AN INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY BERNARD O'NEIL WITH MR GEOFF NORMAN OF GLENGOWRIE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA ON THE 17TH OF FEBRUARY 2004 IN REGARDS TO THE HISTORY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE PROJECT. RECORDED ON A WARM MORNING WITH A FAN IN THE BACKGROUND AND A LITTLE BIT OF NOISE FROM ADJACENT TO THE HOUSE.

[Square brackets incorporate corrections supplied by Geoff Norman and Bernie O'Neil in January–February 2005.]

[0:45] Geoff, perhaps if we could start with some of your personal background. You were telling me a couple of boyhood anecdotes and so on. I think that would be worthwhile putting down.

My early history starts with my sojourn at the primary school of Sandalwood in the Murray Mallee. There weren't lots of folk there but my parents owned the post office and the store in the mighty city of Sandalwood. There would have been maybe 30 people in the township and maybe half-a-dozen houses. My schooling finished at Grade 7. There were not a lot of prospects for future development although my sister had just won a scholarship and gone to the Norwood High School. My father said, 'Well we don't really have that …

Well Geoff, while we had that little pause there for the telephone I was just having another quick look at the couple of family history books that you showed me. [*Four Hewetts venture north: a history of Charles Thomas Hewett and four of his children 1794-1986*, Hewett Family Reunion Committee, Adelaide, 1986] compiled by Peter Norman and there was an update in 1996 about 10 years after that first one [*Hewett family 1996 update: progressive record of the descendants of five of the children of Charles Thomas and Hannah Jane Hewett*, compiled by Peter L. Norman, Hewett Family Reunion Committee, Adelaide, 1996], so there's a little bit about the family story in there obviously. You were talking about one of your sisters coming to Norwood.

That's right. My father said, 'We don't have enough money to send you to high school my son, so we will purchase a farm and I will put you to work on the farm'. In those days, of course, there were such things as debt adjustment boards for farmers who couldn't pay their debts because in the Mallee if you got one good year in every five you did well. So the storekeepers of the day were required to carry the farmers until such time as a good crop came in and they could pay for the purchases for the last few years. But, suddenly if in the fifth year no rain came and no crop came in, they would say to my father, 'I am sorry but I can't pay'. So the Debt Adjustment Board came in and said to the farmers, 'You don't have to pay. If you have got one shilling in the pound then that's all you need to pay' and so my father got one shilling in a pound for 20 or 30 farmers and before he knew it, he was in debt also. He concluded that the only way out of it was to put his son to work on the farm picking stumps and trying to develop some extra funds. So my first job was to attend various sales, clearing sales, of farmers so we could purchase some horses. I remember riding the first horse we purchased from a clearing sale about 20 miles away. I left at 4 o'clock in the afternoon from the sale. My father said, 'You can't have a saddle but I will allow you to have a bag of chaff that you can put on the back of the horse and ride on the chaff. It won't cause you much strain when you're riding for 20 miles'. The problem in sitting on a bag of chaff is it tends to move quite a bit so I found myself (laughs) picking myself up and trying to climb back on the horse again from a fence post on the

side of the road. I got back to the farm by about 10 o'clock that night. Quite a bit wiser, but certainly with our horse at least at that stage. (laughs)

So when we received six horses my job was then to get behind the four-furrow plough and plough a 200-acre paddock. I don't think I have ever seen as many stumps in my life, but every stump came up out of the ground because it was a stump jump plough and by the time I'd finished you could hardly see the soil from black stumps everywhere! So my father said, 'Well here's a four-wheel jinker and two horses and your next job is to pick up all those stumps so we can bring them to a collection point where we will then trim them to the size that is necessary and put them on a truck and send them off to Adelaide for the sale of Mallee stumps'. So that was my next job for the next two years I suppose.

Collecting firewood?

Yes, that right and clearing the land ready for the first crops so that we could get a few acres sown for barley, in those days it was particularly, and we started developing a few sheep and before we knew it we had about 300 sheep to shear. I learned also to shear by three ordinary blade shears and eventually to a machine shearer that we purchased. It was a Wolsley Shearing Machine. I eventually got up to about 80 sheep a day that we shore, but [I realised that I didn't want] to be a shearer for the rest of my life. At the end of the day you wanted somewhere to put your aching back I can remember!

What age were you when you …

I was about 16 I suppose at that stage.

But when you took up the farming?

Yes. That's right, from the age of 13. My father bought the farm when I left school and so those things gradually developed. But at the same time we also had the agency for various wheat companies. I remember the Farmers Union was one particular one. One of my first jobs was to weigh in the wheat as it came in from the farmers. My father would take it off the scales and manually lump it to the wheat stack itself. The wheat stacks were something like 20 bags high. So [he] had to climb one bag at a time and put the top bag on the twentieth bag. It was a feat of stamina usually. By the time I was 18 that was my job as well. But fortunately my father had purchased an elevator in those days so we were able to not have to climb so far with the bags of wheat.

