

City of Adelaide
Oral History (Extension) Project 2011/2012

OH 111

Interview with

Mrs Margo Bates

Long-time resident of the City of Adelaide

Conducted by Madeleine Regan

10 February 2012

Table of contents

Table of contents	ii
The City of Adelaide Oral History Project	iii
Biographical note	iv
Photographs	v
Transcript of first interview (10 February 2012)	1
Transcript of second interview (24 February 2012)	17
Timed summary* - interview recorded on 10 February 2012	29
Timed summary - interview recorded on 24 February 2012	30

*A timed summary provides an outline of the content of an Oral History interview and keywords that make it possible to navigate the recording of the interview in sections.

The City of Adelaide Oral History Project

As part of its concern to preserve evidence of Adelaide's past, the Adelaide City Council established an Oral History Project in 1984 to conduct recorded interviews with persons who had made a notable contribution to the City of Adelaide. This included former Lord Mayors, Councillors and long serving former Corporation staff, as well as long-time City residents, business and community identities.

The project coincided with the lead up to the State's 150 Jubilee in 1986, the national Bicentennial in 1988, and the Corporation's own 150th birthday celebrations in 1990.

The Oral History Project concluded in 2000, but was revived in 2011 at the time of the State's 175th celebrations in order to capture the experiences and memories of more people closely associated with the City. This interview forms part of what is known as the Oral History (Extension) Project.

The oral history interviews provide a record of the City and its Council's past that complements the historic documents held by the City Archives.

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Biographical note

Margo Bates was born Marjorie Matilda Stephen on 16th November 1910 in Adelaide. Her parents lived in the City of Adelaide for a few years before they moved to Wayville where Margo received her early education in a small private school. With her younger brother and sister, Margo spent time with her maternal grandparents and aunts and uncles on West Terrace, and also with her paternal grandparents who lived in Wayville. The family moved first to Wallaroo and then to Port Lincoln where Margo went to high school. She left school at 16 years, and went to work in the Engineering and Water Supply where she was the only woman. Margo married at 19 years, had a premature baby who died, and after about 18 months the couple moved to Adelaide and rented a house on Tynte Street, North Adelaide. She worked at Balfours and also performed ballet and tap dancing at the Tivoli at night.

After divorcing her husband, Margo lived in the Riverina, New South Wales and worked in different jobs. She married Eric Jackson and their son, Peter, was born in 1941. She returned to live with her parents during the War and moved to St Peters and worked while also caring for her son and her brother's three children. Over her life, she took on a range of different jobs including teaching English in East Timor. She moved to Gilles Street in the City, and returned to live there with her third husband after spending some years in Queensland in the late 1990s. At the age of 87 years she learned how to swim and participated in the Masters Games and has won 194 gold medals. In 2001 she received a Medal of the Order of Australia for her service to the community, particularly through the Masters Games, and as a fundraiser for charitable organisations. Margo is blind, lives alone in her house with the support of carers, relatives, and friends, and she loves the proximity to Hutt Street where she is taken for coffee and dinners at the restaurant on the corner.

In this interview Margo speaks about her childhood and growing up as part of a large interesting extended family; schooling and early working life in Port Lincoln; the experience of living in North Adelaide and working in the City and performing at the Tivoli. Margo talks about her love for her son and the sadness at his sudden death in the last two years; the fulfilment of a dream to learn swimming; travel to compete in several Masters Games including Canada at the age of 99; and her pride in winning gold medals. She recalls the party hosted by Lord Mayor Harbison held in honour of her 100th birthday and says that she has no real secret for her long life apart from enjoying each day and setting goals.

Photographs



Marjorie Stephen aged 4 months



Marjorie, Alex and Gwen Stephen 1930



Costume For Nellie Kelly at Tivoli Theatre
November 1934



Marjorie Jackson 1943





Margo in the pool



Margo, at home, April 2012

**FIRST INTERVIEW WITH MRS MARGO BATES
RECORDED BY MADELEINE REGAN**

**in the City of Adelaide
on Friday 10th February 2012**

Transcript of first interview (10 February 2012)

Oral Historian (OH): This is an interview with Margo Bates by Madeleine Regan, recorded for the City of Adelaide Oral History Extension Project 2011-2012. The interview is taking place at Margo's home in Gilles Street, Adelaide, on 10 February 2012.

Margo Bates (MB): And that is not Gillies, it's Gilles. [Margo corrects OH pronunciation].

OH: Gilles Street, thank you. Well first, Margo, I'd like to thank you for agreeing to participate in the project.

MB: [laughs]

OH: To begin with, Margo, could you please tell me your full name?

MB: My full name?

OH: Yes.

MB: Well the one I was christened with?

OH: Yes.

MB: Marjorie Matilda.

OH: And what was your family ...?

MB: Stephen [Margo spells the name].

OH: And what is your date of birth?

MB: 16 November 1910.

OH: So you've had a pretty long life to date?

MB: Yes, yes, long and active.

OH: And do you know why you were given your names Marjorie Matilda?

- MB: Yes. Marjorie was my mother's best girlfriend, Marg King, I was named after her, and Matilda? was my grandmother's second name, on my father's side. It's a family name.
- OH: Right.
- MB: I now have a little niece living up in Alice Springs and she's Matilda?
- OH: It's a lovely name.
- MB: Yeah.
- OH: And can you tell me your father's name?
- MB: Frank Everett Stephen. Everett was a family name because his mother was a Miss Everett, so they gave him the name of Everett, Frank Everett Stephen, yeah.
- OH: And where did your father grow up? Where did your father grow up?
- MB: Where did he die?
- OH: Where did he live when ...?
- MB: He lived in Adelaide.
- OH: Right.
- MB: They were living at Norwood, around there, out at Wellington Street, Norwood, when he died. Mum out-lived him by a good many years.
- OH: Right.
- MB: But she had to go into a nursing home later in life because I couldn't manage to look after her, she needed care.
- OH: And where did your father grow up?
- MB: Where did he die?
- OH: Where did he grow up?
- MB: Where did he grow up? Er, I think in Wayville, Clark Street, Wayville.
- OH: And what did your father do?
- MB: He was a motor mechanic, a very clever one too.
- OH: And there's a story about something special that he did.
- MB: Oh yes, in the early days he drove a car from Renmark to Waikerie, or somewhere on the river. It was quite an achievement in those days because it was only a sandy track, it wasn't a road, but he drove through there in one of the old 1910 Fords, one of the early cars [laughs].
- OH: And what about your mother, what was her name?
- MB: Katherine, Katherine Coppinger she was, her maiden name, and she lives on West Terrace, 28 West Terrace, Adelaide. They lived there, her family

lived there for years. She was the eldest of 11 children, she had seven brothers and three sisters.

OH: And I think some of those children were close to you in age, is that right?

MB: Oh yes, the two youngest ones, the youngest one was two years older than me, and the next one was four years. They were the last two my grandfather had, Frank and Jill, and wherever he went he'd take his two and we three, the five of us went everywhere, he took us all over the place. He was a wonderful singer, my grandfather, and long before people were singing nursery rhymes, we were singing Gilbert and Sullivan [laughs] songs.

OH: So he loved music?

MB: Oh yes, he had a beautiful voice, and he used to sing at charity concerts around the West End years ago. They were as poor as church mice themselves, but he was very proud, he would never accept charity from anybody, but he would sing proudly to raise money for them, yeah.

OH: And you had siblings, two siblings?

MB: Yeah, a brother 14 months younger, and a sister two years and 10 months younger than me. There were three of us under three. I was just on three when I had a brother and sister. I remember my sister being born. I remember that. When I told my mother years later, I described the nurse and the bed that mum had my sister in, she couldn't believe it, but she said: *You weren't even three years old*. But I remembered it. [Laughs] I had a fantastic memory. [Laughs]

OH: You have.

MB: Mm.

OH: And I remember you telling me about going for a walk with your grandfather down the West End streets of Adelaide.

