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Full transcript of an interview with

**COLIN FIFE ANGAS**

on 26 April 2006

by Karen George

for the

**NATIONAL TRUST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

Recording available on CD

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**Interview with Colin Angas recorded by Karen George on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2006 at Angaston, South Australia, for the National Trust of South Australia Oral History Project of the State Library of South Australia.**

DISK 1

**This is an interview with Colin Angas being recorded by Karen George for the National Trust of South Australia. The interview is taking place on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2006 at Angaston in South Australia. So first of all I'd like to thank you, Colin, for agreeing to sharing your memories of Collingrove Homestead and growing up there. Can we start by your giving me your full name?**

Colin Fife Angas.

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

I was born in Adelaide on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1920, the second son of my parents.

There were three in the family: my elder brother [myself] and my younger sister.

**What were their names?**

The elder brother was Robert and my sister was Suzanne.

**Can we start perhaps by your telling me a little bit about your parents, their names and how they ended up to be at Collingrove?**

Yes. My father was born at Lindsay Park and my mother was born not very far away, or grew up not very far away, at a stud sheep property called Murray Vale, near Williamstown, near Mount Crawford. So even in their early days they knew one another as children, and they were married very early in 1915 and then travelled to England – it was wartime, of course, and my father was in the British Army and my mother lived in a flat in London with another Australian girl. And my father survived the [First World] War – he had three years in France – and they came back at the end of 1919 and went to live at Collingrove, which had not been occupied during the War by any family member.

**So they came to Collingrove in 1919.**

They came to Collingrove, yes.

**So how long were they – they were just there a little while before you were actually born?**

That's right, not long, yes. Because my brother Bob was born in England and he came out with them. And I think probably Collingrove had been a bit neglected, maybe, by then.

**What were your parents doing when they moved into Collingrove?**

Well, my father, I think, was what I'd describe as a fairly leisured grazier, I think that's the polite way of putting it, and Collingrove Station had obviously been well looked after by *his* father while he was away. And really, in those early days, those early *years*, after the War, up until the Depression years of '29 and '30, they had a fairly free and easy – I don't think any of them did what I would call hard work. They had adequate staff and they obviously had a good life.

**So bringing to yourself, when you think back, can you think of what your first memories of Collingrove are, what comes to your mind when you think back?**

I think my first memories as a very small child, we were pretty much confined to what we called the 'nursery wing' and we always had a nurse to look after us, succeeded later on by my sister's governess. But if you bear in mind that we were packed off to boarding school as monthly boarders at the age of seven, really there was not a huge amount of continuous childhood there. We came home as monthly boarders for the weekends.

**Do you remember anything of that period before your were packed off to boarding school?**

Oh, yes. It was a very horse-oriented world because my father played a lot of polo and we children started to ride, I think, long before we got bikes. And, speaking for myself and my brother, we weren't terribly keen on horses because we were very disciplined: for example, we had Shetland ponies, which are horrid little animals, they've got no withers, no shoulders at all, and I can recall riding over to a dam and we didn't have saddles, we had what they call pads, which is a sort of flat sort of saddle, and I was sitting on this horse while its head was down drinking and I and the saddle went straight over the horse's head into the water; and of course, wet saddlery, you'll walk home and carry your saddle, you're not allowed to ride in a wet saddle. So, really, (laughs) we hated horses.

**Where did that rule come from?**

Well, it was just part of the system. And the groom who was in charge of the polo ponies was an Englishman, and a very nice man, too, called Harry Challoner, who had been, I believe, quite a famous jockey in England, and he'd come out with the family after the War to look after the horses. And he was a pretty strict disciplinarian and we children did what we were told.

**So it was from the groom that had told you not to ride wet?**

Then we got to bikes and ---.

**Oh, there's a little bit of sound from your shoes, that's sort of creaking.**

Oh, heavens! So from horses, really, we much preferred bikes, I think.

**So taking you back to that nursery area, can you take me through those rooms, describe them as they were when you were a little boy?**

Well, we children slept in the sleepout, which was – and I can remember the sleepout being wired in because it was simply a veranda opening out of, in the corner of the house, opening out of what we called the 'big day nursery', and that was wired in and we children, we all slept, we slept out there, I think, really until we were adult, until we'd left secondary school.

**So that was your brother and your sister, all three of you?**

Yes. Yes. I don't think Suzanne slept out there, but certainly Bob and I always slept out there. Well, the big day nursery, there was a fireplace – and the day nursery had been John Howard's, my great-grandfather's, main office; because it was only when my parents came back from England with a family that they had to find somewhere, and that was because the children all went into what were the offices. The outside office, which exists today, was built in the very early '20s. So in the big day nursery we all had our meals there and we played there if it was wet and that sort of thing.

**So can you describe for me what would be in there, what was in there when you were a boy?**

Wardrobes for clothes. A big table, where we had our meals. And there was a fireplace and there was frequently a fire in the winter. And a couch and chairs. And there was a toy cupboard, which I think you've still got.

**Colin is referring to his son, John, who is sitting in the room with us at the moment.**

I'm sorry.

**That's okay.**

We kept our things like Meccano sets and favourite toys and things.

**What were your favourite toys, do you remember?**

Well, our favourite toys I think were Meccano sets, we started off with the little tiny ones; and we also had wooden toys called tinker toy, which was quite a well-known toy in those days. I don't think we did much – I can't remember really doing lessons, but I think we must have because we were all able to read at a pretty early age, as I remember it, so we must have had lessons of some sort. We had all our meals there, and the nurse or the governess had a little, small bedroom, a very small bedroom opening out into the bathroom which we all used, so really that section of – the nurseries were completely cut off from the rest of house, so we were a separate entity, seen and not heard.

**Was that the sort of attitude that you felt then?**

Oh, very much so, yes.

**Tell me a little bit about that, give me some examples, perhaps.**

I don't think we were allowed to have meals in the dining room until we were almost at secondary school. And really the system seemed to work pretty well. We always had a cook and at least two maids, if not three, in the house, and they were always very good to us children. They were nearly all local girls from the district and I think they kept an eye on us to see that our behaviour remained within (laughs) reasonable bounds, perhaps.

**Can you remember some of those people? Who was the first nurse that you are talking of, do you remember her?**

Well, I can remember – is it proper to mention them by name?

**Yes, I think that's fine.**

It is? Well, the first cook that I can remember was a cook – and she would have been, I think, middle-aged – called Bertha Krebs, and we really gave Bertha a very

hard time, when I look back on it, because we got roller skates pretty early on as children and there was a very long, cement passage which ran downhill from the workshop, past the saddle room, past the laundry, past the cellar, down three steps and near down to the kitchen door. And our roller skates had steel wheels and they were very noisy, and we used to come down this cement passageway, jump the steps and land outside the kitchen window with a horrendous noise which really upset Bertha's nerves, she wasn't a bit happy about that. And the next cook that I remember with *enormous* affection was a local lady called Doris Klose – and Klose is K-L-O-S-E, it's a well-known Barossa name – and she was a marvellous person.

**In what ways?**

Well, she was terribly nice, she was a marvellous cook, we could always get food (laughs) under the lap, as it were. But she was just the nicest person. I can remember Doris really as being a delightful person. And we had two maids that I remember particularly were Vera Traeger and Freda Schiller, and they were really marvellous to us children. And I'd hate to think what they, if you talked to them today, what they would – (laughs) how they would describe *us*. There might be quite a different kettle of fish.

**What kinds of things would they do with you, do for you – – –?**

Oh, I don't really know in particular. They had their work to do and really we got on, I think we children got on with them not thinking at all about a sort of master-servant relationship, there was none of that. And I think, looking back on it, all the people that I can recall working in the house at Collingrove really got on marvellously well with my mother because I remember she not infrequently used to take the maids to Adelaide for a shopping trip because she was a very good driver and she liked motoring, and of course – – –. So no, the maids were very good.

**Were you allowed free rein of that area, would you be allowed into the cook's kitchen and into that area?**

We were allowed into the kitchen, yes, but we were never allowed – the maids had their own sitting room and that was no-go area. And of course their quarters were a no-go area.

