

Waverley Council Oral History of Waverly Beach Inspectors Early 1900's.

Interview with Charlie Christensen, Ken East.

Interviewer #1: Lawrie Williams

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Conducted By Kimberly OSullivan Steward and Lawrie Williams of Waverley Council. It's the 10th May 2006 and we are at the North Bondi Surf Life Saving Club.

LW: Charlie, let me start with you. What are some of your memories or the memories of others of some of the very early beach inspectors, or *the* early beach inspectors. Take for instance, we can start with Dennis [Dinny] Brown. Now, you wouldn't have known him personally, I take it...

CC: No, I didn't know [Dinny] but I knew his son Dave very well, and they tell me that they were very similar types of people. Both were outgoing, friendly, very authoritative when they needed to be, but very kind and looking after people wherever they could. If you couldn't find someone that Dinny Brown had done a good turn to or Dave Brown hadn't done a good turn to, you'd have to look a long way past the eastern suburbs.

They were famous as sportsmen, and it was fitting that Dave went on to Captain Australia at Rugby League and taking over the business that Stan had at Bronte Beach. Both of them made many rescues at Bronte, mainly unpublicized. They were both outstanding people to have on the beach.

LW: Well, not much is known of Dennis Brown's time on the beach, because it was established that he was actually the first beach inspector appointed and not long after Stan McDonald was appointed. Now, that can be a bit of a mute point but nonetheless, because Dennis finished up in the early 20s and went on to manage the surf sheds in Bronte, Stan was a person that seemed to stand tall through that period, the 20's into the early 30's...

CC: One of the beach inspectors that I knew very well, I knew Stan very well in later years, but one that I knew much earlier was Tommy Gladesbrook who was a beach inspector before the war who decided that the safe way for the public to bath was between the red and yellow flags, which he decided was a good idea and which was subsequently adopted by everyone right around Australia.

Now Tommy went to WWI where he won a military medal, and then he came back and I believe he went back onto the beach with Stan McDonald and whilst Dinny went over to Bronte, Tommy was here for a while, then in the second world war Tommy Gladesbrook went back to the Middle East and arranged and conducted surf carnivals there. He had been the first National Superintendent of the Surf Life Saving Association of Australia. Was a first grade rugby league referee, a top sportsman right round and he was one of those famous people that come from Double Bay.

Double Bay in the early years in Sydney was the sporting mecca of Australia. All the great champions – Bobby Pierce the Sculler from North Bondi Surf Club who won the double 2 years at the Olympics in the rowing. [Dally Messenger], Victor Trumper and all those sorts of people were either around Double Bay or close to Double Bay.

Today's probably Bankstown as the sporting capital of Sydney anyway, where you've got the Waugh twins and people like that, but in those early days it was all the sporting people that came from Double Bay and round the eastern suburbs area and they came out to Bondi Beach.

LW: Now, take us through Stan's time on the beach – I know that Jimmy Spencer quite clearly remembers him as not just a figure of authority, but someone that people looked up to, kids flocked around...he really stood tall, in those early years on the beach, particularly in the 20's when there was only one – or [] just two beach inspectors on the beach I believe.

CC: They worked one out, and they relied on the surf club members to take the line if they were doing a rescue, but they also controlled every aspect of the beach. Not just the surf life-saving, and the, or as you know now, the life-guarding, they also controlled the public behaviour, all things on the beach that related to by-laws of the council of which as you know there are probably about 2 million. But they knew all the by-laws. They knew when to chastise people, they knew when to tell people when to break it down, to go quietly. Stan controlled the beach probably with 50 000 people on it all on his own, something that would not be humanly possible today without at least 10 barristers and 25 solicitors and a budget of \$8million.

KOS: Those figures are quite extraordinary because when we were doing the research for this project, and we were looking at the kind of numbers that could be typically on the beach in summer, and particularly on Bondi, you're looking at the combined populations like small country towns like Tamworth, Armadale. You've got that many people on a space that big, and you've got people with no police powers and relying on their authority and the respect of the role to actually control all of these people who are in holiday mode – they're out to have a good time.

CC: Oh, the beach inspectors had police powers don't worry about that. Every beach inspector that was in my time, that's up to the 60's into the 70's early probably, were sworn in as a club member of North Bondi and a patrol captain... was sworn in a special constable with the powers to arrest the same as the ordinary policeman and then the beach inspectors had that power all through the year and the more higher level, and they had the power there was no worry about the power, they also had the physical strength and ability to use it. But they also had the brains and the discretion to know how to handle which was something that was very much needed in those days.

KOS: They don't have those powers now, do they?

LW: They have no powers as such...

CC: Not today. Not today, not today...

LW: ...no delegated authority to..., no powers of arrest outside of the citizens...

KOS: More than normal support than you or I would have...

LW: That's right.

KOS: So when did that change?

CC: About the 70's.

KOS: Because that's interesting. They did have those powers given that they had a social policing role...

CC: You had a badge with a crown on it...

KOS: ...and not just a life saving role.

CC: You had a shield with a badge with a crown on the top, with WMC, Waverley Municipal Council on it.

LW: That in itself was a delegation...

CC: The club in the safe kept beach patrol captain's warrant that was sworn by the council.

KOS: It's interesting that that changed, I'd like look up why that changed and why you would actually take powers away from someone, rather than increase their powers.

LW: '77-78 was when I first started and that had finished by that time, so you're pretty spot on there...

KE: Gone.

KOS: It was gone by then?

KE: Civil Liberties canned it.

KOS: Do you have any...

CC: The old time throw away line, but the best throw line we ever had was in those days if people were bathing outside the flags and you told them to come in and they didn't want to come in, you'd say, well, "you can take your pick, if we go and get you, we'll take you straight to the reception house and charge you with attempted suicide," which in

those days was a mental health thing, and they kept you for a week down at Darlinghurst in the place there where the hospice in today.