It would have toughened you up a bit though, that sort of work?

That's right. It wasn't so bad in the earlier days but when you got temperatures of 45 and a little bit upper it was quite a strain. Never mind, they were the sort of developments that I had in my early life.

An early experience of farming. Did your family come from a farming …

My father came from a farm in the Coonawarra and his father had a sheep farm particularly. They weren't so much into cereal growing but more into pastoral work, rearing sheep and cattle in the Mt Gambier area.

[7:45] When were you born Geoff, just for the record?

I was born in Murray Bridge on the 13th of April in '23.

You mentioned a sister. Did you have other brothers or sisters?

At that stage I had three sisters and my parents found another brother. He was about 13 years my junior when he was born so he wasn't really a great deal of help in the farming area. (Both laugh)

[8:18] Well that was a little bit of your earlier experience in farming. Did you see yourself being a farmer?

As I grew older we also were able to lease land in the Hundred of Auld in those days and for a small amount of money you could lease quite a few acres. My father had leased nearly 3000 acres out in the Hundred of Auld on farms that had had farmers on them but they had gone broke and walked off them. You could lease them from the government for a reasonable fee. So that was the next development. By the time I was 21, my father concluded that that wasn't the life for him so he would leave the Mallee development to me. I felt a future for me wasn't going to be in the Mallee. I didn't want to be Mallee farmer for the rest of my life, when you've got *potential* income once every five years.

At that stage we sold the post office, the store, all the farms and my father moved to the mighty city of Jervois in the River Murray area just out of Tailem Bend. We purchased something like 70 acres of swampland and probably about 100 acres of highland in that area which was the traditional area of dairy farming in the Jervois area. That was quite OK for a Mallee farmer who had rarely seen too much green feed, when it was green all the year round in Jervois. Getting up at 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning and looking for cows in the paddock that you couldn't even see at that stage because it was pitch dark, and then looking for them again in the evening wasn't what I regarded as an ideal future. Even at that stage I started making plans for myself to move to something better.

In my stay in the Murray Mallee I had learned to try to improve myself by [enrolling in correspondence courses]. I'd passed the Leaving English, the Leaving History in correspondence and when I decided to move from Jervois I found that there were a couple of options. I either could go into the Police Force, the Education Department (neither of which really benefited me), I thought if I went into the dairy industry you could become a factory

manager, have your own home and so on, and rear your kids in relative comfort. I had been attending the [butter factory in Tailem Bend] and learned how to test milk and cream for butter fat. That interested me so I thought with my background knowledge of farming and agriculture it would suit me for Roseworthy College so I applied to attend the college in about 1949 but was told that I needed to have qualifications in chemistry and physics which I didn't have. So I attended Muirden College in a crash course in about 6 weeks and learned enough chemistry to pass an entrance exam at Roseworthy.

[11.55] I remember Sam Twartz, the chemistry teacher, then said, 'It's not going to be easy mate, but I think you might be able to handle it'. Biology was my most major concern because they spoke in terms that I'd never heard of before and it was really a matter of remembering what they meant and the various terms related to biology. However …

It was sort of like a raw country kid coming to …

You can say that again. Yes. Anyhow, eventually I attended the college to study the diploma in dairying. It was a two-year course. I had one other first-year student with me at the time and I think in second year there were probably four students. We graduated from that with a Roseworthy Diploma in Dairying in '51. You needed to have at least six months experience in a factory before you received your diploma and so I took my experience to Victoria where the Swan Hill Co-operative Dairy Company was looking for a buttermaker-foreman but my knowledge of factory work was pretty limited at that stage so I gradually developed from learning how to operate the pasteuriser, or the Vacreator as we called it, to operating the first 100-blocks churn that Victoria had imported from New Zealand at that stage. That was quite an experience in making three or four tons of butter at a time with the milk and cream that came in from the dairy farmers of the Swan Hill area.

I remember [receiving a letter] from the then Principal of Roseworthy College, Dr McCulloch, who said, 'You did pretty well in microbiology. We are looking for a lecturer in biology and an assistant lecturer in dairying. Would you like to join us?'. So it didn't take my wife long. We had two children at that stage and they'd offered us a home in Roseworthy so we accepted the job! We stayed there for the next [nine] years at Roseworthy. It was quite an interesting experience. My kids always look back on those formative years when they grew up in Roseworthy.

[14:30] You've provided a copy of your CV here and it says 1955 you took up the role of the [Assistant] Dairy Instructor. It's interesting that you had that transition from going to primary school at Sandalwood, stopping at Year 7, doing a little bit of correspondence only on the Leaving subjects I recall you saying. You didn't actually do the First, Second or Third Year and only a couple of Leaving subjects. Then you end up as an instructor at the College. (laughs) You must have learnt quickly!