**Can you describe the kitchen for me in those days, as you remember it?**

Well, the kitchen was a very large room with a fairly, by today's standards, primitive sink arrangement. There was hot water laid on, which was quite a plus in those days, and always a big, wood stove, double-oven wood stove. And the kitchen table, there was a sort of food preparation table and a big sort of general purpose table where the maids had their meals. And the kitchen had two outside doors, one of them, the back one, leading up to their quarters. And of course there was a handyman, aside from the gardeners. There were two gardeners. The handyman kept the wood boxes full so the cook didn't have to go outside to fetch wood for the stove. And then the kitchen led out through a little sort of pantry affair into a big pantry, where – in the big pantry was all the crockery and glasses and fiddle-de-de was kept there, and that's where all the flowers were done because flowers seemed to be a big deal in those days.

**Would they be through the house generally?**

Yes, right through the house, yes. And to a child flowers didn't mean much. But I recall very much that flowers in all the main living rooms were very much part of my mother's life and they had to be this, that and the other.

**Who did the arranging of the flowers?**

My mother did. But I seem to remember the gardeners would bring them in, to the pantry, and this vase or that vase would be chosen and so on. Flowers, you know, in the same way that, in those days, morning tea and afternoon tea were really quite formal functions in rural areas. People would come to afternoon tea and it was quite a performance.

**Can you perhaps describe one? Were you allowed, at first, as a boy, to attend those?**

No, I can remember later on people would come to morning tea and it was quite a – when I say 'quite a performance', (laughs) unlike our day, where we bash out a cup of coffee and a biscuit and rush off, in those days Vera or Freda would bring in the tray to the sitting room and there'd be sandwiches and scones and you name it, it was all quite a formal performance. And I remember that very clearly, and if we children were told that Mrs So-and-so and somebody else were coming to afternoon tea, it was sort of inferred that you could make yourself scarce because (laughs) visitors were coming to afternoon tea.



**So would that be held in that dining room area?**

No, in the sitting room. But if it was extra-formal, it would be in the drawing room.  
But mostly in the sitting room.

**What I'd like to perhaps do is take you through a day at Collingrove: what happened as you woke up in the morning – you talked about having your meals in the main room; can we sort of – how would you wake up, would you be allowed to wake up at any particular time or would you be woken, or – – –?**

No, it was a fairly free and easy arrangement. But I can't ever remember anybody sleeping in like I have seen children do these days. It was simply taken for granted that you would appear at breakfast at the right time.

**Which was what time, do you remember?**

I think about half-past eight. Pretty easy-going. And breakfast was – bear in mind that the family were being waited on hand and foot – there was porridge and stewed fruit. The only cereal that I can remember I think was Crispies that I remember; stewed fruit played a big part in breakfast and there was often, you could have stewed peaches or stewed apricots because we grew apricots and peaches and plums; and there was always hot dishes of eggs and bacon. And I'm now talking of when we were twelve or fourteen, in the holidays. But I never remember anybody saying, 'Oh, I can't be bothered to get up,' because there was lots to do. And I think one's got to bear in mind that while we were disciplined both at home and at school in a great many ways, we were – and I know it sounds a contradiction – we were really terribly spoilt, in the sense that we never had any money to spend as children because our clothes were all chosen for us and they were the best; but we had tennis racquets; we boys had rifles from a very early age, we didn't have to buy cartridges, they were supplied; my sister always had a very good horse and good gear in that regard. So we were spoilt. But there were very strict limitations on how we – we had to toe the line, that's probably the (laughs) best way of describing it.

**I'd like to pick up on quite a lot of those things you've mentioned, but maybe we'll start there: how did you have to toe the line, what sorts of rules did you follow?**

Well, I think we were taught from a very early age meticulous cleanliness, you were not allowed to come to meals until you'd washed your hands and things like that; you couldn't appear for meals without being tidy. Let me think. Manners were terribly

important and one of the things that I think we were taught – perhaps instinctively, but certainly I recall it was absolutely unheard-of to be rude to any of the maids or any of the staff, you treated them with the same respect that you treated your parents [with] and that sort of thing.

**How did you refer to them? By their first names or as – – –?**

Oh, yes, yes, yes. And in those days we children, the staff and all the employees, I was always ‘Mr Colin’ and there was ‘Mr Bob’ and ‘Miss Suzanne’. Pretty – what’s the word? – not only Victorian but there is another word that escapes me at the moment. And it was made very clear to us, I think – as indeed it was particularly at Geelong, where we went to school as older boys – it was hammered into us that because we were at a good boarding school we were privileged, extremely fortunate and we owed the community a debt when we were able to do something about it. And this was a huge point that all our masters made, because I look back – I’m diverting from Collingrove, is that all right?

**That’s okay, yes.**

I look back on the masters that we had at Geelong and many of them had been to the First World War, they were badly-paid, no superannuation, a lot of them – and I didn’t understand this until much later – didn’t get married until we thought they were quite old men, because they simply couldn’t afford to; but they were marvellous men, they really were. Dedicated to teaching. And it was a different world in those days. And having lived through probably the greatest series of social changes in any lifetime, I would think, as we have, or my age group has, it’s very interesting to look back on. And really we were incredibly fortunate as children to grow up in a house like Collingrove. And I can remember – and then of course I was coming home for school holidays – I can remember the Depression and really it didn’t, I don’t think it affected – I mean, it affected everybody; but the effect on my family was negligible compared to a lot of people and I can remember the cook always being told that if anybody came to the door they must always be given a meal and whatever. And those things, as a child you remember those things.

And then, of course, when we got into our teenage years one very dramatic school holidays, we loved spotlight shooting for rabbits and there were a lot of rabbits in those days, and my father had a new Ford V8 utility – we called them ‘buckboards’

in those days – and we were allowed to take this out, and we smashed that up; and so we came back and he had a very nice Cadillac motor car and we took that out and we didn't smash that up but we bent it a bit; and breakfast was the quietest meal I ever remember. Things were not good. And my mother came to the rescue and she said – and I think Bob would have been about sixteen or seventeen – 'I will give you twenty pounds to buy a motor car', so we got taken to Adelaide and we bought what we thought was a lovely motor car (laughs) for twenty pounds, and we got as far as Gepps Cross and it died on us, but we found somebody to tow us back to Collingrove and we finally got it going and we used it for quite a number of years spotlight shooting – never registered – and that's what I call being spoilt. On the other hand, I can remember my Adelaide contemporaries about the same age, sort of seventeen, getting an MG. (laughs) We were very green with envy.

**So I'd like to pick up on a few of those things. We haven't talked much about your relationship with your parents. You said that you were in that nursery area: how much involvement did you have, how close do you feel you were?**

We had a lot of involvement with our parents, but I think I was – my mother was, I think, very over-protective of us as children. My father was a bit of a remote figure in that he seemed to be good at everything and looking back on it I think we were very much in awe of him. We had a much better relationship with our mother, I think, in many ways. He was a more remote figure.

**You say your mother was over-protective: can you give me an example of how you think she was like that?**

It's very hard to describe. I'm trying to think of an example. I think, looking back on it, when I say 'over-protective', we had no opportunity really to mix with people of our own age in the district, that's the sort of thing I meant, yes. And I look back on that with great regret and that was one of the great disadvantages of going to school interstate, because you make friends when you're in your schoolboy years and I've still got more friends of my own age in Victoria, really, than I have in South Australia because I didn't grow up in South Australia, really, and it makes it even worse if you leave school and go to the War for six and a bit years. You've lost all those years of getting to know your own age group, and that's really what I meant. And I think she should have thrown us into the local pool a lot more.

**Why do you think they didn't?**

Could have been snobbishness. It was a very different world for people like that. I think that's how they were brought up. So I think that's about the only example I can give you.

**That's fine. I was going to ask about discipline when you talked about bashing up the car, I wondered how disciplined was your childhood, what happened when you did something wrong?**

We were too old to be smacked, but to give you an idea of discipline, as I've said earlier my father was a very keen polo player and being very good with his hands he used to make his own polo sticks. And these imported canes used to come from India, beautiful canes, and he'd put the mallets on and glue it all together. Anyhow, at this stage Bob and I were very much into bows and arrows, and I looked at this great line of polo sticks in the saddle room and I thought, 'My God, that's the bow to end all bows,' and I cut the mallet off one of these things and I got beaten. I got beaten very hard. That was (laughs) an unforgivable crime! That's what I meant by discipline.

**Do you mean beaten just with a hand or was there a stick?**

And I seem to remember also persuading my sister, Suzanne, to go into the sitting room and say, 'bloody, bloody, bloody', and it didn't take my father two seconds to find out who had perpetrated this and *again* I got beaten. That's what I mean by being disciplined. (laughs) It was nothing to do with Sue, it was entirely her conniving brother who had ---. And I suppose another, as children we were criticised very strongly by our parents if we didn't behave properly.