KE: But, people generally did come in, they... the different society in those days, and most of the people at the beach were from the eastern suburbs. The different world, they had no cars to go anywhere else they came here, they either walked or they came on the trams, it was different, a totally different world.

KOS: So did you feel that the beach inspectors were automatically treated with a degree of respect...

KE: With respect.

KOS: ...there wasn't a lot of debating...

KE: ...not a 'degree' of respect, a lot of respect.

KOS: ...if you said, "come out here and move over here" people were fairly compliant.

KE: Well, the difficult people were those on the beach, other than those that got into trouble in the water. But if there was an argument, we'd win it.

CC: And they stood out – they were mostly big fellas, they had panama hats with a badge on it, a kind of full length costume and a pair of white shorts, plus their whistle.

KOS: If you were going to get grief on the beach, during this time, who would be giving you grief?

CC: If there was any grief it was ah, very short lived, I can assure you.

KE: Very little.

CC: Because they had the power and they had the back up – they had everyone in both surf clubs – plus, this is the difference, say from Bondi down to this end of the beach, there'd be groups of football club members, of ten or twelve different football clubs, and they would all back up the beach inspectors and the surf clubs automatically.

KE: The sorts of problems in '46 I guess, Speedo bought out a swimming suit called the '[Little ?]' do you remember Charlie? And it was a full two piece except that up the side it had little holes and then the council banned it and they said "this isn't allowed on the beach." So we had to go up to the girls or fellas and say "you've got to leave the beach."

KOS: So it was a specific item of clothing...

KE: It wasn't ...[]

KOS: So yes, it was specifically the Speedo costume [that was banned].

LW: The little [?]....

KE: The little [] it was called...[]

KOS: Oh, good, I'll go and find out about it...

KE: And for example you go up to bloke and a girl, and she'd have one on, "Sorry you can't wear it..." "What's the matter, doesn't she look good enough, isn't she, look, she's lovely..." I said, "I agree with you, she's beautiful, but she's got to leave the beach." And they'd leave the beach.

LW: Was one of the other issues that you dealt with, the fact that people would change on the beach, rather than use the...

CC: [] surf sheds, that was another one...

LW: ...and that was something that you had to 'police' for want of a better word, was to tell them they couldn't wrap around, wrap a towel themselves, that they had to go up to the...

KE: Dressing sheds...

CC: Dressing sheds...

LW: get [] up at the dressing sheds...

CC: Now you get the backpackers dropping everything [] for a swim...

LW: Is that where the beach inspector's office was in the late 40's? Had they located in the pavilion?

CC: They didn't have an office.

LW: Not yet?

KE: No. We, we were all, in my time, we were all North Bondi Members and we... met at the front...

LW: Well, say in Tom Meagher's time, which was just before the war...

CC: They'd used, they'd use Stan's tunnel mainly as a meeting place, the regulars, to have a cup of tea or something like that. They didn't have a room, they got the room a bit later on.

LW: In Tom Meagher's, I think in Tom Meagher's time, you had the bulk of the beach inspectors were from here... You know, Chum Malleson...

CC: Bondi...

LW: Aub, and then you had Tom...

CC: Davo...

LW: ...but would they have all met – because they were from different clubs, would they have met here, or there?

KE: We... always met here, because we were all from here.

CC: Tim Collins was in charge, they'd sign on with Tim in the surf sheds.

KE: But Aub was the boss, and ah, he would tell us what we'd... about our shifts... there were four of us and we'd rotate shifts, 7 til 1, and 1 til 7 or 1-6, or something like that – come in the early morning and put the flags out, []. It was the best job I ever had when I come to think of it because I never had to wear shoes, I got 6 pounds a week.

LW: I know an eminent orthopaedic surgeon that I've worked with on the beach and he still maintains it's the best job he's ever had.

KOS: Given that I never met Aub, if you were describing him to somebody and talking about him, what is it that you remember about him?

KE: It was “man” – that's the first – [] a fine gentleman, everything had to be right. He had great respect, everybody respected him. You can't say much more than that. You could elaborate on it, but he was a good man.

LW: Charlie, I know that you maintain to this day, that he was probably the best water man to grace the sand.

CC: He was the best swimmer to never go to the Olympics. He won the right to go the Olympics, but there was no money in the Athletics or the amateur body at that time, so they didn't take anyone. But he would have been as good as anyone in his time in the swimming world. And after... not being sent to the Olympics he turned professional and he used to win all the professional swimming races at the Domain baths. But in the water he had no fear. He could handle the ocean which probably came out of long experience, he used to row a little boat out fishing and he knew the whole bay back to front, there was no way...

But he had a great habit. If you were on patrol and you were about to send a beltman out to pick someone up, he'd give you a little tap on the shoulder, and say “hold him”. And you'd look at Aub and you'd say “why?”, and he'll say “He's making a lot of noise, he's

throwing himself about,” He said, “let him calm down a bit, and when you pick him up and bring him in he won’t go back in the water.” And that was very true, if you go out to someone immediately they throw their hand up, they’ll go out and they might drown your beltman.

And he always knew just when and how you should go and pick a patient up, and his other one was, he said, “if you come down during the week” he said, “and you see a red cap going out,” he said, “run down and get the reel. That’s me.”

He always carried a little red cap and when he got out to a rescue he’d put his little red cap on, which most beach inspectors never ever worry about.

LW: Tell me Ken more about a typical working day, a busy day... Tell us first when did you start, you had the one year, 1946?

KE: 1946, September []. And a typical day would be, as I say, come down to the flags [and the reels] out.

Two only, and we’d allocate each other the jobs – Aub would tell you if there was any special happening, or you’d be working with him, which was always easier or harder, depending on which way you looked at it. And you’d just walk around the beach, you knew a lot of people, in those days and probably still do and just walk up and down and keep people in between the flags. Weekdays it was easy, weekends when it was very crowded, the surf club used to do most of the work and we used to hang around the patrolies, the patrol areas. Maybe it’s still like that, I don’t know.