I do remember some of the students who had been through high school just prior to what I had done so I really had to ask them quite a few questions about things I hadn't learnt (both laugh).

You were teaching them and learning from them!

You are right, that's right

So you came to Roseworthy in '55 …

[16.20] We spent about eight years at Roseworthy on varying subjects. At that stage had developed … In 1948 a course in dairying had been developed at the College. It was a two-year course; up to four students for a year were taken in. I can't recall exactly but the details of numbers of students gradually declined until by about the mid '50s or it might have been '60s that the course eventually closed down and students were recommended to take the course at Hawkesbury College or in Werribee. Then my future was involved in the dairy and agricultural pursuits of the students at Roseworthy College until a position became available in Tasmania as a dairy instructor and also the officer-in-charge of the Wynyard Office of the Department of Agriculture so we moved to Wynyard in Tasmania. That would have been about 1964.

The idea of remaining as an instructor or lecturer at the College or going to another College. Was that an option for you?

There didn't seem to be a lot of future in the area. Also, because I didn't have a degree of any particular qualification that tended to limit my development in university life. With a house available and a new area in Tasmania we decided we would take our lifestyle over there. We found that quite an interesting area, there is no doubt about that.

So is that joining the Tasmanian department?

That's right, yes. … For the first time they had no officer in Wynyard. The area was operated by the Dairy Officer in Burnie and he covered the area from Burnie out half-way to Smithton at that stage which was regarded as too big an area for him so I took over half of it from him. As well as looking after the office of the Wynyard Department, in those days they were just starting off with the artificial breeding program so half of our staff were employed by the Artificial Breeding Board in Launceston of the Tasmanian Department and seven or eight of those were artificial breeding inseminators who came into the Department. We also had our own Horticultural Officer, our own Agricultural Adviser and Dairy Officer as well, not to mention Stock Inspectors, so that was an interesting development in community living I suppose.

But not only that, you were working with a government organisation. Had you had much contact with the government in South Australia, the Department of Agriculture?

No, not a great lot. The Department was a separate organisation from the College and never the twain shall meet, as both of them regarded it, kept their separate ways.

And only limited experience when you were actually on the farm with the rural debt scheme and so on.

That's right. We didn't really learn a great deal about how the other half lived in those areas, that's true.

And possibly some negative sort of experiences too. We've talked about the debt scheme.

[19.30] Yes, that's true. From Tasmania I was offered a position back in Adelaide. The developing area was artificial breeding. The Department at that stage had some problems in regard to fertility in the dairy herds of South Australia and had employed at least one veterinary officer, whose name comes back to me – Dr Bill Rose. Dr Roses's task was to try to come to grips with where the infertility problem existed in South Australia, what the problem is and what should be done about it. He concluded that there was quite a bit of health problems that dairy farmers needed to be aware of that were causing their stock to be infertile or finding it difficult to get their animals in calf. So it was resolved that an artificial breeding concept should be set up in South Australia. I was seconded back to the Department to work under the Research Group at Northfield and help the Artificial Breeding Board to develop a bull-proving scheme.

We came back to Adelaide in [1966] and purchased ourselves a home in the mighty city of South Plympton. My work then concentrated from the Artificial Breeding Board at Northfield and the Northfield Research Centre. My first job was to try to determine how effective the progeny of the bulls that had been purchased and used by the Artificial Breeding Board. They had selected bulls on the basis that had been used by stud breeders, that is on their ability to look good, to be reasonably healthy, but if they happened to produce excess production, well that was another bonus. Sadly, it was found subsequently that the selection of bulls didn't really justify the prices paid. At that stage there was no method of determining whether the progeny produced butter fat superior to their dams. While there was a Subsidy Bull Scheme operating, the process was that you select the dam and as long as she produced more butter fat then did her dam then the bull itself ought to be capable of producing progeny that was at least the equivalent of its mother.

It wasn't until we developed a Herd Testing Officer named George Durney and I worked in conjunction with George in trying to develop an understanding of the production qualities of the bulls that were being used in South Australia. At that stage, artificial breeding was also developed in New South Wales and in Victoria and they'd developed some quite superior bulls. They had already demonstrated that the progeny of the bulls being used was superior to many of them and they called those 'proven bulls'. Sadly, you couldn't buy a proven bull because everybody else wanted them so you had to prove your own bulls.

Is there an Australia-wide trend, in a sense? Victoria, New South Wales joining in.

Yes. Of course, every stud breeder said his that his bull was the best bull in the place because it could produce stock that could win a prize at the show. But that wasn't really what the dairy farmers of South Australia wanted. They wanted something that would produce butterfat so that they could get some money back from them. That takes a long time. We found that the bulls that we had selected at that stage for the Artificial Breeding Board were really inferior in terms of the quality of the [daughters] they produced.