**What do you mean, 'criticised', how?**

We were told very firmly that that was not the way to behave and you didn't do this, sort of business. And really we took a great deal of notice of what was said to us. I think the parent relationship, I've always described my children, or Ann and I have described our children as 'the kitchen generation' because we brought them all up in the kitchen. Now, we were *not* brought up in the kitchen. So there was a sort of remoteness, there was a definite area of remoteness between parent and child which doesn't exist today, I don't think.

**So if something went wrong and you were upset about something, would you be more likely to turn to your parents or to the governess and nanny?**

I'd much prefer to go to the governess, yes, or the nurse concerned, yes. That would be the first line of retreat if you were looking for protection, (laughs) yes, I think. It really was a totally different world, Karen, to today's world. I'll give you an example: Ann and I met a terribly nice friend of ours who had a four or five year-old child, and it was the first time we'd met this child, and its mother, the child's mother, said to the child, 'Say hello to Annie.' Now, this to us is almost unthinkable. A four year-old being introduced to my wife, I would regard her as being introduced as Mrs Angas. Do you take my point? But now we've adjusted to this – because you've got to, anyhow – but totally foreign. And I would no more have dreamt of referring to somebody; it was automatic, it didn't matter, if I was introduced to your father, I would call him 'sir' until he told me to call him anything else. It was just automatic. And that really, I think, I describe that as a form of discipline, really. Is it discipline, is it training? I don't know. Whatever.

**How do you think you learned those things? Was it taught to you or did you – – –?**

I think it was taught, yes, I think it was taught, yes.

**By whom?**

By my parents, very much so. Oh, yes. It was all, I suppose – and I suppose good manners is really another form of discipline, isn't it, in a lot of ways? And you had to learn the rules and you were expected to behave accordingly.

**I'm going to take you back to a couple of other things you mentioned: you talked about the rifles and I wondered how did you learn about shooting, who taught you to shoot and where did that interest come from?**

To a large extent we taught ourselves. We were, once again, fortunate because at school – again, part of discipline – we had no option, you had to join the Cadet Corps and so you were taught not only military drill but you were taught rifle safety and all the rest of it, so one had a great advantage there. But I've always been critical of my father that he didn't teach us more about safety with firearms. I think he took it for granted that we'd know. And it was very good experience because it taught us to be safe with firearms and not to be frightened of them, and it was very much part of a country boy's upbringing.

**About how old would you have been when you became interested in – – –?**

Twelve. We were driving at twelve.

**How did you learn to drive?**

(laughs) My mother was very good like that. And we learnt to drive on the farm long, long before we ever got a licence. And once again there was only one policeman between Gawler and Angaston and (laughs) he was in Angaston, so one was fairly safe! And we certainly used to go on the roads a great deal, illegally. But there was so little traffic, I don't think we constituted any great danger to the public in spite of being illegal.

**The other thing that you mentioned was your clothing, I was interested you said it was chosen for you: was that a role your mother played as well? Your clothing, what you wore?**

We of course had school uniforms, so that was cut-and-dried. But I remember, I think when I got my first sports coat, a big deal for a young adolescent. There was no way in the world it was my choice; it was what my mother decreed I would have. Finish.

**Would you shop with her or would it be bought for you?**

Oh, no, I'd shop with her but she would do the choosing. And I think that applied to every single thing we wore.

**Would you go into town, into the city, to do that?**

Yes, yes, the city. Always, I think. Yes, always.

**Let's talk a bit about the property around Collingrove, getting back to that, I suppose, childhood of growing up around there: how much free rein were you given of the gardens and the property around?**

We really had an enormous amount of freedom, and I suppose we were very fortunate we could walk anywhere we wanted to go, and there was a very big staff at Collingrove, I remember at least twelve people working there, and they were always very good to us and if we looked like getting into trouble ---. We'd walk down to the shearing shed and places like that; if you happened to be at home at the time when shearing was on, and it sometimes coincided with September shearing in those days in the September holidays, because there were only three holidays in those days, the great thing about getting down to shearing as a child was that for smokos they had buns, currant buns, and if one could get away with a currant bun it was well worth the walk down there. I can remember those, I can see that. And the currant buns were

much bigger than they are today, they were real whoppers, they really were. And the men, I can't remember any of them that I didn't like and they were always helpful, they'd explain things to you, what was going on. So once again we were terribly privileged, really, in that regard.

We indulged in all the sort of usual holiday activities like yabbing.

**Where did you do that?**

In the dams. We played a lot of tennis.

**Was there a court there, as there is now?**

There was a court there, yes. And there was a lot of tennis played at Collingrove in those days, with local people, because my mother was a good tennis player and it was a popular game.

**Was the tennis court in the same place as it is now?**

You know where the fountain is? It was just between that and the road.

The office at Collingrove – the new office, which is there now – really played quite a part in our lives because the bookkeeper was there and there was this daily ritual of the mailbag, because in those days the mail used to go by car from Angaston to Swan Reach and we had our own private mailbag and it was every morning, any letters that were to go in the mail, there were these blue canvas mailbags which had to be tied up with string and under the knot had to go a piece of blotting paper and then red sealing wax would be put on the knot and the family crest stamp put on the thing and the mailbag solemnly carried down to the mailbox on the road, which we'd be allowed to do sometimes, to carry the mailbag down and put it in the box; and the mail that came to us came in the same system. And that was really quite a ritual, watching the mail being done up every day. And that went on until – all my childhood, and I think it stopped about 1970 and they ceased having a private mail, the mailman – the mailman had a contract to do the mail between Angaston and Swan Reach – and then we had to go and have post office boxes.

**Was that part of your – that's the signal that the tape is about to run out so we might stop that, that's the first hour, and we'll have a bit of a break and continue.**

END OF DISK 1: DISK 2

**This is a continuation, it's the second card of an interview with Colin Angas being recorded by Karen George for the National Trust of South Australia. The interview is taking place at Angaston on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2006. We had a little break and we just chatted a little bit about your mother being over-protective and you decided that you would tell a particular story about your sister that gave an example of that. Would you like to begin with that, perhaps?**

Yes. Well, I found out many, many years later from friends of hers who'd been at school with my sister that when my mother sent her to Woodlands she sent her with hand-made underclothes, and you don't need much imagination to know what sort of a reaction this would have got from her fellow students. And that's the sort of thing that I meant. I think my mother obviously did it with the best will in the world, thinking that she was sending her beloved chick (laughs) with the best gear in the world!

**Did your sister ever talk about that and how it affected her?**

My sister never did, no, no. No, she didn't.

**You mentioned that your sister had a nickname that you boys – – –.**

I do. My brother and I always used to refer to her, when we were a lot younger as 'F', for 'Favourite', because we always felt, somehow, that she received, as the youngest, favoured treatment. And in fact I have no doubt it was simply because she behaved (laughs) better than we did, anyhow!

**Were there differences between the way she was treated, I suppose, because she was a girl? Were girls and boys treated differently in families then?**

I don't really think so, I really don't, no. I certainly don't recall anything.

**When you talk about 'we' as children, was that 'we three', was it the three of you? Was she included in your escapades?**

We three, yes. The three of us really got on very well, I think – with the usual sort of squabbles that one had with children. And I think probably a factor in this was that really we'd been separated from one another from a very tender age, so when we did get together on holidays we were good chums, really.

**Well, let's talk about that because we haven't actually put on tape that at about the age of seven you were boarded out to school.**

Yes.



**Where did you go?**

We went to a small – Bob and I were sent to a small boarding school near Mount Lofty called ‘Wykeham’. There were about thirty-odd scholars. It was run by an English Oxford graduate on, I imagine, very typical English boarding-school lines, and we came home once a month on the train.

**Tell me about that, because when I was first here you told me a story of coming on the train.**

It was quite an adventure, the train trip, because we went down to Adelaide from Mount Lofty and caught the Angaston – in those days, the train to Angaston was a rail car, one of the early what were called ‘Barwell Bulls’ and they were diesel rail cars, and in the winter – and we were all in short pants and it was cold – we were allowed to travel up in the driver’s compartment, near the engine, which was nice and warm. When I look back on it now I think probably (laughs) there were only about six people travelling from Adelaide. By the time we got to Angaston there’d only be Bob and I left on the train, and the driver and the conductor. And of course the railways in those days played a huge part in the district life: it was the one link, both with goods and with passenger trains. And Wickham didn’t last terribly long; I think it couldn’t compete with the bigger boarding schools as a preparatory school; and so it faded, and anyhow by the time we’d left to go to Geelong, long before – – –. And it was never really explained to us, but I think the reason my parents sent us interstate to school was because they thought that being country boys in a small pool like Adelaide and South Australia, getting into a bigger pool would be a good thing. Whether it was or not is hard to know, but I think that was the thinking. And we only came home three times a year, we didn’t come home for Easter.