KOS: Who was on the beach, what or who were the typical beach goers in 1946?

KE: Typical citizens, people...

KOS: Locals?

KE: Locals. Mostly locals, I’d say so, wouldn’t you Charlie.

CC: Yep.

KE: People would hardly come from the western suburbs...

CC: A double tram would come down and it would carry just on 250 people...

KOS: So they were Sydney eastern suburbs people... mainly local people...

KE: Bondi Junction [] area

KOS: Yep... I know there were early signs in French and German that were on the beach... would they...?

KE: They never had them – we had the [Burma Road], didn’t we, when we had [] on the beach, but we never had any [signs in foreign languages]

LW: That would be another question, would be – what your memories of that war period were because we have scant information about what the beach was like, were the beach inspectors working during that period... was there are need for them?

KE: I believe – yes there must have been.

CC: Right through.

KE: I don't know what caused the vacancy I filled, but I was told there was a vacancy going, I'd just returned from the war, I'd just been discharged and I'd enrolled to go in a rehabilitation course as a fisherman and they were going to buy a boat, the [] to buy a boat, but none of this ever happened. But that's why I left the beach to go to Cronulla. But never, as I say, [] barbed wire, but I don't know who was before me, but there was somebody and it just, life went on.

KOS: Like Lawrie said, we don't have a lot of information, we've got a couple of photos that the beach was barb-wired off and it was a military site []...

CC: There were a couple of little races where you go through which they closed off at night.

KE: Right – ah, that makes sense, so it was ok to go onto the beach, but not at night.

CC: You had to go through the race...

KE: If you wanted to go to get in the water, you had to go a zigzag...

KOS: Oh? All the way down to the waters edge...?

KE: Yes, the wire didn't extend along the beach but it extended to sections of the beach, and another section would take up – so here we would go down, get in to the wire channel...

CC: And that was the only way you could go.

KE: [...to get yourself into the water.]

KOS: Wow. And at night that was [cut] off:

CC: Closed off.

KOS: So you just went down here, so did many people come down, do you remember?

CC: Not at night.

KOS: Did they go down the little rat run...yeh?

KE: In the day time, yes.

LW: Were there still the usual activities? Were the flags up, were you still riding the big wooden boards?

KE: Not many boards in those days.

LW: Not many boards?

CC: At night time they had sentries on the promenade.

KOS: Whereabouts were they on the promenade?

CC: Both ends.

KOS: Actual sentries?

CC: Fella actually got shot dead. He failed to respond to a challenge. He was challenged by a sentry. He failed to respond. He was challenged again, failed to respond, and the fella shot him.

KOS: Really? [] told me about that, I better go and find out about that.

LW: Ken, can you give us some names from your time? Again, it's... beach inspectors.

KE: Well, there was Aub. Aub was the boss, and Bill Willis as you know [The Whale], and Brian Davidson. [Aub] and we just worked as a happy gang of people. Outside of those times, I was a mad surf board rider in those days and I used to spend most of my time board riding if I wasn't working. So most of my friends were [Aub, Ray Hookham, Ron Cracker, Sam Curren and all those people.] It was just a job, a very enjoyable job.

LW: Do you know who was at Bronte and Tamarama?

KE: No I didn't know...

LW: Is there...

CC: The Rileys I think were at Bronte around that time.

LW: Roger Riley was. He... they... I found it hard to... know how long he spent on the beach... but his son claims that it may have been nearly as long as Aub. Aub was 40 years... Roger...

CC: He was there a long while. Frank Norton would be able to tell you that, I think.

KOS: []

LW: Yes...

KOS: Ken, I wanted to ask you, you said that you were a board rider and certainly I remember when I used to go the beach around Cronulla area in the 70's, there was a huge demarcation between the Clubbies and the board riders and a lot of disputes between them and "never the twain shall meet".

And we've really seen that dissolve over the last 30 years, where you'll have beach inspectors who are, you know, one is an ex-pro surfer, so when the big waves happened at Tamarama a couple of weeks ago, and the beaches were closed all the beach inspectors went and rowed there and there's a lot of great shots of them in the paper. So that kind of "gulf" seems to have gone, which is really quite interesting.

KE: Well, I never really knew of a gulf. Really. Most of the board riders were surf club members either from Bondi or from here. A Gulf, I think a gulf probably was created when people, when the short boards came. See it was hard... to do anything, to take a long board anywhere, unless it's a surf carnival. And when the short boards arrived, poor people had motor cars you could either put them on the tram or the bus. That caused an influx of people from other areas, onto other beaches, then there would have been rivalry, I can see that happening. That happens today up the coast.

KOS: It's interesting that that developed, and then it collapsed.

LW: Charles has got a great story I can recall from his interview for that Bondi video. Where people – a lot of people don't realize and I'm told the life guards here today, that it was actually the surf clubs who supported board riding being allowed here, because the council wanted it banned from the beach.

CC: Completely.

KOS: Can you tell us that story?

CC: Originally, the trouble was that in this north corner there's a bank which has been there for 100 years and it'll be there for another hundred...which in the winter time particularly is very good for body surfing, but in the summer from the point in its good for board riders.

KOS: A bank? Like a natural sand bank?

CC: Yeh, so they'd ride their board in, but instead of the smart ones drop off before they got to the crowd that were swimming in the body surfing area, and that boiled over. They were going further along the beach on to – that's known as Laidlaw's Bank that one, its been there that long, and the other one in front of the old Diggers was Smiths Bank after

Billy Smith, who was another beach inspector, and they'd ride the boards in amongst the flags and create havoc.

