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Transcript of an interview with

MAXWELL TRENORDEN
b.1948

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INTERVIEWS WITH MAXWELL WAYNE TRENORDEN, MLA

(This series of nine, one-hour interviews commenced on 20 February, 2008 and finished on 15 April, 2008. They were conducted at Parliament House, Perth, by interviewer John Ferrell. Original recordings were made on TDK D60 Cassette Tape, using a Sony TD5-Pro recorder. Transcribing was done by WA Hansard. Transcripts have been checked and corrected by the interviewer.)

Introduction

When interviewed, Max Trenorden was ‘father’ of the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia – its longest serving member. He had been member for Avon from the 1986 election, and retained his seat for the National Party at every subsequent election. The interview was provoked by the imminent re-distribution of electorates, which was to see the disappearance of Avon.

Born into a farm family at Wyalkatchem in 1948, Max learned to love the land and its people. Despite the relative isolation of his home, he developed an early interest in political affairs as he was encouraged especially by his mother to read newspapers and listen to ABC radio. After primary schooling in Wyalkatchem, Max attended Scotch College in Perth for some four years before returning to work with his parents and three brothers on the farm.

Following the rural downturn in 1969, Max left the farm and began work as a storeman with Western Mining at Kwinana. However, only about a year later, and recently married, he was recruited by the AMP Society as an insurance agent. He was assigned a territory based in Northam, and which took in the region in which he had grown up. Thanks to his diligence and the training by AMP, Max built a successful business over the next decade and a half.

As a local business person, Max was very active in local affairs. With others he was instrumental in resurrecting the Chamber of Commerce in Northam. He also served as a member of Northam Town Council. One legacy of his public life is the Avon Economic Development Foundation which sponsored light industrial firms to become established in the Avon within easy reach of several important towns. His local prominence brought him into contact with various political personalities who helped shape his intention to seek election to State Parliament.

Whilst in the Legislative Assembly, Max was National Party spokesman and coalition shadow minister for various portfolios. Serving for many years on the Public Accounts Committee, which he chaired for nearly eight years, Max also attended national and international conferences of related bodies. Through involvement with various committees he developed a keen sense of the full role of parliament in the legislative process, which he says is endangered by the increasing tendency to rule by Cabinet. He is credited with pushing for reforms, in particular the use of standing committees which run for the duration of a government, not merely for a parliamentary session.

From April 2001 until June 2005 Max was Leader of the Parliamentary National Party. He consistently supported increasing and enhancing the voice of regional WA in state affairs. At the 2008 election he gained a seat in the Legislative Council representing the Agricultural Regions.

John Ferrell, 30 March 2009.

INTERVIEWS WITH MAXWELL WAYNE TRENORDEN, MLA

CONTENTS

- Tape 1A Formative influences: childhood on family farm at Wyalkatchem.
- B Influence of father, mother and extended family. Political and religious attitudes.
- Tape 2A Environment and community of Wyalkatchem; primary schooling locally.
- B Experience of Scotch College. Early working life.
- Tape 3A Insurance Agent: life and work in Northam.
- B Family matters; Town Councillor; Avon Economic Development. Elections 1983 and 1986 as National Party Candidate for Avon.
- Tape 4A Influence of National Party colleagues. Campaigning.
- B Education about politics. Motivations of politicians. Induction into Legislative Assembly.
- Tape 5 A In Opposition 1986-1993. Liberal/National Party Relations. Colleagues.
- B Reminiscences about Burke Government and WA Inc.
- Tape 6A 1986 – 1993 continued. Parliamentary Committee work. Experience of public reaction to Abortion Bill. Max as National Party spokesman on various issues. Comments on staff of Parliament House and improvements to the House. Working the electorate.
- B Comments of ALP leaders following Brian Burke. Public Accounts Committee. CPA trip to Zimbabwe.
- Tape 7A After 1993. National Party role in changing Liberal leader. Richard Court Govt. Trips to Indonesia and Canada.
- B Private international travel to Egypt, Turkey, Chile, USA, UK. Kierath IR reforms. Effects of One Nation on National Party. Committees on Procedure and Privilege.
- Tape 8 A Bringing Bendigo Bank to WA. Procedure and Privileges Committees post 2005.
- B Reform of Legislative Assembly committee system, thoughts on other reforms. Committee on petroleum products pricing. Debate on logging old-growth forests. Issues relating to aboriginal citizens.
- Tape 9A How Max became Leader of National Party, 2001. Membership of Rostrum Club. Staff when Leader.
- B Confidantes when Leader. Loss of leadership. Future plans. Reflections on various issues, e.g. republicanism

Table of Contents

TRENORDEN

Tape One Side A	Page Number
Earliest childhood memories, history of family farm.	1
Childhood growing up on the farm.	3
Effect of mechanisation on wheat farming.	6
Vehicles owned by family, people staying on the farm.	8
Farmyard pets.	9
Relationship with parents and brothers.	11
Tape One Side B	
Influence of father on Trenorden	13
Trenorden's father's upbringing.	14
Relationship with mother, family history dating back to 14 th century Cornwall.	15
Mothers influence on the running of the farm.	20
Family holidays	21
Parents' religious and political views.	22
Education at Wyalkatchem Primary School.	23
Tape Two Side A	
Migrant and Aboriginal population in Wyalkatchem.	25
Development in primary school, hobbies at 12y.o.	28
Local people who influenced Trenorden's development.	29
Size and population of Wyalkatchem in Trenorden's youth.	30
Trenorden's memories of important historical events from his childhood days, ongoing interest in history.	32
Education as a boarder at Scotch College.	33
Tape Two Side B	
Education as a boarder at Scotch College.	37
Lasting friendships from Scotch College, leaving Scotch in year 11.	40
Other memories of Scotch College.	41
Trenorden returns to the family farm.	44
Trenorden leaves the farm to work for Western Mining and lives in Mandurah. Encounter with standover unionists.	46
Tape Three Side A.	
Trenorden's work history upon leaving the farm, moving from Western Mining to Northam with AMP, life as an insurance salesman.	49
Trenorden meets future wife Kathleen Horsley, Trenorden recounts story of marriage, births of children & divorce. Trenorden wins custody and raises his children as a single father.	58
Tape Three Side B.	
Fatherhood and juggling parenting with full time work,	60

Table of Contents

TRENORDEN

Trenorden's children today.	
Trenorden's involvement with Northam Council.	62
Trenorden's Association with the National Party, becoming elected in 1986.	67
Trenorden's opinion of Vietnam, ineligible for conscription.	69
Tape Four Side A	
Awards and accolades as an insurance salesman.	70
Travel highlights.	71
Trenorden joins the National Party	73
Influence of Mick Gayfer and other National Party identities on Trenorden.	76
Preselection process for 1983 & 1986 elections and campaigns.	77
Tape Four Side B	
Trenorden's early interest in the political system, opinions of the political system today.	81
Trenorden's Maiden Speech.	87
Family involvement in campaigning.	87
Changes to Trenorden's life upon entering Parliament.	88
Tape Five Side A	
Trenorden's assessment of National Party colleagues.	91
Trenorden's opposition to Labour Party Ideology.	98
Trenorden's assessment of Liberal Party members.	99
Trenorden on Brian Burke.	100
Tape Five Side B	
Trenorden on W.A. Inc.	102
Tape Six Side A	
Events of concern for Trenorden during his period in opposition between 1986 & 1993.	112
Memorable bills witnessed by Trenorden	113
Trenorden's duties as party spokesman & his attempts to facilitate regional development projects.	114
Trenorden's views on the Racing Industry.	115
Allocation of shadow portfolios.	116
Parliament House staff.	117
Structural state of Parliament House.	118
Professionalism of Chamber staff.	119
Trenorden's policies on looking after his electorate.	120
Tape Six Side B	
Trenorden's impression of Peter Dowding as Premier	122
Trenorden's impression of Carmen Lawrence	123
Trenorden's experiences on the Public Accounts Expenditure Committee.	124
Trenorden's experiences on the Joint Select Committee on Parole.	128

Table of Contents

TRENORDEN

Trenorden's Parliamentary trip to Zimbabwe.	129
1989 election campaign.	130
Tape Seven Side A	
State of the National Party approaching the 1993 election.	132
Trenorden's role within the parliamentary party.	132
1993 election campaign.	133
Working with Richard Court, process of joint party meetings.	134
Issues investigated by Trenorden on behalf of ministers.	137
Influence of Parliamentary travel to Indonesia and Canada.	138
Tape Seven Side B	
Other travel undertaken by Trenorden.	143
Effects of the Industrial Relations changes introduced by the (Richard) Court Government.	145
Other Court Government issues; infrastructure, the belltower, effect of the One Nation vote on the Court Government's loss, Court Government sell-off of state assets.	147
Trenorden's work on the Procedures Committee.	151
Tape Eight Side A	
Trenorden's involvement in bringing the Bendigo Bank to Western Australia.	153.
Trenorden's work on the procedures and privileges committee and issues arising from it.	160
Tape Eight Side B	
Trenorden's work on the procedures and privileges committee and issues arising from it (continued).	163
Trenorden's work on the Joint Select Committee on the Commission on Government.	164
Trenorden's work on the committee on the pricing of petroleum products.	165
Trenorden's views on the forest debate.	167
Trenorden's views on the closure of small schools.	169
Trenorden's views on Aboriginal issues.	170
Tape Nine Side A	
Trenorden's ascension to leadership of the National Party	174
Trenorden's view on coalition agreements.	176
Trenorden's achievements as leader of the Party.	177
Staff employed by Trenorden.	179
Trenorden's leadership style.	182
Tape Nine Side B	
Trenorden's confidantes as leader and his working relationship with Colin Barnett.	184
Trenorden's gains as leader.	185

Table of Contents**TRENORDEN**

Trenorden resigns as leader	186
Trenorden's relations with the Federal National Party	187
Trenorden's views on the future of the National Party	188
Trenorden's future in politics.	189
Opinions on the parliamentary superannuation scheme, republicanism and the future of parliament in its current form.	190
End of interview.	

TAPE ONE SIDE A

This is tape one, side A, in interviews with the honourable Maxwell Wayne Trenorden. This is being recorded on the 20th February 2008 at Parliament House, Perth.

JF Max, cast your mind right back into your childhood and tell me what's your very earliest memory?

TRENORDEN I have often thought about that. I'm not sure that I've got too many memories before going to primary school. I must have had, but my memories are just of the farm, family, of our kitchen and a big blue breadbox that used to be the cornerstone of the kitchen. People used to sit on this bread box. My father and my mother, because we lived some 20 miles east of Wyalkatchem. There used to be a lot of people around. My mother always had boarders, and even the school bus driver used to stay overnight on our property, but I don't recall much of town sites and other children and those things, until I really got to school.

JF Yes, well we'll take up the story of your home. You said it was 20 miles or so from the town. Was it a well established farmstead?

TRENORDEN My father had cleared it. The interesting thing is my father always claimed to be the first white person born in Wyalkatchem. Whether that is true or not is probably not here or there. He was born in 1911. He cleared his own property just prior to and around the Second World War and built his own house, as people did in those days. One of the interesting things I remember was some renovation many years later: he had put a piece of jarrah clean through the chimney. The house could have easily burnt down at any time but it had just charred up over the years. So, yes, we lived in a house that he'd built, a farm that he'd established. But he was a very capable farmer and my mother was a very capable financier and individual. My mother ran the finances and my father ran the farm.

JF So, the house itself, what sort of structure was it?

TRENORDEN Mud brick. It was built from materials around, except for the timber and the steel, so it was a mud brick house with a steel roof, much like many other wheatbelt houses. Certainly, he formed his own bricks and built the house out of that.

JF Yes.

TRENORDEN In later years when my brother lived there, there was a bit of a struggle to keep the mud bricks together, but it was very comfortable and a house that I have a lot of great, warm feelings about.

JF Did it get added to as the years went by?

TRENORDEN Yes, but before I was born, so it did get added to after the Second World War, clearly. My father got manpowered so he didn't actually leave Western Australia but he was not on the farm; he was doing other things as manpowered people did. But immediately after the war, he did expand the house, but there was no construction that I was conscious of.

JF What size did the place end up?

TRENORDEN It was a sizeable house. I really wouldn't know how many squares it was, but it was an old fashioned house; it had verandas on all sides. It had enough to sleep four boys and the parents so it was a sizeable house. Also, as in those days, it had outbuildings. It had two outbuildings, a large storeroom type place, shower, and a second toilet, but also a huge garage with living quarters at the end of the garage. But that would be pretty typical of many farms at the time.

JF What about things like supplies of power and water?

TRENORDEN They were interesting. That was a bit of a fascinating period. I often think about that too. First of all, we had a 32-volt diesel motor. For many, many years the same motor (a Lister motor) was banging away just outside the house. Then technology caught up with us and it was just fantastic in my teens when we got a situation where we got a brand-new Lister motor with the electronics that when you threw the switch in the house, the power would come on when the motor would start. So the argument before that was: who was the last to bed and who was the one to wander off to shut down the 32-volt motor, which I never minded doing; it was a bit of

an intrigue to do that. It was an interesting part, again, of nearly every farmer's experience.

JF That was 240-volt AC was it?

TRENORDEN The second one was a 240, yes, that's right. It dramatically improved certainly the quality [of life] for my mother with things like ironing and the appliances in the house, but we never had TV until I left to go to a college in Perth. Great memories about home was playing bridge with my mother. My father would sit and read. The rest of us used to listen to a lot of radio. I can remember clearly listening to the Melbourne Olympic Games by radio.

JF Oh, yes, the Empire Games?

TRENORDEN It was '56 was it?

JF Yes.

TRENORDEN I clearly remember that on radio, listening to things I'd never heard of before, like fencing. I heard there was fencing. Fencing as a farming context, but of course you learnt those things. The bridge process was fascinating. My mother loved to play cards and the love of cards has stayed with me since. We used to sit down and play a very aggressive form of contract bridge as very young children. I don't play bridge now but I love to play bridge. I'm a bit of an antisocial bridge player because we played it more like poker than like bridge, so it upsets other players – partners – but I enjoy that process.

JF Now water supply was always a necessary thing to fix on a farm. How was that organised?

TRENORDEN Well, because it was a large house with large outbuildings we had a fair bit of water catchment from the roof. My grandfather, who lived with us for quite a few years, round about this time of year, towards March, would disconnect all the downpipes from the roof and we'd wait for the first rain to clean the roof, clean the dust off the roof and those sort of things and couple up to a large number of water

tanks. So we weren't supplied from dam, though we had a very large dam not that far away. I don't ever remember going dry, but the house was supplied by water tanks.

JF So, for everything; washing and everything—

TRENORDEN Yes, the lot. Every now and then my father would go and cart water for the house, which was a great thrill for us because safety people weren't around in those days. We used to sit in the tanks on a hot summers' day and slush around in the back of the tank while my father drove the truck, slowly of course, and that was a lot of fun. The cartage of water was something that happened fairly frequently in late summer.

JF And he would take the water, what, from a dam or from a soak?

TRENORDEN No, from a tank actually. He used to have a particular tank where the water used to settle a lot so there was very little earth content in it. It was pumped by windmill [to] a large tank and you'd just take it out of that because it was good, clean water.

JF Well now, thinking about the farm, and you said it was cleared by your father, how big was the arable area?

TRENORDEN About 4 000 acres or 2 000 hectares, give or take. It was a successful farm because it was a mixture of tamma light land and heavy land, so it was durable in terms of seasons. He was a very capable farmer, and we did well. I had no concept of wealth and those sort of things in those days because we lived on the farm, but we never ever lacked anything. But from time to time, because of my grandfather, we'd eat things like pigeon, 28s and often rabbits because my grandfather was also there before and that was his staple diet. So every now and then we'd have those sort of things but always supplied our own meat so we had a lot of mutton and a lot of hogget. My father would kill a pig occasionally. In those days, [we were] quite self-sustainable. My grandfather grew enormous vegetable patches, which was always a source of entertainment for us because we'd be in there stealing his vegetables. He had that all fenced off. My mother had an enormous area for turkeys, ducks and chooks (probably well over an acre) fenced off, which she got my father to do and my grandmother was a huge poultry person. [She was] Scottish, mean and hard, but to me she was a wonderful woman but in hindsight I

can hear all these people saying how tough she was. I can remember many a sheep dog getting slaughtered because anything that hurt her chooks had a life expectancy of a few moments. My uncle was always under pressure to try to keep his dogs away from her chooks. So poultry was a big part of the process. We had a lot of poultry, a lot of vegetables and a lot of meat. We had a very much self-sustained property.

JF Of course, you wouldn't, in the days of your earliest childhood, have had the availability of fresh food from elsewhere anyway, would you, easily?

TRENORDEN In those days it was a long haul to head off to town, but my father was also a massive sports person and a very boys' boy so he enjoyed male company, so he was very regularly off to golf and bowls. Bowls was his great passion but he did play golf and, in his younger days he played football and cricket, of course, but not in my memory. He was off the farm quite regularly but my mother was not regularly off the farm. Friday was the big event, particularly when I went to school. You'd know that my parents would be turning up in town so Friday was a day to be looked forward to because I could vanish from school and go and do things with my mates, which were things which just wouldn't be considered now. We'd go off and play in the bush. Our parents wouldn't worry about us at all and then we'd end up outside the Wyalkatchem Club and be there until closing time. The police would arrest you for that these days, but in those days, all I remember is a truckload of fun. When it got time to go to sleep, summer or winter, you had a rug or not a rug and they'd come out to check you. I had no ill-feelings to my parents at all about that process. In fact, it was huge fun.