MB: Yes, yeah, oh yes. In those days there used to be a little shop on every corner just about, with corner, little corner deli type of thing, and my grandfather was known to all of them there, and he'd brag: *These are my three beautiful grandchildren*, you know, he was very proud of us. [Laughs] And we loved him so much, and he used to sing to us, and one of the songs he used to sing was [singing] *Oh soldier, soldier, won't you marry me for a five pound fiddle and a drum*, and we'd be waiting to go bom, bom [clapping], the drum [laughs].

OH: And I imagine you really enjoyed it?

MB: Oh we did, we just adored him. We'd wait for him, he used to work on a Saturday in those days, and we'd wait Saturday lunchtime, we'd be up there waiting for him to come home from work, and he, I don't know how he did it, but he always had a bright, new, shiny penny for each one of us,

never an old penny, it was always a nice, bright, shiny new one for each of us.

OH: And what would you have done with that penny?

MB: Uh?

OH: What would you have done with that penny?

MB: Well there was a, at the back of their house there was a man who used to buy bottles – we used to collect empty bottles and take them into him – and we'd buy homemade toffee with it, we'd get a penneth of homemade toffee. [Laughs]

OH: And what was that like?

MB: It was lovely. Well, being those days we thought it was lovely because we didn't get much in the way of sweets, you know, we weren't indulged in that form. We had good food but my father was always in work, he was never out of work, so mum never ever went short of anything, like a lot of people in those days who did, but we never did because my dad always had work, and he always had someone's car to repair or do work on, on the weekends, so we always had a car ride on Sunday afternoon [laughs] because he'd have a car in the yard repairing it. [Laughs]

OH: And Margo, where were you actually born?

MB: In Adelaide at the old Queen Elizabeth, Queen's Nursing Home I think it was called, Queen's Home, on the terrace that's just by the Victoria Park Racecourse, that used to be a nursing home there, and I was born, actually born there.

OH: And do you know where your parents were living at that time?

MB: Yes, they were living with a Mrs Kelly in Princess Street.

OH: In the city?

MB: Yeah, in the city. They had the two rooms and the use of a kitchen in those days, but once I came along the lady had, the lady who had, Mrs Kelly, who owned the house, didn't want a baby in the house so they had to get out, so that was when they got a home at Wayville, at Joslin Street, Wayville, number 5, Joslin Street, Wayville, and we lived there until dad got another job in the country. We went to live at Wallaroo.

OH: And do you remember going to Wallaroo?

MB: Yes, I do, yeah, I remember it very clearly, and it was there that my migraine headaches started, when I was eight years old, these dreadful headaches started, and I had them until I was 79, and I had a massive brain haemorrhage at that age, and when I recovered I had no more headaches, and I haven't had a headache since, so whatever it was cleared up, mm.

OH: And do you remember much about your father's parents?

MB: Oh yes. I just adored my grandmother, and she had a trap and a pony called Blackie, and she used to take me shopping, we'd go up to the market and I'd sit alongside her, and we'd have a rug over our knees and she had the hood down at the back, and we'd go up to the market shopping, and I'd go with her, and I used to love that, and then I'd go sometimes ... then when I went to school, it was in the same street as their house, the little private school, and I used to go to granny's for lunch on a Monday [laughs].

OH: That would have been a treat I guess?

MB: Oh, it was, it was wonderful. She never ever took to the other two but she did like me [laughs].

OH: So you spent quite a bit of time with her?

MB: Yes, I did, yes. She always smelt lovely. I had a very keen sense of smell, even then, and she always used to rustle with her silks and satins, and she dressed beautifully, and of course she never ever did any housework, they always had maids, they were very well off. The original home where she lived is where the Hari Krishna's now have the house as a, like a castle out on Goodwood Road. That was the family home, the Everett home. They were known then as landed gentry in those days.

OH: And how would they have made their money?

MB: They were bankers in England, they were very wealthy people, and of course they brought their money out to Australia with them, but they had this beautiful home and always had maids.

OH: And that was different from your mother's family?

MB: Oh, very different indeed. Dad's family couldn't stand my mother because she was a Catholic, and his family couldn't stand theirs because they were Protestants. People in those days were very passionate about their religion, it's not the same now, but they were then.

OH: And how did you think about that, like was it something that was talked about in your home?

MB: Yes, it was, and I remember when I was 14, I vowed then that I would never quarrel with anyone about religion, and I would go into any church and mix with any people, which I did do. I never worried about what religion people were. They were all Christian to me, and that's all that mattered. They were very passionate about Catholic and Protestant, you know, in those days. It's very different now.

OH: And in your family, did your mother go to church?

MB: Oh yes, yeah. Oh, I remember too she had one brother who was a real character, he was always referred to as *the boy*, and this particular morning he crept up, it was in church, and he went down alongside mum to take communion, and she whispered to him, she said: *You shouldn't be here*,

you didn't go to confession, you shouldn't be here to have communion. He said: Oh, it's not the invisible I'm afraid of, he said, it's the visible in the back seat. His father was there counting heads to make sure they all went to church and all went to communion [laughs].

OH: This is your grandfather?

MB: Yeah, and the boy, one of his younger sons, he said: *It's not the invisible I'm afraid of, he said, it's the visible up in the back seat* [laughs]. He was a real wag, yeah. And another one was on the stage in Melbourne, he was a tap dancer, he was a very, very good dancer. No one could follow him, he was like one of the ones on television now, the one that does *Singing in the Rain*, he dances to that. Well my uncle was like that, he'd make it up as he went along, he could dance to anything from *Nearer My God to Thee*, to *The Irish Jig*. It wouldn't matter to Jim, he could dance to it.

OH: So you obviously had quite a strong relationship with your mother's family?

MB: Oh yes, we did. We used to see them often, because we lived at Wayville, and we used to walk all that way up to West Terrace, these little kids. Well I was the one who walked. Mum had a pusher for the baby, and Alex would stand on the step of a little pushcart, and I had to walk, so I learnt to walk long distances from a very early age [laughs]. I was a good walker, yeah.

OH: And what about school, Margo?

MB: School?

OH: Yeah.

MB: Well I went to this little private school to start school, and then when we went to Wallaroo, there was no private school, I went to a public school, and I hated it, and I remember they used to, the Headmaster used to be on a raised platform out the front for assembly, and the whole school would do physical jerks, and I remember we had to do lunging, and I was the only one standing there, I had no idea what lunging meant, and I stood there like an idiot not knowing what to do next, you know, I didn't, I'd never heard about lunging, but I must have learnt about it eventually because I joined in everything, but I hated that school at Wallaroo after the private school, you know, it was so different, yeah.

OH: How long did your family stay in Wallaroo?

MB: I think about a year. I went to a different school every year in a different town, until we went to Port Lincoln and I was in grade, the last grade before high school, Grade 7 it was then, and then I went to high school in Port Lincoln, and from there I went to Teacher's College and studied to be a teacher.

OH: And what about Port Lincoln in those days, what was Port Lincoln like?