So that was when the council decided they'd ban them and the surf club said, "look the obvious thing to do is ban them from the north corner, ban them from the middle but designate an area between the baths back up to nearly the Hotel Bondi" which is what, in those days, there was the Binoculars run out the storm water, it wasn't a good area to swim in, so they decided that was a good idea and away they went and it worked beautifully for 20 odd years.

LW: And to this day, I'm glad you gave us a bit of a background, because to this day the general rule of thumb is the third ramp which lines up with the Bondi – Hotel Bondi, although with more board riders here now they tend to push the area further north toward McDonalds Tunnel. But that was always, in my time, that was the rule of thumb. No further north than the Hotel Bondi.

KE: See, it seems strange, but in the early 40's every board rider knew every other board rider on every beach, on the southern beaches. And then gradually after the war, there still, still were a lot...lot of people and you get to know them because there were [] transport in those days, we had cars, put them on the roof of the car and go to Manly or North Narabeen or somewhere, and you got to know the fellas there. But there was no [] there weren't enough board riders.

LW: It's interesting, one of the books I gave you for ...for the archives up there was the Impounding Book...

CC: Yeh, [] boards...

LW: Which [] you go up, and you'll find that that this ties in with what you're talking about, in that all those impoundings really date from the 60's and possibly the late... the late 60's going forward but not...

CC: Backward...

LW: ...not prior to...so the problems tended to be during that period of great social change.

KE: It was when the [Balberg board]...

CC: Quite popular...

KE: ...and people came from elsewhere to the beaches, the people who lived on the beach knew how to behave.

KOS: It's interesting isn't it, because that kind of social change like more mobility because people have cars, and what they're actually riding changes, actually then changes the social culture on the beach...its all kind of linked together

KE: Well, before the war, not before the war, in the 40's Jack Duffe was the only fella in this club [who owned] a car, one member of the club owned a car...

CC: I think in the early days, Frank Pourham was the first board rider we had, and he used to take his dog out on the board and catch a wave in off the point, a solid wood board...

KOS: How fantastic – what kind of a dog?

CC: A cattle dog, I think. They're smart.

KOS: I haven't heard about him. What a great character. I wanted to ask about some of the other characters on the beach. I get asked a bit about them. I get asked fairly regularly about Bondi Mary – who lived in the caves... North? Was it North Bondi?

CC: She used to follow the [march-past team] around the beach with an umbrella up, straight behind the back four.

KOS: Didn't she live in the ...

CC: ...don't know just where she lived...

KOS: ... [caves] up there, she was a homeless woman...and she was here for ages...

CC: There was a homeless woman lived over – over in a cave over on the cliffs for a long while...

KOS: Oh... I'm on the wrong end of the beach am I? It was the southern...

CC: [laughter], she complained all the time about the rats eating the biscuits.

KOS: And so you remember and she was known as Bondi Mary? Someone is trying to write a book about her.

CC: Yeh, well there's been, I'd say, in my time, there's been three known as Bondi Mary. The original one was in the First War, who used to regularly get dressed up and go down to Woolloomooloo to wait for her husband to come back from World War I which he never did of course. But, she went round the bend when he got killed in the war apparently, and she'd been there to see him off and she used to regularly go down to see the ship come in that had him on it.

KOS: That's really sad...

CC: She was the original Bondi Mary.

KOS: I had begun to suspect the same thing, because she seems to go for too long a period and I started to think she's actually a number of homeless women who lived around here, who lived in caves round the beach and there were certainly the people around Mackenzies and to Tamarama during the depression...

CC: There's a fella []

KOS: ...and I began to suspect she was actually a couple of people...that kept being known as Bondi Mary.

CC: ...that kept the name going...

KOS: Yeh...Ok, what about Bea Miles. We've got some great stories of her...

CC: Bea Miles is another one...

KOS: Do you remember her down here? What do you remember of her?

CC: You'd probably remember her in her younger days, she was a good sort they said, but the classic story is...

KOS: I heard she was very beautiful...

CC: ...she was probably the first one to swim across the bay... She used to carry a big Bowie knife on the side of her costume with a belt on... that was to fight the sharks off. And there were plenty of sharks around, she was probably wise to have a knife...

But they use to row out occasionally to tell her to come in, and anyway one day she was not too keen on coming in, and they were keen on getting her in, it was a bit cold. So, they rowed around and someone backhanded her with the oar on top of the skull, and they just dragged her into the boat and brought her in. She was no problem after that, which is probably illustrated in the fact that many years later, I saw her in town in George street near the old Farmer and Company shop, and a cab pulled up near the tram stop in the traffic, and she run out and went to jump in. And as she did, the cab driver – was a little fella about 8 stone, jumped out of the cab, run around, grabbed her by the throat, pushed right across the footpath against Farmer's window and give her the greatest tongue bashing you've ever heard. And she looked at him, she went white, he left – the traffic started to move so he let her go and jumped back in his cab and drove off, and I reckon that was one cab she never tried to jump in again.

KOS: She was very fond of Bondi Beach, we've got some nice stories about her down here and bringing her sheep down onto the beach, and...

CC: Well, she lived for a long while...

KOS: ...about them not challenging her, and her saying there's no rules about sheep on the beach only dogs on the beach and she tied the sheep – I don't know where she got the sheep from. But it's nice because she is such an iconic figure in Sydney, she actually has a real history down here. She loved this beach and came down here a lot.

CC: Well, she lived for a long while under the ah, near the old tram depot, at Rushcutters Bay near the viaduct where the storm water runs out. And every now and then she used to go up to St Vincent and the nuns there, in those days they were all nuns in the hospital at St Vincents, the nuns used to get her and put her in the steam room and scrub her down and give her a new set of clothes and send her out clean as a new pin.

But ah, she would... she was very good on reciting Shakespeare and she had a little placard, so much Shakespeare for thrippence, and a lot more for sixpence, and she'd read I think the whole Twelfth Night for a shilling.