JF Coming back to the farm for a minute, we didn't say what cropping you did. I presume it was predominantly wheat. [Bells audible in distance]

TRENORDEN It was mixed farming, so there was always a lot of sheep, the occasional cow, but not too much, and a lot of grain growing, yes, but mainly wheat. So very mechanically orientated. Interesting things like most of the time we had a horse on the property but I've never ridden a horse in my life. My father was hugely anti-horses because it was an enormous drag on him when he was a young person. Looking after horses he didn't enjoy, so the advent of tractors and those things were pretty important for him. So, a lot of machinery.

JF What sort of tractors did you run?

TRENORDEN It was in the days of the Chamberlain but before that there were the Fordsons and the standard equipment. Chamberlains were a bit later, earlier than that were Fordsons, from memory. We had one of those on our property for many years. It still ran for many years. It is probably still up there now and still running.

JF As far as mechanisation of the grain growing was concerned, in your lifetime that would have changed quite a bit I suppose. Do you remember it being handled in bags?

TRENORDEN Oh, yes. I remember doing it myself. Actually, Wyalkatchem was the start of the bulk process on a farm not far from us. Yes, one of the jobs that was difficult at harvest time was sewing up the bags. I used to do a lot of that and there was a fair bit of cartage of grain by bags, even though bulk was in at the time, but it was a time of transition.

JF So you were sewing the bags, which would be then taken to and stacked at the siding for—

TRENORDEN No. There were sewing bags for seed mostly, but the seconds process (the wheat that the harvester used to take out as a secondary grain) was always in bags. So that came off on bags off the harvester and you sewed those up and you stored them on the property. [We] didn't used to sell too much of that. We used to stack that and store it for feed use.

JF And the main wheat that was going in for sale then, would that be handled in open-top bags, would it?

TRENORDEN No; most of it was in bulk, even in my youth. At some stages it used to go in bags because there used to be occasions . . . but the bulk of it was in very small bins of 100 bags or so.

JF You're talking now about the early '50s, I suppose, are you?

TRENORDEN No; the early '60s. I was born in '48, so by the time I was out there on the farm doing those things it was late '50s.

JF I suppose, partly because of the size of properties around Wyalkatchem, it came in earlier there than it would have done further south.

TRENORDEN Yes. It was very necessary. It is not only the fact of the size of your property, nearly everyone . . . fortunately, we were close to the sidings, the siding was a fair distance away and trucks being what they were in those days it was a long haul to go to the siding and back so to do that with a small load became very inefficient. Not that I thought about those things but that's what happened. And in those times there were several tragic deaths from kids being drowned in wheat and that in the back of fuel bins.

JF Goodness. Talking about the equipment, you mentioned a harvester, would it be an A. L. Harvester?

TRENORDEN Yes, back to those things, a Sunshine. I can remember that coming out as a massive new harvester [with] amazing capacity. Of course, they are tiny these days, but nevertheless they evolved pretty quickly. The ability of the harvester to move at the rate of a tractor as against moving at the rate of a horse and do the separation of grain and the sifting, that technology changed quickly. I did watch that as a young person with amazement of where that started to even a few years how quickly that evolved.

JF Some of older ones had only about six-bag capacity, didn't they?

TRENORDEN Exactly and that was the bagging process but once you got to the situation where bulk wheat was in place, the harvester pretty much came up to around about 60 to 100-bag capacity.

JF It would have been a header process in those days rather the old fashioned relying on the head to break?

TRENORDEN That's right. They all had knives, and they all cut. It was always the bane of keeping these things going of the knives breaking all the time. And the violent process of sifting the wheat, the headers used to break down regularly. But it wasn't a great difficulty to fix them because they were a simple process, but they used to break down quite regularly.

JF Would you have bought that sort of stuff in Wily, or would you have—

TRENORDEN Oh yes, most definitely. If you go back to the towns of those days, they all had several machinery dealerships, not one. Most of the towns around us had several. Ford cars were there and Holden cars were there. The towns were significantly larger communities than they are now.

JF What did your father own in the way of a car?

TRENORDEN He always liked a good car so we had a lot Chryslers (Chrysler Royals) and Dodges. We had a lot of reasonably fancy cars of the time. My father was quite a successful farmer. I don't ever recall having much hardship in the quality of the vehicle we were driving.

JF Did you have a truck?

TRENORDEN Oh yes, several trucks, but trucks were very small in those days, so, again, they were Dodge trucks most of them and they would relate back to the dealership in Wyalkatchem and who my father's friends were and who played bowls with him and all those sort of arguments. The truck sometimes was relatively old because . . . even now on farms trucks are necessary only for a portion of the time. So you always had some form of utility. In those days there wasn't the flat tray utility of today; it was more the American-type box-backed, heavy vehicles. There were a lot of Fords amongst them, but they were reliable vehicles. Lord knows how much fuel they used.

JF [Laughs]. Fuel was a big consideration too, I suppose. Did you have on-farm deliveries for fuel?

TRENORDEN The issue about living on farms was who turned up and, in those days, there were a lot of people turning up on farms. You had fuel delivered, you had travelling salesmen of all sorts turning up on properties so it was a fairly regular feature to have people you didn't know turn up on the property. They were busier than they are today, I would imagine, the communities. But, as I said, my mother used to put up shearers. She used to take in relatives from time to time. We always seemed to have a few of those. She kept my father. As I said, the school bus

run, for a period the school bus driver slept at our place and finished the run at our place and started the next morning at our place, so there was always people around.

JF In which direction from the town were you located?

TRENORDEN East, heading towards Trayning there's a little community called Yelbeni, which is the closest community to us. Yelbeni is a fascinating little town. Until very recently it had a store that operated, which burnt down last year, unfortunately. It was like a process out of the 1930s. A fantastic little community. It was just a wheat bin plus a store and for a long while it had a very successful machinery dealership operate out of it. So we were this mix between Yelbeni and Wyalkatchem. We were east of Wyalkatchem and probably directly north of Yelbeni.

JF Now, would you have had plenty of animals on the farm? Would you have had pets that you considered your own?

TRENORDEN Oh yes, we had dogs and I still have a great passion for dogs. We always had dogs and dogs were very close to us all, but they were farm dogs; they were never allowed in the house. We always had more than one but never packs of dogs, maybe two, perhaps every now and then three when we fed a younger dog. They were always working animals but also [were] much loved by everyone. My mother liked cats so there were often cats around, more often later in life than the beginning of her life. We had everything else. [We had] pigs. I mean, some of the pigs were pets. We always had pet sheep. I can't remember a time when we didn't have pet sheep.

JF You would've had to raise orphaned lambs, I suppose, sometimes?

TRENORDEN Exactly, and once you raise them, they become pets. They are rather quirky, pet sheep. There were lots of funny instances with pet sheep.

JF Such as?

TRENORDEN Oh, my brother and I used to teach them to bunt. They used to bunt whoever turned up. People would get out of the car and all of a sudden find that they had been rammed by a ram. We thought that was hugely funny and we'd keep on training them to do that. No-one ever got hurt, but it was a great amusement to us.

[We had] pet kangaroos every now and then. Not that often, but occasionally we had pet kangaroos. [We had] a lot of pet birds, of course.

JF Caged or from the wild?

TRENORDEN Both: caged and non-caged. We used to have smoker parrots up there. They were beautiful parrots. We had a pet for many years that just lived around my mother outside the laundry on the grapevine. It was there all the time for many, many years.

JF That leads us on to thinking about the bush. Was there much natural bush left on the farm or had it mostly been cleared?

TRENORDEN Well, Wyalkatchem is one of those communities where in the whole district I think there is six per cent left, which is terrible. Around our house there used to be quite a sizeable patch of virgin land; I'd say, maybe 100 acres. We used to vanish out into that and play and come back. My mother was never worried about us being out there and, in reality, there was nothing to be worried about. We were lucky in that context, but much of the area had been cleared. Our farm did have some small patches of 100 acres or so but [it was] very much cleared.

JF What was left in those patches? Was it white gum territory?

TRENORDEN No. Most of what they left . . . generally they'd leave the lighter country so it was mallee gums, broom bush and that type of vegetation . . . low vegetation. It was always a magical place for me. I used to love going out there, particularly amongst the mallees. There were always things to find, and always things to do and mother nature to be looked at in a lot of different ways. I really enjoyed that. That was an important part of my life. I'd come home from school and go out into the bush. The other thing I used to do a lot of, and which my father used to complain about, was read. I used to read a lot.

JF That's an interesting combination of activity and relative inactivity?

TRENORDEN I used to like to go to my room and read but I also used to like to get out into the bush. Of course, my father was always feeding sheep and going places and doing things. He'd always take us with him. It was pretty much fairytale time. I'd

have to say of my father and my mother that they were pretty close to faultless as parents. They were wonderful parents. Three brothers are great brothers. My younger brother and I used to have several standard punch-ups. For example, the pet sheep. A great thing happened there with my brother. The bus used to be a mile away from the house so I'd race him home on the bicycle, then slow down and have the pet sheep take his bike out from under him until he learnt to be very wary of the pet sheep because he used to wait for us and ambush us.

JF This is your younger brother?

TRENORDEN My younger brother. He used to wait for us as we came down the road into some bush before the house. The pet sheep used to be there every day waiting for us.

JF I'm trying to organise myself, but you brought up the relations with your siblings so maybe I'll talk about that for a bit. You had three brothers, as you've said, and you were the third in the row. Brian was quite a bit older than you. Did he leave home or was he a factor in your growing up?

TRENORDEN He was a major factor in my growing up. [He was] the elder brother, but, as I said, there was never any tension between us. Even though Peter, my younger brother, and I had several punch-ups over the time, it was just I think more natural than anything else. We never disliked each other at any stage. There were simple things like when my brother was old enough to drive I can remember him picking me up at Perth from Scotch College, coming back, parking outside the Wyalkatchem hotel and I was sitting outside the hotel waiting for my brother to have enough. Of course they were the days of age 21 drinking age and he flew out the front door parallel with the footpath and landed on the bonnet of the car and the sergeant of police was the next one out after him and told him something about being a young bugger and to keep out of the pub. That was a memory of the police officer and that is how the police used to operate in those days, and the police used to be respected. That would be absolute violence now. My brother used to respect it as well, but he was an under-age drinker. He was old enough to have a driver's licence but well and truly an under-age drinker. He was a formidable person in my youth because he was playing sport and he was out doing those things that big brothers do, while I was still a student.

JF What about the next boy, John?

TRENORDEN John was about two years older than me. Again, he was a significant influence, but he and I probably did more boys things together because he was just a couple of years away from me. But, again, [he was] a significant influence on my life, as was Peter, my younger brother. When I went to Scotch my eldest brother, John, was still at school and when I was at Scotch, my younger brother turned up, so we always had that continuity. We're not a close family. Trenordens don't keep good contacts. It just happens to be a family trait, but whenever we see each other it's like we've never ever been apart and are still the same and we're very close, which I'm grateful for.

JF It's camaraderie mainly. Are there specific things that you think you've gained from relations with your brothers?

TRENORDEN We did a lot of working together. I can remember my elder brother nearly losing his life. We were taking a wheat bin off the back of a truck. He had a pair of thongs on. [It was] a hot summers day. Obviously there was no traction on the thongs and, between the three of us, we couldn't keep the bin balanced and it fell and missed his head by maybe an inch. So I've never worn thongs since. I don't own a pair of thongs and I've never worn thongs since because they were just so close to killing him. We spent a lot of time, the four of us, playing together. There are lots of stories. My eldest brother, Brian, knocked John out with a toy pistol once. One [brother] wrapped a live snake around the other's head on one occasion. There are all those stories that boys have. We did a lot of playing together, not too much of it [was] ever malicious. Even when I was growing up as a teenager in a country town I did a lot of fast driving and a few other things I shouldn't have done, but the things we used to do were pretty much non-destructive to other people. Maybe they were destructive to vehicles and a few other things.

END OF TAPE ONE SIDE A

TAPE ONE SIDE B

This is tape one, side B, in the series of interviews with the Honourable Max Trenorden.

TRENORDEN I'm not Honourable by the way.

JF That is a good point to pick up. You are not honourable?

TRENORDEN No. To be honourable in the lower house you have to be a minister for a period of time or be the Speaker. [Bells heard in the background]

JF What about when you were a leader of a party, would you qualify then?

TRENORDEN No, the Parliament does not recognise parties.

JF Right.

TRENORDEN It recognises officialdom in the process such as Premiers, ministers and Speaker, but that is basically it.

JF Right. I stand corrected?

TRENORDEN That's all right. A lot of the people have told me I'm not honourable!

JF [laughs] Right! Come back now to the influence of your dad, I think. Just reflect on him. You have said quite a bit about him.

TRENORDEN He was a very strong character, loved a laugh, exceedingly quick temper—immediately up but then again immediately down. Didn't hold grudges, loved the company of males, loved his sport. It was a great experience for four boys growing up on a farm because no matter what the crunch time on the farm was, we went to sport. We shut the harvest down or seeding down or whatever was happening (the football would not be in harvest time) but we would shut down whatever was happening at the time and we would all go to sport. There was a financial risk in all of that, particularly in seeding because it is pretty important to get

crops in at the appropriate time, but that family part of the context was really important. He was also a person of fantastic judgement. One of the things I tell about him a lot, and I remember a lot, is the usual bit about, "Dad, can I have the car?" I'd go to him and say, "Dad, could I have the car." If he was happy, he would just say, "Yes, you can have the car." But he never ever said, "No, you can't have the car, but if he felt it was inappropriate he would say, "Yes, you can have the car but we are starting work at four o'clock in the morning." We used to start work at four o'clock in the morning, so if I came home with a hang-over or had had two or three hours sleep, I paid dearly the next day and that was the way he measured it. He would never rant and rave. You had to make your own judgement. He would say, "Yep, you can go but we're starting at four o'clock in the morning." Also, particularly in summer time, you knew when you were in the bad books, because we wouldn't come into lunch until one o'clock or two o'clock, so by the time that occurred and you'd been out on the town, you thought you were about dead.

JF So he didn't have to be a violent man in terms of thrashing you or anything of that sort?

TRENORDEN No, he was never violent. I shouldn't say "never violent"; a lot of spanners got thrown and all those sort of things, but he was never violent certainly to my mother or to us. Maybe we got a clip under the ear every now and then but, frankly, I don't have any memory of that at all. If it happened, I deserved it. Back in those days, if you came home from school with some sort of report that the teacher was unhappy with you . . . it was a different time. He certainly measured out punishment but it was not violent and swift and those sorts of things. [He was] a lot of fun to be around. Many people enjoyed his company; he was quite a popular person but a competent and very good farmer.

JF You said he was worn born in Wyalkatchem, so did he start life on a farm there?

TRENORDEN Yes, his father had come to the district early and wasn't a particularly successful farmer. His mother died very young, so he was raised by a nearby family called the Gales. Terry Gale is probably the most famous. There were a large number. He lived with that family for some three or four years, so he was brought up pretty rough. He left school at the first possible opportunity, so he was not hugely literate but didn't have to be because my mother was. He had a pretty rough

upbringing. I guess, if you think about it, you could probably see it, but as a farmer and as a person . . . the farm was all there really was about it. Even as he got older, going to town was a once-a-week event so everything around us was the farm. [We had] very few neighbours. We had contacts with some neighbours but there were probably only three families we had regular contact with because the rest were just too far away. He was, I probably can't say faultless. . . he certainly, as a person, maybe had a lot of faults, but as a father he was excellent.

JF What characteristics do you think you have which might reflect his?

TRENORDEN And my mother. I think you have to have to throw my mother in there very strongly. I have some rules about life, which maybe we will talk about somewhere along the line. I developed a fairly philosophical view of life when I was on the farm. I used to spend a lot of time walking through the bush on the property with a rifle, with the dog, thinking. I used to do that for hours and loved it. I used to think through processes of what life's about, what's the meaning of all this and all that sort of stuff, as a young teenager. Of course, I think we all are a summary of our experiences and my experiences were my parents. My base was just so stable so I am quick tempered at home but at work I'm almost impossible to get angry. I'm not quick to judgement. People tell me (I think that I would be the worst person to say what my best traits are) but if I say those things, I do listen to people and I am pretty open in my processes; I have very few things that I have a closed point of view about. I would say that strongly that comes from my parents.

JF We've spent a fair bit of time talking about your dad, but we haven't pinpointed where the family originally came from.

TRENORDEN This is pretty important too. Someone recently tracked the Trenorden family back to the fourteenth century in Cornwall. We came out of Cornwall. T-R-E is Cornish, meaning "from the house of". Three brothers arrived in South Australia and, I think in 1842 or 1852 (one of those two dates), there's a house in the hills of Adelaide called "Tregarthen": a house with a garden, it means, which is heritage listed. It's still up there. They were Cornish tin miners, of course. That's why they were brought into South Australia. They had a big flair for orchards, so all of them ended up working in orchards as against tin mining or mining. Around Uralia or Summerton (the hills in South Australia) kick a rock and there is a Trenorden. They're

all tall and they're all lean, except for me and my brother. Brian and I are not because we're built like my mother's side, which are Graces. [They] speak slowly.

JF The west country drawl?