- MB: Oh, very, very isolated. It was the back end of nowhere, you know, the only way you could get there by car was to go up to Port Augusta, 200 miles, and down the other side 200 miles. It was over 400 miles by road, otherwise you went by boat, and the boat took overnight, went overnight.
- OH: And did your father have a car, did he own a car?
- MB: No, he didn't own a car for years. We used to take other people's cars for repairs and we'd go out in that car, then eventually he bought an old car, a [?] Dijon, it was an old French car with the gears on the right hand side instead of the left, but I learnt to drive it when I was 14, I was a good driver, but my brother hated it, all he was interested in was slow race horses and fast women, as he grew up, but I was interested in wheels. I'd drive anything on wheels. I rode a motorbike as well [laughs].
- OH: And what about school, what did you like about school?
- MB: I loved school, I really loved it, yeah, and I remember we had one Headmaster in Port Lincoln, and I used to go in, in the lunch hour, and write on the blackboard, and all this sort of thing, and I remember one day he came in and I'd been writing on the blackboard, and I hadn't had time to rub it all off, and he came in and he had a look at it and he said: *And what diminutive person has been using my blackboard* [laughs]. *Please Sir, I did.* [Laughs]
- OH: Did you get into trouble?
- MB: No, no, I never got into trouble because I was a good scholar, I was always one of the top scholars.
- OH: What subjects did you like best?
- MB: I liked them all. I loved English and Geography, History, I loved it all, mm. I was very good at Arithmetic, I topped the country in the Intermediate exams. I was one of the top three students in the whole of Australia in Arithmetic and Maths, I was very good at Maths, mm, very good at Maths. [Laughs]
- OH: And when did you leave school, Margo?
- MB: I was 16 and I left there to go to work. I left school on a Friday and started school, started work on the Monday with the Engineering & Water Supply Department, in the government. I was doing shorthand and typing.
- OH: So you'd done shorthand and typing at school?
- MB: Yeah, yeah, so I had my living at it then, yeah.
- OH: And what was it like starting work?
- MB: Oh, I loved it, I was very pleased. [Laughs] I had my first pair of shoes with heels [laughs], instead of school shoes, you know, I had a very nice little pair of what they called *flapper heels* on the shoes, a bit higher than the ones that I was used to, and my father threatened to chop them up, I

wasn't allowed to wear them, but then he had to give way because I was earning money and paying my board home.

OH: What did he see as being the problem with the shoes?

MB: That I was grown up. He wanted me kept as a child I suppose, yeah. He told me years later that I was his favourite. I said: *Well, you had a funny way of showing it.* I said: *You were always cruel to me.* He was too, but that's how he was, mm, yeah.

OH: And what was it like being a young woman in a workplace at that time?

MB: Well it was horrible because I was the only girl and there were 14 men working there, and they made fun of me quite a lot, it went, going over my head of course, I didn't understand what they were talking about, but they did make fun of me because I was so young and so naïve, mm, but anyway it was a good job, and I stayed there until I got married.

OH: And how old were you when you got married, Margo?

MB: Nineteen.

OH: Nineteen. Was it usual at that time for young women to marry around that age?

MB: Yeah, mm, oh yes, yes it was. But I wanted to get out of Port Lincoln, I hated Port Lincoln, hated it, and there was no way I could get out of it except that I got married.

OH: And who was your husband?

MB: Who was he?

OH: Yes.

MB: He was just a local boy.

OH: And what was his name?

MB: Tom. His proper name was Maurice but when he went to work and they asked him his name and he told them Maurice. They said: *Oh, that's too fancy for here, you can pick one of the other, one of these, Tom, Dick, or Harry.* He said: *Oh, the first one will do,* so he was Tom.

OH: After that?

MB: Yeah, always ...

OH: And what was his surname?

MB: Carey. [Margo spells the name]

OH: And his family lived in Port Lincoln?

MB: Yeah, yeah. No, they lived in Adelaide and he came to board with us and that's how I got to know him.

OH: And when you got married, where did you live?

- MB: Lived in Port Lincoln, yeah, we lived in a house belonging to the firm that he was the manager of.
- OH: And what was that firm? What was the firm called?
- MB: Now who was it? I just can't think at the moment.
- OH: It was a business?
- MB: Yes, a big business, it was a building, building business. I just can't think of it at the moment.
- OH: Well that's alright. And how long did you live in Port Lincoln as a married woman?
- MB: About a year and a half and then we both came here, got a job, got transferred to Adelaide with the firm, and we went to live in North Adelaide, had a small house out there, it was single-fronted villa in Tynte Street, North Adelaide.
- OH: And did you, were you buying that house or were you ...?
- MB: Oh no, we rented.
- OH: Right.
- MB: Mm.
- OH: And what was that house like, did it have a passage down one side?
- MB: Yes, yeah, similar to this really, what they call a single-fronted villa, it was in Tynte Street, There were two pairs of houses the same, a duplex of two there, a laneway, and another two. Two of the houses are still there but the first two were knocked down, there's another building there, but the other two are still there.
- OH: And were you working at this time?
- MB: Yes, I got a job at Balfours in the city, I was a waitress, and I used to walk into town, walk to work, walk home, yeah.
- OH: And what was North Adelaide like at that time?
- MB: What was what?
- OH: What was North Adelaide like at that time?
- MB: Oh, oh it was, it was a very nice place to live. There were nice people all around there. It wasn't a poverty-stricken place by any means, it was quite an upgrade, upmarket place, quite nice, mm.
- OH: You told me a story about when it was really hot at night.
- MB: Yeah, we had to go up to Wellington Square and sleep on the grass up there, taking a, taking a rug with you. Everyone used to go up there and sleep outside [laughs]. No such thing as air-conditioning in those days, or fans, no such thing as electric fans and air-conditioning. Everyone used to go up there.

- OH: And would you stay the whole night there?
- MB: Oh yeah, yeah, stay there 'til daylight, and then you'd go home, yeah [laughs].
- OH: So was it a friendly kind of place?
- MB: Oh yes, very, everyone knew everybody else, yeah, very friendly, very nice. Oh dear.
- OH: And where did you do your shopping?
- MB: At the Central Market, it was a wonderful place to shop, the market – go there Friday nights as a rule because I was working in the daytime, yeah.
- OH: And what was the job like at Balfours?
- MB: Very strict, they were very, very strict. You couldn't have hair hanging down, you had to have your hair off your face and tied back, and it was just very strict indeed, you know, and no such thing as writing orders down, no matter how many people you had at your table or tables – we had so many tables each – you had to memorise all your orders, and I remember the first order I took [laughs]. I got out to the pantry to gather the cups and saucers and things that I needed, but I couldn't remember one thing that I'd been asked to get, so I stood there and one thing came to me and I picked it up, and then another, and gradually it all came back to me. But I was absolutely petrified, I couldn't remember a thing [laughs] but I did remember, mm.
- OH: And was Balfours open for lunch and dinner?
- MB: Yes, yes, yes. I had my dinner at night, you know, that was free, so I had one good meal a day, you know, mm, yes. That was in Rundle Street. They had two cafes in Rundle Street at that time, one on one side of the street and one on the other.
- OH: And what kind of food did they offer?
- MB: Oh, much the same as you'd get now, like pasties and pies and things like that, buns, yeast buns, little cakes, things like that. Not a big meal like you'd get at a hotel but it was a nourishing meal you could get there at a reasonable price, but of course they weren't open at night like the pubs were, they closed at 7 o'clock or whatever it was in those days, and then I was dancing at the time at the Tivoli, so I'd leave there and go to the Tiv and get ready for the night performance [laughs].
- OH: And where was the Tivoli?
- MB: In Gouger Street, yeah.
- OH: And what kind of dancing did you do?
- MB: Ballet, ballet and tap, yeah, I worked there as well, worked there at night time, mm. I was a good dancer.
- OH: You must have been busy?