KOS: Yes, she certainly was very bright – she seems to have had a very good education, and been very intelligent and...

CC: Oh, she was definitely bright, there was no chance about that. She knew what was going on all the time. She used to drive the tram drivers mad jumping on and off, telling them what to do and how to run the trams.

KE: She was a free spirit....

CC: A very free spirit...

KOS: She was...

CC: ...and she had been, all the old timers said what a good sort she was in her day.

KOS: Yeh, apparently she was very beautiful... and it's really lovely, she's a really free spirit, and really eccentric and bohemian, didn't ever hurt anyone, she was just a great character... she was just larger life, had a kind of bigger than life personality. There was, even when she was driving the taxi drivers mad didn't seem she ever did anything malicious or nasty, she was just... she was just a free spirit.

LW: They had, and you'll remember this Charles, because there was quite a dispute between Pierce [Byron], and Alan Johnston about the disappearance of a number of lovely old photographs and also menus, where at some stage and I assume it started in the 50's maybe they started having dinners.

And I think it was at the Diggers where beach inspectors from up and down the coast, only Newcastle I think as you said, Waverley and Randwick would have a dinner once a year and it was black tie affair... And... don't have too much information, certainly the photographs, both parties are claiming that they don't have them. But I don't, do you know anything either one of you, about those dinners?

CC: They used to have all the photos in [both McDonalds] but are where they got to... everyone, Johnno definitely blames Pierce, and Pierce definitely blames Johnno. It's one of the two. There's no risk on that. It's a matter of finding them.

LW: What about the dinners themselves, what... do you know much about them? What they were all about?

CC: I went to the one at the Hotel Bondi, as chairman. Cec Mack was to be chairman, and Cec got crook so they promoted me from the benches up to be chairman. And that was Bill Willis' farewell. That was sponsored by Janson, the swimming team people, and John [] the host at the Bondi looked after them, and it was probably one of the best dinners you could possibly go to.

It had about a five course dinner, and of course there was plenty of amber fluid and whatever you liked in the wine department, with good entertainment and it was well attended. There was probably about 100 or so people there but they came from along way away.

Toddy Young brought a big contingent down from Newcastle, the Illawarra people were up there, all the Cronulla people, the Randwick people, and it was a really big function, which was very well conducted like, whilst I was probably conducting it, I didn't have to do much because they conducted themselves that well, it would have been a credit to anyone in the world to have so many fellas that were athletes and high-spirited people in a lot of cases, who were prepared to take a risk and live dangerously when it was required, who would on a night out, conduct themselves in a way that you would have thought they were Sunday school teachers.

It makes me smile every now and again, when I look at the professional athletes around the world, who can't possibly behave themselves for 20 minutes, much less fellas like these that conducted themselves for 4-5 hours under the same circumstances.

LW: Come to think of it now, the photographs that I remember, that were lying around that have now disappeared mysteriously, they seemed to be of the Bondi Hotel because I can remember the joinery and it's what's in the Bondi Hotel, so those photographs more than likely were of that send-off or farewell. Tell me a little bit about, firstly Bill Willis and Davo.

KE: Well, Bill was just a big boy, really. He was married to - I forget her name, a blond, the little blond worked from the Bondi Hotel. And we used to drink up there [when we], after work, and outside other times, and he was just a happy, really happy-go-lucky chap. And I was, when he died I was living in London, I went to [] moved out to the westerns suburbs when I got married in '53, til about when I went to live in London so I was not here in those times, I was very sorry to hear of his death, but he was one of the happiest men, who did his daily swim across the bay, when others weren't doing it, [] except Bea Miles, and he was a lovely man, and you couldn't offend him. If he got offended, it was a [] doing it, and he would take care of himself or take care of the problem.

Davo was a totally different character. He won the Galah award several times in my memory []...

KOS: What was the Galah award?

KE: As the name suggests you were a Galah, Galah of the Year and he won it for various reasons...

KOS: Do you remember any of the reasons?

KE: Yes, I can't tell you them. And he was, he had a wonderful life. I used to think, I was younger than him of course, I used to think he had the best life you could have. He worked on the beach in the summer and he went to Switzerland in the winter to teach, a ski instructor. And he did that for years, long, long time, and then he went to the Baths, at the Spit, was it? The Spit Baths I think he took over? You probably remember more of the latter time, Charles, than I do.

CC: Yeh.

LW: Interestingly, I noticed that, looking up some old press clippings, I noticed that after that after...after the council had Aub ruled medically unfit and there was a challenge [] there was a petition, and at the end of the day he had to go, ... it was the same year that Davo decided to quit and I often wondered, because I think, I estimated Davo was there for over 30 years and it appeared to me, that maybe he quit because his buddy Aub was finished and that was the end for him, I'm not sure if that's the case.

KE: Could be.

LW: It just seems a coincidence.

KE: They were very, very compatible people, you'd never ever find a group, and I am pleased to say I was one of them, though a junior one, you'd never find people who got along better, together although they were quite different. Aub, of course was more different than the rest of us, because he was such a mad stickler for the right thing, you must do the right thing. But a very, very congenial or happy group of people, and yet they were so different.

CC: Unless you knew [The Whale] very well, you wouldn't have know that he won a state championship as a road rider in the cycling with Enfield-Burwood, which in those days was the top cycling club in NSW; that he played football with Cobar where he came from and then came down and played rugby league with western suburbs.

He never mentioned those to the ordinary run of people, and its only when you got to know him really well and the discussion turned around, one of his great mates was Joe Walsh who was one of the top professional cyclists in Australia, and if he was talking to Joe you'd find out he also been in the game and that he had won state championships. It was the same with the football, you could talk to him about footballers in the club, then one of them would let it out that they'd played against him when he was playing with Western Suburbs...

KE: That's right.

CC: But his big caper was across-the-bay swimming and when he started that there was no stopping him.