TRENORDEN Exactly. They are tall, lean and speak slowly. It's interesting how the family trait comes in there. There is a story about my grandfather James, which was apparently put in the movie *All the Rivers Run*. It's a true story where his daughter, Philadelphia, was sent down to the corner shop, which was a long time away in those days, to get some provisions and she came back without his tobacco. He lost his temper and sent her back for the tobacco. It was cold and wet and she died of pneumonia. The tobacco tin sat on the mantle piece for the rest of his life. When she died, there was a tombstone put there recounting that story, which someone read in, I think, Uralia cemetery. Close family in those days. There's fantastic photos of the three brothers sitting in community in Summertown or Uralia. Without being too negative, they were competent but I don't think they really worked that hard. That is just a judgement of my own. I can see a lot of family in that process. Several came over here. I think two of the brothers came over here for the gold rush. One got killed. sorry, some sons of those three came over. One got killed in the Somme and another one got shot up badly in the Somme. The second one, Jack, who got shot up badly, there is a memory I have of him sitting on our front veranda in Wyalkatchem as an old man sitting in a cane chair. There were foxes running over our dam banks at least 200 metres away and he said to Brian, "Go and get the rifle." He didn't even get out of the chair, he just shot the fox. Years of fighting in the trenches in France. They came back, went goldmining [and were] unsuccessful. All of them except Len, who was killed in the war, drifted back out to farming.

JF You knew that uncle. Did he actually live on the property?

TRENORDEN No. I only saw him a few times in my life. As I said, we weren't a fantastic community. We were always aware of the extended family and they were always spoken about but we rarely saw them. He'd turn up occasionally but that is it. No, he was not a constant person.

JF What about your grandfather? He was on the property?

TRENORDEN My father had a brother farming nearby and between the two of them they looked after him but they also had sisters. One of the sisters ended up looking after him for many years at the end of his life. Her husband was a publican and she used to look after him for the latter period.

JF After providing you with vegetables, and you stealing his vegetables, did he have much of an influence on your upbringing?

TRENORDEN Oh yes, he was very much an influence. I can remember him making comments at meal times like, "Bloody useless, waste of time educating kids; it just makes them lazy", was one of the comments he regularly made. Those sort of comments from a person from the older generation was part of my growing up. You get a view about most things and, like most people of that time, he read a lot. I just noticed my uncles and the elderly people around me because there was radio and there was reading. That was it. But old newspapers and journals (I say "old"; they were old by the time they got them) were devoured. They were read from cover to cover. American news, English news and European news. It was always part of the process?

JF Just a digression for a moment from family, talking about radio, the reception would have been a bit of a problem at Wyalkatchem wouldn't it?

TRENORDEN We used to get ABC fairly strongly but, again, that was the only reception we got so we thought that's what it was. It was crackly, no question about it. We used to listen to the radio so things like the Country Hour programs. . . *Blue Hills* my mother used to listen to. We'd listen to the radio for a short period of time after a meal but we did play a lot of cards so we quickly got down to where my mother and particularly my brothers would play a lot of cards or read.

JF With the radio, again taking that one up, what sort of antenna would you have needed?

TRENORDEN We had a wire antenna off the chimney at the top of the house, just like TV then took over that same process. That's not quite true because the first TV tower we had was quite high. It would have been a windmill plus tower, so significantly higher. The radio was a simple wire reel on the roof.

JF Coming to TV, seeing we've mentioned it, the reception would have been pretty awful in those earlier days, I suppose?

TRENORDEN Yes, it was very crackly but, as I said, that is what I heard so I didn't know the difference.

JF No; I was thinking of the TV.

TRENORDEN Oh, no, well, TV was very late in my youth. It was after I came back from Scotch College, so it was the mid-60s. A lot of things happened in the mid-60s, late 60s like electricity turning up, water turning up, reticulated water, reticulated power, all those things came in in the 60s and 70s and significantly changed the way farming happened. We went from a situation (we always still grew some vegetables) of being self-sufficient to purchasing it from the town.

JF We'll come back to family. Your mother's come in for a few mentions but not very detailed at this stage so I notice Grace Street is one of the streets in Wyalkatchem, is that a family . . .

TRENORDEN My father [means maternal grandfather] was a road board president [chairman], I think the term was in those days, during the depression. On his death, his write-up was fairly significant because he used to pay people's rates and was a very successful person who just didn't open up after the depression. When everyone else saw that the depression was finishing and expanded, he didn't, so his farm never expanded. He died of cancer during the war so that was also a limiting factor, obviously. But the Grace family goes back, if you follow the Grace family back through marriage and so forth, it goes back to Michael Dwyer. Michael Dwyer was the foremost Irish Catholic in Australian history. [He was] never arrested, picked up in Ireland as a political individual, transported over here, went to Tasmania and the convict island . . . the beautiful island . . .

JF Norfolk Island?

TRENORDEN Norfolk Island. He got rescued by the Governor of the day and ended up being the principal judge in the colony. His farm was around Richmond racecourse now. It was a very significant family at the time and at that stage he married a Grace. The Graces were very heavily involved in New South Wales

agriculture. [They] did a lot of plying up and down the rivers carting wool and so forth. One of the things about our family history is the reason why the Graces came here is because the rivers ran dry. People are talking about the drought currently but the drought at that time was greater because the boats couldn't ply the rivers. They came over for the same reason across to the goldfields but they weren't all that popular because they had a different type of goal. They used to desalinate salt water out of the lakes and sell it in Kalgoorlie for a lot of money, I presume, and I don't think they were all that popular. The other thing is that the grandfather converted from being a Catholic because he always told a story, whether it's fair or not (I don't want this to be said to be a part of the history of Western Australia) but he said that when there was a typhoid outbreak in Kalgoorlie, the Catholic priest was the first bloke out of town. He was very bitter about that and so he changed his religion from being Catholic to being basically Anglican, maybe part Methodist, part Anglican, but that occurred, which is quite interesting because the history right up to that stage was all Catholic.

JF Coming back to Grace Street then in Wyalkatchem?

TRENORDEN That would have been from my grandfather, who was the Shire President there and was a very substantial individual at that time. The Graces and Trenordens lived about five miles apart, I suppose. Dad married the local girl. My mother went to MLC and was a very intelligent individual, a very stable individual. [She] saw life as black and white without being mean about that. She was a fantastic mother, totally devoted to us. When I look back, her life was us and my father and the farm. My father wouldn't have been a fantastic husband because he loved a good time. I'm sure he was out a lot and I'm sure she was home on the farm a lot by herself but she is a person who I admired immensely, my mother. She was a fantastic influence on all our lives. As I said, life was black or white; it was right or wrong. There was no grey for my mother, but not a domineering type view of black and white. She just had no difficulty in deciding what was right and what was wrong.

JF How long had she spent at MLC?

TRENORDEN I think she probably did five years at MLC. I've never checked that out. Her father was relatively wealthy at that stage; a successful farmer. I'm sure she did the usual year eight to year 12 process.

JF Did she have a profession before she married?

TRENORDEN No, she went back to the farm. Her mother got ill and eventually died of cancer as well.

JF So she was very important on the farm. What about outdoors? She wouldn't have had much to do with outdoors because there were four of you, I suppose?

TRENORDEN That's right. She was very capable. She would do those things that were necessary, driving vehicles and so forth. No, there was always plenty of people around our farm. We always had employees. There were lots of stories. There was always laughter and funny things happening. It certainly wasn't a boring life growing up on the farm. At the time, having not experienced anything else, I found it hard to imagine that anyone else would live any other sort of life. It was really quite an excellent life. Back to her though, she was in the community a lot. She liked her bowls and she liked her golf as well. Despite what everyone says about the community, and I can't speak for all of rural WA, if you went to the Roads Board, the Hospital Board and all those boards were all run by males but the women ran country. Wyalkatchem was run by the women without any doubt, even though they didn't have the positions, they ran it and she was one of them. There was a raft of wonderful women up there. Many of them have been dying over the last 10 years, who were just sensational people and they ran the community, there is no question about it.

JF They have the upper hand when it comes to the men don't they?

TRENORDEN I've got a story about our family. We were struggling during seeding trying to get a crop in. My father had come in; we were sitting down having a meal and he said, "I've had enough of it. This tractor's going to go. We're buying a brand new tractor." And we all said, "Yahoo! fantastic!" In the morning, we came out for breakfast and the motor was getting fixed in the tractor and weren't getting a new tractor. And that is the way our family worked?

JF So financial astuteness was—

TRENORDEN Was my mothers.

JF It was your mother's side of it (contribution) and very important. To what extent were you keeping formal books and that sort of thing in those days on a farm?

TRENORDEN No, in those days there wasn't a lot of that. When I came back to the farm, I used to take over paying the accounts and doing those processes but even in those days it was a very simple process. There weren't really that many people to pay and many sources of income. The income would come in in lumps from similar sources. My father always produced pigs. That's how we all got educated on tax-cheating pigs. Nearly everyone used to do it. That is what he used to do. He used to grow pigs, take them to Northam, sell them for cash and the tax man never got to find out about the pigs and we got educated.

JF Did you have quite a big piggery?

TRENORDEN Yes, there were a lot of pigs around and quite a lot of effort in that. When I say we didn't have many cows, we were always had a milking a cow or two. We always had milking cows. I and my brothers used to milk cows. That was something I never, ever got around. I was a terrible milker but we used to get it done. A lot of funny stories about all those things of course too, but always a lot of pigs.

JF They were, what, largely grain fed, were they?

TRENORDEN Yes, because the second process I talked about with the headers, we'd store the seconds wheat and that would go through the pigs and return the money that way. [It was a] sizeable effort. There was always a lot of work on the farm.

JF I suppose that dovetailed in with the more seasonal aspects of other farming. In harvest, your pigs would look after themselves a lot more.

TRENORDEN That's true but there were always a million things to do. Particularly back in those days, my father had cleared the farm. There were still a lot of mallee roots and still a lot of fences to be done so there was never too much of a down time when there was not a lot of work to be done but we always had family holidays. Very often we went to Nornalup, some times through what is now Margaret River, and a little bit of Busselton. They were always magic and adventurous times as well.

Hopping in the family vehicle driving to Wyalkatchem to the south coast was quite an adventure for a young kid.

JF It would be a couple of day's journey would it?

TRENORDEN No. It was always a day but it was a big, big day. We would leave before sunrise and arrive late but it was a magical time.

JF Did you have a holiday house down south, or not?

TRENORDEN No, we never had that. My father went to Shark Bay for 23 years in a row. He loved his fishing. He was an incredible fisherman; he had a knack of fishing. We did a lot of fishing and my children fished with him. He was a very significant influence on us.

JF Normally you said Nornalup, sometimes. Nornalup would have been a good fishing place.

TRENORDEN We went there a lot. For a country boy from the wheatbelt to get on the river and go up amongst those tall trees where there was dead quiet and all the birds and vegetation and black bream and silver bream and all that . . . in those days it was a very untouched part of the world and it was pretty special.

JF It is just about time, I think we talked about . . . sorry, we didn't ask whether your father was involved with the roads board at all?

TRENORDEN No he never did those things. He was very heavily into Freemasonry. He was president on and off of the bowling club, golf and football but he never went into roads board activities. In fact, I know he was a good Liberal supporter. I often wonder what he would think about my process, where I think my mother was probably more a National, or in those days, Country Party supporter.

JF One of the things that sort of comes up in talking about them, to what extent was religion important to either of them?

TRENORDEN Not important. My father, basically, was non-religious and I think my mother was always religious in a way. We never went to church. I shouldn't say

“never”, but we rarely went to church. Church was not a simple process; it was basically a day’s outing. My mother always kept religion on the edge of the conversation without being the core of it so we never had religion thrown at us but my mother was religious. Even towards the end of her life she didn’t go to church and those things either. Neither of them were a church going family.

JF You said they were supporters of Liberal or perhaps . . .

TRENORDEN No; no active politics, not even agri-politics, so it was always conversation . . . world affairs, politics, Prime Ministers, wheat boards. All those things were always conversation around the table so it was freely spoken about but neither of them were active in any of those things.

JF It is about time we spent a minute or two on your primary school.

TRENORDEN Yes.

JF You went into Wyalkatchem for that, I presume?

TRENORDEN Yes. I clearly remember going in for my first day, which was not a moment of fear, but a moment of adventure. I went in by school bus but, of course, I had two elder brothers so that wasn’t a worry. It was a great adventure going to school. There was an old primary school in Wyalkatchem, which I went to for quite a few years and towards the end of my primary time there was a new primary school but they were friendly, open, happy times.

JF They didn’t have a district high at that time, or a junior high as it would have been.

TRENORDEN No, there wasn’t. That was built right at the end of my primary process. I spent my last primary year in the new school.

JF That was about 1960 would have been when you finished there, was it?

TRENORDEN Yes '59 was my last year there and that must have been the year it was opened, or close to that. I don’t actually remember any of my teachers. I can visualise them but I can’t remember too many. Towards the end there was a couple.

There was a Mr Droppet I remember very well because he used to throw dusters at us so he should have been Mr Thrower, not Mr Droppet. Nevertheless, towards the end of my schooling I did have a recognition of teachers but early in my process to me they were a bit more like authority because all that was brand new to me; all that socialisation. You were told to sit down and be quiet and that format was all new to me. I wouldn't say it was a shock but it was definitely new to me.

JF You said you used to like reading a lot as a young fellow. Did you read before you went to school?

TRENORDEN Most definitely, yes. My mother was quite intelligent and quite focused. Never ever pushed us at all. Even later in life, if she wanted to know how I was, she'd ring up one of my brothers and say, "How's Max?"

END OF TAPE ONE SIDE B

TAPE TWO SIDE A

This is tape two, side A, in the series of interviews with Maxwell Wayne Trenorden, MLA, this being recorded on 27 February 2008 at Parliament House.

JF Max, last week we had started talking about your school days and your primary school, and today you'll take up the story roughly there. I wondered if, relating to your personal development and so on, whether you were aware of the migrant presence among the students at Wyalkatchem school?

TRENORDEN They were there, without any doubt, but I actually never thought anything about it because that was just what I walked into. I just assumed that was the natural format of the whole world because I did live this insular life on the farm. They were definitely there in large numbers, and since those days, and particularly living in Northam . . . there is something like 32 000 to 34 000 people went through Northam. The Water Authority and Main Roads, and a lot of those government bodies were (PWD in those days) employed a lot of those people. There was a camp, in fact, in Wyalkatchem. Joe Pop, as we call him (Joe Popaniski) was a boy up there in my time. In fact, looking back on it, it was pretty unique. There were some really different looking people, some strikingly beautiful girls who grew up in Wyalkatchem, and fellows like Joe Pop, who brought a very different perspective to the community.

JF What was he actually doing there?

TRENORDEN His parents were working on the railway, I think. You'd have to check that. He's now a prominent journalist here and quite proud of his time in Wyalkatchem, which was an extended period of time. The other thing that I didn't know was happening around about the time was (I'm just trying to think of the fellow's name; he's currently in York) he was the Queen's secretary, and his father was a principal in Wyalkatchem before my time. So Wyalkatchem had a bit of fame about that. So when I was growing up, we were all aware that the Queen's secretary was a person who used to spend a fair bit of time in Wyalkatchem. He used to talk about it; even the Queen has noted the strange name, Wyalkatchem, from time to time. But when I went to school, I just thought that was normal. I didn't perceive anything different about it. I guess that's probably why I've never had any problems in my life, even though Wyalkatchem was a town that had one Aboriginal family. Apparently

that was because there was no natural water in Wyalkatchem, so it wasn't an area where Aboriginals traditionally gathered at, but I have always had a fair . . . and I dislike the words like "tolerance" and those things . . . but I've never had problems with Aboriginals or Europeans or whatever.

JF Was there any evidence about among other kids at the school, whether it was the migrants or Aborigines if they were at the school, subject to teasing and that sort of thing?

TRENORDEN I think everyone was subject to teasing, but I don't recall anything that you would call racist or whatever. The difficulty with kids is, if you've got something different about you, whatever it is, it gets picked on, doesn't it?

JF Yes.

TRENORDEN If you're unlucky enough to have a bad leg, like one of my friends did, or those things, that was a part of the ridicule and children do that world-wide. But I don't recall anything remotely like nasty.

JF What about for yourself? You mentioned a couple of nicknames, but they probably came in later life, I think, judging by the ones you gave me.

TRENORDEN Yes. When I went to Scotch, I was the third Trenorden to turn up and I was instantly "Gangster". All the teachers referred to me as "Gangster", ALL the teachers. Rarely was I referred to by Maxwell Trenorden. That actually is an interesting story: my eldest brother turned up at Scotch College with another person, who he can't remember who it was at the time, and the other person stole a car on his first day at Scotch College. Then because my brother came from Wyalkatchem, they just said that everyone in Wyalkatchem is a gangster, and that stuck, and it still is. Going through the college, I have relatives still going through the process, and "Gangster" [has] stuck. But I'm not sure . . . I've always attracted nicknames. My friends around Northam called me "Senator", and that's just because I'm in politics; they often just call me "Senator". I'm unaware of why that occurred, but someone obviously started to call me "Senator" and it just caught.

JF It happened.

TRENORDEN So I seem to attract nicknames. I used to be called “Ropey” at school a bit and I used to be called “Nedronert”, which is Trenorden backwards. So some people attract nicknames and others don’t, for some reason.

JF Coming back over what you were saying about the Aboriginal family—one Aboriginal family only in Wyalkatchem—were there kids at school with you from that family?