- MB: Oh, flat out, absolutely flat out, and by the time I'd get there after working, I'd go into one of the bathrooms and put water in the bath tub, and I'd sit on the edge of the bath and put my feet in the water to try and get the swelling down so I could get my shoes on because, you know, I used to work so hard, such long hours. It was really hard work.
- OH: Margo, tell me about the Tivoli, what kind of place was it?
- MB: What?
- OH: The Tivoli, what kind of place was it?
- MB: Oh, it's a big theatre, 'the Tiv,' oh, very big theatre, and they used to have really good vaudeville, vaudeville shows. They were good, yes, so it was lovely there. [Laughs]
- OH: And how many nights a week would you have worked there?
- MB: Every night, every night except Sunday, yeah. I worked very hard, I worked long hours, mm. I've always worked hard. It must have done me good, I'm not worn out yet [laughs].
- OH: Well that's good. And was there much time for a social life with Tom?
- MB: No, no, no social life whatever, too busy. I had two girlfriends, two sisters, one was a show girl and the other was a dancer in the ballet with me, and we were great mates the three of us, and on Sundays we'd walk down to, no, we'd get a tram down to Glenelg, no the train, there used to be a train down to Glenelg. We'd take the train down to Glenelg, we'd walk along the beach to Henley Beach, and then we'd catch another train back up to the city, and that was our outing on a weekend, but then I'd walk out to their place at Payneham, and Rene used to say to me: *We're having butter this weekend and we're having a roast dinner, you'd better come out.* And I'd go out for a meal with them. [Laughs] We'd have a decent meal once a week, you know, if we were lucky. [Laughs] Oh dear.
- OH: And what about life as a married woman, what was that like?
- MB: I wasn't too keen on it, actually, I wasn't too keen on being married at all. I was glad to get out of Port Lincoln, that's the main reason, came to Adelaide, and then eventually I left my husband, divorced him, got out of that, yeah.
- OH: And I think that you had a first child, didn't you?
- MB: Yes, yes in Port Lincoln, yes, but he only lived for two hours and died. He's buried there. He was a little *premmie*, yeah.
- OH: That must have been a very hard thing?
- MB: I didn't get over that for years, it was a terrible blow, and it was dreadful, yeah.
- OH: And then ...

MB: I made friends with a clairvoyant years later and she picked out the fact, she said that my child had grown up in the next world and he was with me, he knew who his mother was. It was amazing. She didn't know, I hadn't told her, it was years before, but he was there with me. isn't that amazing?

OH: It must have been a comfort to you?

MB: It was, it was absolutely marvellous, I couldn't believe it. She was just wonderful, Sister Toser her name was ... she was a clairvoyant, she was the cleverest woman I've ever met. We were going out one night, she used to give talks you know, and readings and all those sort of things, I went one night with her, and she had a big hall, there were about 100 people there, and she gave a message to everyone there by the end of the night. She'd say: *over here, over there*, not one after the other, all over the place. When she'd finish she went like that [clapping]. She said: *Have I missed anyone?* Not anyone, she'd given a message to everybody. Gosh she was clever, and she was the one. We were going out one night, she said: *Oh*, she said, *before we go any further*, she said, *there's a beautiful bluebird on the bonnet of your car*. She said: *Its wings are spread and it's ready to fly*. She said: *You're going to travel the world*. I said: *Oh Sister, don't be funny, where would I get the money from to travel the world?* She said: *That I don't know*. But she said: *travel the world you will*. And she said: *Your son will go to America*. He was 12 at the time. He went to America to live when he was 24. Yeah, she saw it all there.

OH: And where was she working from?

MB: Oh, she had a ... just home.

OH: But was she ... was this in Adelaide?

MB: Oh yes, she lived in Adelaide, and I remember I was going out to see her on this particular Sunday – no, I went out on the Monday, that's right, to see her. I'd been away somewhere and I wanted to catch up with her – when I got there her husband greeted me. He said: *You're just a day too late*. He said: *She died yesterday*, so I missed her, but oh she was clever, she really was clever, mm.

OH: And Margo, if we go back to you in your 20s ...

MB: Yeah.

OH: What else was happening, because you married and then you divorced, you told me?

MB: Yes, yeah, I left him.

OH: Did you stay in Adelaide?

MB: Now let's think. Yes, I stayed in Adelaide for a while, and then I met another boy and became engaged to him, Dick Hutton. I was engaged to Dick, and he was looking for work, and we both went to Melbourne and I met up with some friends there from New South Wales, who invited me to

their home for a holiday, where I went, and that's where I met the man I married eventually, and had Peter, eventually, yeah.

OH: What part of New South Wales was that?

MB: That was in the Riverina, what they call the Riverina, between the Murrumbidgee and the Murray River, that land between there, it's called the Riverina, and I lived there. They were the happiest years of my life, yeah.

OH: What were you doing when you were there?

MB: I was hairdressing, yeah, I had my own business and I did very well there, yeah, had a wonderful time there, but one weekend, I was boarding at the hotel there, a beautiful new hotel, I was boarding there, and this particular Sunday I was looking after the bar for the owner, she used to get on the gin, and she said to me, because I didn't drink or smoke. She says: *Stevie*, she said: *would you look after the bar for me, I'm going upstairs for a sleep*. I said: *Alright*. So I looked after the bar, and while I was there, we had a football team from Melbourne staying there at the time, they came up for the weekend, and I looked up and there's this footballer coming downstairs, and all he had on was his watch [laughs]. I said: *I think you'd better go back to bed ... OK, Stevie*, he said, turned around and went back upstairs [laughs].

OH: And why were you called Stevie?

MB: Oh, Miss Stephen, my name.

OH: So you went back to ...?

MB: I hadn't married then, I'd never married then, I was Miss Stephen, and everyone just called me Stevie, yeah. Oh, that was funny.

OH: And when the war broke out in 1939 ...

MB: Yeah.

OH: You probably have some memories of that?

MB: Oh yes, yeah. My husband joined up, I was married by then, and he joined up, he was in the air force. He went away, he was flying bombers out from Darwin. I didn't see much of him at all. They were tough years, mm.

OH: And when was Peter born?

MB: Peter?

OH: Yes.

MB: Peter is a war baby, he was born in 1941. His father was 1914 and Peter was 1941, the same numbers. His father, January 1; Peter, January 2, so there were three days' celebration, New Year's Eve, Peter's dad and then Peter. [Laughs]

OH: And Peter's dad's name was?

- MB: Eric, Eric Jackson, mm, tall handsome – he was a lovely man – but he went to the war and he was never the same, when he came back he wasn't the same, he was a stranger to me, so that was that [laughs].
- OH: And what about when Peter was born, where were you living, Margo?
- MB: In Berrigan in New South Wales, I had a big eight-roomed house there, oh it was wonderful, a beautiful home we had there. He was born, I had him at home, my friend said to me: *Are you going to the hospital to have the baby?* I said: *No, I'm not, I'm going to have him home. How can you have him at home, you can't have him by yourself?* I said: *I don't care what happens, I'm not moving from here, I'm having my baby at home.* Anyway, when the time came I had the Matron from the Finley Hospital, came to look after me because her husband had gone to war and she gave up her job and was living at home looking after the farm, so she was able to come and look after me. So I had her all to myself, yeah.
- OH: Well that worked well for you then.
- MB: Yeah, and when Peter was born he said :*Oh!* He said: *you've got a beautiful baby boy*, he said, *a perfect specimen*, yeah, held him up, yeah. Peter was so sharp, he was a bright lad. Mum came up to stay with me one time when Peter was about two and a half, and they were outside one day and she said *Oh look Peter, there's an aeroplane up in the sky.* He said: *Yes, Nanny, that's a Wiraway* and it was a Wiraway plane. [Laughs] She couldn't get over it. [Laughs]
- OH: Wow! He was very observant?
- MB: Oh, he was observant and he was as sharp as a tack. You couldn't put anything over him, he was really clever. By the time he went to school, he went to Rostrevor College, and they used to call him the pin-up boy of the school. Everyone wanted to be like Peter, he was a born leader, yeah.
- OH: So you came back to live in Adelaide, Margo?
- MB: Yeah, oh yes, yeah, yeah.
- OH: And where did you live when you came back?
- MB: I went home, it was war time, I gave up the home, I went back to my parents to live with my parents until the war ended. When Eric came home I'd already bought a house in St Peters, Second Avenue, St Peters, so he had a home to come back to. But he was never the same, so that was that. We eventually parted, and he said, he said: *You think more of that baby than you think of me.* He was jealous of Peter, and Peter was just the light of my life, I just adored him. I did right up until the day he died. We were great mates. I can't believe that he's gone.
- OH: And how, how long ago did Peter die?
- MB: Going on for two years now, but he's still there with me, and my clairvoyant friend said, I was up in the sitting room, and she said: *Peter is*

here, sitting here with a book, she says He's here with you now. She could see him, I couldn't of course, but she could. She said: He's sitting there on the couch and he has a book. And that would have been Peter, he always had a book, mm.