So my job was to confirm this by identifying the progeny of the bulls, by following up their production status and then making a comparison of their progeny with that of other bulls' progeny in the State. We found that it was so inferior that we resolved then and there not to buy any more bulls from stud breeders in South Australia. One of my developments at that stage was an offer by the New Zealand Dairy Board to take one of the departmental officers to examine the development of bull proving in New Zealand. One of the directors at the Artificial Breeding Board, Don Mackie, and myself at that stage were invited to New Zealand to examine the process there of their bull proving program and their selection process.

One of the developments at Northfield had been that you select and you collect your bull's semen and you freeze it in that particular freezing process, put it into little capsules and send it out to inseminators. There were about five different groups of inseminators in South Australia and they would inseminate the stock with that. New Zealand used what they call a liquid semen process, which didn't require freezing, but you needed to use the semen that same day so that it didn't loose any of its sperm. While the process was very good we realised that we couldn't really use a liquid semen process in South Australia because of the time from the collection of the semen to the time we got it into the field.

We found that the New Zealand Dairy Board had a process of holding their semen for at least 24 hours prior to distributing to the field. It was a means of settling the semen down so that they retained a greater degree of fertility. We felt that if we could transfer the semen that the New Zealanders had collected and put it in some sort of a holding pattern in a thermos that kept the same temperature, by the time we received it in South Australia we could probably just about use it in the same way as they did. They accepted that possibility and we started off with a process of collecting semen from New Zealand bulls, proven bulls that we could never hope to prove in the time we had. That really was the start of the development of artificial breeding in South Australia.

So you had to freight it, fly it over?

We flew it over, that's right. Collected it from the airways and processed it as soon as we got it.

About when would that have been Geoff?
In the mid '60s I would say.

In about '67 you became a Dairy Husbandry Officer so it would have been after that.
That's right. I can tell you exactly when we went to New Zealand – in 1971. I wrote a report on our visit to New Zealand.

So you say that's the start of the real …
We realised then that artificial breeding had the opportunity to not only to improve the fertility of our stock but the quality of the progeny that were being produced. Mind you, by then the New South Wales and the Victorian Departmental AB Boards had also come to a similar conclusion. So they were importing proven bulls from not only New Zealand but from around the world. I also found that at that stage we were starting to realise that it was possible to get semen of varying types of bulls, not only dairy bulls but beef bulls as well, so we had things like Simmental bulls which were particularly bred for beef production and ... A range of semen then was made available to dairy farmers and even beef producers at that stage, so artificial breeding extended from just dairy cattle to beef producers as well in those days.

Was the aim to get a better product in the end, whether it be dairy products or beef?
Yes, that's right.

Did you have any quarantine requirements when you talk about importing?
Yes. Needless to say, the bulls had to undergo quite a bit of examination and pass health tests prior to the collection of the semen. Basically, most AB Boards realised that if they wanted to have a wider distribution of their product they had to comply with most of those, so it wasn't a major concern.

You mentioned New South Wales and Victoria. But Tasmania, Western Australia, Queensland: were they involved?
Yes, but they came in a little bit later, probably not dissimilar to South Australia, but New South Wales and Victoria carried the lion share of the pioneering work.

[29:40] Geoff, you mentioned AB Boards. Were the Artificial Breeding Boards formally organised?
They were generally privately run Artificial Breeding Boards, yes. Except in the Department in Tasmania, it was an offshoot of the Department of Agriculture.

But in your case in South Australia, you were a member of the board?
I wasn't a member of the board. The board was chaired by the Director of Agriculture. In my day it was Marshall Irving. The director of the Artificial Breeding Board was Dr Bill Rose. The Artificial Breeding Board was set up by an Act of Parliament, which required a veterinary

office to be the director of the board so he could maintain a watching brief on the health of the animals as well as the health of the semen produced.

[30:40] I'll follow that through with the parliamentary records for things like annual reports and so on. To go off at a tangent. Were there any discussions at the time about the advisability, suitability of these techniques?

Yes. In those days, of course, as the board started off it was imbued by the opinions I suppose that were widely spread in the moment that stud breeders knew what they were producing and so all you needed to do was get an animal that was qualified to probably become first prize at a show somewhere. It looked good, it had good health, it walked well but its production was difficult to determine how effective its progeny might be because there was no attempt to follow up, in any quantity, the production of the daughters of those bulls. No farmer had a big enough herd to ensure that he had enough progeny to guarantee that there were no variations in the production so you can't take the results from two or three dams and their progeny. We found that you needed at least 20 daughters from 20 dams to confirm that the production of those progenies could be reproduced in various herds around the State.

[32.20] One of the first requirements of George Durney and the testing program was to try to distribute the semen from these bulls as widely as possible across the herd-testing field of South Australia. Farmers were even given the semen in those days from unproven bulls to confirm that in your herd this is the production we will get from these unproven bulls. From that we could tell within two years … The daughters, of course, would take two years to come into production and it would be another 12 months or 12 months' production to be determined and it could well be another 12 months after that before you got the results of their progeny. Then you could say … By then, if the bull had been two years of age when it started producing semen, four years later by the time the bull was six years of age you tell if it was going to be good or bad. So that's when you could start saying I don't want that bull anymore or I want to continue to keep that bull. So it would be difficult for a normal natural dairy farmer to keep a bull long enough to know whether his bull was going to improve or not. The only hope he had was to have a range of bulls in the hope that at least one of them might be successful.