TRENORDEN Yes, but a bit older than me. He was a bit different. His name was Charlie Sandstone, and I’m talking to you fourth-hand or fifth-hand, but he was an outstanding cricketer. They wouldn’t let him wicket-keep in the local competition because they couldn’t tell whether people had been bowled or he’d stood up to the wickets and just flicked it onto the stumps. He was outstandingly quick, and apparently he went to one country week and made 100 runs every innings he went at. He was an outstanding cricketer. He definitely still had the Aboriginal attitude process of people to him, but he was very well liked and well respected. But his eldest son went way off the rails and was a serious problem to him, and drugs (not so much; I probably shouldn’t say “drugs”), but certainly heavy alcohol problems. In Wyalkatchem we only had that one Aboriginal family, the Sandstones, and now there are a few more families there. They’re good people and, like [in] every country town, they’re involved in sports. I don’t recall, again, any adult interaction, except the negativity of . . . there’s no class process in Australia, but perhaps you can say a class-type process, more than a negativity in terms of racism.

JF Did that Aboriginal man hold down a paid job in the town?

TRENORDEN He worked for the Shire, yes. He was a lovely man. He was a lot older than me, but I used to enjoy chatting to him because he had an easy sense of humour and was a very likeable person.

JF What about Aboriginal employees on the farms around there? Were there —

TRENORDEN No. As I say, that was the only Aboriginal family in town, including towns around us, like Dowerin and Koorda and Trayning also have either none or very few Aboriginal families. You go to Moora or Kellerberrin and other places and

there were quite a few, but in that tight little area there were very few Aboriginal families living there.

JF I'm thinking about my experience, say, in Quairading. There was quite a big of community of Aboriginals where there was a reserve, say —

TRENORDEN Yes.

JF — a government reserve, like in Quairading itself, or somewhere there was a, sort of traditional place like Yoting, I think —

TRENORDEN Yes, Yoting.

JF — they used to congregate at. Was there sort of a natural Aboriginal gathering centre anywhere near your part?

TRENORDEN No. As I was saying, I think, from what I can and read the history of Wyalkatchem and a few other bits and pieces, there was no surface water in that part of the world, so Aboriginals didn't naturally go there. It was tough country for them. When I moved to Northam, the Aboriginal community was heavily involved, and still is heavily involved, in chaff-cutting and those sort of activities. There is a lot of agricultural employment. But in that part of the wheatbelt, seeing an Aboriginal family was pretty much a rarity.

JF So when you were coming towards the end of primary school in Wyalkatchem, you would have developed some sort of unique qualities as a person, and hobbies and so on. What was the young Max, at 11 or 12 years of age, into? What was your motivation and so on?

TRENORDEN I guess I was into myself a fair bit. I used to spend a lot of time with myself and my brothers and family, as I've said. As I said, I used to walk in the bush and do those things and just loved doing it, and a lot of reading. But I was very insular. I can recall vividly going to school and this phenomenon called Buddy Holly had died, and I had no idea who Buddy Holly was, not even the vaguest idea who Buddy Holly was. All my people around me were just saying how terrible it was and I was thinking, "Why didn't I?" But because I didn't listen to music . . . I did listen to the radio, but I tended to listen to programs of the time; I can remember *Biggles* and a

few other things that you're not allowed to, apparently these days, listen to, but I used to listen to a bit of that. But I spent a lot of time by myself, so I was a very insular individual. I didn't get involved in the groupings at school, but I wasn't the one who sat over in the corner by myself either; I just kept my own thoughts to myself and just watched it. I did that all the way through school, all the way even through Scotch College I did the same thing. I didn't play sport at Scotch College.

JF Yes, I picked that up in your notes. I was going to ask about that. But did you play sport at the primary school?

TRENORDEN No, only when I had to. I've never really quite understood why I took that . . . I can't say it was . . . it was never a negativity to me, it was just in me to do that. I used to watch a lot and I used to listen a lot, but I . . . and I did very poorly at primary school. I'm not quite sure why that was either. I shouldn't say "poorly", but I didn't do very well at English. So I was a bit different and I don't know why I was a bit different. I actually just think it was [because] my focus was around my family and my farm, and this was . . . going off to school was a distraction. Even though I can remember chunks of it and it wasn't anything like a terrible experience (in fact it was a pleasant experience) and the years I spent at Scotch, I have to say, I really enjoyed.

JF So coming back to your reading habit, what were you reading as a boy of 11 or 12?

TRENORDEN I really can't tell you that now. My mother was an avid reader, and there was always books in the house, but there were *Boy's Own* type stuff, if you remember the stuff around in those days, John. There was volumes and volumes of adventure stories, and I did read a bit of those things like *Biggles* and so forth, but I haven't got a strong recollection of what I consumed; I just enjoyed reading.

JF Often, when a young chap's growing up, he's influenced, to a large degree, by people outside the family. We've talked about family members last week. Can you nominate one or two individuals around the town, or that were not part of the family but were very influential in your development?

TRENORDEN Yes, definitely. Some of those people I spoke about in the first tape . . . some of the women my mother's age were just pillars of strength. Even as a

young boy you just recognised the strength in those people and, of course, they were mothers of people I went to school with so I had a lot of interaction with them. There was a Mrs Davies and her husband who had six sons, and all six sons were friends of mine, so they were quite an influence to me. But also there was a close friend I kept for many, many years called David Bruce, and his father was quite a character and I used to watch him. So I used to watch quite a few people. There was a fellow called Gordon Davies, who had been a significant footballer. He was the Shire works operator, an individual I used to just take notice of. I had an uncle called Lionel Grace; I had a significant grandmother who used to terrorise everyone, but she didn't terrorise me because I was young, I suppose. There was a range of people I watched closely.

JF Can you assign to any one of those individuals particular things that you think they taught you or that you observed that you liked or disliked?

TRENORDEN I think they radiated the same things as my parents radiated. A couple of them, like Mr Bruce, had an eccentric side but still had the basic values, and that's what I remember about my youth, about Wyalkatchem, about the strength of those values. You'd see the people in the community who were down at the pub and the like, and as I got a bit older some of my friends . . . the Coffin Cheaters were born and bred in Wyalkatchem; they were created in Wyalkatchem. One of my friends went to school at a place called Benjaberring, and he was telling me the other day that there were seven in the class and five are now dead, and the five of them were Coffin Cheaters, so we had that other element in town. I was able to watch those people around me, and the other element. Not that I ever remember having any great dislike of the other element; in fact, like everyone else, we were all attracted to that element when they seemed to be having so much fun and all the rest, but I was never attracted to that. I guess by the time I got to school, I had 10 years or more of indoctrination, or whatever you want to call it, from my parents, which they'd never, ever pushed anything at me, it was just living in the house.

JF Just to digress and look at Wyalkatchem with the Coffin Cheaters' antecedents and so on there, what size of population would there have been in Wylie at about those times?

TRENORDEN It must have been at least double what it is now. It must have been around about 1 500 people, I guess. There were little communities. My little

community of Coralocking; we had a football team. Often I'd turn up to play football and I'd be the 18th player to turn up, but nevertheless we kept that team going for many, many years. Certainly we had a cricket team, and Coralocking is five houses and a wheat bin. So the population in those days must have been at least double what it is now. Also, what I feel sorry for the young people out there now, there are no young girls out there. There are young men out there, but very few young girls out there, so it is a very different community now.

JF What was there? There was the wheat bin, as you said, and there was a wheat bin in every siding thereabouts. What else was there that people could work at in Wyalkatchem?

TRENORDEN It was purely an agricultural town with a bit of railways. The line diverted up to Koorda and there was always, in my youth, a strong railway camp there. Outside of that . . . and Water Authority, sorry; there is a strong Water Authority depot there as well, because at that time the water was still being laid so there was quite a strong workforce there. Outside of that, other than the servicing of the wheatbelt, [there was] not much. There were three car dealers, off the top of my head, and at least two, maybe three, machinery dealers, where you'll have no machinery dealers there now, and probably no car dealers; almost certainly no car dealers.

JF So these motorbike fans were largely among young townspeople rather than from the farms, were they?

TRENORDEN No, all of them that I can recall were farmers. I can't tell you why that happened, the biker attitude happened. It came out of two families which had . . . I can't remember also the number of boys, but three or four boys in each family, and they were the nucleus of the Coffin Cheaters. I must admit, one family were neighbours of ours; they were people I liked talking to, but they, in later years, did some terrible things.

JF Were motorbikes very important in your young life there?

TRENORDEN Not mine, but motorbikes were; there were a lot of motorbikes around. Motorbikes, I guess, from around about the First World War were a pretty significant form of transport, even more than now. I think they were, in those days, more a form

of transport than now; now they're a bit of an icon. To have a motorbike makes a statement. In those days motorbikes were . . . a lot of people had motorbikes but, of course, the biker groups were around the tradition of the motorbike and they had more, I guess, the clan, or whatever they call it, in the clubs.

JF So you didn't use bikes on the farm for mustering or anything like that?

TRENORDEN No. We had bikes later. In my early youth we didn't have bikes, but later, when I was in my teenage years, yes, we did, and of course they were very useful. They were low horsepower bikes. Then people started getting injured and killed on them, of course, because they're . . . again, it's easy to see, because you'd bounce across the rocks, and if you slipped and hit your head on a rock or you broke your arm easily. But they were very useful, motorbikes.

JF Coming now then to things that were happening around the world; you were a reader, you listened to radio. Are there national and world events that you remember from your primary years that caught your imagination? I mean, Sputnik, for example, would have been known to you, I suppose, and things like that.

TRENORDEN Sputnik definitely was, but because my mother always had an interest in politics and the newspapers and the magazines, and what they used to listen to and consume, I was always aware of world politics. Israel was major at the time and all those Arab-type problems.

JF The Israeli state is the same age as you, isn't it?

TRENORDEN It is, it is, that's right.

JF Formed in 1948.

TRENORDEN That's right, that's right. I can't even remember my parents batting for one side or the other, but definitely my mother listened to all that and consumed all that, and I did, too. I was aware of the Prime Ministers of the UK in particular (much more conscious of the UK than, say, America) but I think I would have been able to tell you who was President of America at the time, but I certainly would have been able to tell you who was the Prime Minister. Also Australian politics, Menzies and the

like; I was always aware of all that. I wouldn't have had anywhere near the consequence I do now, but I was always aware of all that. I guess there has always been people . . . I don't know when I became aware of Napoleon and Caesar and all those icon people most of us read about, but it was probably very early in my life.

JF You mentioned that history has become an interest of yours, when we first met. I wondered whether that was being honed either at the school or at home, or was that later?

TRENORDEN No, at home. I'd say that came from my mother, or if it was a natural component in me. I'm still fascinated by history and I love history. I do dumb things; like, I was at a meeting yesterday in Merredin, and to say how long I'd been in Parliament I just said, "I've been a member of Parliament since the siege of Mafeking." Of course, a few people knew where Mafeking was and a lot of people wouldn't know where Mafeking was. I've always loved reading history, and for a period there South African history was important to me. I went through a period where I did a lot of reading about South Africa.

JF So you're a bit of a wit as well, are you?

TRENORDEN I like humour. I keep on telling my staff in my office and I keep on telling my colleagues in the National Party, "If you can't laugh about it, you shouldn't be doing it." It doesn't matter how tough it is; if you can't have a laugh, you really ought not be there. I have strong view of that. I think I've seen too many people get so involved in what they're doing that it just consumes them, and I think that's something I would never want to happen to myself, so I laugh a lot. I really appreciate my staff in Northam; they laugh all the time. I'd say we're a good office, we work hard, but there is laughter all the time. They'll have a go at me, and I have no problems with them having a shot at me because I think that's what my family was like, I suppose.

JF Coming now to Scotch College in particular, why the choice of Scotch by your family?

TRENORDEN I'm not quite sure, because my mother went to MLC. My father, as I told you, left school, basically, when he was 10. I'm not sure why they chose Scotch. They would have chosen it for my eldest brother, Brian, and I really don't know why

that was the case. It certainly wouldn't have been because of religious connotations. I would just say that my mother, who was a great follower of these things, decided it was THE school to go to.

JF Do you remember whether, in those days, you had to be booked in long in advance?

TRENORDEN Yes, it was still pretty tight in those days, like it is now. We were booked in from a fairly . . . not a very young age because in my . . . when I was very young, my parents barely didn't have two bob, but they started to do well in the late '50s and into the '60s, and we would have been booked in some time in the late single years, I would say.

JF Just on that score of the affordability of schools and so on, I suppose the wool prices of the 1950s would have given them quite a boost?

TRENORDEN Yes. As I said last week, my father stole from the taxation, from the people of Australia; it was illegal pigs. Half of the wheatbelt did that. He grew pigs right through the process. We often went with him to the market at Northam, and he'd sell them for cash. He must have declared some of it, but I'm sure that's where the bulk of it (the education money) came from.

JF Has the taxation department, to your knowledge, been able to change that situation?

TRENORDEN Yes, you just can't do that now; it's just impossible. But in those days markets were about cash; everything was cash. So the question was just whether it was recorded. If your name was at the top of the docket for the cash, well then the taxation department would want to know you, but it was probably Mr Jones or Mr Smith or some other process.

JF Can you remember what it used to cost per annum to board at Scotch and go to Scotch?

TRENORDEN No, it never entered my head that I should have to worry about things like that, and I never did. No, I have no idea what it was at the time. But I know, like

all parents, it was . . . in hindsight, it was definitely a struggle for my parents to find the money, but they sent four of us through Scotch, which is —

JF And two at a time in most instances, so they'd be shelling out two lots of fees at once.

TRENORDEN Yes. As you say, though, for a period there, wool was strong and wheat wasn't too bad, so my father did have a period where income did flow reasonably well while we were going through this period.

JF What appealed to you about the boarders' life at Scotch?

TRENORDEN Very close friends and it was a new world. Also, I was able to test things and do things that I would never have dreamt of. Like, to go to the beach you had to have a bronze medallion and all that; I used to just crawl out of my bed at four o'clock in the morning and go, and be back before they knew I'd gone. So I learned to start doing a few of those things with close friends. I used to write my own leave letters. I had a friend who had a house in Dalkeith, and I knew my father would never write, so I used to write leave letters to the school in my father's name. I did that for many years, and would go on leave, so I learnt to express myself that way.

JF It was good for your English expression then.

TRENORDEN Yes. I never, ever got excellent in English, as you've probably worked out, but I was able to do those things. We used to dabble with alcohol and so forth, but I was never . . . the things we did were never terrible in any form. I can remember, in 1964 Claremont won the grand final and I snuck out of the boarding house and went down to the ground and a few people gave me a few free drinks. I was coming up the stairs at the boarding house and the head boarder was standing at the top of the stairs and he said, "Trenorden, if you make any noise, I'll hear you and get out of bed and catch you", and he went. I mean, if I was really up his nose, he would have pinged me. They were learning experiences, like that. There were quite a few good boarding masters who taught me some basic things. I used to have great trouble sleeping and one of them taught me three things (and I can't remember the third one, but I've always kept these); they were – to empty my head of thought, and how much lead do you give a sitting duck?, and what is the sound of one hand clapping? – and there was one other. We have all heard of those. I used to do that. I

used to sit down and think, “What is that sound?” and just empty my head, and then I’d go to sleep. So things like that were . . . the boarding school was a pleasant experience; it wasn’t a nasty experience to me. I know some of the other boarders came and went pretty quickly because they just couldn’t stand it, but it wasn’t an unpleasant experience for me at all. I had very close friends around me and I enjoyed it.

JF Was the food good?

TRENORDEN No, it was terrible—terrible. But, again, we could live through that. It took me years to eat cabbage because at the boarding school they’d just put the cabbage in the pot and boil it for a week; it was just terrible. The cabbage I eat now is a different vegetable than what I used to have at school, but nevertheless I enjoyed it. We had major characters. Malcolm Brown, the footballer, was just an amazing character at school. He turned up at one breakfast (we had to assemble for breakfast and we had to be ready for school) and he was a prefect. Maxwell Keys, who was the principal of Scotch College, was at the breakfast, which he rarely was. Mal Brown turned up without a tie and Maxwell Keys said to him, “Malcolm Brown, prefect or not, you know you’ve got to wear a tie”, so off he went and came back wearing a tie, but he’d taken his shirt off. [laughter] There are many stories like that. So I watched these characters and enjoyed these characters and I think because. . . The world is full of characters.

END OF TAPE TWO SIDE A

TAPE TWO SIDE B

Tape two, side B, interview with Max Trenorden.

JF Max, where was the boarding house in the Scotch arrangement? I mean, the buildings have changed there so much, I suppose, since.

TRENORDEN Significantly. I'm not a great 'old boy' process, but I go to one event a year at Scotch, and so I have seen the development there. They were immediately south of the old principal's residence. It was the first part of Scotch, so there are double-storey buildings there. So, basically, in my time the boarding school was above the classrooms. It was very functional, it was very good, we had a full range of people, people like Terry Gale, which I talked about before, the Gale family. He was a major person at Scotch and there were some really wonderful people who grew up and did, you know, in terms of the Western Australian context, very well. So I enjoyed those people and I enjoyed being there.

JF What about influential masters? You have mentioned a couple without . . . well, you have mentioned Maxwell Keys, for example, and you have mentioned others not by name. Who stands out as being important to you among the teachers?