He said to me one day, he said "Charlie," he said, "you're on holidays?" I said "yes Bill." He said, ah, "you're gunna swim a lap of the bay?" I said, "Yes, bill." He said, "I'll tell you what, Charlie," he said, "Swim two laps" he said, "With me," he said, "and you're on two schooners for lunch. Better still," he said, "make it two pints." I said, "You've got me Bill, you've got me."

So in we go, we swim the two laps of the beach, and when we come in, he said, "come up the middle, at lunch time, we'll go up the Bondi and I'll buy you you're two pints." I said, "good". So I went up at the middle of the day, up to the Bondi, he bought the two pints. While I'm getting through the second one very slowly, John [] the publican come in and he said, "John he just swum the two laps," he said, "get him a pint". That was the third pint. I thought 'that's alright', I'm feeling no pain by this time.

A representative of Tooths Brewery came in, he said "meet Charlie, he's just swum two laps of the bay, you got to shout him a pint." That was four. Another fella came in. Was a local sergeant of police, he said, "Charlie's just swum the bay, twice, you got to buy him a pint." That was five pints.

Bill said 'we'll have some lunch.' I said, "Bill I'm going back to the club." And you know how far it is from North Bondi to the Hotel Bondi, it took me an hour and a half to walk back through the park, and I stayed on the top of the roof in the sun til 6 o'clock to sober up to go home.

That was the sort of fella he was, he enjoyed looking after people, getting them to do thing that they didn't think they could do. And when he swum his 12 laps of the bay he'd started something that continued today and has become one of the biggest things in Sydney, now in the summer time is the ocean swimming.

People now, that wouldn't dream of swimming more than a couple of laps in the Baths, are swimming miles in the baths so they could go in the long race in the surf. Which is a great thing because it keeps them physically fit, and it also encourages everyone they know to do the same thing.

And it was all based on the theory that Bill started off, 'if you try you can do it but you have to do the preparation it doesn't come easy, if you do the work you get the result, you get the result, you get good health and you get the body to look after the jobs you wanted to do'.

He was fantastic at that. He would encourage, it wouldn't matter how strong or weak a swimmer was he could teach them so they could swim at least a lap of the bay.

KE: He was a very modest man, he'd never talk about himself.

LW: The picture in the North Bondi History book, the picture of yourself, the unknown beach inspector and of course Aub and Davo, are being shown a resuscitation technique. Can you talk about what sort of technique you did use then?

KE: I don't remember, until I saw that picture, I thought I'm sure it happened, but I think a fellow from may be the council arranged it with an oxygen mask, [] I don't; remember.. I don't remember being there.

LW: Ok.

KOS: Do you remember when you were working though what resuscitation methods were used?

KE: The old-fashioned...

KOS: What was the standard?

CC: He was a Schaefer man.

KE: Schaefer.

KOS: So the Schaefer method. Can you describe that a bit, the standard...

KE: Yeh, well, lets see if my memory goes, it was a matter of finding the bottom rib, I think from memory and bringing your fingers up and getting the thumbs...

CC: Spreading your hands wide...

KE: []

KOS: Yeh...

KE: ...and then backwards and forwards times one two, I forget the time... three minutes I think it might have been or two minutes up and back, just going backwards and forwards to pump the lungs...

KOS: And so, what was the theory – what would you actually do...

CC: Pump from the back...

KE: Pump from the back outside...

LW: They were on their stomach...

CC: You lay the patient face down.

KOS: So they're on their stomach...

KE: Yeh, lay the patient on their stomach...

KOS: ...and you're reinflating the lungs

KE: Yes, I guess

CC: That was the idea.

LW: There was no mouth-to-mouth, lung massage...

KE: ...massage.

CC: No [Holger Neilson] ...

KOS: So, it was kind of like pushing up, from...

KE: Well, although, it was gentle, gentle hand pressure,

CC: You had your hands spread out completely like that...

KOS: Wouldn't it break someone's ribs doing that?

KE: No, it was on the back, on the back not the front, and you just press down hard in the hope that water would come out. Or air...

KOS: Oh, right so you might get rid of water in the lungs?

KE: You put his head on the side...

KOS: Yep. Oh, so oh, I see, so people would, their head was on the side, with the idea that if they inhaled water...

KE: You lay on your stomach with your head on the side.

KOS: And that was what the Schaefer method was? And that, did that come after the method where you put people on a board and turn them upside...?

CC: That was the [eve rocker] that came a bit later, that was no good either.

KE: Schaefer was the first...

KOS: That was, Schaefer was first so this was later. I'd seen pictures of people have a strap to a board and then...

KE: That's the...

CC: That's the [eve rocker], a disaster.

KOS: ...and that didn't make, yeh, I was going to say, if you had water it would go into your mouth and throat and you'd choke wouldn't you?

CC: Worse still, when we had to do it in training you nearly drowned – without being in the water, it was a shocker.

KOS: So that you felt that was a mistake...

CC: It went out of use very quickly.

KOS: ...and what was that called?

LW: [the eve rocker?]

KOS: [eve rocker?] And what came in after that?

CC: The [Holger] Nielson...

KOS: Can you describe it for us?

CC: Oh not really, it's a bit technical to go into, but it was a different method, until they got up to modern methods there was no great benefit I couldn't see in any of them really.

KOS: So you didn't see a lot of good recovery...

CC: If you saved anyone with the old fashioned methods they were very, very lucky in my book. But with the modern methods, they're fantastic. The technology, particularly with the defibrillator is something else again. Like, we've had numerous cases here where people that were clinically dead, that had been brought back to life either by the life guards or by club members. And one of our doctors said the other day, if you're going to have a heart attack, have it on Bondi beach on a Sunday morning when the patrols are there.

KOS: Really?