**So those three times, in what months would they be?**

The May holidays, the September holidays and the Christmas holidays. So one looked forward to the holidays very much, really.

**Were there particular things you got up to in the – well, May would be the winter and September would be more the spring – – –?**

Don’t really know. We did an awful lot of – sometimes in the school holidays my father used to take a fit – when I say ‘take a fit’, that’s metaphorically – and decide that the boys should be put to work. And this was usually done without any rhyme or

reason of any sort, and we might be allowed to drive a tractor in a certain operation or we would be sent out hoeing star thistles, which was one of the most intelligent forms of occupation that one could contrive (laughs) for boys who hated hoeing star thistles all day! And in the summer we used to help cart wheat to the [flour mill in Angaston] – it was all bagged wheat in those days; there was no bulk, of course – and that wasn't a job we liked too much, we reckoned the wheat bags were pretty heavy.

**Carting, you mean actually physically carrying?**

Yes. But on the whole we weren't put to work much during the holidays; it was regarded that holidays were holidays and so on.

**We did start talking about the property and the places that you would go as boys or as kids, and you mentioned the shearing, when the shearing happened. Were there other favourite haunts or places that you would like to go?**

There wasn't a great deal that we – the Christmas holidays, the main activities were we had a lot of dried fruit, dried apricots and currants, and we were not really, we didn't take any active part in those things at all. (break in recording)

**This is a continuation of an interview with Colin Angas being recorded by Karen George on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2006. We just paused a moment and we were talking about what you were doing during the summer holidays when you'd come home.**

In the very early '30s my father had built, starting I think in about 1928, a very nice, 52-foot schooner yacht, because he was a very keen sailor, and during the summer holidays it was usual to go away for a three weeks' cruise round to Port Lincoln and Port Victoria and places like that, and this was really a very exciting and a completely novel holiday for us. There was fishing, sailing; and it was at a time when there were still the famous clipper wheat grain ships, the four-masted barques. One I remember in particular, which was a very famous sailing vessel called the *Herzogin Cecile*, which I think later was wrecked in the English Channel, and they used to load bagged grain in places like Port Victoria and sail round the Horn back to Europe with it, and they were a fascinating part of seeing what was going on. The sailing part of it, once one had got over seasickness – and there was a great variety of highly-ingenuous methods of overcoming seasickness: one which my brother Bob favoured was going into the butcher's in Port Adelaide and winding himself with brown paper round his tummy, about four (laughs) layers of brown paper, and we never discovered whether this actually had any effect on seasickness or not! But the psychological effect

seemed to be enormous. And the other thing was that, when it was very rough – and the Backstairs Passage and these gulfs can be very rough – it was really quite terrifying and we had been told by an experienced sailor that the great thing about sailing, particularly at night, in rough weather was ‘one hand for yourself and one hand for the ship’, and we quickly decided that the real secret of this was both hands for yourself and forget about the ship! But that made school holidays very interesting and great experiences, really.

**You also mentioned, the first time I was here, about polo being a big part of your father’s life and a big part of – – –.**

Well, the polo played a huge part, particularly in the 1920s when we were really very young, and it had ceased by about 1930. But there was a polo ground on Collingrove, which was used a lot.

**Where was that in relation to the homestead?**

Not visible from the house. About halfway between Lindsay Park and Collingrove House, on the North Para River, near the North Para River. It’s a beautiful ground. And once again, during the summer months when these teams used to play there, there was a great ritual: there was a lawn outside the office and one of the bookkeeper’s duties was to take these beautiful, wooden, white polo balls out from the strongroom in the office and on the lawn wash off all the tissue paper that they were packed in, and there would be a line of three children watching this operation, desperately hoping that one polo ball might be mislaid. But it never was. They looked absolutely wonderful: gleaming white, beautiful polo balls. That was one recollection. The other one was my unfortunate venture into Robin Hood world with the bow. And the other, very memorable, feature of polo was we children used to be dressed up to go to the polo – which wasn’t popular, really, the getting into your best clothes – and I can remember I had a silk blouse with a rather tight elastic around it, and I don’t know how old I’d have been then – five or six or something, I can’t remember – and I *hated* this shirt. Anyhow, we would be bundled off down to the polo ground in charge of Nanny Morris who was a governess from my mother’s brothers’ families, because my mother’s two brothers played in this team with my father and another cousin, it was very much a family affair. And we were bored stiff at the polo, as you can imagine: didn’t mean a thing to children. And we’d come

home to tea and there was always this post mortem about how incredibly badly the children had behaved at the polo. We'd frightened the ponies and hadn't been polite to the grooms and we'd got in everybody's road, and altogether polo was a no-no for us. Added to which we didn't like horses as well, (laughs) so that was that.

But the polo was a very interesting period, because throughout Australia after the First World War there were a lot of – in New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland and South Australia, there were a lot of family teams who played a lot of polo up until the Depression – and I think the Depression put a huge blot on the whole thing – because rural Australia has always been a very horse-oriented scene. In those days the polo was totally amateur, it was all people played for fun; and, interestingly, when it started again after World War II or in the '60s and the '70s, when Kerry Packer became involved Australian polo took off with highly-paid professionals and it became a hugely professional – for those that could afford to do it – and many people felt that it had taken something away from what the game used to be, because it used to be people who loved horses and polo was a great, competitive game. I never played polo. Many of my age contemporaries did, when they came back after the Second World War they played for quite a long time, but you needed to love horses, particularly.

**That image of the garden and washing the polo balls was great. Is there anything else that you can tell me about the garden and around Collingrove, what it was like and ways that it might have been used?**

The garden at Collingrove was very much my mother's love and she was fortunate, she had two very devoted gardeners, and the garden had a great reputation for dahlias. And dahlias, I seem to remember dahlias playing a great part in the gardening world.

**Was that because it was a favourite flower of your mothers, or – – –?**

Well, I think partly that and I think partly because Stan Bradshaw, who was the head gardener, was very talented with bulbs; and that was the main function of the garden.

**Whereabouts were those planted in the garden?**

They were planted mostly outside the dining room, in that area where the croquet lawn is now.

**So was that a croquet lawn in your time?**

No, never. No, never. It was all garden in those days.

The other thing I remember very vividly about the garden was what we called – and it is still there – what we called the ‘potting shed’, which was where the gardeners lived and had their smokos, and that was always a great attraction for small boys, there was always something going on.

**Like what?**

You could find things to – there was always something you could nick or find that was interesting. But the garden was very higgledy-piggledy in a lot of ways. The front lawn was always there, but in the early days at each end of that lawn was a huge palm tree, massive palm tree, and they were taken out, I think, in the late 1930s. They were enormous trees. There was obviously some – I’ve heard several theories about why people planted the – – –. You see these palm trees in the most extraordinary places, and one theory that I’ve heard put is that it was a relic of the First World War dating from Egypt, and when returned men came back they planted a palm tree of some sort. Because they are in the most illogical – that’s the word I’m seeking – places. Anyhow, those palm trees – they were hideous things, really. But the garden was very much my mother’s; my father, I think, was always bored with the garden, as is often the case.

**What were the gardeners like? Do you remember them as – – –?**

The gardeners? Stan Bradshaw was one of two brothers who worked all their lives at Collingrove. Stanley and George Bradshaw, you could hardly get two more English names, could you, than that? They were slow-moving, gentle, strong men, very good workers, very devoted. George Bradshaw, who had no children, his wife was called Violet and I remember her very well, and she was reputed – I think up until the First World War there had been a flourishing Collingrove – it wasn’t called ‘Collingrove’ because the station was called ‘Tarrawatta’ – Tarrawatta Rifle Club, and Violet Bradshaw apparently was the champion rifle shot in the Tarrawatta. And the other thing I remember of Violet was she made the most marvellous rock cakes. So they were really a terribly nice family, the Bradshaws.