TRENORDEN Well, the first one was a fellow called Alastair Courtney, who retired from Scotch just a few months ago, so he must have been very young when I turned up. We had a house across the road, which was my first time boarding. He was there with his wife, as the master. He was a really outgoing character and taught us a few things, because even though people think they were nasty, but things like nuggeting and so forth was very heavy, but we all knew that was going to have to happen to you, so it was a process of how you were mastered. Apart from the embarrassment of it all, it really wasn't that terrible. We had one particular lad there who developed into a friend of mine, but he was big and we couldn't nugget him, so Alastair Courtney, without directly saying it, sort of told us what to do and five of us jumped him. Because he did it to all of us, the system was, he had to have it too. So it took quite a few of us to jump him and do it. So Alastair Courtney gave us that balance about don't take too much of it, but there was no punching and terrible things about it, it was just don't put up with nonsense. Also there was a fellow, Gamble, there who was there a long time; a very even-handed teacher. My first real interface with women teachers . . . Marjorie Wyndham used to teach music and a few other bits

and pieces . . . there was a person. But, again, history, there was a teacher of history that I remember getting a half-yearly exam back and I got 49 per cent for the exam and I was devastated, but I topped the class by about three or four per cent. I just wondered what was the logic of that, but nevertheless he was a person who used to push history very hard. I can't say that I ever in my youth had a teacher that was just really important to me.

JF Do you remember people who were outstanding eccentrics among the staff there?

TRENORDEN Yes, there were quite a few. There was an old fellow who was a World War I veteran who was at the boarding school, and I just can't . . . if I thought about it, I would come up with his name. He was quite eccentric and quite a character. There was a fellow, Cousins; he was the one who taught me, or said to me about one hand clapping and how much lead do you give a sitting duck and so forth, so a different sort of person than I'd seen before. I think that's the great value of a place like Scotch College, or those sorts of institutions, because they do pool all those together. There were Asian students there, there was a great mix of people, so you blended in with all of those.

JF What about the Scottishness of it?

TRENORDEN No, there wasn't . . . apart from kilts and drums and pipe bands, there wasn't much of a Scottish element at all; in fact, far from it. We used to like the kilts and the bands and so forth and I was always involved in cadets because it's a slower marching speed out there—pipes. But it was always a bit different, things like going to the interschool sports in kilts and so forth, and I quite enjoyed all that, but it wasn't really pushed. We all knew it was Scottish, but there was no real cultural process in that, like a Catholic or whatever. It wasn't really, and I'm sure it's not there now.

JF What about the religious side of it, did that have much play?

TRENORDEN Very little in terms of school and class, other than you'd expect. It was more when I used to sit . . . because we used to start the day with a prayer, but there was very little religious element into it, except there was always a scripture class.

JF How did you react to the scripture classes?

TRENORDEN No, that's fine, it's all history—it's all history. I have developed a severe dislike of churches over the years. I'm still a Christian and a believer in the Christian process, but I have a severe dislike of churches because I think churches have damaged a lot of things in the past, like politicians have damaged a lot of things in the past, because to me they're no different from politicians. There wasn't a strong element of that and I didn't react badly to it. I always knew that my mother had a high interest in Christianity more than religion, so I was pretty neutral to all of that, but to me, much of it's history.

JF What is most memorable for you in the academic side? You've said you didn't do especially well in the academics, but what's the most memorable part of it for you?

TRENORDEN I did get quite a few awards at the end of it. As I found out when I was at Scotch, if I paid attention and worked during class, I could cruise. I did actually cruise through school and I did reasonably well at Scotch. That was just the learning process. That was the difference, I think, between the primary school and there. Scotch had a better focus of teaching, so I did concentrate in class and I did quite well in all subjects, and eventually even in English. That was, I think, the discipline of the school, which, sort of . . . not that it was ever forced at you; so I did relatively well at school.

JF What was the class size?

TRENORDEN They were fairly big. I just think that, even now, teachers at private schools just get it a bit easier than teachers at public schools. I mean, some of the thing that teachers at public schools have to put up with, private school teachers don't have to put up. They're the negative things. They're the things that sort of damage teachers every day. In my youth, the teachers used to turn up and they had pretty much an open hand in the class, and if you got a clip under the ear, you got a clip under the ear. Not that that happened a lot; in fact it was very rare, but every now and then it would happen. If you were sent off to see the principal, which I used to go a lot . . . in fact, in one term, in 13 weeks I got the cane 26 times, but that wasn't because I was such a naughty boy. I used to be a part of the team, so there were five or six of you who'd go, "Who did that?" No-one would own up; you would all go. It was more that process than being particularly difficult myself. I think the teachers had

an easier reign than teachers I see now, and they were able, therefore, to concentrate on teaching more than my primary school teachers.

JF You were obviously interested in footy and things because you said you went to the grand final and so on, but you didn't actually play for Scotch.

TRENORDEN I can't tell you why I took that attitude. I used to make sure . . . I used to score for the cricket team, I used to do odd bits around the grounds for the football team, and I made sure I was out of that process. I used to train and enjoyed training. I used to train at football, train at cricket, but when they looked for a volunteer to do something, I always volunteered. It was to get out of it. I guess it was that I just didn't want to be in the mainstream; I just didn't want to be with the pack, I just didn't want to be with the group. When I went back to the farm for two years, or it must have been something like two years after I went back to Wyalkatchem, I didn't play sport, but after that I got heavily involved in sport, and still play a lot of sport. I don't think it was the sport process; like most males, I enjoy sport. I just didn't want to be in the pack.

JF Who are the lasting friends that you made at Scotch?

TRENORDEN I had a friend called David Bruce who went right through my youth, right through Scotch, and unfortunately died a few years ago. There was another fellow called Andrew McLelland out of Kellerberrin. I knew him a little bit before school, but I was great friend of his at school. He's now in the eastern states. Another fellow was David Stewart who came from Bruce Rock, who unfortunately died a lot of years ago. So I had some very close friends, and I go back to what Scotch call their Foundation Dinner every year, because there is a group of about up to 15, where we just meet each other and talk to each other, and a fellow called Kerry Shanaghan is a good friend. There are a few of them that we easily get back together again, spent all those years. Kerry Shanaghan probably spent, I'd say, from five years to 14 at Scotch College at boarding school. So there was a bit of that around.

JF You left the school without completing your leaving.

TRENORDEN I pressured my parents to let me go home at the end of year 11. My mother was mortified, and I think there was a financial process there as well, but they did allow me to leave at year 11. It was pretty significant in what's ended up. Who

knows what would have happened if I'd actually put my head down and gone through to year 12 and maybe gone to university and did all the other things, but I just wanted to get back to the farm. I keep on talking about it, but I just loved the farm. So it's not that I disliked where I was at Scotch (it was always enjoyable) but I wanted to get back to the farm.

JF You would have done the junior at Scotch, I suppose?

TRENORDEN Yes, I did.

JF How did you go with your junior?

TRENORDEN I did quite well. In fact, I failed one subject, which was my strongest. Even these days, I went into that . . . it was the last exam and I went in there with a bad attitude and I looked at a few of the questions and I thought, "These are dumb", so I sort of rebelled at the paper. No, I did quite well. It wasn't the education process and I wasn't anti the education process, I just had this enormous desire to get back to the farm.

JF So you had no aspirations in terms of career other than the farm?

TRENORDEN No, I was going to be a farmer; that was it.

JF Did you do any part-time work at all while you were a student?

TRENORDEN No, not an hour. Perhaps I shouldn't say that. When I went back to the farm, I was pretty good at throwing fleeces so my father used to offer me around the local shearing sheds but I never got paid for a day of that. Not that I ever complained about that, I didn't even know what getting paid was, but my father would say, "Max will go and help you", and I would go over and do a day at a shearing shed here and there, but I never got paid for that. I never saw that as anything else other than an extension of what I was doing on the farm when I was home on holidays, because we worked all the way through our school years, driving tractors and working sheep and so forth.

JF Talking about getting paid; did you have some pocket money when you were at Scotch?

TRENORDEN Yes, we always had a fixed [amount], where the school demanded that every student had at least this amount of money. It was always enough and I don't ever . . . my mother was always generous and saw us regularly, and if we ever wanted anything, I can't ever remember being denied anything. There was a fixed formula and the school was strong on that; they didn't want any of the students having more money than that or any less money than that. Everyone, in theory, was to have the same amount of pocket money.

JF Where would you spend it?

TRENORDEN Corner shops, which basically still exist in Swanbourne now. There was a canteen at the school where you could buy cool drinks and all the things that people tell you now you shouldn't eat. All that was available. Mostly, we'd walk down to the main strip at Swanbourne, which is exactly the same today as it was then.

JF Did you ever go to the films or that sort of thing when you were —

TRENORDEN Yes, I used to sneak out a bit because of the drive-in at Lake View, is it?

JF Yes.

TRENORDEN I can't remember that.

JF Lakeway.

TRENORDEN Lakeway, because you could sit on deckchairs there. A thing we would occasionally do was sneak out after, when you had the time, and just go up there and watch —

JF It was only about 100 yards away, wasn't it?

TRENORDEN It wasn't far. We used to do a little bit of that. But occasionally the school would allow you to go into Perth and watch movies and come back, because the school was right beside the railway line. The school was good like that. It was a boys' school obviously, but if you behaved yourself in school, you got a fair amount of leeway. They would allow you, on just your own invitation, to say, "I'd like to go to

Perth to the movies”, and they’d say, “Get two or three of you and off you go”, and we used to do that. I still love the movies. Movies and music have always been pretty important to me.

JF What sort of music, at that stage, were you interested in?

TRENORDEN The Beatles just blew out of nowhere. When I was in my early days at Scotch College, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones and the Searchers and the Seekers . . . not the Seekers, sorry; they were later. A lot of those bands just came from nowhere into my life and I really enjoyed it.

JF What about singing; did you ever sing?

TRENORDEN Yes, I was in the state winning choir. I had a terrible voice, but Marjorie Wyndham used to put two choirs, every year, into the state competition, and she was a regular winner. She’d put people like me down the back and tell us when to make some sort of noise and so forth. I had a terrible voice, but she never, ever excluded anyone from the choir; the choir was obviously quite big. Yes, I was in the choir for quite a few years.

JF I presume the school had socials; how often did that happen and how did you relate to the girls that came to the socials, and so on?

TRENORDEN They were just terrifying events. I came from all. . . apart from my mother. . . all brothers; these things called girls were just terrifying creatures. Of course we had dancing classes, which I used to go to. I probably went to four years of dancing classes and never learnt a dance step. I actually didn’t mind dancing and I still like dancing now, but I wished in those years I had actually paid some attention. The problem with dancing lessons was that they had these things called girls, which were just terrifying creatures. I’m not joking about that; I was bewildered by girls. There were all these blokes around me just going berserk about girls and I just couldn’t quite understand all that. It took me a little while to get into that scene.

JF [Chuckles] So you didn’t enjoy socials?

TRENORDEN No, they . . . I used to enjoy them because PLC and Scotch used to link up a fair bit, so they’d organise, basically, partners for you and so forth. Yes, I did

enjoy those, but girls were still . . . well, I probably should take a step back: my mother was on a pedestal in my house, and always was; we always sort of revered my mother. The only birthday we ever celebrated at my house was my mother's. Birthdays were of no consequence in our family, and I still . . . and even now they are still of no consequence to me, but my mother's was. All things to do with my mother, we were very strong on. So in my household we probably put women a bit too high. It probably affected me until my late 20s, probably, but I wouldn't say it affected me; I just had a different attitude with them. I would never, ever do anything terrible or say anything nasty to a girl or misbehave or . . . because they were just creatures to be, basically, worshipped. I shouldn't say "worshipped", but put on a different plane.

JF So you went back to the farm at the end of year 11, and you were just absorbed into the family farm at that stage, were you?

TRENORDEN Yes, and I loved every moment of it. By that time we had several farms; it was quite large. My two elder brothers were back there working full time, so it was a reasonable workforce at that time. My father was good, as I've already said several times, so it was a pretty switched-on operation, and it was a joy to be a part of.

JF So you always worked as part of the family team, rather than going out on your own account as a farmer?

TRENORDEN Exactly, except my eldest brother married and was off on a different farm and was running that independently, but I, or my brother, would regularly go over there whenever he needed assistance, so it was still the same operation. It was the same business entity for some time, but at that time it was definitely the same business entity, and a lot of fun. Interestingly, money didn't count; I used to get paid a fixed amount and it just went into the bank. I was not really conscious of money. I mean, I knew money but it was not important to work for money.

JF You enjoyed what you were doing?

TRENORDEN Yes, definitely.

JF By that time . . . you would have been driving vehicles all your life, I suppose, but when did you first end up being able to get a vehicle of your own?

TRENORDEN Well, it was quite a while, because with four boys, my father used to make us share. My younger brother came home, so we bought the utility, which was the farm utility plus our vehicle, then we shared a car and then we got individual cars much, much later on. My first car was a shared car with my brother, and it was up to us to work out who had it and how we did things. In general, it didn't matter because we went to the same things. At the end of the night it might have been a bit of a problem, but you either slept where you were, or somebody else was going your way or whatever; there were never great problems. But, yes, we were forced to share a vehicle.

JF The farming operation, you said you acquired several farms eventually as part of the family arrangement. How big an operation did it become in terms of area?

TRENORDEN The total area would have been about 9 000 acres, going back in those days, and it got bigger than that; it went up by about another 50 per cent a little later on, just before I left the property. In those days, when tractors were very much smaller and really the only way to get a crop in was hours . . . you had to put the hours in and you didn't have the wide coverage of tilling machines and so forth, and we used to do this thing of ploughing. We'd work the ground sometimes three times before the seed went in, where now it doesn't get worked at all. So it was hard work, but I never, ever saw it as hard work though. It was hard work and I was fit as a mule and everyone around me was very fit.

JF Of course, when there was seeding, you would probably be working at night, as well as day, to get the crop in?

TRENORDEN Yes, and I was the number three boy so I got the midnight to dawn shift. That period before dawn coming up, I remember there were a couple of occasions when I did wake up and had wandered across the paddock sound asleep on the tractor. Our farm was very dangerous; there were a lot of deep creeks in it. But I can only remember doing that twice. That pre-dawn period, it was pretty hard to keep awake, but on the other hand, one of the wonderful experiences in life as a farmer is, I'd just stop the tractor, freezing cold nights, sit beside the main wheels of the tractor, under the heat of the motor, have a cup of coffee and smell the earth. Smelling the earth and drinking the coffee, it gave you a significant feel to mother

earth and to the stars above you and all those things around. It was just a wonderful feeling, to do that.

JF I suppose you had your share of tractors getting bogged and things like that to get out of?

TRENORDEN My father was a shocker in that way. If the paddock had an inch in it, a paddock had to go in. The good thing about current farming is that they wouldn't bother; they would go around it because putting seed into slush is a useless process, but my father. . . We pulled out a lot of tractors out of a lot of bogs; that's right. That was part of the process. . . freezing cold, covered in mud. Still, I never objected about that. Things like carrying a full bag of wheat or a full bag of super on your back, treading over harrows to put it in, it was just a very dangerous process. It was amazing that we didn't get hurt, but we were very young and we were fit and we were careful. I mean, we didn't do anything. There was no rush to do it, so you just did it. There were some circumstances that were dangerous, and I still now am amused that one of the things I do when I finally, occasionally go to a country pub is, look around the bar and see how many hands have missing fingers and so forth. Farmers have got a terrible record of those sort of injuries.

JF Did you ever go farming on your own account?

TRENORDEN No. I left the farm just after I was 21.

JF What prompted you to leave?

TRENORDEN My mother. 1969 was a severe drought, and so we sat around the table and said, "How do we survive this financially?" There was a discussion about do we keep on buying farms, do we end up with four farms, and my elder brothers were concerned about that because they would have had to work to get the last farm for my younger brother and those sort of arguments. My mother just said, "Max, you're the one who's the most likely to do well off the farm, so you should leave the farm."

JF How did that make you feel at the time?

TRENORDEN I realised the circumstances; I didn't feel terrible about that. I've never felt terrible about it. Even the estate process, where my three brothers all got a farm each and those farms are theirs. The deal was that I got whatever assets were off farm at my parents' death. None of those things have worried me, because my brothers worked those farms. I've got no problems about that at all. If it had to be that way, it had to be that way. No, I wasn't bitter about it; I wasn't angry about it. I guess, also, that probably it's a mark of the standing of my mother in the family. I don't want to give any impression that she was a strong, domineering person because she wasn't. She never operated like that; she was always gentle, and there was never, ever any blunt occasions with my mother. But she was keen for the four of us, and decided that the best thing was, as a 21-year-old person, I was more likely to succeed off the farm, so I went and got a job at Western Mining in Kwinana and worked there for a year. I lived in Mandurah. I enjoyed living in Mandurah, I played football at Mandurah and I swam; all the things you do at Mandurah. Mandurah was a small country town in those days. I really enjoyed Mandurah.

JF Crabbing?

TRENORDEN Yes, a lot of crabbing. I still love crabbing. I'd be down there now if I could.

JF What were you actually doing at Western Mining?