[33:45] **End side A, tape 1**
Tape 1, side 2

[0:05] … the quality of the herds and the sort of production they used. Ultimately, we listed at the back of that report all of the bulls that we'd have ever tested to show whether they had a plus or a minus rating. When the farmers could see that some of their bulls had a minus rating, they wanted to confirm just how did we come by that decision. So we could show them the production and compare them with production of other animals in not only their herd but other

people's herds so that we could get a range of management styles and say that if the average producer in South Australia used the progeny or used that bull's semen you could guarantee that you would get such and such a production. That wasn't difficult eventually to demonstrate to them.

By the time I left that section of the Department we were able to put out an annual listing of all the bulls because of the progeny we'd found that they'd produced in South Australia. That compared with some of the progeny in other States. By the time I had left that section, you could compare the daughters of interstate bulls, overseas bulls as well as our local bulls to see whether that production was improving or not. By then, of course, the Department of Agriculture's involvement with artificial breeding and the Artificial Breeding Board had reached a stage where the fertility of the bulls at Northfield were in question. There were difficulty in getting non-return rates that were reasonable. In other words, if you inseminated a cow today it would be reasonable to assume that it wouldn't return for another insemination in 21 days time. But many of our bulls were [not] doing that. The semen wasn't of good enough quality and so we had to re-examine the quality of the health of the bulls.

At that stage Dr Rose also was involved in that particular area. It was found that the best bet would be to import semen from not only New Zealand but also Victoria. The Victorian Artificial Breeding Board then came to South Australia and offered to take over the whole of the running of artificial breeding in South Australia. I can't be positive of the date, but the Artificial Breeding Board was run by Peter Lovisatti as the manager and basically was a distribution point for semen from various parts of the world rather than collecting semen from their own bulls. I suppose that probably in the late '70s, then it gradually phased out completely.

So did the Victorians take over?
Yes, they did.

Because they asked if they could … take over … (talking over each other)
That's right.

The operation was based at Northfield?
Yes, it was.

So you were distributing from Northfield out to regions?
Yes, that's right. We had five basic regions: Mt Gambier; the Barossa area; Mt Barker; Murray Bridge; and there was a distribution point in Clare I think it was. There was one farmer/inseminator in Mt Gambier. In Mt Barker we had four or five inseminators. They would

collect their semen each day and sit in an office at Mt Barker, take phone calls from dairy farmers who required inseminations that day: they would put a sign out on the side of the gate saying they had an animal for insemination and so the inseminator would be driving around knowing where they had to go in and inseminate an animal.

So time was obviously a key element.
Yes, that's right.

Did you have to register your interests, register your …?
They would man the phones from about 8 o'clock in the morning till probably half past nine so every farmer had to ring them up to say, 'I want an inseminator to call today' and so they would arrange their rounds accordingly.

Did you recall what sort of success rate there was?
Yes. The success rate was not dissimilar to their natural conception, but the hope was that artificial breeding would be even more effective than natural insemination. It eventually proved to be improving the fertility rates as well as the production levels of the herds.

[5:15] Did the Department, I don't mean you personally, but did the Department get complaints about this sort of program from the general public or from farmers, people thinking you were tampering with nature?
Oh yes. I remember the very first animal that was born to artificial insemination we assumed it would have a foot in its mouth or something similar as a result of insemination, but that didn't come to pass. One of my roles was to try to find the best-producing dam in the State and with the best producing semen we could find not only in New Zealand but in the world, then inseminate that animal and, hopefully, produce the progeny as a bull for the Artificial Breeding Board. It didn't always work. We often ended up with a female instead of a male but then the owner of the cow was quite happy with that anyhow.

He was ahead one way or the other.
Yes.

[6:30] How big did the operation become? You set the program up and in seven or eight years …?
In terms of numbers of animals inseminated I can't be clear on that, but certainly it covered the State of South Australia and the requirements we had.

And within the Department itself, how big an operation was it?
As far as the Department of Agriculture is concerned, there was only one person and not only was there only one person, the rest of it were run by the Artificial Breeding Board itself. So it had Dr Rose, the director, and he had about four or five staff who's job it was to collect semen, process it and so on. As well as that they had a five-member Artificial Breeding Board that would meet once a month and he reports on the development of the board itself.

So they were all working for the board and not for the Department?