**Did the gardener live there, or did they – – –?**

No, he lived at Tarrawatta, on the station. The other gardener was a Jungfer[?], Ern Jungfer, who was not as dedicated a gardener as Stan; a very quiet man. And I

always thought perhaps Ern had had a very sad life – I didn't ever know, but he just gave you that impression. That was the garden.

The other memorable thing about the drive was that at some stage the drive in front of the house, Bob and I were very keen on making carts, as I think a lot of boys are – sort of bilycarts or dogcarts or something – whenever we could get wheels, and every now and again one of these carts would be left on the drive, not put away. And my grandfather, of whom we were terrified, would ride down from Lindsay House in the morning for morning tea, and if his horse shied on one of these bilycarts life was not worth living. More discipline. It wasn't good.

**There's another story that your son mentioned, while we're in that front area of the house, about shooting particular parts of the house.**

Oh, we never, ever shot the finials off Collingrove, we wouldn't have even dared. It was the ones at Tarrawatta Station, on the buildings there. Yes, well, they got a (laughs) bit of a hammering, they really did, yes, and that wasn't popular, either. That was not a popular move at all.

**There was another thing that you mentioned when I was first here, which introduces the role of the church and the religion: you talked about a particular path that you would take.**

Yes. When we were children St Faith's Chapel, which you've seen, there used to be fairly regular Evensong services there, and my mother would play the organ. 'Feudal' was the word I was thinking of earlier. And this is a pretty feudal setup. And originally, from the bottom drive you walked across the road and then in the paddock there was a little white, wicket gate and a pathway which led in the paddock to St Faith's, to the chapel, and we used to walk to church there. And the church didn't have electricity – nor did Collingrove, except there were two things that I'll get back to was the electricity and the petrol is worth a mention. But the church was lit with kerosene mantle pressure lamps, and we would be back in the family pew, behaving ourselves, and my father would have to light the pressure lamps and get them all, and every now and again one hoped that something would flare up or a mantle would burn out or something, and the old man would use to have to walk down the aisle and make a final adjustment on the needle valve just to get the mantle burning. It was a source of endless speculation (laughs) as to whether something would go wrong. Church was a very formal affair, always Evensong, and on rare

occasions Bob or I would be made to read a lesson, which couldn't have thrilled the locals much. And church really played quite an important part in station life because not a lot – well, a lot of the station people had cars; but it was very convenient, and that was why, of course, the chapel was built, because when it was built there were no churches in Angaston. And it served its purpose; and then, of course, when Angaston got adequately-churched there was no point in the chapel, so in the 1960s it was decommissioned and deconsecrated so that it's no longer a church, but it played an important – as children, it played an important part in our lives.

**Did the staff of Collingrove go to the church with the family, or was that separate?**

Some of them did, but most of the staff were Lutherans so very properly they went to the Lutheran Church. But one or two of them did come. And Stan, the gardener, Stan Bradshaw's daughter had a lovely soprano voice and she used to stir things along a lot.

**You mentioned the lack of electricity in Collingrove so perhaps we can talk about that, I hadn't thought to ask that question.**

I cannot remember the gas – we had gas there, acetylene gas – but I remember the generator, the thing that made the gas; but I do remember we had 32-volt electric lighting with Delco electric lighting generating plants. But I remember very well the huge excitement in 1928, when 'the power came on', as they called it, and I think it would have been very close to 1958 when the power came on to the house that Ann and I were living in, because we made our own electricity for a long time. And they were great occasions when 'the power came on'. The big excitement of the power coming on was they got a refrigerator and we made apricot ice cream, which was a very big deal in those days. (laughs)

The thing that is worth noting was in those days all the petrol that came anywhere outside a bowser, which was in the towns, came in four-gallon tins, two tins to a wooden case. And behind the garage was a little stone house, which we used to play in a lot, called the 'petrol house', where these cases of petrol were stored. And they were these beautiful wooden 'kerosene cases', as they were called – and I don't know why they called them 'kerosene cases', because the petrol came in, and in many places they called petrol 'benzine' in those days. These wooden cases, which had to be opened and the cans lifted out, were nailed with quite long nails in these

wooden boards to keep the ..... in, and I can't remember, probably the handyman or my father or somebody, who opened all the cases and took the lids off, they left the boards with these lovely nails sticking up through them. And we frequently trod on these and got nails through our sandals and there was always trouble in the petrol house. But that was a very, those four-gallon tins became a huge part of life. Once the petrol had gone and the tops were cut out, handles were put in and everybody used them in dairies, for carting water. They were beautiful buckets – but, of course, they rusted eventually – but the petrol tin was very much a sort of part of life in those days.

**Another part of life which is far away from that that I wanted to talk about, because we talked about it quite a bit at the first meeting, was your love of reading and the books in the library, and where that came from and the things that you read in those days, as a boy.**

I think we were all encouraged – well, I suppose, going back to the very earliest days, we were read to a lot by our nurses. I never remember my father reading to us. And I think we must have been read the right things to give us a love of reading, because books very early became – – –. And again, we were terribly privileged and terribly spoilt: we used to get these beautiful ‘Wonder Books’ for Christmas – you’ve still got some, haven’t you? – hard-bound: *The Wonder Book of Motors*, *The Wonder Book of the Sea*, *The Wonder Book of the* – – –. They were magic: beautifully-illustrated, with texts that were informative and educational but all done in a way which would interest children and spark their interest. *The Wonder Book of Engineering*, *The Wonder Book of Animals*. The other books that come to mind were strictly boys’ books: *Chums*, which was a huge, Kiplingesque material, all coloured red, ‘the Empire forever’ sort of great stuff; and *The Champion Annual*. The hero always won; the British always won; the good man always won. So you started off on the right lines, (laughs) without any question! And it was a great start, and I suppose it was those very books which instilled a love of books very early on in life, which was a great plus.

**Were the books kept in the nursery or were they – – –?**

Yes, the books were kept in the nursery. And we had a lot of books there, too. I can remember getting – I reckon we might have been about ten or twelve, we got a gramophone for Christmas, a wind-up gramophone, portable gramophone, and that



was a very big deal. But I can't remember much about the records. And of course wireless in those days was very much in its infancy, we didn't ever have a wireless in the nurseries. There was a wireless in the sitting room. And I can remember very vividly in September 1939, because I had left school and was waiting to go to Oxford, and I can hear Mr Menzies with that fateful announcement, and the thing I remember, it sounded very serious to me but I didn't really know much about it, but my father got up and walked out of the room. Very dramatic. But wireless sets, no, they didn't play any part in our life. Books were very important, I think.

And the other thing that was a great plus: my parents subscribed to very interesting periodicals – *The Illustrated London News* – I think I've got that right; I used to call it *The London Illustrated News* but I think it's *The Illustrated*, isn't it, do you know?

**Not sure.**

I think it's very important to get it [right]. I think it's *The Illustrated London News* – which was a marvellous, world-wide periodical. It covered almost every world-wide event. And my father subscribed to various sailing and motoring magazines, which were very educational in themselves. And I recall really quite vividly when my father was building this yacht, it was designed by a very famous American naval architect called John Alden[?] of Boston, Massachusetts, and my father carried on a huge correspondence with Mr Alden, and I remember him saying how much he used to look forward to Mr Alden's letters from America, because there was (laughs) no internet in those days. And I remember reading some of Mr Alden's letters about American affairs, which really, to a schoolboy in those days, was really quite unusual.

**Where was he building the yacht, was he building it at Collingrove? Where was he building the yacht?**

In Port Adelaide. It was built in Port Adelaide, yes, by a chap called Clausen, who was a Swede, with his son, and they were a wonderful pair, these two. Very talented boat-builders.

**Taking you back to books, the area that is the library now in the Collingrove homestead, was that like that when you were a boy, were the books kept in there?**

Yes, it was, yes. There were a marvellous range of books, really, there. One book which has gone missing since it was handed over to the Trust – and I'm not surprised at this – one of the most educational books I've ever read was – and my mother brought it back, I think, from England – was a hard cover, and it would have been that thick –

**About five centimetres.**

– a hard-cover book of everything that Harrod's produced, from a knitting needle to an elephant, with a price. It was the most magical fund of knowledge. You couldn't imagine, looking at a book like this, and no wonder it disappeared. But it was an extraordinary volume.

**So as children could you go into that room and just take the books?**

Oh, yes. Yes, in the sitting room, yes. Oh, yes, that wasn't a problem.