CC: He was a man from St. Vincents. He did very well, he was known as Professor John Hickey, he was one of our early morning swimmers who Pierce probably told you about, because, when the method first came in, Pierce was doing a resus– in the middle of the beach, and he looked up and a fella said to John Hickey, you're a doctor, and Hickey said Yes, and Pierce said "take over" and he said 'no son, keep going, you're doing it the right way'.

Pierce said, when it finished the fella came around alright when they took him a way, he stood up and said to John Hickey, he said, I don't know whether I did the right thing, I thought I heard something crack – he said 'don't worry about that son, it meant you were really doing it the right way. I couldn't have done it better.' And that was the type of beach inspector in those days had to be able to do.

And today now they have to be able to use a defibrillator where they wire the patches up. You have to someone clinically dead to operate it, they give them the ["packa-wacka-bang"] and up they come and we had a fella 14 stone and he lifted 6 inches off the beach in a complete lift...

KOS: Wow.

CC: ...and he is still alive today and that was 10 yrs ago...

KOS: Wow. And he was clinically dead?

CC: Clinically dead. It won't – the defibrillators we use won't work unless they are clinically dead...

KOS: Oh really?

CC: ...which is the greatest thing of all, because you could do him a terrible damage if they weren't dead and use that effect on them...

KOS: Yes, upset the heart rate.

KE: Who finances that gear Charlie?

CC: Hmm?

KE: Who finances that gear...?

CC: We finance it ourselves.

LW: With the Council – the council operates... at the three beaches and they were donated by Rotary, but if they were to be replaced council would do it. That's for the life guard surfers but of course, the surf clubs have to buy their own.

CC: We use which ever one's nearest.

LW: Yes, that's right... there's no [].

CC: We use theirs and they use ours...

CC: If there's a beachie out there and he needs one, he just sings out to our patrol. If the patrol's not on someone runs into the club and grabs it off the wall and that's it.

KOS: I think that doctor was very wise because, it would be very rare that a doctor would be doing a resus...

CC: Well the continuity is the big thing when you're doing those things...

KOS: Yes, doctor would be very rarely doing a resuscitation... that's very much ambulance paramedic work you know, kind of emergency services, and if someone is resuscitating you, you'd want people that are doing it all the time.

CC: Well, my GP said he learned how to do it from Pierce who was a patient, and every time I went to see him for 20 years after it, he used to say, he'd say 'how's pierce, he never asked me how I was'.

KOS: Lawrie, do you want to ask a little bit about shark fishing? I know you asked Jim Spencer about shark fishing on the beach...

LW: Yes, there was the fishing – you know, I recall plenty of stories about the actual fishing from the beach, people like Roth Bassingthwaite 'Basso', would come down..

CC: With the nets...

LW: ...with the nets...

KE: With the garfish...

LW: ...and they would pull in salmon...

CC: Garfish on a Sunday...

LW: Salmon and ah...

CC: Mullet...

LW: Mullet...and then another side of that was that you used to have people would come down for recreation, people like the Platt brothers, and people before them, to catch sharks...I assume it was off...

CC: They were professionals, the Platts were professional. They fished all the week...

LW: Shark fisherman?

CC: Yeh, but they fished all week.

LW: But they used to drawn in big crowds. []

CC: On a Sunday...

LW: Ok...

CC: Bit a Hessian around, they'd catch a tiger shark, lay it on the rocks, have a bit of Hessian round... and they charged thruppence to have a look at it.

KOS: To have a look at the dead shark...?

CC: Some of them wouldn't be too dead either...

KE: They'd drag them along when we were sitting on our surfboards, I don't know when it was, before the war and drag the shark by the tail. A big one... bastards would tell us we how mad we were. You know, "you bastards are mad." And we just look at them, think we might have been and carried on swimming, it was perfect.

CC: The story was that they'd get a rotten leg of lamb, put it on a big hook, put it down on a set line just near the point on a Saturday night, and you'd get a shark there Sunday morning for sure.

LW: With getting back to the schools of fish, I assume from what you hear, that there were a lot, schools of fish were a lot more abundant...

CC: Well, the fish are coming back now, in the last 12 months there have been more schools of fish around the beach than there's been for a long, long while...

KOS: Ok, so what was that, the end of that about the fishing?

CC: With the clearing up at the [water], the sewer outfall was improved, and then the storm water was improved on both ends of the beach, and since then the fish have come back, there've been schools of blackfish, schools of whiting, and big, big schools of salmon around the beach all of summer. And on the north point there's five or six big green gropers, and a couple of bluey's, and in the early 50's and 60's and 70's you wouldn't see a fish anywhere. But you can swim out along the rocks now and you'll see fish nearly everyday. This is all because the quality of the water has been improved by removing all the extraneous matter that was drifting into it.

KOS: So you think that, that the [] out fall and other...

CC: Mainly the outfall, and then, secondly, the storm water...

KOS: The storm water, controlling the storm water pollution. Isn't that wonderful, it must be wonderful to see that, come back...

CC: Well, in the 50's if there was a sudden cloudburst and a bit of a storm anywhere around the area, the whole of the point of North Bondi down to about the Diggers'd turn black from the water coming from off the streets...

KE: It was like a sewer here...

CC: Yeh, it used to drop straight onto the beach.

KOS: How awful, it must be beautiful for you to see it in the state it is now...

CC: It is probably better now than it has been since, probably 1935 or something like that...

KOS: That's wonderful.

LW: South Bondi, now, if you'd a crowded a day here in summer, it's estimated you could have 60 000 people here on a very busy day which I think is a reasonable estimate. When you look at photographs, say, pre-the 70s, if you look at a photograph, a panoramic photograph of the beach, you'll notice that most of the people obviously are up here where the flags are, both North Bondi and Bondi. There didn't seem to be a lot of people at South Bondi. Would I be right in saying that?