That's right except that the Department had its finger on it because the Director of Agriculture was also the chairman of the board. The Chief Dairy Officer, Graham Itzerott, was also a director of the Artificial Breeding Board. His knowledge of dairy cattle and his ability to judge dairy cattle was regarded as a benefit to the selection of the bulls at that stage. As well as that, there were some stud breeders who were also on the board.

Where did the operation fit in terms of the Department? You say you were the only departmental person but …

I think it was sort of an adjunct. I don't know that the Department, except for the director and the Chief Dairy Officer, they didn't really have a lot to do with the Department itself.

Were you in the Livestock area?

I was in the Research Section of the Dairy Division, which eventually was taken over by the Animal Industry Division.

So a small show within a …

That's right, yes.

But it's something … You're saying you've got the director on the board and so on so there is obviously a level of interest, if not, support from the Department.

That's right, yes.

[8:55] How long did you retain that position?

Then there was a position offered to me to attend the University of Melbourne as a postgraduate student in agricultural extension. By that stage the Artificial Breeding Board was considering closing down and taking over the VAB [Victorian Artificial Board] so I accepted the role and graduated from [the university in 1975 and in 1976 accepted] the position of Officer-in-Charge in Mt Gambier at that stage. That was interesting in that it also had a group of artificial inseminators. It wasn't just one; there was quite a few inseminators at that stage as well as other officers of the Department. It eventually became a section of the region, in the southeast region, when regionalisation became a fact of life. The officers, while they were previously members of say the Dairy Section or the Animal Health Section or the Agricultural Section, all came under the jurisdiction of the Regional Officer at Struan because of the Southeast Region.

From Mt Gambier then I was offered a position back to Adelaide when the Chief Dairy Officer retired and they were proposing to take over … [break in recording] …

We'll have to pick up on that story of moving, promotion in the Department.

Yes, moving back into Adelaide. I've got a feeling that would have been in 1979, somewhere in that area anyhow, and was taking over the job of Chief Dairy Officer as well as Principal Dairy

Officer and so we were handling both of those areas under the jurisdiction of the Division of Animal Industry. As a result of regionalisation, Animal Industry was divided up into various sections, including dairying, the pig industry, the wool industry, the sheep industry, all underneath the directorship not of what you'd call the director but the Chief of the Division of Animal Industry. So when I came back I was in charge of the Dairy Section of the Animal Industry Division. Subsequently, John Feagan, at that stage who was the Chief of the Animal Industry Division, was moved up to the role of Director of Agriculture and I took over from him as Chief of the Animal Industry Division, looking after those various sections of the Department until such time as my retirement in 1985 I think it was.

[12:45] So you were the … [interviewee coughing] Chief Dairy Officer and then Chief of the Division of Animal Industries?

[13:00] When I moved up to Animal Industries then it was Steve Rice from one of the sections moved up to take over my role in the Dairy Section.

So you maintained a connection with the dairy industry all the way through?

That's right, yes.

[13:15] Geoff, you mentioned a couple of times the regionalisation aspect, the creation of the regions and so on. What impact did regionalisation have for you?

At that stage to most officers it was a traumatic period because it meant a change in concepts. Even at that stage, it was considered that we ought to charge for our services. Extension officers regarded that as shameful because we made ourselves available to all and sundry without having to determine that the value might have been [of our advice] to the various departments or the various sections of the industry we were involved with. But with the development of regionalisation and the involvement in Mt Gambier in particular I suppose in the South East, we certainly found ourselves more compact, more involved in understanding our own problems rather than having a broader understanding of what was going on in the State, which was to some extent in our industry a bit of a deficiency because we didn't really see ourselves as a dairy industry as such but rather as a region and lost an understanding of what the whole industry itself was doing.

And what about from the point of view of the whole of the Department? In a sense you become a region …

Yes. We were an offshoot of the Department and our understanding of what was happening in the rest of the Department was also affected accordingly. While I can understand the concept of reducing the administrative costs of the regionalisation, I've never really seen the benefits listed financially or even physically to the industries of the State, the result of regionalisation. We concluded that it was a bit of a change and that eventually we'd have to revert to its original development anyhow and we'd become a State department once again, but that hasn't quite

happened yet! I know a few other things have happened, there is no doubt about that. (both laugh)

In terms of working within the Department, did you have much contact with people in other areas? Horticulture and …

In the Animal Industry Section I certainly had quite a bit to do with veterinary officers, Extension Officers and so on, but only within our industry, not too much with other regions, they were separated on their own, which again was a bit difficult because as an industry it was our job to develop the problems of that industry and that you needed to be able to try to ensure that the Extension Officers that were employed by other regions were aware of the problems of the industry overall. And that never really came to a great deal of fruition I don't believe.

Was there an attempt to bring the officers together for an annual conference of the Department? At certain levels did officers come together to meet across the regions?

[16:56] In the Dairy Section we certainly tried to do that, there is no doubt about that. That did help us to some extent and helped officers in one region develop what the problems were in another, but because it was only on an annual development I don't really think they did as much as they might have done.