**Perhaps we can talk a little bit more about how Collingrove is set up now, and I understand it's quite different because it's set for the period of John Howard Angas rather than your period: what was different in your time from how Collingrove is set up now?**

Not a great deal, Karen, inasmuch as the whole of the nursery wing is disappeared. I don't know why the Trust have put quite out-of-character things in my mother's bedroom; I mean, that bed in there is just ludicrous beyond words.

**Now, which was your mother's bedroom, the one with the big, four-poster bed in it?**

Yes, that's right.

**Not the white bedroom at the front.**

No. But I've no doubt they had reasons for that.

**What was it like in your mother's time, that room? Did it have the wallpaper on there that is there now? That's a hard question, probably.**

That I would find – it's a while since I've been there. In my mother's day it was fairly conservatively – – –. It had a double bed, a big dressing table, those wardrobes were there, and her bathroom was never like it is now, it was just a very ordinary bathroom, really. And there was nothing very elaborate about my mother's bedroom, really.

**What do you mean, ‘ordinary’ bathroom: what would be an ordinary bathroom of the time?**

Well, it didn’t have a built-in bath; it had a conventional, claw-leg bath, conventional basin and lav, and there was a big cupboard in there as well. My mother, I think it’s fair to say, dressed superbly, didn’t matter where, what how or when, she had a genius for looking good and she had a figure that suited it, too. She was very good with clothes.

**Where were her clothes kept? Would they be in that little dressing-room area off the bathroom?**

Some of them would have been, yes. She had a lot of clothes. And she liked clothes, too. But equally, come World War II and she lost all her staff, she set to – and she’d have been fifty – she became a superb cook, a *really* superb cook and she was an extraordinarily capable person. She was a good horsewoman, a good polo player, very good tennis player. Her schooling – and she was sent to a girls’ school in Geelong, funnily enough – her schooling would have been, I think – it was always said that the worse her reports were the better her father liked it; but I’ve still got a medal that she won for dancing. (laughs) So who knows what’s important?

**Dancing, was that part of your growing up?**

Sadly, no. We were offered the chance to learn at school, at Geelong, and one of the silliest things I ever did in my life – and many of us did this – we just said, ‘Absolutely no way.’ If I ever came back to the world a second time, one of the things that I would make a point of doing would be to learn to dance properly, because I think I missed an *enormous* amount of fun and it’s been one of my greatest regrets ever since, (laughs) for what it’s worth. Just goes to show how silly you can be, doesn’t it?

**That’s interesting. This side of the tape is coming to an end. I might just stop the tape for a minute so we can discuss where we go from here.**

Yes.

END OF DISK 2: DISK 3

**This is a continuation of an interview with Colin Angas being recorded by Karen George for the National Trust of South Australia. The interview is taking place at Angaston on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2006. When we finished up just before lunch we were**

**talking a little bit about the way Collingrove is set up today and how that differed from your childhood, so perhaps we can continue with that. We talked about your mother's bedroom and that sort of area; I wondered, the room that was called the 'white bedroom', the bedroom at the front there – that's how it was described to me – what was that in your time?**

Now, is that a bedroom just inside on the left of the front door?

**Yes.**

Is that still a bedroom? Is it set up as a sort of information centre? Or at least, when I was in there last it had a tremendous amount of Collingrove memorabilia in there.

**No, the office had that kind of thing, as you come in the door; then there's the hallway – and I've only been there once – but it's the room that I think they sometimes rent out as a place for people to stay, but it has a large bed in it. It's a very white room with the window, one of the windows at the front. That room. So it's not far from what would have been your parents' room.**

No, I don't – – –.

**It doesn't matter.**

When you went in the front door, what was in on the right? Can you remember?

**That would have been the – is it the sitting room? It's next to the drawing room.**

What we called the 'drawing [room]' – the one with the piano in it?

**Yes.**

Oh, that's right. So the last I was at Collingrove what we used to call the 'single spare bedroom' was the little one on the left. And next to that, going across the front of the house, was a double spare bedroom.

**That's the one, I think.**

Yes. The double spare bedroom. That had two single beds in it, and that I always used to think was a delightful room because it had watercolours by – terrible blank. I should have written it down and remembered it. Charming English watercolours. The name escapes me.<sup>1</sup>

**That's okay. When the transcript comes you can fill it in, that will be fine.**

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Rackham, who illustrated the original *Peter Pan* by Barrie which we knew well. – CA

Yes, if I think of it. And that was always the ‘double spare bedroom’ and that opened out of the hall. And the hall had war mementoes of my father’s war which he brought back, which were mostly artillery shells, because he was a gunner – empty ones – and a German Mauser service rifle. And the other notable thing in it was a very nice little stand with tapestried badges of the three Oxford colleges that my father was at, my uncle and my grandfather, and that was really rather a nice thing, done in colours. And the Pacific Island memorabilia was partly the big, polished tortoiseshell – I think that’s still there – that came from New Caledonia on a visit my father made there. And the New Guinea artefacts came from my sister’s husband, who was a district officer in New Guinea.

**You wish to pause for a minute? That’s fine. (break in recording) We’re just continuing the interview with Colin Angas being recorded by Karen George on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2006. So we were talking about the hallway and some of those artefacts. I wonder what about the hunting trophies, the heads of the reindeer and that.**

The hunting trophies were all deer that my grandfather had shot. He always kept deer at Lindsay Park – and they’re still there, incidentally – fallow deer, but he was a keen shooter so that’s where they came from.

**So that hallway is pretty much as it would have been as a child?**

Very much so, yes. And the other thing that I always remember was there’s a funny old – at what would be the eastern end of the hall, there’s a funny old sort of sideboardy piece of furniture with cupboards in it, oak I think it is: nothing particularly fancy but a very roomy thing, and all the bits of string that came into the house were kept there and in one of the cupboards all the bits of brown paper were folded up and kept. That was in the days when there was no plastic, it was all string and brown paper, and that was quite sacred. That drawer, if you wanted string, there was always string in that drawer. And if you got a parcel, a Christmas present that was done in string, you were duty bound to see that the string was tied up properly (laughs) and put in that drawer.

**I’m glad you mentioned Christmas because that was one of the subjects I’d had to talk about, because I assume that you would have come home for your Christmas holidays.**

Yes, yes.

**Can you describe Christmas at Collingwood for me?**

Yes, it was a very big family affair. Turkeys in a hot – didn't matter what the weather was – hot turkey, bread sauce, plum pudding; and of course the puddings had threepences and sixpences in it. And I seem to remember one year when – because it was notable – none of the children got anything out of the Christmas pudding and all the maids got all the silver, (laughs) which seemed to be very appropriate, from their share of the Christmas pudding.

**Did you have a Christmas tree?**

Yes, we did have a Christmas tree, but not lit up, we didn't ever have it with lights on it. I don't think they were in then, those miniature lights. But we always had a Christmas tree, yes.

**Where would that be?**

That was in the hall, in front of the hall fireplace. And what else was in the hall? Just inside the front door was what to us was always an interesting document, and it was called 'The scrap of paper'. And I've never heard an official description of how they evolved, but I think, after World War I, in Britain this form was printed and it referred to the scrap of paper which Belgium – why Britain declared war. Germany had torn up the scrap of paper. And it really was a – provision was made for a family to list all the members of the family who'd served in various theatres of the War, and my grandfather, who was a good watercolourist – in a very amateur way, but really quite a talented one, I thought, and he was very good with these sorts of things – he did one of these for the Angas family, all the various branches that he knew of who'd served in various theatres, and that was framed and hung in the hall. And that gave you, as a child, some sort of interest and a glimmering as to what went on, even though you didn't really understand what went on.

**Are you referring to the war service?**

As a matter of fact, very early in the days of the Trust they very kindly lent me that and I had it photocopied and gave it to other members of the family, and I've got a copy here which I'll show you before you go because it's quite interesting.

**Yes, I'd like to.**

And I've got a feeling that someone in Britain put out this *pro forma* and you simply bought the piece of paper and filled it in. That's the only explanation that I can make for it.

**You mentioned the flowers that your mother had.**

Oh, there were always flowers in the hall, yes.

**Did they come from the garden?**

Yes, always from the garden.

**They were all from the garden.**

Yes. I don't ever remember anything else. And, funnily enough, I don't think they ever grew any natives in the garden, like this sort of thing. They weren't in in those days, I don't think anybody had natives then, which is a pity, really.