OH: So was Peter a good student?

MB: Yes, top of his class, top of the school, he was brilliant, he was brilliant.

OH: And Margo, when you were living at St Peters, were you working?

MB: Yes, I was. There was a place on Payneham Road there called Mumzone Products, it was a jam factory. I worked there in the office, I was the cashier and worked in the office, did all sorts of office work, yeah, a bit of typing, yeah, I could walk to work there, and when Peter had holidays I was there handy, you know, he was never a latch-key child, I always had someone there when I wasn't. I never left him alone because at that time I was also looking after my brother's three daughters, the eldest one and twins, twin girls and an older one, so I had the four children to look after. I had one great big room with a bed in each corner, four beds in four corners. [Laughs]. And in the winter time I used to have a fire there in the room, and a little kindergarten table and the kindy chairs, and they'd have the table set and their meals in the room all together, a very happy time for all of them, and one of them was called Peg, and Peter and Peg were great mates, and they used to call each other *eat an egg*, instead of Pete and Peg, it was *eat an egg*. [Laughs] Oh, they were funny.

OH: It must have been a busy household?

MB: It was, very, very busy, because they learnt tap dancing, they went to a little school where they learnt dancing, and I used to make all their fancy costumes and everything else, and do their hair for them. They were always perfectly turned out, you know, and they went to a nun's school, you know, a Catholic nun school out there, and the nuns apologised to me one day because they went home dirty and arrived clean. I said: *They're happy enjoying themselves*, I said: *That doesn't ...* I said: *I'm not cross with them*. They apologised because ... *He's got dirty at school*. You know. I said: *That doesn't matter*. I said: *he can soon be bathed and cleaned*, I said: *That's no problem*. *They're happy that's all that matters*, you know, and the house we lived in, I had a big cellar, it was as big as this kitchen, and in the hot weather I had my sewing machine down there, and ironing board and all that. And the kids would come down there and play and I'd do my work down there, it was lovely, because there was no such thing as air-conditioning or anything, we didn't even have a fan, but we were very comfortable because they had that lovely big room downstairs in the cellar. [Laughs]

OH: And did the three nieces stay with you for a while?

MB: Oh, they were with me for a long time, until their father remarried, then he took them to live with him, and the step-mother was horrible to them, she

was cruel, she gave them a pretty rough time, and one of the twins has a son who has murdered two girls. He's in jail for life, he's still there. He always was queer right from when quite young as a child, but he murdered two girls and threw their bodies in the rubbish tip.

OH: Margo, going back to you and your working life, you had a variety of jobs I think, didn't you?

MB: Oh yes, very much so. At one time I was housekeeping for three Catholic priests in Sydney, on the Parramatta Road, I was there for quite a while because I could have Peter with me there as well you see, because I never went anywhere without him, and I never left him in the care of anyone else. I always looked after him myself, yeah. We were great mates, you know. I miss him terribly. I still miss him, yeah.

OH: That must be very hard.

MB: Yeah. What time is it now, please?

OH: It's quarter to four and we might be able to leave this part of the interview, and start next time with some of your memories from further into your life.

MB: Oh yes, OK.

OH: Thank you, Margo.

MB: Yes, yes we've covered a lot of ground.

End of recording

**SECOND INTERVIEW WITH MRS MARGO BATES
RECORDED BY MADELEINE REGAN**

**in the City of Adelaide
on Friday 24th February 2012**

Transcript of second interview (24 February 2012)

Oral Historian (OH): This is a continuation of an interview with Margo Bates recorded by Madeleine Regan for the City of Adelaide Oral History Extension Project 2011-2012. The interview is taking place at Margo's home in Gilles Street, Adelaide, on Friday, 24 February 2012.

Margo, we've just been talking about you moving here to 350 Gilles Street. I wonder if you can tell me the story of how you came to be here.

Margo Bates (MB): Well I had been married and my husband had died. I was living at Burnside in a very big house with a grass tennis court in the backyard, and all the rest of it, which of course was useless to me living alone, I couldn't imagine being there alone, and I wanted to live somewhere also to be near my parents who lived in Norwood, so I was looking for something or somewhere in Norwood, but the land agent I had was very nice and he said he had nothing in Norwood but he had something in the City, and I said: *Oh, the City, I wouldn't live there.* I thought it was an insult to tell me to live in the City, but anyway he was so nice I relented, I said: *Oh well, I'll have a look at the place.* He told me about it. I said I wanted a rainwater tank and he said that it has that. I wanted a back entrance: *Oh, it has that,* something else it had that I wanted, a backyard where I could put my car in the backyard, just drive straight in: *Oh, it had that.*

So in the end there was nothing I could say I didn't want, so I said I'd have a look at it, so when I came here I had a look at it, and I stood in the passageway and I realised then that I had seen it, I had been given a vision of this place 20 years before. I saw myself living, actually living here, and at the time I thought *Why am I here all alone, where are my parents, where is my brother, where is my sister, where is everybody, I'm all alone?* Of course I didn't know it was going to be 20 years later and my parents would be gone, and it would be different. So it all happened, you know, I had the vision, I saw it all. I moved in, I was only here a week, I had a mattress on the floor, no furniture.

- OH: What was the house like? Can you describe the layout of the house?
- MB: Oh, the same as what it is now.
- OH: Yes, and what's that?
- MB: It's what they call a single-fronted villa, it is a special house, a special design by the shape of the windows and the doors, and it had a very, very small backyard but nice big double gates at the back where I could just drive my car in.
- OH: And how many bedrooms did it have when you moved here?
- MB: Two, only two, it still has only two. It's only a small house.
- OH: Yes. The front room, how did you use the front room?
- MB: That's a sitting room and the next room is my bedroom, and the next one is a bedroom, a spare room, for the odd visitors I have who stay, and the kitchen I had altered. There was a wall there and this was a little room here.
- OH: Where we're sitting now?
- MB: Yes, but I had the wall removed and you can see where the wall has been by that light. I had that left as a skylight, which made it all very bright, and that window down there on that wall, I had that put in. It was a very dark room so I made it so it was nice and bright.
- OH: Why did you decide to live in the City?
- MB: Well, I only had a certain amount of money and I would not have a mortgage, and it just happened that the people who owned this place badly needed the cash. I had the money in my hand, I offered them \$2,000 less than what they were asking and the agent said: *I don't think they'll take that offer.* I said: *Oh well, I'll try something else,* I said, *because I'm not fussy.* I said: *As long as I can pay cash and not have a mortgage. I don't want any debts.* So anyway, he spoke to them and the next morning he came, he said: *They've accepted your offer.*
- OH: And what year was this, Margo?
- MB: 1969.
- OH: And so you moved in pretty ...?
- MB: Yeah, I moved in and a week later I was off to Timor.
- OH: And what were you doing in Timor?
- MB: I was teaching English to the Portuguese people, East Timor people. I had been studying Portuguese because I had become friendly with a Portuguese lady actually in Adelaide, so by the time I got to Timor I had the basics. Nobody spoke English, and the only entertainment there was at night we used to all gather at the Miramar Hotel, only one hotel in Dili, and we'd all gather there and sit around in a big circle. There'd be French

and Portuguese and English and Dutch, all these different nationalities. So I learnt to speak Portuguese at a very early stage, because otherwise I would have been dumb, nobody spoke English, so it was quite an interesting job.

OH: And when you came back, did you come back to this house?

MB: Yes, I left it locked up while I was away.

OH: And what for you were advantages of living in the City at that time?

MB: Well the main reason was I was near my parents, was one thing, and I found out by living here that all the conveniences suited me as a single, living alone person, you know, the Arab Steed [Hotel] across the road for meals, the Chinese restaurants across the road, Nepalese, a five-minute walk up the road, the post office, the newsagent, no matter what I wanted it was all five minutes walk, it really suited me.