TRENORDEN I was a storeman. That was a fantastic experience for me, too, because things happened to me at Western Mining which I didn't know . . . I knew they existed, but to have them front you like, I worked in the store. Most of the people in the store were ex-Western Mining individuals from the goldfields, so they were pretty hardened but very likeable people. They taught me a lot about life. One of the things I've remembered, one of the fellows said to me, "Max, you've just got to remember that when you make a decision, every decision you make is for the best. As soon as you've made a decision, it's for the best." I have always agreed with that attitude. That was one thing that I picked up there. The other thing was, a few weeks before I left Western Mining, two fellows walked up to the counter and I was the storeman, and they said, "We're here to sign you up to the union", I said, "Oh no, I've just resigned. I'm leaving." They said, "Well, put it this way; you join the union or we'll break your legs", and I thought, "I don't want my legs broken", because I could see these two Englishmen, I might add, were serious, so I joined the union. But one of

the jobs I had at Western Mining was to look after the petrol bowser for a period. People would just approach me and say, "Fill up my car", and I'd say, "No". They'd say, "Everyone else fills up my car; why won't you?" I'd say, "It's not your fuel." They'd say, "No, we all do this." I just would not fill up their cars, not because I was anti them; it's just the way I was brought up. You just did not take somebody else's property.

Those union-type things were prevalent. Again, I remember a major meeting which we all attended where the union boss stood up and said, "We've got to demand this money", and one of the other people there said, "Well, the plant's only been running a few months, we know production is not good, they can't be making a lot of money", and the union said, "It's not about whether the company is making money or not; what's that got to do with it?" So that was a brand-new world to me. Some of those union officials were just terrible people. I can't say that I was biased for the rest of my life, because I'm not anti-union, but I did see that element out there that I'd never seen before. I can't say I didn't enjoy working for Western Mining. It was a good experience. Standing at the counter at the warehouse, all these people came past me, and I knew all these people, they'd all talk to me, and it was an interesting process. I saw the warehouse go from being probably 14, 15 employees, to a situation where it was fully computerised, when I and one other were the only ones on the floor of the warehouse, but there were twenty in the office trying to work out the IT systems. I saw all those things first-hand and I've used those things in politics.

END OF TAPE TWO SIDE B

TAPE THREE SIDE A

This is tape three, side A, in the set of interviews with Max Trenorden. This is being recorded on the 5th of March at Parliament House. The interviewer is John Ferrell.

JF So, Max, going through your work history first, you were at Western Mining at Kwinana. I think you told me you were there for one year only.

TRENORDEN Thirteen months, I think, to be exact. Yes. I'm not quite sure how I picked up the job. Maybe through the family or maybe I went and sought it out myself. I ended up as a storeman at Western Mining. For a period of time I lived in the family house in Mandurah and drove up, and then I got married and I moved into—I keep on saying Safety Bay, but it is actually a bit further south than Safety Bay. I was living in Boundary Road in, what's the area called? That's all I'll say—Safety Bay.

JF Is it between Safety Bay and Rockingham, or is it further back from the coast—Yangebup, or something like that?

TRENORDEN Down towards Penguin Island.

JF Oh, yes.

TRENORDEN Safety Bay is close, for a large area. I lived there for a while and then I got approached by AMP to replace a person I knew fairly well—a fellow called Dick Schonell, who was a Scotch College person older than me, but I knew of him when I was young. He was living at Kellerberrin and was a prominent person through the central wheatbelt. I was approached to replace him. I actually went up to Kellerberrin to look at houses, to where I might live, but AMP, in their wisdom—and it's one of the few things that I've got to thank AMP for—was they suggested I should move to Northam.

JF Just before we carry on with the AMP story, what do you think the people who recruited you saw you had that fitted the task of being an agent for AMP?

TRENORDEN To be strictly honest, I think, two arms, two legs and one head. I think it was very difficult to replace people in the insurance world. I did well and obviously

Dick Schonell knew my family, knew me and would've known that I had good connections in the central wheatbelt. My father, as I said earlier, played a lot of sport. Both sides, the Grace family and the Trenorden family, were old families—not to use “old” in terms of class, but had been around a while—in the wheatbelt. I think they saw that. I wasn't incapable.

JF You were in Western Mining's employ down, sort of around —

TRENORDEN It was at the nickel refinery at Kwinana.

JF Yes. How was he aware of you—the person who approached you?

TRENORDEN He approached me through my family.

JF Oh, yes.

TRENORDEN At that stage my father and mother had retired to Mandurah, but they still had strong associations with the farm. Dick Schonell wouldn't have had much trouble tracking me down.

JF No. He must have thought long and hard about who he knew.

TRENORDEN And who might replace him; that's right. I can remember when I told my wife about it, she just about had a heart attack, but, nevertheless, I saw it as an opportunity to get out of being a storeman in Western Mining, which I just didn't see any future in at all.

JF Did Western Mining try, at all, to offer a future to people? Was there training and that sort of opportunity for you?

TRENORDEN Not when I was there for, say, 11 months, but when they got wind of the fact that I might leave they offered me a permanent position in administration—not in the general workforce—and offered me training at that stage. I probably could've gone on. A family friend—when I say “a family friend”—that is where I would've got the job from when I come to think about it—called Malcolm Hood was a cost accountant at the same worksite for Western Mining at Kwinana; that's where I got the job. I did think about following him in his footsteps. He's ended up quite

wealthy, well-to-do, in the oil industry. I did think about that for a while, but for a farming lad to be enclosed in Kwinana and in Safety Bay the thought of escaping back to the wide expanses was very attractive.

JF Yes. What period of time was it that it took you to make up your mind about this? How long was it from when you were offered the possibility to when you actually accepted?

TRENORDEN It would be less than a week, which, as I said, horrified my wife at the time. She was from a working class family—a very good family—but to her, income was a monthly, fortnightly or weekly pay cheque. When I said I'd go off and work for commission, she didn't like that at all. It was a bit of a problem. It did excite me; it was an opportunity to test myself.

JF It would be very daunting though, even for you I suppose, because you'd been used to a regular pay cheque for that last year. How was it structured? Did you have a retainer plus commissions or were you on only commissions?

TRENORDEN I elected to go commissions only. You could take a retainer and a lesser commission, or just go on commissions. I decided I'd jump in and swim or sink. I think the failure rate is well over 80 per cent. I didn't have any illusions about that. I wasn't worried about it, because if I failed, I would've gone on to something else. To have an opportunity to go out there and do it—I've always had a passion for people, always enjoyed being with people. In some ways, being an insurance agent is a fantastic life. I remember at the time reading a bit of literature from an English clergyman who said that the only thing close to being a clergyman was a life insurance salesman.

JF Certainly people in Britain, like the Prudential, had a reputation for doing the right thing by their customers, didn't they?

TRENORDEN I can't say, in practice, there were a lot of people like that when I actually got into the industry. But in fact you actually got very, very close to your clients. They told you very often the very closest, intimate details of their family in trying to deal with their circumstances. You were in a position of quite some trust. I really used to enjoy it. Also, it honed up some skills that I thought about when I was a youth. I used to say to myself when going in to talk to someone about insurance that I

needed to know them within three minutes. I used to concentrate on knowing them. I wouldn't go in there trying to make a sale; I'd go there trying to understand the person, because I believe that you can't help people unless you know them. Even though it's a bit trite, there's no point selling a policy for someone's family if he didn't like his wife. He just wasn't going to buy it. If a person wasn't committed to his family or had a lot of money and wasn't interested in superannuation, there's no point. I was never the Baptist priest in terms that I wanted to convert people. I think it's about being a service. I used to sell life insurance and general insurance and had a fantastic time.

I think I was an agent, officially, for 18 years, but for a few of those I was actually in politics. It took me a couple of years to realise I couldn't keep that business going. I spent, say, 15 years-plus in an industry that I did very well out of, but also taught me a huge amount about people.

I'm not quite sure where I got it, but at some time in my youth I heard this view that everyone is, in fact, three different people. I came to the view at some time in my teens or 20s that everyone is actually four different people. I haven't done this for a while but the argument in my own head is that you are the person who you think you are, you are the person that other people think you are, you are the person who you want to be and you are the person who you really are. I have believed that all my life.

JF Which of those persons buys insurance?

TRENORDEN I think there's a bit of the person you want to be in those processes. I've applied it to everything I've ever done. In my office and in politics I'm almost impossible to get angry, but if you attack me at home I go off like my father used to go off. It has affected the way I operate. The other cliché or saying or whatever you want to say – I shouldn't call it a cliché, perhaps—I've always believed that if you put words out there you can't take them back. There's no retraction. There's no point saying sorry or any of those things. Once you say something, it's said. People might forgive you for it, but they'll never forget it. They are the things that drove me. I spent a lot of time focusing on people; trying to understand the people who were in front of me. I got wonderful joy out of that. I got extremely close to a lot of clients and really enjoyed the life.

JF What sort of time frame did it take to earn you a reasonable income?

TRENORDEN I was a bad salesman in some form. I used to sell not that many policies, but I sold quite reasonable volume. I didn't do a lot of knocking on doors and asking people—in fact I don't remember doing any of that. I used to concentrate on going to families and businesses and just going through the people until I found someone in need. That was in the early days. In the end, you end up with a client base and you just service the client base.

JF Yes. What sort of proportion was life insurance or superannuation to general insurance of your business?

TRENORDEN Probably 70 to 30 per cent. Again, I used to enjoy the general insurance because it was a distraction, but I would do what in those days was not the formal thing. I'd try to get people to put all their due dates on one day and I'd go and see them prior to that date and do a review. It was service, it was getting to know the people and, after all, I was getting paid for it. I was actually giving a service for that commission. I found that all very successful. Life insurance and superannuation—right at the end of my career I actually did get a financial dealer's licence, which I never saw. It was right at the end. I qualified for it, but I'm not sure that I ever got the paperwork. I used to be in that field of advising people. I sought out those successful people in the communities I serviced and tried to make the successful people my clients. I never ever ignored anyone else, but that's what I used to work on, because life insurance and general insurance was about money. The more money you got, the more you needed.

JF Your predecessor lived in Kellerberrin; you lived in Northam. Were you servicing roughly the same geographic area as he did?

TRENORDEN Yes, they actually moved me away, because there were actually two other AMP agents in Northam as well. We sort of competed in Northam and I was given a geographic area, which was my old stamping pad, which was from Dowerin to as far north-east as you wanted to go—Koorda and all those areas—and out past Trayning. I didn't go to the full extent of what I could've done because it was a lot of country and I didn't need to. It was an hour's drive to get from Northam to Wyalkatchem. That was enough wasted time.

JF Yes. To what extent did AMP actually help ease you into the post? Did they have any form of training or tutoring?

TRENORDEN Fantastic. AMP were superb at the training process, both in terms of product and understanding of product, but also about looking after yourself, understanding yourself and understanding what was happening around you. They were well before their time. Back in the '70s I went to many a seminar at which people talked about the simple processes. I remember an American of some professional quality saying, "Don't wake up in the morning and jump out of bed, because that small period of slumber was extremely healthy for you." I've always found that was useful too. Things like that they talk to you—practical things. As a self-employed person don't ever go down and pick the mail up, because if you go down to pick the mail up first thing in the morning and you open it, you spend an hour with the mail. Again, an American professional of some sort was saying to you at the same time, "Do those things in the morning, because of the argument about the jungle. As you want to pursue the jungle, people start punching you. In the morning you're still relatively happy. In the afternoon you've had a few hits and you're not so happy. So do your good work when you're happy; do your good work in the morning." That's something that's always stayed with me too and tried to balance that out.

JF It is a bit hard in Parliament with night sittings.

TRENORDEN Yes, it was. It's a difference being here, all right. It was always useful to get up and get going and try to do your productive work while your mind was fresh and you hadn't filled it. Obviously it's not really about being hit all the time, or whatever that may be, but all sorts of things fill your head during the course of the day. While you're fresh—they were keen in getting those good manners with good personal skills going. It was a credit to them. They spent a lot of money on doing those things.

JF What sort of hierarchy was there at AMP? Who were you responsible to and how did you relate to them and so on?

TRENORDEN There were two major divisions. The general insurance industry, which was quite small, then the life and superannuation industry, which was massive. The AMP building downtown—the beautiful old building in the '70s—was chock-a-block with people. When they built the new building in the '80s, I wouldn't know how many

employees they had there, but it would've been greater than 400. It was a massive organisation. It was a bureaucracy of some note, but it wasn't that hard to deal with. They separated the process between the functioning of a life insurance office, a superannuation office and a general office to that of a sales office. Basically, as an agent, we dealt with the sales office the vast bulk of the time and not the general functions of the massive industry that it is.

JF Had you any concept of insurance before you went into this?

TRENORDEN For years Dick Schonell turned up at our house and did insurance. Yes, I did have a basic concept, but more about listening to my parents again about risk. There was always some, not heavy, talk, because finance was never a major topic in our family, but it was a basic topic. It would get discussed seriously from time to time. Having reserves of cash, having a fallback position was something that was always talked about by my parents. I understood the concept of risk and being prepared to take some risk, but making sure you didn't take all the risk.

JF I believe you said that you had a role in the finances of the farm when you went back from school. Did you tell me?

TRENORDEN Only a very minor role. I did the accounts. I can remember quite clearly the first time I did it I got all the accounts in, balanced it all, wrote out the cheques for my father and my father signed them all except one that he put aside. I said, "Why did you put that aside?" He said, "That's a fuel company; they don't get paid for at least three months." He did not like them coming through the Depression years. He had an attitude towards fuel companies right the way through the process.

JF That brings up something I failed to mention the other day, and it is digressing a little bit from insurance. Which stock company did you patronise on the farm?

TRENORDEN Elders. It is interesting, loyalty. It is sad that in the '80s and '90s some of the sizeable companies threw loyalty out the window. Banks, for example, threw loyalty out the window. My father wouldn't deal with anyone else but Elders, because he really believed that he looked after Elders and when the crunch came Elders would look after him. For a lot of farmers, when the crunch came in the '80s and '90s, Elders didn't do it.

JF Elders had built up a reputation for looking after people in the Depression, hadn't they.

TRENORDEN They had. To my father and to many, many others, it was not about price. He would do business with Elders. He would argue about price, but as long as he thought that was fair, it was give and take. As we talked about a few moments ago, farming is a risk. A bad year is only one year away. That was always part of the planning process. Part of the insurance that he took was Elders would back him when he had a bad year. In his working life, they did. In my brother's working life they didn't.

JF The attitude was changed.

TRENORDEN Yes.

JF You brought what might be considered to be good business practice to your insurance selling by trying to encourage people to have their expiry date for all policies on the same day. Was that your idea or was that something that fed down from higher up in the system?

TRENORDEN It was a mixture of both. In general insurance, the thing that insurance companies do, and I am sure they still do it today, which the general public didn't understand, was what they call expense rates. A client may spend, say, \$2 000 on premiums, but if they did very little claiming, the insurance company, when it became marginal, would be friendlier to them. There were people who you got to know who wanted to claim all the \$2 000 back every year, and you soon learnt not to deal with them. Well, we won't talk about families. I have a story about the Caratti family, but we won't talk about families. It was a mixture of I, myself, wanting to look after the expense rate, because that was hugely time consuming. If you had a client who loved to claim, you usually had an angry client, then that increased the workload of my office and then you had an angry claims assessor in the insurance office. Having that better understanding of what was going on, and I used to try to tell my clients about that sort of process, you have a better working relationship. I had a good working relationship with the client. I would always want to bat for them whenever they had a claim. It is like life now—there are some people you shouldn't bat for. I wouldn't complain. In the end, I wasn't just dealing with AMP; I was dealing with a

range of companies. If the company got aggrieved with a client and I thought the client was taking a lend of them, I wouldn't mind them saying, "No, we'll stop dealing with this person." The consequence of that is everyone else pays higher premiums. I was pretty keen to make sure that my clients did well, I did well and the insurance company did well. To do that, you needed a good relationship and you did have to understand why the underwriters and so forth would have a view about whatever it was, and you'd need to make sure the clients understood that as well. Still, it's a problematic industry at the best of times, general insurance.

JF Was it something that you managed to grow over the years or did you get to a sort of a plateau in it? In terms of income for you, were you able to keep growing it or was it something that plateaued out over time?

TRENORDEN In the end it plateaued a bit because it got to a time factor and I wasn't prepared to put more in. I enjoyed it. The thing about general insurance is when people pay their premiums you've got your five or seven per cent commission and that really was a constant level of income no matter how you were doing in terms of life insurance and superannuation. I enjoyed it in that way too. It was a bit of a security blanket to me. It did get to a stage where it was earning me quite a reasonable amount of money, but was taking a growing proportion of my time. I didn't want to drop the service process. I would just look for good-sized clients, but it did plateau.

JF What amount of time would you spend day-in and day-out on your insurance sales?

TRENORDEN I was a workaholic, like a lot of people. Probably I am a lesser workaholic now than I've ever been, interestingly, but I used to enjoy it so I used to put a lot of hours in. In thinking back on it, it wasn't much different to what I do now. Some of those hours that I'd put in would be things like—a couple of friends and I started the Chamber of Commerce in Northam, which had been defunct for some 10 years or so; I got involved with P&Cs; and I got involved in a whole raft of things, which I didn't differentiate between work time. Knowing people is a part of the industry. It is important, if you are going to succeed, you feed into a broad spectrum of people, but, still, I counted all those things as work.

JF Let's go back to the business of getting married and so on and talk about that and the family. I might come back to the profession and how it affected the family a little bit later on.

TRENORDEN Yes.

JF Tell me the story of your meeting your wife and so on.