[17:25] I was interested, Geoff, in one of the things you mentioned earlier before we started recording about the Department's Rostrum program. Would you like to comment a bit about that? A small thing but it's significant.

When I came in from Tasmania, my colleague in the Department, this is George Durney in the Herd Recording Section of the Department, we had our office in the Simpson Building, which wasn't air-conditioned. It was on Gawler Place. I can remember when the temperature got to about 112 or so and they said, 'When the white ants start coming out of the woodwork it is time to knock off for the day because it was too hot even for them to be here, it was too hot for us also!'. You couldn't really open a window because you were up on top of all the other iron-roofed buildings anyhow. Our stay in the Simpson Building was of intrigue, but in hindsight it was an era of development because George Durney had then learned to use the Power Samas calculating machine and as a result of the Power Samas machine we were able to feed into it much of the data from all the herds in the State and then conclude what the various bull productions were. That really was the start of bull proving using computers and calculators a little bit later on. Without computing bull proving was certainly a problem.

As I came back from Tasmania George had become a member of the local Rostrum Club and persuaded me to join No. 7 Adelaide Rostrum. Once a week we would attend a Rostrum meeting during our dinner hour. That really was a means of giving people confidence in public speaking and having a critic that could listen to your exercises. We would all be given either an impromptu or a set five or seven-minute exercise in a topic that we would be given. The critic

would then examine our presentations and give us some feedback on whether it was good, bad or indifferent and what you could do to improve it.

I thought at that stage that many of our research officers in the Department had some problems in making their presentations more effective, particularly to the farmers with whom they were dealing, because the farmers who ultimately were persuaded to make available funds to comply with the requirements of a particular research program, whether it was in improving pasture production, health production or whatever it was. If the research officers had difficulty in explaining to the farmers what they were trying to do, they would have difficulty in getting some funds. So I concluded that it was of ultimate benefit not only to the researchers themselves but to the general production of improvements in the whole of the industry that they should be able to improve their presentations, so I persuaded them to have a Rostrum club in the Department. We would meet periodically, it was fortnightly. But I did find that the officers themselves didn't take kindly to criticism of their presentations and thought that they were beyond reproach and what they had to say was above board and you had to accept it. So you needed to be quite diplomatic to be able to present to them criticisms of their presentations. In some cases it was accepted and in some cases it wasn't I believe. I'm not sure whether it still continues, but the concept anyhow was accepted.

How long did it go on?

Probably 12 months I'd say.

[22:05] Part of the extension service advisory role for officers to be out giving … to interact with the farmers and so on …

I suppose our Extension Section of the Department ought to have been involved in something like that but while we would have an extension seminar probably periodically, once every four or five years, selected officers would attend that from time to time but I don't believe it gave us an extended training program. With public speaking you really need to be continually examining yourself rather than doing it once every period.

You do have different levels of education …

That's right.

[23:00] … experience and you've got to get ideas across to the farmers. Did you get involved in any media work, or radio presentations or TV?

In Mt Gambier in particular I guess we were involved in presentations with the local station but at that stage I don't believe we had a lot to do with the radio in Adelaide except for publications from time to time on herd recording and proving, I've had a few of those.

Things like publications? You mentioned before about how the programs were becoming very scientific and so on. Did you have to write up reports and get them published?

Yes. Each research program had it's own research presentation. While my involvement wasn't as a research officer, I would need to report periodically to the Research Section on the development of artificial breeding in the State.

Would those reports have been published in things like the *Journal of Agriculture* or were they just internal sort of documents?

[24:05] Basically they would be internal, but we would have to present to each research meeting photocopied copies of our presentation, what the research project was about and so on. I'm not sure whether that's a historic record has been kept of that or not, but possibly not.

So what sort of time would you have been spending on doing administrative report writing and … *(speaking over each other)* ...

Fairly limited on that extent. Mostly it was out in the field.

And essentially at Northfield?

I would suggest that probably two days of the week I would be in head office with George Durney developing records and the other three days would probably be at either Northfield or in the field.

And obviously it is different when you are out in the region down at Mt Gambier and so on?

That's right.

[25:05] Did you get involved in any of the regulations or legislation?

As a Dairy Officer I certainly didn't get involved in regulatory work because my role was a Dairy Husbandry Officer as such.

But in Tasmania certainly, my role was also handling the regulations of the Department's Dairy Section so you needed to ensure that the farmers complied with the health requirements, production requirements and so on. You liaised between the production of the product and the end production in the dairy factory itself. You worked with the farmers as well as the factory following up the type of material that came into the factory. You could identify a farmer who wasn't producing quality material. [*] Some … production that I think in Wynyard it was a cream-producing factory initially but it ultimately became a whole milk as well as a cream-producing area where they produced cheese as well as butter. Farmers used to think that if they produced whole milk and it was still in liquid form by the time it got to the factory that's all you needed. But it needed to pass a quality test there and there were times when milk couldn't pass what they called a 'Method and Blue Quality Test'. As a result of that you could say to the farmer, 'I'm sorry my friend, your payment is going to be reduced this period because your milk hasn't passed the standard of quality that is required of it'. It would take some difficulty to explain to them so you'd go through their processing machinery and say, 'Well here's the problem. You haven't cleaned this machine for the last three years or whatever or three weeks'

and show them just how to go about it. The end quality product would be demonstrated then and they could see what they should be doing.