OH: And all of these are along Hutt Street?

MB: Oh yes, all on Hutt Street, yes, because I was almost on the corner of Hutt and Gilles, so it's very central, and of course the added great advantage being near the Park Lands, the fresh air, you know, I could go for a walk in the park, or what I used to do in those days, I was very active physically, and I used to walk right around the Victoria Park Racecourse before breakfast every morning. That was a mile right around, so that was good exercise, and all handy to home.

OH: And a beautiful walk too.

MB: Oh wonderful, absolutely wonderful.

OH: And what about your neighbours at the time, Margo?

MB: Oh yes. On one side of me was a girl I taught at school, and she was married to a Dutchman, and they bought the house next to me because she wanted to be near me, so she lived there. She's dead and gone too now. And on the other side I didn't know them at all, but people were very friendly in the City, everyone spoke to you.

OH: And you knew people across the road?

MB: Yes, I did, yes. Yes, I knew John, he was only 14 when I first met John and his family, so we were friends for years.

OH: And John is still a friend of yours?

MB: Oh yes, yes, he's a real dear. He's one of the sweetest people I've ever met, and the sweetest mouth. If you get a chance to have a look, he's got a most beautiful mouth, beautiful shape, beautiful lips. He always kisses me goodnight when he goes, and it's a little butterfly kiss just on the lips, never on the cheek, always on the mouth. [Laughs]

OH: And you were telling me you see John every day?

- MB: Every day, yeah, he comes in every day for a piece of cake and a cup of coffee at my place. He knows the run of the place as much as I do.
- OH: And how do you manage living here at the moment, by yourself, at your age of 102?
- MB: It has its problem at times because I can't see, that's the only problem, but otherwise I'm perfectly healthy. It doesn't bother me because I know everyone around. The neighbours have changed of course in those times. The people next door now, a married couple with two little boys, and they've both been born since I've been here, so they're growing up with me. [Laughs]
- OH: I understand that you have carers who come in?
- MB: Oh yes, I do, yeah, with Domiciliary Care, I have two carers, but they're only here for a couple of hours and then I'm on my own for the rest of the day, but that doesn't bother me.
- OH: And you have a bit of a routine going with meals outside?
- MB: Oh yeah.
- OH: Can you tell me about that?
- MB: Well I have Meals on Wheels who come for lunch, bring the lunch, and at night I go, there's a restaurant on the corner here of Gilles Street and Hutt Street, 'the Argentinian', and I go there every night for dinner, and the owner of the restaurant is married to the chef, and he makes beautiful meals for me. I never order anything, I have whatever he serves up to me.
- OH: And how did you come to go there every night for dinner?
- MB: Well it suited me because it was a five minutes walk, and at that time I could see, but now that I can't see, well it has a double advantage, you know, I'm really quite capable of getting there by myself. I use my wheelchair, and when I'm by myself I wheel the wheelchair myself, but if someone comes along and can help me, I sit in the chair and they push me there [laughs].
- OH: And I think you told me you are there at 6 o'clock each night?
- MB: Yes, yes, they send for me, either the boss herself comes or sends one of the staff. And they wheel me up there for my dinner.
- OH: And how long do you stay?
- MB: Until 10 o'clock. [Laughs] She introduces me to others of her regulars, and some that she's only just met, because I always tell them jokes and make them laugh – wherever I am there's laughter, you see, and they enjoy that. [Laughs] I'm not a grizzly old, elderly old woman by any means. [Laughs]
- OH: No, I can understand that. So living here suits you?

MB: Absolutely, yes, I wouldn't want to live anywhere else. I wouldn't have the conveniences even in a ... they wanted to send me somewhere for respite, I say: *It's no respite when I go to those places*, I said *I'm a lot more comfortable and have more respite where I am*, so I refuse to go, I'm not moving anymore. I said: *I'm not going anywhere where other people want to put me. I'll stay here*. And I'm off on a cruise in a fortnight's time, up the river, doing the River Murray cruise from Mannum up past Lock 1. It's absolutely wonderful, the care and attention you get on that river cruise is marvellous.

OH: And who will you go with on that cruise?

MB: Nobody, I go by myself, you get plenty of company on board, the food is delicious, the company is wonderful, the scenery is superb, what more could you want?

OH: Well it sounds wonderful, it sounds wonderful.

MB: Yes, and I can afford it, that's the main thing. I don't borrow money to go anywhere, I pay cash wherever I go. If I haven't got the money in my hand I go without, it's simple. Bob Francis is like that too you know, unless he's got the money to go somewhere he won't borrow to go anywhere or do anything. He's a character.

OH: And Margo, can you tell me about swimming in your life?

MB: Oh, that was funny that was. I used to go swimming, I like puddling around in the water, but this particular time I had a vision where I was in the water and it was very, very dark, it was stormy sort of weather and the water looked rough, and I was scared stiff of sharks and everything else, and as I was swimming a figure came and swam alongside of me, it was a figure of a young man, and he swam a few strokes with me, then he turned on his side and he said: *Keep swimming*. And as he said that he drifted away, he disappeared, and instead of being grey and stormy and rough, the sky was blue, the water was crystal clear, and I could see white sand under my feet, and I knew then that I was safe. I looked for a spiritual message, I thought: *There must be a message in this for me somewhere, why have I been told to keep swimming?* But I couldn't come to any spiritual message, so I put it out of my head, and it wasn't until 20 years later it suddenly came to me again, this vision of myself swimming, and I thought: *I wonder if I'm meant to physically swim*. What am I looking for?

OH: A dream?

MB: Yes, it might be that I'm meant to really swim, so I went along to the local pool and I said to the man there: *Do you think you could teach me to swim?* I was 87.

OH: And where were you living at that time?

MB: I was living in Queensland, and he said: *Well jump in the water and show me what you can do*. Well I jumped in and I showed him what I could do

with the dog paddling [laughs] and kicking around the place. *Oh*, he said: *Yes, I think I can teach you*. I started and for the first six weeks I hated him and the pool and everything to do with it, because there wasn't a part of me that didn't ache, but I was told to keep swimming, so I thought there must be a reason for it, so I'll do it. So I did, and I started then and it was in Canberra I entered my first Masters' races, a competition, and I rang my coach, he knew I was going to enter of course, and I said: *Oh, I've entered the races in Canberra*. I said: *I forgot everything you told me, I held my head up instead of down, I bellyflopped instead of diving properly, I did everything wrong*. He said: *Never mind you'll do better next time. But how did you get on?* I said: *Well I did three races and I won three gold medals*. [Laughs] And that was the beginning, I've now got 194 gold medals for swimming.

OH: That is fantastic. And I think that you've done a bit of travelling in the Masters' Games?

MB: I've travelled the world, yes, what with the Masters and for pleasure for myself. I've travelled all over Australia of course, I believe in knowing your own country first. I know the history of my country and I'm very proud of it, and I show that to people when I travel, and I've travelled all over America, and down to Mexico, been everywhere, been there, done that!

OH: And I think that you competed in Canada?

MB: Oh yes, I did. I broke five world records in Canada.

OH: And how old were you when you did that?

MB: Ninety-nine.

OH: So you travelled over by yourself?

MB: Yes, yeah. I'm the only woman in the world my age ever to swim 200 metres backstroke, it's a new world record.

OH: Wow!!

MB: When you look at a pool, you look at a 50-metre pool, and you imagine doing four of those laps, it's quite a distance.

OH: That is such an achievement.

MB: Oh yes, it shows I'm fit, physically fit. When I was going to compete in the World Games in Melbourne, 2GB in Melbourne wanted to sponsor me, it's a radio station, so when Alan Jones rang me to see, he said *How would you like the money, we're going to sponsor you?* I said: *Keep it in the thousands*. I was only joking. The next thing I get a cheque for \$5,000, so that paid for me and my son, our airfares, accommodation, transport, everything to compete in the World Games. [Laughs]

OH: Wonderful.