CC: Well, it's never been an attractive end to surf, as a body surfer, and at that time the boards were there anyway, so people didn't go there, because there were no flags and the boards which were likely to hit you. And there some breakers I think, it just that fam-people collected this end because it wasn't attractive water.

LW: It looked like a wilderness really...

CC: It was, because the water was always polluted, the seaweed was half dead, and didn't smell real good as you can imagine, and it was the end of the beach where no one would go in the water anyway. Even if they only wanted to get wet, they wouldn't go in there, they'd walk up to the middle to get wet.

But now the south end has been rebuilt, you could say, because the sand now goes around nearly to the baths, where it used to stop before the first big rock. Where the first cave is on the beach, used to Bondi's boat shed, which most of the time was straight into the water. Now it's onto the beach and sand and rocks. The beach is probably 30 metres longer at the south end than it's ever been.

LW: Which is a good thing...

CC: Which is a very good because it's good sand and made a good area for the people.

LW: Plenty of those...now

CC: Particularly in the wintertime as you just said, in the winter time its paradise, particularly with a westerly...

KOS: I love it, this time of the year, its just beautiful down here. I wonder, I was just thinking, with your experience with the people you know, and you know, talking about Bondi rescue at the moment [] contemporary life guard. What do you think makes a good life guard? What are the key qualities do you think in the best people you knew...

CC: I would say that there's no such thing as a perfect pattern for a life guard...

KE: No, that would be right...

CC: There are...

KOS: No, but what do would make a good one...?

CC: There are probably 50–60 you could say that would be proto-types that would be a great success ranging from fellas that weigh about 8 stone to fellas that weigh 16 stone. The thing is, basically I suppose, they've got to have a big heart, they've got to be able to swim, they've got to be able look after people. But there is no such thing as a prototype because I've seen that many different fellas, particularly even a beach patrol. The most unlikely looking people are the ones likely to do the most outstanding things in the water.

KOS: Right...

KE: You're right, exactly. You need to love the surf, and be a good swimmer, and just enjoy your work.

KOS: What about your skills with people. I just remember often the lifeguards that people remember the most fondly, they would say as you said earlier, 'he was a real gentleman, you could always approach him, he was great with the people' ... just have those really good...

CC: That's a personality matter like, you've either got that or you never get it.

KE: It's a necessity

CC: You've got be able to talk to people...

KOS: Be a good negotiator

CC: If you've got a chip on your shoulder, go somewhere else, straight away. Never come to a beach.

KOS: Right...

KE: Tell a fella his girl is a good sort and still order him off the beach.

CC: ...what he followed, when he give up the beach inspecting.

LW: What did you do?

CC: He likes a little bit of music, I think.

KE: I accidentally fell into the music business.

CC: Ask him who is favorite artists are...

KE: Oh...

CC: Think of someone with a fancy hair cut... in a group...

KE: Oh, the Beatles... I was at EMI records in London, when the Beatles were popular.

KOS: Oh my God, Ken...

LW: You met the Beatles...!

CC: Ask who signed them up.

LW: Gee, that's a quantum leap...

KOS: Did you sign them to EMI?

KE: No, I didn't.

KOS: Oh my god...

KE: They were signed by accident. No body wanted them. It was a funny story.

KOS: Was it Decker that knocked them back?

KE: Everybody knocked them back and, this was in '62. And Brian Epstein, their manager... his family owned a furniture store which happened to have a big record department, biggest store in Liverpool. And he came to the man running EMI then, Glenn Wood and said, "Come on, we're a good customer do us a favour". And he said alright, he gave them a... George Martin was the producer, the house producer, who had made comedy records with Peter Sellers and all those people and he said, 'George would you like to take them on because no-one else would', ... he said 'yes alright' - George was a fine musician himself and they were a great combination... it all happened.

LW: Far cry from [] beach inspector.

KE: I spent the rest of my life in that.

KOS: So your years were 1946?

KE: '46 - '47.

KOS: 46–47...

KE: Left in 47 march I think, to go down to Cronulla, to go to the Marine Biology school...

KOS: Oh yes?

KE: ...to become a professional fisherman

KOS: Right.

KE: And then the weather got cold and I thought this is not my lot...

KOS: Thank you so much, Charlie is there is anything else you'd finally like to tell us?

CC: Not really... I don't thnk...

LW: Charlie, one thing I will say, when I first spoke to you about that history project, there were so many names and we can't... we won't be able to recount them now, and they must have been casuals because you seemed to have the full-core seasonal people that were here for the summer, including the Boss. But then a lot of other names were thrown in, you know, Basso, Billy Pugh, Chum Malleson, the list goes on and on...

CC: Kevin Burgess.

LW: Kevin Burgess, ok... there are a lot of names there, how many casuals would they?

CC: One of the interesting casuals was the Reverend Billy [Jobbling] who had at one time the largest parish in Australia, based in Mt Isa. He became famously known as [Jobbling] of the Jordan as an archaeologist who was a member of this club and a very good little swimmer. But he was a character who worked on the beach in his holidays, while he was studying for his doctorate in Theology.

LW: In fact, it was a life guard and his father who worked on him – when he did have a heart attack, it was Matt Calhouon and Matt's father who was a doctor who worked on him.

CC: He had a long association with the beach. But if you look through some of the notes you'll find some terrific characters amongst them, the casuals.

LW: There's a fellow called [Kaffa] Johnson...

KOS: God, you'd never call anyone that now.

LW:[] you'd never call anyone a [Kaffa] now

CC: No, you wouldn't be game to, would you.

KE: A Nigger...

CC: We had a Sabu... an [] beach inspector, we had a Sabu – you wouldn't be able to call that either.

KE: A Nigger, we had a nigger... []

CC: A nigger [] you couldn't say that.

KOS: Thank you...

CC: First time I've had a touch of laryngitis in a hundred years...

KOS: That's alright – thank you everyone for the interview – this is the end of the interview.