[*Revision supplied by Mr Norman on 16 February 2005 follows:
In the case of cream it meant grading each can as it came into the factory. The cream was graded by the factory grader from choicest through 1st to 2nd or reject. Milk had to pass a milk quality test known as The Methalene Blue Test. A 10 ml sample was treated with Methalene blue dye and incubated. The greater the number of bacteria in the sample, the quicker the dye was absorbed. First quality milk was required to have retained its flavour after five hours of incubation. The Wynyard Co-op Dairy Company was initially a cream-processing factory in Wynyard. It subsequently absorbed the cheese factory at Yolla and incorporated a milk-processing section at Wynyard for cheese making. With the information resulting from the quality testing the Dairy Adviser could liaise between the factory and producer demonstrating that payments for quality production depended on hygiene in the dairy and an effectively operating milking machine. Advisers were welcomed by producers when it was found their advice could improve income. Consequent farm visits led to wider advice on farm operations.]

[27:10] At the other end, Geoff, talking about the dairy work in South Australia: were you involved in framing regulations as opposed to applying them?

Mostly regulations had been framed by then and we were simply following them, but certainly there was a need periodically to examine the justification for a particular thing, but it wasn't an ongoing program.

You mentioned you retired in 1985.

Yes.

Yes. Just to clarify the record of your earlier mention of being seconded to the Department was, you actually resigned in Tasmania …

That's right. Came to Adelaide.

… came to Adelaide and joined the Department here. Why did you retire in 1985? A bit early?

They resolved to do away with the Chief of the Animal Industry Division and put him directly under the Office of the Director of Agriculture. So I could see that my future as a divisional chief was limited so I decided to get out while the going was good!

So a couple of years on the early side.

Actually, it was about three years prior to retirement. In those days you had to retire at 65 I think it was.

It may have been your original idea perhaps?

[28:35] At that stage my uncle was having problems in running his … problem with tenants and so on and his collection of … What would that term …?

He was running a property …

Property management, that's right. Mind you, he was then at the age of something like 94 or 5 and I could forgive him. It seemed to me to be a reasonably easy transition from one role to the

next in view of the fact that my future as an officer of the Department obviously had some limitations so I thought to get out while the going was good.

[29:25] I won't put you on the spot about individual people except in terms of perhaps the Directors of Agriculture. Did you have much to do with Marshall Irving, Jim McColl …?

The most I had to do with was Marshall Irving mainly because of his involvement with the Artificial Breeding Board. Certainly I found him a most astute character. He knew exactly what he was doing and not only that he seemed to be able to get on well with his officers. I would have thought that he was one of the outstanding officers. As far as earlier officers … a guy by the name Strickland was also an officer of the Department I think. What was his name?

Was it Geoff Strickland?

Yes. Geoff Strickland was a sort of … I had not a lot to do with the Horticultural Section. Geoff Strickland came up from the Horticultural Section in the Department and I've got a feeling that Marshall Irving was director when I came back from Tasmania anyhow. Jim McColl was also a lecturer in agricultural economics at the University of Melbourne when I undertook my postgraduate course, so I was interested to operate with Jim under his role as the director when I came back from Tasmania. Jim certainly knew what he was about and he was aware of the agricultural and economic sections. I will admit that economics was not an area that I found of great interest because I had to start pretty much at scratch like I did when I learned chemistry first of all. Terms in economics were something that I had great difficulty with.

You needed more than a 6-week crash course!

You can say that again!

Just out of interest: did you and Jim know each other from …

Yes. Jim remembered who I was.

He would have been the director through to your retirement then.

Yes, he was.

Did you have any dealings with the Ministers at all?

Yes. I'm trying to think of the gentleman who lives in Tasmania. Chapman? [break in recording]

That's Ted Chapman of Kangaroo Island.

That's right, yes. I had more to do with Ted as I became involved with the Animal Industry Section. Certainly I found that Ted you could talk to and I could still have some words with him even when he retired. And I retired he remembered who I was, that was good.

A lot of people don't get to deal with the Ministers or even the directors. You might see them on once-a-year trip or something like that.

That's right, yes.

That probably rounds it out in one sense, Geoff, but there'll be some questions that come out of the transcript perhaps. And there might be other things that you recall we can jot down in due course. Thanks very much for being involved and certainly for getting more of the artificial breeding story down. That's pretty good. Thank you.

[33:08] **End of side B, tape 1**
End of interview