



City of Port Phillip Living Heritage Project
Edited transcript – Leonard “Dugga” Beazley
Interviewees: Leonard “Dugga” Beazley [DB] and Frances Beazley [FB]
Interviewer: Cathy Dodson [CD]
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Living with industry

1.24.25

CD: Ok. And the other thing I wanted to ask you about were the factories that were around the area. You know, I’ve certainly got the impression that there were lots of families living in the area where fishing was the main source of income, but I imagine there were a lot of other families that were working in the local factories?

DB: Oh, all of Port Melbourne worked in the factories. They had Harper’s over the road. You know, Swallow and Ariell’s up there, GMH, the wharf. Kraft Cheese. Glazebrooks paints. Bloody industry everywhere. When we lived up the road here, 4 o’clock they used to pour out of Harper’s over there, you know. Everyone. Everyone went in to the sweat shops like that. My mate round the corner, Vicky Ralph, you know he left school, he ran all the way home too, but he was a drongo at school too. *[Laughs.]* But he run all the way home. Next day he was in Harper’s, working. You know? But I can clearly remember, the first week he worked, he come home from work and he said “Look at this,” he said, and he had five pound, a five pound note. And he’d never seen five pound in his life before.

CD: But he got one on that first day? *[First week.]*

DB: Yes. Yes.

CD: Did he get to keep it or did he have to pass it on to the family?

DB: Oh, I reckon he would’ve had to pass it on because they were a big family, because there were five or six kids in there and the old man only had one arm. He was a veteran from the war, he’d lost his arm. You know?

FB: And we all paid board back then, whereas these days – *[Laughs.]*

CD: Yes, so you had to contribute. Yes.

DB: I reckon they would have took at least half of it off him.

1.26.25

CD: So having all of the factories around the neighbourhood, could you hear the sounds of the factories for instance when you walked down the street, or from your own home?

DB: Some of them, it didn’t matter, it would depend on what - But something they’ve lost here, you know, is the smell of Swallow & Ariell’s, cooking gingernuts. *[To Frances:]* Wasn’t they? She was there when they were doing that. Gingernuts that big, and about that thick, you know? But you could smell them. Bloody beautiful. One of my aunties used to work there when I was a kid. She’d come home at dinner time, lunch time. She always used to bring a big bag of gingernuts home, just been cooked, they were still hot. Because they went cold, they went hard as a rock,

and that's gingernuts. But when they were just cooked they were soft, you know? Bloody beautiful.

CD: Delicious.

1.27.37

DB: And it didn't matter where you were in Port Melbourne when they were cooking gingernuts you could smell them. And then you'd go to the football of a Saturday afternoon up at Port's ground, and Kitchen's would be cooking their stuff up there, you know, they used to make soap, and that sort of thing. But they made that out of bloody cow fat and stuff like that, you know? And boiling up old cows and things like that. Used to stink something bloody terrible. *[Laughs.]*

CD: Not quite as nice, that particular one.

DB: Oh! You'd be at the football and it used to stink, you know? Yes, you'd go to the footy and the old man, old Bob, my grandfather, he'd give me two bob and go and buy a hot dog. Used to be a bloke there with a big can full of hot dogs boiling, and the bloody things would be about that big, and about that round. And he'd give you a bun and the bun would be stale because it was the weekend and there was no fresh bread of a weekend. And a big dob of sauce on it, two bob. Beautiful. You'd eat the hot dog, but chuck the bread in the rubbish bin.

1.31.10

CD: Just a little bit more about the factories. So, you've talked about the smells of some of the different factories.

DB: Yes. Kraft cheese, you can tell when they're, even now when they're cooking Vegemite. You can smell it.

CD: Yes. Yes. And what about sounds from the factories? Like could you hear particular machinery, or whistles going?

DB: No, no, they didn't sound - Like, Harper's and that here, that was all steam driven over there. That big chimney over there, they used to have a big boiler downstairs there, you know? And it used to burn brown coal. Yes, but on the top of the buildings they had big water tanks, you know, and it used to circulate. What they used to do, when you boil water, it makes steam. Then they condense it, back in to water, so they just used to use the same water all the time. Yes, but all the machinery was run by steam, which is quiet. Yes, machinery by engines, like a diesel engine or something, that makes noise but - You know?

CD: So it was ok to live around in terms of the noise? It was fine to live around, it didn't bother you?

DB: Yes. The only trouble with Harper's was, when the wind was southerly, of a night time, they'd have the burning the brown coal, you'd get up in the morning and everything would be covered in brown coal dust. They used to dump it outside on the street, the brown coal. But everyone used to go over there and pinch it, you know, in their billy carts, in prams, in all sorts of things. But you used to go out of a morning, and you could see "psht, psht, psht" *[Dugga makes a hand motion to indicate tracks leading away from the piles of brown coal.]* Trails everywhere, heading to the houses. *[Laughs.]* All you had to do was follow the trail, you know?

CD: What were people doing with the coal dust?

DB: Burning it, in their fires.

CD: So you could still burn it, even though it was dust?

DB: No it wasn't coal dust, it was coal, lumps of coal.

CD: Oh, it was lumps of coal. Sorry, I thought it was dust.

DB: Yes. They could go down the gasworks and buy a bloody big truckload of coke for – And it was practically smokeless. In Port Melbourne when that was there, of a cold nights and that, you'd look round - [*To Frances:*] Brown smoke coming out the chimneys everywhere, wasn't there?

CD: So the air must have been pretty thick with all sorts of things?

DB: Oh foggy nights it was more smog than fog. That's why you don't get much fogs any more. Like years ago, when it was still, the air was full of - It wasn't just here, all the city was burning brown coal everywhere, you know? All the ships in the Yarra you know, lots of them still had steam engines in them. All the tugs and the hopper barges. Everything was still steam driven, right up to the 1960s.

CD: Would you say that's been something that's improved?

DB: Oh most definitely, yes.