TRENORDEN Kay Horsley—Kathleen Horsley—was the daughter of Jim Horsley, who worked for the Water Authority in Northam. He got transferred to run the depot in Wyalkatchem. Kay came up there as a 14 or 15-year-old and I met her in and around Wyalkatchem. We dated each other for quite a while—four or five years, it would be at least that. I met her locally. Jim Horsley was just an outstanding man. He didn't drink, but he'd be the first one down the pub buying people drinks. He'd be in there with the football team, the cricket team and everyone else. He'd be there for just a drink. He didn't gamble. He didn't have too many faults and was hugely, hugely supportive of everyone around him—a wonderful man. Unfortunately, he died at the age of 52, which was a jolt. Actually his death was, in my view, the reason for the divorce. My wife just loved her father, which she should have done; he was just a wonderful man. His death was a big jolt to her.

I married Kay in the period in which I left the farm and went down to live in Mandurah. I lived in Mandurah for a year and really enjoyed it. I played football for the Mandurah Football Club and I tried to surf and those things while I was working at Kwinana. It wasn't a great toil to drive from Mandurah to Kwinana. Kay and I got married in Northam, moved down to Kwinana, then up to Safety Bay.

My first son was born in Northam in '71. That was a moment not to forget, too. I had a very old lady living next door to a house I was renting. I came home and she put her head over the fence and said, "Has it happened yet?" I said, "Yes." She said, "What did you call him?" I said, "Aaron." She said, "I suppose you'll call the next one Moses", [laughter] which I'll never forget. My firstborn was born in Northam, which all my three were. I still live in Northam now. I had a son, Aaron, a son, Heath, and then a daughter, Nikki.

My marriage blew up—started to go wrong in '81. It was a very sad time for everyone, obviously, but I made a decision at the time when it was going wrong that I

had to either contest custody of my children or let them go. I'd been married for 12 years, I'd seen a few of my friends go through the process and I still have this view today, whether it is right or wrong, but once you become a divorced father you are no longer a father, you are an uncle. You don't have much interaction with bringing up the children. I thought about it for about a day, and it was not a good day, and then I decided to contest my wife for my children, who went into a very bitter process. I caused a lot of the bitterness because everyone told me—I went and saw two lawyers who told me I had no chance of winning. Everyone I knew told me I had no chance of winning. The great interest in all of this—I told the two lawyers what strategy I wanted to take and they congratulated me at the end of it and charged me, having told me it wouldn't work. Nevertheless, it was sad and my ex-wife, who is a very decent person and a very good mother, ended up being what I was afraid of being. She ended up being the person without the children. I didn't actually win custody of the kids; she conceded at the door of the court and I became a single father and brought up my three kids. Probably—I shouldn't say "probably"—it was almost without doubt the best thing that I ever did. The experience of bringing up my children was sensational. I didn't find being a single father that traumatic, because I loved what I was doing. The reality is, and I often feel guilty about this, that once you're a single father I got tremendous support from friends, my ex-mother-in-law—I still call her my mother-in-law. Everyone expects the male to be useless, so you just act useless and they give you tonnes of support. I just got tremendous support by some wonderful people. My next door neighbour, a woman called Robyn Stewart, was just sensational. My mother-in-law, the children's grandmother, was sensational. And I don't want to finish there, because a raft of people – including my own mother, who was living in Mandurah at the time – a whole raft of people helped me.

END OF TAPE THREE SIDE A

TAPE THREE SIDE B

Tape three, side B, interview with Max Trenorden.

JF Max, give me a thumbnail sketch about what fatherhood means to you then and what it involved, especially when you were juggling the needs of family and work.

TRENORDEN Work is for family. That's always been my view. I was an insurance agent through a lot of that. But 1986 I got elected. There is a major story in there too. In 1983, a friend approached me who wanted to be elected to the upper house for the National Country Party I think it was called at the time. I agreed to run in the seat of Avon, mainly to clear my head because I was going through divorce and I thought I had nil chance of getting elected. I needed to concentrate and just get the experience of the last year or so off my back, so I agreed to do it. I threw myself into it and campaigned heavily and ran last in a three-horse race. But I ran third to the Liberal Party by some tiny amount of votes, less than 50 votes, and doubled the vote of the National Country Party in those days in the seat. I wasn't there to win. I never had any illusions about winning. I did it because talking to people is hardly a bad thing for an insurance salesman to be doing, but also talking to people is what I like to do. By that stage I was involved in local government. I was a councillor in the town of Northam and I'd been involved in the Chamber of Commerce. I had an interest in how things functioned. I quite enjoyed the period.

JF You were responsible for these kids who would have been, what, upper primary age?

TRENORDEN Yes. Well, my daughter was about seven. She was the youngest. My oldest was about—he was born in '70 so he was about 12 or 13. It was hard on them. My daughter quite recently has become religious and going to church, which I'm very pleased to see. I used to encourage her to be religious when she was young. Because she prayed for us to get back together, she believed for 10 years or so that there couldn't possibly be any God because no God would treat anyone like that, which is a common story, as we all know. My oldest son took on a lot of responsibility at that age when, in all probability, he shouldn't have done that. It caused tension, which still exists between my older son and my second son—not terrible tension but still tension. But all three of them are wonderful people. I have a relationship with them now that's just outstanding. It's something that you can't put a value on. My

daughter never asks me what I should be thinking or doing; she just tells me. I just find that wonderful. I don't always do what she tells me, of course, but she just assumes that she's got that role. It's all binding, it's all healthy, it's all positive. My two boys are significantly different personalities but wonderful people. At the end of the process, I just think it's fantastic. I was a busy person. I was selling insurance. I employed a full-time housekeeper. I shouldn't say full time. She lived in Northam; she didn't live with me, but she used to come before school and stay until she felt that things were done. I'd come home for tea. When I couldn't, somebody, mostly my mother-in-law, would supply tea for them. I can't say that I felt any negativity in that period. It's negative getting divorced but those sorts of things happen to nearly everyone. You either have a death or whatever. People have crises in their life. I found that time bringing my children up to be of immense value in my life. I'm sure when I'm laying on my death bed, that will be the period that has been the most important to me. But also, I was in my 30s, it was a great time to be alive, a lot of good friends, a lot of those people who supported me were friends and tremendous relationships.

JF What's become of the kids, just briefly, in their adult lives?

TRENORDEN My eldest son, Aaron, he's heavily involved in the IT industry. It took him about 10 years to work out if you work in the IT industry, you don't get paid a lot. So in June he'll finish qualifying as a librarian. I was amazed when he told me he wanted to be a librarian, but he just said to me, "Dad, it's IT but better pay", which I hadn't thought of. He's a person of immense charm. He's got a huge ability with people. He's capable, more capable than he gives himself the opportunity of. He's definitely capable. He's just a highly likeable person. He will get on and do well. My youngest son went through school as a crisis. He just refused to work. I had him tested several times. He has an above average IQ, in fact, well above average IQ, but just refused to work through school, so basically left school illiterate. Now if he doesn't earn \$2 000 a week, he gets upset. He's a concrete worker. He's a perfectionist. Recently he laid a floor in a garage I built at home, a very sizeable garage. The person putting the electronic doors in just said to me, "Who laid the floor?" I said, "My son." He said, "This is the first one I've done for some time where the floor meets the door." He's a perfectionist. He does his job very well. He's well sought after. Hopefully he will do well. My eldest son had a daughter out of marriage. She's about nine, a wonderful girl. He's got a long-term partner. I think things will go well with him. My other son, who's in his mid-30s, shows no sign of marriage, which

many of his friends of the same age don't either. I'm not sure what happens there. He's really doing well. My daughter said goodbye one day and toured the world for six and a half years. It's just a sign of our relationship. She came back one day and said, "I really need to talk to you." I knew what was going on because parents get told what's going on. I said, "I'm happy to talk to you as long as you don't tell me that you want to get married and you want to get married to a Boer and he's a lawyer. So long as you don't tell me that, I'm happy" – because I'd already been told. He's a wonderful man. He's South African, of Boer extraction. They got married in South Africa. I went over to the wedding, which happened just after the death of my partner, Brenda, which was a bit sad because I wasn't quite on track at the wedding. Nevertheless, it was a great experience for her. She's now got two children. He's living back here. He just loves Australia, even though he wants to barrack for South Africa in rugby. I'm not sure about cricket. He just loves Australia. He was carjacked twice in his life. [To] not have those sorts of experiences in Western Australia and have an opportunity as a lawyer and he's decided not to practice law. He's gone into insurance. He does the legal science of major claims. He just loves it. He's a fantastic fellow and in a great relationship. I have a grand-daughter and a grandson out of that process, who are just fantastic. I haven't got a lot to complain about.

JF Fantastic. Coming to your community involvement in Northam. You have said you were in the town council. Let's take that strand first. What led up to you becoming a councillor?

TRENORDEN Being in the Chamber of Commerce mainly. Being an insurance agent, early on in my time as an insurance agent, I created an office. I thought that was important. That was one of the things that AMP pushed you to do because it took you away from home. If you were at home working for AMP, like a lot of agents did and some still do now, your kids still interact with you, your wife still interacts with you and it actually does confuse your working a lot. I did go down the street. I actually started an office. I was in the commercial mainstream. Northam, even though it's a smallish country town, still has a sizeable business community. There's never any cohesion in that community, either dealing with council or dealing with laws that came through. They'd be all over the place. They'd come together in a time of crisis and in good times wouldn't even talk to each other, in terms of work; they'd socialise, obviously. There were about four of us who got together and agreed that we'd take turns in sharing the Chamber of Commerce, just trying to keep a function going where business people would take the time to talk about common issues but also

things that were commonly good for the community, and that led to my decision to go into council. I didn't have politics in mind at this stage. I was doing well in the insurance industry and didn't think I'd be doing anything else. I didn't go into local government for political reasons, although I did run the first time and lost when I was in council. I was realistic about that. I remember there was a Labor Party councillor in the town of Northam, who's a very likeable person. When I nominated, he said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "I'm going to win this election." He said, "Rubbish." I said, "I'll write down on a piece of paper and we'll seal the envelope and we'll open it after the election and we'll see who was right." I wrote "last" on it, put it in an envelope, gave it to him and told him for the whole campaign that I was going to win. A couple of weeks before the election, he came to me and said, "I think you will win." I knew. . . because winning elections is about mathematics. Even if you're popular, some people still won't move away from their basic politics, and I don't argue about that. I didn't have any aspirations about politics. I was doing local government for reasons to try to improve my community. Northam did struggle for a lot of years. It's only in recent years that it's actually started to grow and started to mature. It always had a negative view of itself. Northam people usually bagged Northam pretty hard, which I always found a bit strange.

JF As a councillor, you represented a particular ward.

TRENORDEN Yes, for a very short period. Early in my council years, they opened it up to a single ward. It was a tiny community, in a tiny area, and a town. It was a wise thing to do. All councillors were responsible for all their area and you weren't just back and forward for one section.

JF How big a council was it?

TRENORDEN We had a dozen, which was amazing that a council as small as that had a dozen councillors. We had a dozen.

JF What are some of the memorable projects that you were involved with as a councillor?

TRENORDEN Things that are memorable to me, we started a new sporting area. I moved a motion to call it the R.J. Hawke grounds because he was a member in Northam for 32 or 33 years. That was a significant expansion of the planning areas.

In my time in the council not a great deal happened. For about 20 years, that is the story of Northam. Northam is now moving ahead really strongly. It's a pleasure to be there now, seeing things that are happening.

JF I believe you were also involved with a couple of committees like the Avon Development Association.

TRENORDEN Yes, that's an interesting story. I just related a bit here in the house the other day when we were eulogising Sir Charles Court. We started an organisation, which I was a part of, called the Northam Economic Development Association. We employed an ex-insurance agent, who was a very capable and likeable individual. The argument was we'd raise the revenue from activities and from fees from businesses to have this organisation that kept, as a charter, improving Northam, not just commercially but in every aspect. What we found was that the bloke had to work hard to raise his salary and didn't have time to do anything else. So then myself and a very small number of people, probably three of us, decided we'd expand that to the Avon Economic Development Association. We got an American out from Tupelo, Missouri. [Should have said 'Mississippi']. I'm trying to think what his name was—Harry. . . I'd have to have a look back. He received American awards for this process of establishing industrial parks between communities. We came up with this concept of the Avon community development foundation, which put an industrial park not in Northam, not in Goomalling, not in Dowerin, not in Meckering and not in York, it was in between. It was within calling distance of about 11 towns. That got tremendous support. It got going with a lot of support from Ian Taylor when he was the Minister for Economic Development. The land was purchased and it was started with much fanfare. Fifteen, 16, 17 years later, it's now quite successful but for a lot of years it just didn't go anywhere. That was something that I had a lot of passion for. Now it's got a million and a bit in the bank. The industrial park, the first section of it is sold out. I think there'll be something like 500 jobs there shortly. The second section of it is now for sale. They are the things that I've enjoyed being the member for Avon, where nearly everyone, including Hendy Cowan, told me that it was a waste of time, a waste of space, those things don't work. But it *has* worked and it's worked for good logical reasons because it got community support. At the time of a survey in the '80s, it was the only industrial park in Western Australia that had community support because we did it with the community. The whole community was involved in the process. That was the process I did at the time. I was councillor and an insurance agent at the time.

JF But you initiated that, did you?

TRENORDEN I and one other person, a fellow called Jim Lee, were the two people who really did that.

JF Where did the idea originate?

TRENORDEN From Harry, whatever his name is, from Tupelo.

JF The American?

TRENORDEN The Northam Development Association, or whatever I called the first one, that had been tried many times before. If you remember back to your youth, things like that were done in the UK on a fairly regular basis. There are many examples of local community effort employing someone to get things going, particularly out of the UK. That's where that came from. The other one came out of this American. I would have to look the name up for you. He was obviously quite an individual. What happened at Tupelo is what happened at Northam. They established this industrial park on an area of timber and furniture but within a short period of time, industries they hadn't thought of were there. That's what happened to us. The Avon Industrial Park, as it is now called, is booming on the goldfields because people want to service the machinery there, service the goldfields. It was all done from Perth, all done out of Kewdale, all done in difficult circumstances there. Where you can go to Northam, buy cheap land, the labour *is* available and you're halfway to the goldfields. It's been a success story again from the mining industry, which we never thought of in the process.

JF That's interesting because it's sort of rediscovered the Avon's role, which really began in the first days of the twentieth century when gold was the big thing. It wasn't industrial servicing then but it was —

TRENORDEN Food.

JF Growing food, and sending food to the goldfields.

TRENORDEN If you spend time walking through the town of Northam, there's at least 100, if not more, beautiful federation houses, outstanding houses. Northam was wealthy at that stage until the rail went through, interesting enough, which made Perth a bit closer. Northam got very wealthy on the goldfields, that's right. It had some pretty remarkable people, like George Throssell and a few other people who not only was the mayor of Northam, prominent in the town of Northam, but also the third or fourth Premier of Western Australia. Northam has had more Premiers than any other community in Western Australia. They've had four. They can claim Carmen Lawrence as one of them, which I think they're cheating about. She was born in Northam and was raised in Northam. You had in the early days leading up to Sir James Mitchell, three Premiers—Colebatch, Throssell and Mitchell.

JF What about Bert Hawke himself?

TRENORDEN Hawke, of course. I should really count Carmen Lawrence as the fifth. Bert Hawke came to Northam from South Australia as a union activist and was there for, as I said, years.

JF It's interesting looking at Northam to talk about the political disparity between those various people who held the Premiers' post. It hasn't been all conservative.

TRENORDEN Oh, no. When I won the seat of Avon, it had been Labor for 53 years. It had a major Labor component. They were the days of very prominent rail. At one stage Northam was *the* most sizeable rail depot before the Second World War. That slowly deteriorated. Very major in those days public works department, now water authority, still fairly sizeable water authority now. Main Roads was a major process. When I was in council, I think we used to say something like 80 per cent of all employees in the town of Northam were public servants. Now you'd be battling to get a quarter.

JF So it's prospering. What about the hinterland around; it's prospering too, I suppose?

TRENORDEN It changed substantially. It's a real pleasure to see it. It's bringing on a raft of pressures, of course, but having a whole diverse community up there, it's very urbanised now. I just find it of interest as I deal with people in Perth. They say to me,

"I've got a farm at York," or, "I've got a farm at Toodyay". Quite a few of them live three or four days in my electorate and come to Perth as senior business people. We don't know how many people commute out of my electorate to Perth but it's probably better than a thousand. We don't know how many people in my electorate commute with the fly in, fly out process. It's quite substantial. There's no way of counting them. There's no question that people find it easier to drive from the hills' region in my electorate to the airport in Perth. They can leave their families at home and they're not going to get beaten, they're not going to get robbed. In a lot of ways, it's a lot easier to keep the family in those circumstances in an urban area like Toodyay, Northam, York, Beverly, Brookton.

JF We're almost at the stage where we ought to talk about your association with the National Party.

TRENORDEN The National Party, yes.

JF Where does that actually come in? You weren't a member of that party at the stage you've been talking about when you were first a councillor. Is that what you said, you were *not* a member?

TRENORDEN Definitely not. My first political process was handing out cards for the Liberal Party in the "let's get rid of Gough Whitlam" process. I actually came down to Perth and handed out cards in some far-flung part of suburbia, which would now be central suburbia. I don't actually remember where it was but it was in the northern suburbs somewhere. Interesting, from that day the Liberal Party used to claim me as a supporter. I was never a Liberal Party person. I just saw myself a bit more people oriented than the Liberals I used to know who I thought were a bit distant from the working class. I've never ever tried to place myself in one section or the other, not that there's any classes in Australia but in a community like Northam, you dwell with everyone. That was my view.