**Was there anything else typical of the – like the flowers, something that was a typical – – –?**

Gladioli were also another bulb that Stan Bradshaw was fond of. Dahlias and gladioli. Gladioli was a *huge* favourite and there were masses of them, masses of them. And I remember my mother taking a lot of flowers when there were obviously too many in the garden, taking them into the Angaston Hospital. They were nice flowers. But in those days, of course, one was allowed to donate preserves, eggs, butter, the hospital kitchen welcomed all those things, and we never killed anybody. But the bureaucracy destroyed it in the '70s and '80s. Ann, my wife, used to bottle furiously every summer for the hospital, and then of course the bureaucracy took over and said these hospital kitchens were out. Very sad, isn't it.

**You mentioned that when you were a boy the preserving was done there.**

Yes. Fowler's outfits, yes.

**What about butter? You mentioned butter, was that made on the premises as well?**

Yes, there was a separate dairy at Collingrove, a little dairy house, which was always flooded in the winter, and it had the separator and the cream there, yes, and butter used to be made there, our own butter. You probably didn't see it because it's very

hidden: alongside that huge oak tree, it's hidden there, the dairy. I'd forgotten about the dairy until you mentioned it. Yes, all the butter was made.

**So that's where your milk for Collingwood came from?**

Milk came from the station, Tarrawatta, where they had a big stud Jersey herd. And I remember my mother quite often quoting that her mother – now, whether it was true or not I don't know but it was a good story – she used to say to some unfortunate guest, 'The butter we make, the jam we buy; which will you have?'

**You mentioned when I first was here that there were deliveries made to the house, there were various – – –.**

Yes, from Angaston.

**Can you talk a little bit about that, what came?**

Well, the baker, the butcher, horse-driven vehicles would come out from Angaston on a rotten dirt road, and it wasn't a good road. It was a horrid bit of road, really. And I can't remember anybody bringing vegetables. But the baker and the butcher always called, I can't remember how often. And the butcher, whose name still appears over his shop in Angaston although, of course, he's long gone, but he was a marvellous man and I remember him very well. His name was Fred Schulz, and he started working for, as a boy, the previous butcher and eventually bought the business. And he was a great big man, huge man, a very good churchman. My mother said – and I think she used to go to Red Cross dances during the War, during *my* War, in Angaston – and she said he was a marvellous dancer and 'like a lot of big men, very light on his feet'. Yes, Fred Schultz his name was and he was a tremendous citizen. He became Chairman of the Angaston Council and I was his Deputy Chairman, and he was a marvellous townsman.

**I'll just get you to watch your hands on the microphone.**

Oh, sorry. He was a marvellous townsman, he really was. So he was the butcher. Wonderful story, really, of a man.

**You mentioned the vegetables not coming: was there a vegetable garden at all as part of the gardens?**

We had a huge vegetable garden and that was why, I think, vegetables never came out.



**Where was that situated?**

Behind the potting shed. I think it's now defunct because there was a very big raspberry patch as well in the vegetable garden. And that attracted the rosellas, and in those days we murderous boys used to shoot the rosellas. (laughter) And of course now you can be prosecuted for shooting the rosellas. Times change. But the hall, the other thing I do remember very vividly was when we were little children, inside the front door there was a huge polar bear skin with a head. I don't know where it came from, but it was a marvellous thing for children to play on, and it was a massive, snow-white, polar bear rug. That was a notable feature of the hall.

**When I was at Collingrove – and I wondered this for your time – the caretaker mentioned about the servants and the cook not being allowed to bring the food over to the dining room, that it had to be the maids. Was that something that's a feature of the period that they're reflecting, or were there certain rules related to the servants in your time?**

Well, I think, Karen, this all – I don't ever remember that being a rule. I never remember seeing the cook in the dining room, but I am sure that was because the maids all wore uniforms and I'm sure that was the reason why, the maids came into the dining room in uniform. Oh, and in those days they had sort of frilly caps and all this to-do. The maids were always in uniforms.

**What was the uniform, do you remember what they looked like? Testing your memory.**

Look, I really can't – I do know they had day uniforms and night uniforms, and the night uniforms were always black and white. But I think they were just simple skirts and I seem to remember a sort of fawny colour. But they certainly had uniforms and that was all the go, I think, in those days. It was a different world, wasn't it?

**We started to talk a bit about meals when we talked about breakfast, but we didn't talk about the rest of the day, lunch and dinner: as a boy did you also take those meals in the nursery, or – – –?**

Yes. Then, later on, of course, in the dining room. And it was all – we never had terribly elaborate meals but there was always very good meals, we had lashings of cream and scalded cream, and I can remember these great big enamel pans of scalded cream – you know what I mean, do you? Oh! (laughs) And of course the station killed all its own meat and everybody on the station got meat.

The other thing that is worth mentioning about Collingrove is what was, in John Howard's day, the coach house. And I think this started almost simultaneously with my father coming back to live at Collingrove, because by then they were all motor cars. The coach house was converted into what we all called 'the store', and the store was in fact a very wide-ranging dry goods store with every sort of tinned commodity, sugar, flour, tea, tobacco was a very big thing, which my father used to buy wholesale in Adelaide and supply to all the chaps on the place, the families on the place, at the same price. So really you could look at this from two ways: he was conferring a significant benefit on his employees; but he was doing the local tradesmen in Angaston out of business. But that went on right up until the time when my brother and I took over running the place and it was regarded as being no longer – nobody really wanted it. Everybody shopped in Angaston and everybody, all the men on the place, had cars so there was no need for it. But it was quite a big sort of little business, supplying, and I think it was very much appreciated by the chaps and their families on the place.

**Would they come on a particular day or particular time to collect their – – –?**

Yes. Every fortnight, because they were paid fortnightly. And they'd come and take what they wanted, order what they wanted. But I think that was – not so much in an area like this but in the station country – I think that was a fairly common practice with a lot of the properties, because really the average working man didn't get to Adelaide very often, not like today. So the coach house ceased to be a coach house.

**Are there any other rooms around that back section, the servants' quarters and that, that we haven't talked about, in that area?**

Well, in the servants' quarters, they came out of the kitchen door, up the steps and up the cement pathway, and on the right there was a separate block with their bathroom in the middle and two big bedrooms, one on either side, all opening off the – – –. Now, I don't think I ever went into there as a child, but I knew what the setup was. And then across from there, across from their little porch was the door into the laundry, and [in] the laundry, which was a very big room, there was a big copper, certainly four if not five concrete troughs, a turn-the-handle mangle, a huge ironing board and where the big, and it was a very big, hot-water cylinder was, it was in a little separate room with shelves which made an airing cupboard, so that everything

that was ironed went into the airing cupboard from there. And that seemed to work very well. And across the laundry you found yourself in this sloping cement passage which used to cause Bertha so much trouble.

**The roller skates.**

Yes, with the roller skates. And next to that, going up, was what was called the 'harness room', which was where all the polo gear and the saddles and all that gear was kept. And there were two cellars, which were really quite important, quite separate cellars, and I suppose they were very important in John Howard's day, I would think.

**What about in your time, as kids: what were they used for?**

They were used for – because we dried a lot of fruit on the place, they were used for storing big tins of dried apricots and dried pears and things like that, and also all the preserves. How they carried them all down there I'm blessed if I know. Steep stairs down, and a very commodious cellar. And the other cellar, which was alongside what we called the 'back door' into the house was really a wine cellar, and I think that's about all that was ever kept there. That was of no interest to us – in those days!  
(laughs)

**With regard to the laundry, was there a separate laundress or would it be the job of the maids to do all that?**

No, the maids did the laundry. It was a big job, too. I mean, imagine – well, there is their own linen, two or three maids and the cook, all their linen and towels, and all the mob in the house. Laundry was a pretty big undertaking. I think we were lucky because we got the power before I think electric washing machines came in, so we didn't ever have a petrol-driven washing machine, the power was already there by the time electric washing machines came in.

**Just talking about with regard to going away to board, you've painted a sort of picture of the life at Collingrove: what did you miss, do you feel, in being away at school? What were things about Collingrove that you missed, being away from home?**

Well, I think all of us were terribly homesick. But probably going as young as we did, looking back on it, I think it probably was less brutal than if we had gone, say, at fourteen or fifteen or sixteen. Because I remember vividly during the War chaps of

twenty-eight and twenty-nine and thirty who were married and had never left home in their lives, they really found it hard, the whole business of being away from family. Now, (laughs) we'd had worse food and it didn't mean a thing to me, that was the least of my worries; I had other difficulties, but that, we were toughened up and we were used to that. So from that point of view we were way ahead of those chaps. But a lot of those fellows found it terribly difficult emotionally, but it didn't mean a thing to me because (laughs) I'd been doing it for so long. Which was very interesting, really. We got very hardened to it.