- MB: Yeah! No, I was only joking because I treat everything as a joke, I never take anything too seriously.
- OH: You came back to Adelaide to live?
- MB: Yes.
- OH: When did you come back?
- MB: Well 1969 actually I came back here to live.
- OH: But you went to Queensland and ...
- MB: Yes, oh that's right, I was there for 17 years, that's right, 17 years in Queensland, and I came back to Adelaide, then I was here for a little while and then I went back to Queensland for another 21 years, and eventually came back to Adelaide, and I'm staying, staying put, I'm here to stay until they carry me out in a box.
- OH: And you did some of your swimming practice at the Aquatic Centre I understand?
- MB: Oh yes, what the one here?
- OH: Yes.
- MB: Yes, I did, yes, I've done some there, yes. I'll be doing a lot more there yet because I have to do a lot more training for the next lot of Games that are on in Adelaide, if I'm going to compete I've got to train. You can't go in on wishful thinking, you've got to really work at it. I used to tell my son: *You need the Big W*. And I said: *I'm not talking about Woolworths, this is work, you have to work at anything you're going to do, you work at it. You only get out of it what you put into it.*
- OH: And it seems like you put a lot into your swimming.
- MB: Oh yes, I have, I've worked long hours and regularly training, you know, whether I felt like it or not, and when I first started the teacher at the pool put me with the kids, I wasn't good enough to swim with the adults. [Laughs] So I've come a long way from there.
- OH: You certainly have.
- MB: Yes.
- OH: And Margo, 2010 was an important year for two main reasons, one you turned 100, and the second was that you received the Award of the Order of Australia.
- MB: That's right, yes.
- OH: Can we talk first about turning 100, what was that like?
- MB: [Laughs] Just another birthday, as far as I was concerned, but the Mayor of Adelaide at the time gave me a big birthday party, and he paid all the expenses and everything. And we had this big birthday party at the Adelaide Town Hall for my 100th birthday.

OH: And was that Lord Mayor Harbison?

MB: Yes, yes.

OH: And how did you feel about that?

MB: I wondered why everyone was making a big deal of it, it was just another birthday as far as I was concerned, but I had a good time. [Laughs]

OH: Did you have to make a speech?

MB: Yes.

OH: And what sort of things did you say in your speech?

MB: Oh, I don't remember, it just came into my head and went out again, I didn't make any big deal of it, no.

OH: And what about receiving the Award of the Order of Australia?

MB: Oh, that was a big surprise to me, very big surprise, I had no idea.

OH: And you received it for the reasons?

MB: For community service, for my service to the community, and achievement in the Masters' Games, it covered that, yes. I had to go to Queensland, I had to go to Brisbane for that, because I was living in Queensland at the time, in Harvey Bay, so I had to go to Brisbane to receive that from the Governor. Yeah, that was a big surprise.

OH: And what kind of services to the community can you tell me about?

MB: Mainly in nursing homes, entertaining the elderly, reciting poetry, telling stories, and generally just being a nuisance I suppose. [Laughs]

OH: And would it also have included your time in Timor?

MB: No, that didn't include that I don't think. No, that was a different period of time altogether, different story.

OH: Well it was a great honour to have received that Award?

MB: Oh yes, it's over there somewhere, it's in a little box, yes, and of course all those things up there, they're all what I've won in swimming.

OH: The beautiful trophies.

MB: Oh yeah, and the Olympic Torch, I ran with the Olympic Torch. My great-granddaughter has got it at the moment showing it off at school, but it's usually sitting up there in that corner. I've got the replica of it, yes, so that will go to her when I die, she can keep it.

OH: And where did you run for that?

MB: That was in Hervey Bay, I had to do 500 metres along the forefront. It was done in relays. I was told that I could walk it, you know, so when the one came from behind me and I held my torch up to get mine alight from his, I

forgot I had to walk it, I took off and ran [laughs], I got so excited I just ran. [Laughs] Oh dear!

OH: Oh, that's lovely.

MB: Yeah.

OH: And Margo, you said that you would talk about your son, Peter, you were very close as he grew up.

MB: I just loved him so much, he was absolutely the joy of my life, but he didn't like the Adelaide winters and he bought a property in France, and this particular time we'd been shopping and I said goodbye to him that day. He flew to France the next day, he went to bed that night, went to sleep, and didn't wake up, he died there.

OH: What a shock.

MB: It was dreadful. He was with his partner, she was with him, and she woke up in the morning with a corpse alongside her, terrible for her. Yeah, so that was that, so I lost him, and then last year I lost my husband, he died suddenly, died in his sleep.

OH: You used to go and visit your husband in the nursing home?

MB: Yes, twice a week, yeah, but he got to the stage where he didn't know anybody, didn't know his own name or anything.

OH: And Margo, I understand that you have been a member of the Baha'i Faith for a long time?

MB: I've been a member longer than a lot of people ... Yes, I joined the Baha'i Faith back in 1963, I became a Baha'i.

OH: And that's been an important part of your life?

MB: Most important, yes, because it's based on unity, the central teaching is unity, and I believe in that, I believe that all people are brothers and sisters, you know, there's no difference whether you're black, white, brown or brindle, and I loved that about it, just unity.

OH: And have the Baha'i community got a house or a place of worship in Adelaide?

MB: Yes, we do. It's called the Baha'i Centre of Learning, it's in Flinders Street. It used to be the old Flinders Street School. That's our property. They hold meetings there, have afternoon teas and talks, things like that. If people want to know, they could go there and find out. We never forced it on anybody. If you want to know about it we'll tell you, otherwise we don't mention it.

OH: And how often would you go there?

MB: I don't go at all unless someone takes me. How can I go? I can't go anywhere unless someone takes me, I just can't, I can't catch public transport because I can't see. I keep in touch, a lot of the Baha'is visit me

of course, so I keep in touch and find out what's doing, and I believe in the principles, you know, of world unity, that we're all people the same.

OH: You had some problems with your sight, you were telling me.

MB: With my sight?

OH: Yes.

MB: I always had poor vision from when I was a child, but I don't think my parents realised just how bad it was, and when I went to school I had to ask for the teachers to let me sit in the front row so that I could see the blackboard. Being one of the top students I was supposed to sit at the back, but of course I couldn't see anything if I sat there, so I used to sit down the front so I could see.

OH: And then you were telling me that around 90 your vision changed.

MB: Yeah, what happened then?

OH: I think you were telling me you were driving home from swimming.

MB: Oh, that's right, oh yes, that's right. I had been swimming, I had been able to see up until then, but when I got home I said to my husband: *I'm not driving a car anymore*. He said: *Why not?* I said: *I can't see the white line in the middle of the road. I can't see enough to dodge traffic coming towards*. At that stage, something coming towards me, I'd pull up on the side of the road, so every time there was traffic I'd have to pull off on the side of the road because I couldn't risk passing anyone, I couldn't see, so I thought it was about time I gave it away, so I did.

OH: And you manage very well here in your home?

MB: Oh yes, oh it's wonderful here, I couldn't wish for anything more. There's places like the Helping Hand I've heard about, you know, where you could have a unit and live out there, but I have everything here that I need, and wonderful friends, I couldn't live here without my friends, but I have a great time here. I go across the road to the pub for a midday meal, and at night I go to the restaurant. I mean what more could I want?

OH: It sounds like a pretty good life.

MB: Oh, it is, it's wonderful. It's only what I make it myself, I mean I could be sitting here and grizzling because I can't see and I can't do this and I can't do that. I could be sitting here and moaning about it, but I don't, I get out.

OH: And you enjoy it?

MB: Oh, of course I do, I enjoy everything.

OH: And what about, you've got grandchildren and great-grandchildren?

