



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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Billy carts

DB: Yes. I can remember going round the streets with my billy cart selling couta for two bob each.

CD: As a very young child?

DB: Yes, when I was going to school, yes. Just, bloody, ten or eleven, twelve years old. Like I didn't go around saying “Couta for sale”. We had customers. My old man, he used to fillet them, and one of them would want two couta or something, some of them would want one. He'd fillet them and roll them up in paper and I'd put them in the billy cart, and I just went 'round the different houses who bought them, you know? Yes.

CD: And see if they wanted them?

DB: Yes. Like that was once a week or something. Whatever. And flathead, we used to do the same with the flathead. Used to roll them up in parcels and I'd fill the billy. I'd come home after school and fill the billy cart up. I'd made a billy cart out of a fish box. Wooden fish boxes in them days, and ball bearing wheels on them. We used to have ball bearing wheels. You know what a ball bearing is?

CD: I know what a ball bearing is, but I'm not sure what a ball bearing wheel is. Describe that.

DB: Well a ball bearing is, you know, they're all different sizes. The ones we had were about that big. It's got a hole in the centre and there's all little balls around it. A ball race. They're in motorcars, they're in wheels, and in the gear box and in the differential. Yes.

CD: Ok. Were you using something that had come from an old car to make the wheels?

DB: Yes, they had to be worn out. New ones were useless, they were too tight. But worn out ones, you know, they used to rattle.

CD: Good for billy carts?

DB: Yes.

CD: And you built your own billy carts?

DB: Yes, we used to build billy carts. We used to have billy cart races and we used to have billy cart fights. Yes, we used to go down Station Pier when the bridge was there, and get down the top of the bridge, because the footpath was all concrete, you know, and there wasn't many cars. It's a wonder we didn't get killed. You know, we used to go flying down the bloody bridge. You'd get down the bottom, you had to turn hard left and of course the concrete turned right. Then you'd hit the dirt. You know? Then you'd have to walk all the way up again, drag it up the bridge.

CD: Who were you doing that sort of thing with? Who were you hanging out with?

DB: Well all the boys from around here, all the kids from up the street here. McIntoshs. Over the road from his place there was kids here we used to – you know? One of them was Bumper, we used to call him. He was a big tough kid. You know? Yes. Dennis Horrigan. Yes, there was – can't remember them all.

CD: So local boys?

DB: Yes.

CD: And were local girls, what were they doing? Were they involved in these kind of games too?

DB: They were playing with us. *[Laughs.]*

CD: So there wasn't a separation between the boys and the girls?

DB: No, no, they used to be in it too. Yes.

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CD: So back to the billy cart. Your career in the fish industry really started right from birth didn't it, if you're taking fish around on the billy cart?

DB: Oh, yes, yes.

CD: And what would you do, would you knock on the door?

DB: Yes, just knock on the door. Sometimes you'd be going past the pub and you'd have the billy cart full of them and before you got to where you were going all the blokes in the pub would buy them, so you'd go back, you know?

CD: Go back home and get some more?

DB: Yes, go back, get some more.

CD: And you said they were wrapped up in paper, was that newspaper?

DB: Newspaper. No white paper in them days.

CD: And, how did you manage the money and stuff? They would just –

DB: Put it in my pocket.

CD: Yes. *[Laughs.]* Did you come prepared with change? Or -

DB: No, everyone had, that's why they used to buy them, everyone had two bob or a shilling. Like there was no ten bobs, well there was, there was ten bobs in quids, that's a pound and ten shillings. But not too many of them paid you with them.

CD: So they didn't have those larger amounts on hand or they didn't use it necessarily.

DB: They didn't have it, no.

CD: And did you get to keep any of the money that you made?

DB: I used to get two bob a day.

CD: And the rest to your parents?

DB: Oh, I used to, yes, just chuck it in the billy.

CD: Where was the billy?

DB: Oh, they used to, you know, in the boat, when we were selling fish out the boat they had a, well, a bucket. [*Laughs.*]

CD: With a lid? Like a billy? Ok.

DB: No. No, just a bucket.

CD: Just a bucket.

DB: But at home, I'm pretty sure they had a billy at home.

CD: For keeping money in?

DB: Yes, for selling the fish.

CD: Ah, ok. So, when you were – I was going to ask you about the selling of the fish from the pier which we talked a little bit about in our other interview.

DB: Yes, down the Lulla. Not the Lagoon.

CD: Down the Lulla. So you just had a bucket for money with that one too? And you really kept that tradition going didn't you when you set your shop up?

DB: Yes. Yes, instead we used the sink.