If I can give you a little vignette as to ---. We used to be taken down to catch the train back to Melbourne, usually after lunch, in the afternoon, and in those days my family would meet up with their friends, and there were about seven of us, South Australians, who used to catch the Melbourne Express back to Melbourne to go back to school, and we're eleven or twelve. We would be taken into the main lounge of the South Australian Hotel about four or five o'clock, with our parents, desperately trying not to cry, and they would sit around with their friends having drinks, fiddling around, and here one was with nothing to do, dreading this moment, and not infrequently the hall porter would escort us down to take the seven o'clock, because the Express left at seven p.m., you see. And here you were for a couple of hours sitting frozen, (laughs) trying to be brave, while your parents enjoyed themselves, not a care in the world. Very character-building, if I can use that phrase! And after a while, you see, you went through that for a year or two, you got the whip hand and knew how to cope with it. Because, yes, we had a marvellous routine when we got to Melbourne: we would rush off to a little café called The Wattle and have a huge plate of scrambled eggs, we would then go to the Athenaeum Picture Theatre, which showed English pictures, and see somebody like Jack Hulbert or something who would make us laugh, we would then have a ritual chocolate milkshake at Hillier's Milk Bar and race down to Spencer Street to catch the train to Geelong. (laughs) And that was the procedure.

**Sounds like you deserved it after that! So what were your feelings coming home, then, in the holidays, given that sort of forced being sent to [school]?**

We looked forward to it enormously, yes, we really did. One got used to it and you also, of course, got very used to concealing your feelings. It was the 'stiff upper lip' (laughs) which saved the British Empire and all that. It was a funny world to look

back on. And when I see today what some parents go through with their children in Year 12, I simply can't believe it. I don't ever remember my parents telling me that I had to work hard to pass exams. It was taken for granted. And I think their attitude was, 'That's the schoolmasters' job.' But it wasn't until I reckon I was nearly seventeen that I suddenly realised that I had to do some work at school, otherwise I wouldn't matriculate. But none of that motivation came from my parents. They simply expected me, it was taken for granted. Completely different mindset, isn't it? I'm sorry, I'm diverting.

**No, no, it's extremely interesting. And it all connects with the world that you're in at Collingrove, so it's important.**

Yes. Well, that's right, it was. It was a very different world, yes. Now, if I had failed, I think all hell would have broken loose. But there was no real motivation, which today I find puzzling.

**You mentioned that after you left school you were at home at Collingrove for a period of time before I guess you enlisted and the War began. Was that a very long period, living there?**

No, I left school – I went back for one term, my parents sent me back for one term, which finished at the end of May, and the plan was – I'd matriculated for acceptance to this college and my brother, Bob, had been at Oxford for two years. And he was coming back for the long vacation, their long vacation, and we were going to go back together, I for my first year and he for his last. And he flew back KLM, which was a very big deal in 1939 and that was a big excitement, and he came back; and our passages were booked on the boat. I was actually, my trunk was packed when war broke out. If we'd got away we might have had a ---. Anyhow, that was what happened, so everything was cancelled. And my brother, Bob, who had when he went to Oxford joined the University Air Squadron, which was a marvellous thing because if you joined the Squadron you were taught to fly for nothing by probably the best people in the world then, but you automatically went on Air Force Reserve as an officer, so you were committed. So he was well advanced with his flying when he came out here and after an enormous amount of difficulty he got transferred to the Australian Air Force and he went to the Middle East and had a very distinguished – won a Distinguished Flying Cross and became a squadron leader – because he was a fanatic flyer. So that's what happened to Bob. And he didn't ever go back to Oxford

to finish his year because all those chaps who'd done two years, if they had passed their two years, they gave them their degree subsequently. Not that he ever used it.

I must say, looking back on it, it was an experience I'd have given my right hand – both hands – to have had. I think to have had the experience of an English university must be marvellous, really.

**So what happened to you?**

What happened to me? I joined the AIF<sup>2</sup> as a private – that had some shocks, but different shocks to (laughs) being away from home. I gradually got up through the ranks, I became a sergeant and then I was commissioned, and once again, having been through six years of school Cadet Corps I had an advantage over a lot of people from that point of view. And during the War, 1944 when I came back from New Guinea, I made what subsequently turned out to be a disastrous wartime marriage –

**Did you wish to speak about this on tape or not?**

– I don't mind. It sadly failed, it was a disaster, and of course immediately after the War we were divorced. That was a great social disgrace, a *great* social disgrace in those days. You didn't know anybody who'd been divorced. And anyhow, then I transferred, partway through the War, from the AIF to the British Army in India and served with an Indian brigade in Burma and then finally came home in May 1946.

**So you spent virtually –**

Over six years.

**– away from – – –?**

Yes. And really I had a much easier war than a lot of people. I didn't like it but I – some people had a terrible war.

**So perhaps we can – the War is sort of the end, really, of your childhood experience at Collingrove –**

Yes.

**– so can we sum up, I guess, your strongest memories of growing up at Collingrove? What stands out for you?**

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<sup>2</sup> AIF – Australian Imperial Forces.

An immensely happy childhood – – –.

**I might just, because I can hear your wife coming home, just pause a moment. (break in recording) This is a continuation of an interview with Colin Angas being recorded by Karen George for the National Trust on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2006. Yes, the strongest memories of your childhood.**

So, summing up, Karen, I would have to say that we had an immensely happy and privileged childhood and upbringing, right up until the time of the War. We really had marvellous parents. They lived in a totally different world to the world that we children subsequently grew into, and so, all in all – – –. There are times when I look back and say, ‘I wish my father had told me something about how to go about going to war,’ which he never did; now, that may be a totally unfair comment, but by the same token I’ve got to say that he gave me the best education that money could buy, he cared for and nurtured me for all those years, and can a (laughs) father be expected to do any more? I think not, probably! From then on you’re on your own. So you could say really we all had a marvellous start in life. Whether we’ve subsequently justified that (laughs) is another matter. But really it was a tremendously happy time, and it was a very happy household. I think that’s the great thing about it.

**What were the happiest times and what were the saddest times connected with Collingrove, do you feel?**

Well, I think the sad times were seeing my parents – is it all right to talk about my parents? –

**Yes.**

– seeing them grow old in what really was to them pretty much an alien world. When they grew old it was very hard to get good domestic help in the country and they coped remarkably well but I don’t think they were terribly happy with it.

**So they remained at Collingrove right through?**

Yes, they remained at Collingrove. My mother died – well, she died in Angaston, and she died before my father. And, looking back on it – and I often say to my children – I think my parents, by virtue of good fortune, were both terribly spoiled, and all right, that was their good fortune; but really one couldn’t criticise what they did for us. (laughs) We might have complained about being left in the South[?] watching them drink while we were terrified and trying not to cry! But that was part

of life. So no, I look back on my time there really with the greatest affection, and I think that was due to my parents because they really did make it a very happy place for everybody.

**What's it like for you when you – I mean, you said you were there last Sunday for the 150<sup>th</sup> – what's it like for you going back there?**

I've completely adjusted to the new regime and I rather rejoice in telling the children and the grandchildren (laughs) naughty stories about how I misbehaved in my youth, which I can't tell on this program!

**Aren't there any that I can get at this stage?**

I doubt it! So on the whole it was – – –. And we were terribly lucky, really.

**So if you can imagine your period of time at Collingrove being remembered, how would you like it to be remembered, *your* time at Collingrove? How could it be reflected in the homestead, I guess?**

Reflected in the – – –?

**In the homestead, how could *your* life be reflected there if it was set up to reflect your time there?**

I don't quite know how to answer that, Karen. I feel really I didn't contribute much to the house as a person. I was sort of part of the family. I would like to think that all the staff remember me pleasantly and I think that's important. And I like to think that, to the best of my ability, I was a good son to my parents – others may think otherwise, and fair enough! – but I remember some very, very happy times there. And with all things, if there were difficult times, you forget them. You put them aside and you remember the good time. But ninety-nine point nine per cent they were good. My behaviour may not have been, (laughs) but the times were good.

**Well, I'd like to thank you very much for sharing your memories with me today, I've really enjoyed it, and I'm just sad I didn't get those naughty stories, but perhaps another day.**

Well, it's a strange story!

**Thank you very much.**

Thank you, Karen.

END OF INTERVIEW.