MB: Yes, I've got two grandchildren, one grandson living here and he has two children, so I've got two great-grandchildren, the rest are in Melbourne and Sydney, I don't see them very often. One is a dancer and an entertainer in Sydney, he's very good. I've got a video, I'm dressed in top

hat and tails, and so is he, and we are doing a double routine together, a soft shoe routine, tap dance.

OH: Like Ginger and Fred?

MB: Yeah, yeah. I've got that all on video, so that's there for posterity, so they've got something to remember me by, but I love living here in the City, it's beautiful.

OH: If you think about the changes in the City over your lifetime, because you knew the City pretty well as a child ...

MB: Oh yes, I did, we lived at Wayville and Goodwood, two different places, and we used to walk from there up to West Terrace. My grandparents lived at 28 West Terrace, Adelaide, right opposite Sir Charles Todd's residence, it was there then, and then later on became the boys' high school, and now it's all wiped away I believe. I think there's none of that left there now, but I learnt to tap dance on West Terrace, one of my uncles taught me the basic steps for tap dancing on the footpath. [Laughs]

OH: You would have seen a lot of changes in Adelaide in your time?

MB: Oh yes, especially with the trams, the tram system, you know, because number 1 was the City and number 2 was Victoria Square, number 3 was Croydon, number 4 was Prospect, number 5 was Enfield. I knew all the tram routes, I still remember most of them. The trams were regular right around the City then, the tramlines and the trams.

OH: When you think about the changes in Adelaide, do you think that they ... like for example Victoria Square has been through lots of changes?

MB: Yes, I expect it has. I don't remember much about the changes, to me it's always just been Victoria Square, with the Queen statue in the middle there. Oh, and at that time too there used to be a little cement, like a guttering about that high, right around, and then the wrought iron railings around it as well, yes, that was a big difference then.

OH: And the market, you knew the market well?

MB: I just loved the market, because my parents used to go to the market every Friday night, and half the time I'd get lost. I'd be what they called stargazing, you know, and they'd walk off without me and forget me. I ended up in the police station more often than not. I loved all the policemen, I thought the policemen were wonderful, but they'd take me in and sit me up on a table and give me lollies and make a fuss of me. [Laughs] I reckon the policemen were all my friends, the policemen. [Laughs]

OH: I think that we'll end with the question about, like is there a secret that you have about living a long and healthy life?

MB: I don't think there is ... just enjoying each day as it comes. Never expect anything, because he who expects nothing is never disappointed [laughs].

OH: I think you also told me that working hard, for you, was an important way of living.

MB: That's right, that's what I told my son, if you want anything really badly enough you've got to work at it, you have to have the Big W, not Woolworths, this is work. Yes, whatever you want you have to work at it, and the main thing I think is to know your goals. I've always set goals, always had a goal. I've never drifted through life. I've always had a goal.

In one place I had my own hairdressing business up in New South Wales, and I used to board at the hotel, the local hotel, and it was funny, there was a football team up there to play against the locals, and most of them had gone off for the day, except one, and they'd left him upstairs in bed. I was in charge of the bar, the boss had gone to bed – she used to get on the gin and get drunk, and she used to say to me: *Would you look after the bar, I'm going to have a sleep*, so I'd run the hotel while she went and had a sleep – and this particular time I looked up and here's this lad walking downstairs, and all he had on was his watch. [Laughs] I said: *Johnny, I think you'd better go back to bed. OK, Steve*, he said, and turned around went upstairs and back to bed. [Laughs] Oh, I saw some funny sights there.

OH: And if you had a message to give young people today, what would it be?

MB: I think the main thing is to set a goal, have a goal to strive for, and work at it, and achieve it. I think that's the main thing, and not to be a drifter, just drifting through life doesn't get you anywhere. I think that's the main thing. Well that's what I've always done anyway.

OH: Well Margo, I think that that's a lovely note on which to end this interview.

MB: OK, thank you.

OH: Thank you very much for your contribution to the project and the City of Adelaide.

End of recording

Timed summary* - interview recorded on 10 February 2012

Time	Topics	Key words
00.00.00	Introduction. Margo gives full name and date of birth (16 November 1910). Parents' names and backgrounds. Father, a motor mechanic. Mother's family lived in the City. Two younger siblings.	Marjorie Matilda. Frank Everett Stephen. Waikerie. Renmark. Katherine Coppinger. West Terrace.
00.08.45	Margo's parents, living in the City then moved near the City. Family moved to Wallaroo. Father's parents. Maternal grandparents and religious conflict (Catholic and Protestant).	Joslin Street, Wayville. Wallaroo.
15.30	Schooling – primary at Wallaroo and secondary at Port Lincoln. Isolation of Port Lincoln, learning to drive at 14. Topped Intermediate exam	Port Lincoln.
19.30	Left school at 16, started work as shorthand typist. Only woman employee – 14 men.	Engineering and Water Supply.
21.33	Margo married at 19. After a year in Port Lincoln, moved to Adelaide. Rented house in Tynte Street, North Adelaide. Worked as waitress at Balfours in the City. In summer, slept overnight in Wellington Square.	Tom Carey. North Adelaide. Balfours. Wellington Square.
26.07	Shopped at the Central market. Formality of job at Balfours. Dancing at the Tivoli at night.	Balfours. Rundle Street. Tivoli. Glenelg.
31.30	Disenchantment as a married woman. Loss of first baby – born premature and buried in Port Lincoln. Divorce. Predictions made by a clairvoyant.	
35.08	Life after divorce. Engagement to Dick Hutton and move to Melbourne, then New South Wales. Birth of her son Peter. Memories of happy life in the Riverina district. Second World War. Husband, Eric Jackson, in the Air Force.	War. Peter Jackson. Murrumbidgee. Murray River. Finley.
38.27	Son, Peter was born in 1941. Education of son. Bought a house. Separated from Husband.	Berrigan NSW. Rostrevor College. St Peters.
42.28	Peter's death (as an adult).	
43.12	Employment at St Peters	Mumzone's Products
44.01	Looking after Peter and her brother's three daughters. Busy household.	
48.15	Session ends	

Timed summary - interview recorded on 24 February 2012

Time	Topics	Key words
00.00	Introduction. Margo moved to 350 Gilles Street in the City after living at Burnside. Description of house and alterations. Reasons for buying in the City. Paid cash for the house in 1969.	Gilles Street, Adelaide. Norwood.
5.09	Taught English in East Timor, had been studying Portuguese in Adelaide	Dili.
6.10	Advantages of living in the City as a single person; benefits of the locality. Neighbours and friends.	Arab Steed Hotel. Nepalese [restaurant]. Hutt Street. Park Lands. Victoria Park Racecourse.
9.11	Living alone at 102 years and loss of sight. Assistance of carers. Eating out for dinner.	Domiciliary Care. Argentinian Restaurant
13.35	Learnt to swim at 87 years. Participated in competitions in Australia and overseas. Made World Records at age 99 years.. 184 Gold Medals. Sponsorship by 2GB radio.	Masters Games. Canada. Gold Medals. World Games, Melbourne. Alan Jones.
18.46	Life in Queensland for 17 years. Return to Adelaide. Describes swimming training.	North Adelaide Aquatic Centre.
20.37	Turned 100 in 2012 and had a birthday part at the Adelaide Town Hall. Received the Order of Australia. Ran with Olympic Torch in Hervey Bay prior to the Olympic Games in Sydney	Lord Mayor Harbison. Order of Australia. Olympic Games, Sydney.
24.24	Love for her son Peter and his sudden death in Paris. Recalls her husband's recent death	
25.54	Reflections. Membership of the Bah'ai faith since 1963. Wish to remain living in her home. Grandchildren. Great grandchildren.	Bah'ai Centre of Learning. Flinders Street School.
31.41	Changes in the City of Adelaide over her lifetime. Recalls tram routes	Victoria Square. Central Market.
34.26	Philosophy about longevity. Message to young people.	
37.21	Session ends.	