I would have to go back and look at the records, but I probably joined in '82 or so, which is halfway through my time as a member of Parliament, to run in the seat in the 1983 election. As I said, not because the Country Party or the National Party; I really did that to clear my head. It *did* suit my politics. The fellow who I was supporting I liked a lot, a fellow called Budd Byfield, who was a very prominent sportsman in Western Australia but a very prominent person in Northam and I liked him a lot. I

really did it to support him and clear my head. My problem was I was too successful, even though I came third in that election. As I said, I doubled the National Party's support. When in '86 they wanted me to run, I was reluctant to run—in fact very reluctant to run—because I knew I could win as against the previous time when I knew I couldn't win. Winning would obviously change my life. I don't want this to sound like it will sound but, nevertheless, the last year I worked in insurance, which would have been about '86, I earned \$125 000 and I went to be a pollie at \$34 000. That was enormous pain, not only for me but my family and all the things around me; it was just a significant crunch. There were a lot of good reasons why I didn't want to stop being an insurance agent. I really enjoyed my life. I had a prominence in the community that I enjoyed. I was close to a whole raft of people. I was able to do things like we talked about, the Avon Community Development Foundation. I was also on the original committee of the Avon River, the management group. I was doing those sorts of things. I had a life that was good. I decided not to run in 1986. I probably should tell you the reason why I did run because I think it's reasonably well known. I was up at the golf club one day and I was approached by the candidate, who was a friend of mine, and his campaign manager, who was a friend of mine. They said to me, "We'd like you to run in the seat of Avon." I said, "Why would you want me to do that, why would you want me to run?" They said, "We need your preferences to win." I said, "The difficulty is, I'll win, you won't win." And they laughed. I said, "I'll nominate tomorrow," and the rest is history. Again, they just threw the challenge to me. My ego was too great to not accept the challenge, which I don't regret. I would never want to say anything else but I have just really enjoyed being an insurance agent. It was a great life and a great opportunity to connect in the community. Every day you felt worthwhile. There were plenty of insurance agents doing the wrong thing but if anyone looked at my record, I didn't do too many terrible things. I enjoyed that, and I had a good reputation for doing it. But, of course, it's an enormous honour to be elected into Parliament. One of the things I do remember—I had all these wonderful people helping me on my first campaign. Two things on the night I remember. I was waiting for Beverley to call in and give me my polling numbers and they just didn't call in. Very late in the night they rang, having been down the pub for some hours. I said, "Why didn't you ring the numbers in?" They said, "The numbers were so good, we went down the pub and celebrated." So they rang me. I finally did my sums and I walked out into my lounge room at my house and the TV was going during the usual ABC rundown of the election. I said, "Silence," and they all stopped. I said, "I'm pleased to announce that I have won the seat of Avon." Instead of spontaneous applause, for some reason there was a moment of

silence and the TV said, "And Ken McIver's safe in Avon." [laughter] It was just one of those moments. Then my daughter broke into tears, sitting next to grandma there and she said, "I just lost my father." That's a moment that stuck with me. I thought, "Oh, no." She was only young at that stage. She denies that she ever did that but she actually did do that. I thought, "Oh." Hopefully she didn't lose her father.

JF In the last minute or two, instead of continuing with that story, let's pick up quickly on a couple of things that I meant to ask you about, which were related to developing political consciousness, I suppose. You were eligible, I imagine, for participation in the Vietnam War?

TRENORDEN That was significant. I got called up. This is straight conspiracy, but I blame my mother (or thank my mother, whichever way you want to put it) for not going. I injured my knee playing football for my team Korrelocking. My marble had come out. I went down to a bank of Northam doctors who examined me. One said I wasn't fit to go. I suspect my mother nobbled them. I got no proof of that. I played football two, three weeks after I was declared unfit to go to Vietnam. [It was] a great blessing for me that I didn't go to Vietnam because obviously a lot of my friends did and many of them suffered terribly for that.

JF In general, were you supportive of the Vietnamese involvement?

TRENORDEN Like 86 per cent of Australians, I was in favour of it. It only turned bad after that time. I think that's one of the great blights on Australian history, how Australians treated conscripts. They should have got stuck into the Australian government, not into the actual conscript soldiers. That was one of the tremendous shames in Australia's history. There are people out there now who still well and truly are *not* over it; and the stories from my friends about how they came back . . . and a story just recently . . . about a fellow [who] got hugged by his family and pelted with rotten fruit [by the mob].

END OF TAPE THREE SIDE B

TAPE FOUR SIDE A

This is tape four, side A, in the series of interviews with Max Trenorden, MLA; this one being recorded on the 12th March at Parliament House with interviewer John Ferrell.

JF Max, when we were last speaking, we finished up your work as an insurance agent but we finished without talking about the accolades or awards that you received, and I believe you were to the fore in being awarded as an insurance agent.

TRENORDEN I was not one of the gun, gun people but I was certainly up there and I enjoyed a lot of those years. One of the great rewards with AMP was that if you finished in the top bracket, whatever it was (10 per cent or maybe even less) there were significant trips available. I have been to America, Hawaii, Fiji, some with AMP. Not only were they just good trips with people you were friendly with, but, as I said last week, they were very good at putting on very useful information for individuals, not just insurance agents but individuals; matters on how to deal with life and how to look after yourself, particularly your mental state, attitude and those types of issues. Awardwise, AMP, like most places, had awards, gold status and all this sort of stuff, but it was not really much different from what anyone else did. I never topped the sales process at any stage. I did top the fire and general one from time to time, but they weren't important to me. I do not really think that they were important to AMP. AMP was always more concerned about having that top lot all going, because in any sales organisation, 20 per cent of the sales force sells 80 per cent of the business. Interestingly enough, AMP used to encourage that 20 per cent not to work harder but to work smarter. That was a good thing because many of those really good agents, or my colleagues, would work only three days a week and still be right up there as the best sales people.

JF Were you able to enjoy that luxury—three days a week?

TRENORDEN No, it was a bit like being a politician, because I had a large country area to cover. The problem of it being a country area was you always had a driving component that was a part of your day. I used to work very hard, but at the same time what they kept on teaching you was to reward yourself, so I did take days off to do things I wanted to do (breaks for the children and those things). I would put it in

my diary, block it out and do it because we were strongly encouraged to do those things.

JF I did not pick up on this before, but did you have office staff backing you in that position, or to what extent did you have staff?

TRENORDEN I used to employ staff. I would not say I was the first in the state, but there was an early move when I was in insurance to have a main office, and I said that last week, I think, and I had that staffed. I did have periods of doing different things. There was a time I shared an office with CP Bird, as they were in those days, and at times with other insurance agents with AMP with me. Towards the end of my career, there were three AMP agents all operating out of the same office with two, two-and-a-half staff, so it was a business.

JF Just picking up on the overseas trips you were able to get, were they the first time you had been out of Australia?

TRENORDEN Yes, if I think about that, I would have thought probably major trips, AMP would have been the first taste. Probably what I have not said is at that stage, because of AMP, because I was making money and because I had control of my children, I used to make sure my ex-wife got them for fairly sizeable chunks and I would go overseas. I quite regularly went overseas twice a year for quite a few years. I am not as well travelled as some, but I am certainly well travelled compared with most. I have been to a lot of places. Interestingly, I used to like to do that by myself. I would just pack up and go. One time, in 1986 or 1985, I went for seven weeks, I think it was, but most times I would go for two or three weeks. I would find somewhere I wanted to go (most of them based on history) and off I would go.

JF What are some of the highlight places then that you visited?

TRENORDEN I just loved (and I have had the urge to go back ever since) Egypt. I made the mistake of going to Egypt before I went to Europe, and when you see Egypt and then you see Europe, in terms of its historic context, you spoil it. Also, Turkey was fantastic. Ephesus and those places were pretty sensational. I did a Mediterranean tour. I spent five weeks in Chile, and that was fantastic. That was a really exceptional holiday. I think Chile is a remarkable place. I did that in the last few months of Pinochet's regime and listened to the people talking about Pinochet and

Allende. Despite what we read in the press over there, they did not like either of them. They just saw both of them as being control freaks. They were a country that was very keen to just be free. They are highlights, but in political times, I have been to Canada a lot. Canadian politics and administration are very similar to the Australian [model], so since I have been elected, I have been to Canada quite a bit, but Egypt I think is the place I have a yearning to go back to.

JF I presume that is up the Nile and into the historic precincts?

TRENORDEN Yes. Luxor I just find absolutely amazing, and to think that was a ruin nearly 3 000 years ago and the periods in which those buildings occurred, and in Luxor there is a pillar there and one of Napoleon's soldiers chiselled his name into the column as a tourist and some period up to about 1 500 years before, a Greek had done the same thing as a tourist, and they were ruins then.

JF It is a timescale that is hard to comprehend almost, isn't it?

TRENORDEN Yes, and particularly when we are thinking about 200 years of Australian history, and get all excited about that. Anzac Day is coming up and it is fantastic here. People here, even now, on the streets are getting excited about Anzac Day, but that is 1915. I think they are important things to keep in context. That's why I am a big lover of history. I think history does put many things into context.

JF So, overall, what do you think you personally have gained from being able to roam the world?

TRENORDEN Definitely a view on ourselves. In reality, they said of John Monash, when he was a general in the First World War, in 1918 when he finally broke through on the Western Front, that that is the only time that Australia has ever done anything that led the world, and it's true. We get carried away about the size of Australia and the attitude to Australia. Go to places like Indonesia and speak of Australia, and many Indonesians just look at you. They have no real concept of Australia. For many of them, it is just not in their awareness, and we have people down here afraid that Indonesia is going to invade us (or we used to have years ago) whereas, for Indonesians, we are just not on their radar and, in fact, are unimportant to them. The context of all these great leaders, and we have had some great leaders, but in reality, on the world stage, we are a pimple. All those things will occur no matter what the

Prime Minister of Australia says and no matter how often our troops go to Afghanistan or Iraq or East Timor. They are important to us; they are not particularly important to the rest of the world.

JF So it has given you a context.

TRENORDEN Yes, a context, and I'll get a little bit of criticism here too, but the reality is the Western Australian government, even now they are going so well, in the world context, is a small local government. The city of New York and those sorts of places, and Los Angeles—the State of California's economy kills ours; it kills Australia, let alone Western Australia. All those things need to be put into context. I think we are getting too carried away. I think at the moment our concentration on export industry and just pumping our primary goods out at an amazing rate is a very short-sighted policy, and some time in the future someone is going to look at us and say, "What were they thinking?"

JF We might come back to that when we talk policy later on. Coming now then to your entering into politics (and it is a fairly sudden jump, I realise), I was interested in your joining of the National Party. I think that would have been prior to the 1983 election contest.

TRENORDEN Just before, that is right, and I had not been a member of the Liberal Party or the National Party. I think I said last week that some people always put me down as a member of the Liberal Party. I certainly used to get involved in elections. I was always keen on politics. I always followed politics and, as I said, I did get involved in the Whitlam years, but I did not actually have any great desire to be a member of a political party even though I followed the processes. I did not, certainly before 1983, have any dreams about being a member of Parliament.

JF What interested me was the National Party prior to that had gone through a pretty horrific period, dividing itself and so on, and I just wondered if, as you contemplated, and having decided to run for Parliament (you needed to join a party I guess), but what qualms did you have about joining up with the Nationals at that stage?

TRENORDEN None structurally, because it was not a concern of mine. It was all happening at the time. Hendy Cowan was a young, up-and-coming upstart. The

National Country Party at the time were very opposed to Hendy and Matt Stephens, so that split was still pretty raw. A close friend of mine, Eric Charlton, was one of the individuals that started to look at putting the parties together. I think Eric Charlton got elected in '82 in a by-election from a death, I think the process was. Eric Charlton was one of the individuals trying to put the two warring parties together, and I went to a lot of those meetings. I went to the state council after I joined, and I watched a lot of that, but my concern was not about the structure of the National Party; my concern was about the life of country people. That is what got me involved and that is why I chose the National Country Party. I was never around in the Country Party days but the National Country Party and then the Nationals and it is still my passion (regional people). That just left no option in my mind of which party I should be a member of.

JF It has always interested me, from the little bit of experience I had in the wheatbelt, that some of the other parties were pretty well represented there when you might have thought that the National or Country Party would have been the obvious one for everybody to be in. Around Quairading there were quite substantial fellows who were Labor supporters, for example. People like Walsh from Merredin is a case in point. What do you think about the division within a wheatbelt community that sees people involved in a socialist party rather than throwing their lot in with the Nationals?

TRENORDEN Much of it can be traced back to what we talked about, John Monash, because a lot of those people came back from the First World War and were soldier settlers. Many soldiers came back as socialists. They were talking of the trenches, living what they had lived and watching what they had seen. Socialism was a very strong component of many of those returned soldiers. A lot of those areas you talked about are returned soldier settlements. That is where the socialist part came into the regions. That remains an interesting part of the current National Party. A director of a few years ago, when he was first appointed asked me, "Where does the National Party sit on the spectrum?" He drew left to right and I drew two circles, one on the centre-left and one on the centre-right. The reality is that the National Party is centre-left socially and centre-right economically. That confuses people and that is why I think there has always been a strong Liberal Party in the regions and a part of that is (and I have heard it said a lot of times) that the National Party is agrarian socialist. That is the reflection, I think, of the soldiers, both from the First World War and the Second World War, and it remains there now. Even now, any conference of the

National Party will argue strongly for social issues in terms of pensions and government contribution, where that would not be happening in the Liberal Party.

JF So it was a party that fitted your philosophy personally as a son of the land.

TRENORDEN Definitely, but also I had spent quite a few years living in Northam, and Northam still is, but even in those days, it was not the wealthiest of places. There was a large, working-class there, so I had a lot of contact with those people and their aspirations. When you looked at those people trying to educate their children, trying to get health care and trying to retire, and just generally struggling, I just felt empathy with those people. They were always out in the country towns anyhow, much more in those days than now. The people who worked on farms and people with farm services were not wealthy people. They were people who lived probably fairly reasonable lives, but they were never going to be comfortable.

JF Of course, the whole economy of the rural areas became a different story with mechanisation and so on. What a farmer has to have in the way of capital backing now is so incredibly different from what they needed in the '30s or even the '50s.

TRENORDEN That is right. Very much now, when I think [of] agriculture as against thinking [of] community, one of the embarrassing moments I had was when one of the federal ministers came over and we were touring around the Mukinbudin area during a drought (not the current lot but a previous lot) and we were in a shed where a farmer was telling the [federal] minister and the state minister and probably 50 or 60 people how tough it was to be a farmer and so forth, and straight behind him was \$1 million worth of machinery. I was looking at this \$1 million worth of machinery, thinking, "This doesn't make a lot of sense." That is the 'right' part of me, because I just think that some of those provisions aren't properly pitched; yet, on the other hand, you could go to my town of Northam now and there are 140 kids at risk in the community. There is a strong differential in the regions.

JF You have mentioned a couple of names, but who were your closest associates in the party, particularly soon after joining in those early days?

TRENORDEN The person I admired a lot, and still admire a great deal, is Mick Gayfer. Mick Gayfer was the member for Avon for many, many years, and then moved to the upper house, which is interestingly what I am doing. Basically, he did it for the same reasons I am doing it (redistribution). He was very popular and the type of member of Parliament that I think for country people should be there. He was very straight with the people. He was very warm with the people. He is the person that I model myself on more than anyone else. When I was here, "Reckless" Eric (Eric Charlton) was the best minister I have ever seen, I would suggest, but he was just that—reckless. He was a good minister because he was absolutely determined that what he thought was right should be done. At the end of the process, if it did not work (and some of Eric's schemes did not work) he would just say, "Oops, it didn't work", and would move on and would not worry about the criticism that was levelled at him. He was a strong influence with me as well, but the number one was Mick Gayfer.

JF When did you first meet Mick?

TRENORDEN I'd known Mick before I had a go at politics. Mick Gayfer used to come through Northam from time to time. I had, not strong contacts with him, but I did meet him from time to time because of the chamber of commerce and those things that I was in. I was on the town council for nine years, so I was aware of him and had met him before.

JF Did he have instances where he gave you personal advice and helped you into the business of politics?

TRENORDEN As I showed an interest, yes, because I ran in '83 and, as we said last week, I came third. At that time he definitely became involved. John Paterson is another person, who was president of the National Party at the time, so from the time that I nominated, that was the first time I met John Paterson. He was a south west individual. I still have a lot of time for John Paterson. He is another person in the National Party that I have a great deal of respect for. He again was a glue-type person, a person who was always trying to pull things together.

JF Some of the older and key people in the old Country Party may have still been around when you joined. What about blokes like Tom Drake-Brockman? Did you have anything much to do with him?

TRENORDEN No, they'd withdrawn by the time I got involved. He was around. He was obviously alive and well, and you saw him from time to time, but he was not playing an influential role in the party at that stage.

JF And Crawford Nalder likewise, I suppose.

TRENORDEN Exactly, yes. I got elected with his son, who, unfortunately, got very ill and died, but Crawford Nalder was the same, yes.

JF You mentioned somebody by the name of Byfield the other day. What influence did he have on your coming in?

TRENORDEN Budd Byfield was a (I will get this wrong) St Kilda footballer, I think; a state cricketer; and definitely a WAFL player for (I am not quite sure off the top of my head) maybe Subiaco, so he was a very popular man and was very involved in country sports. He was the one who approached me in 1983. He ran for the National Country Party to try to get a seat in the upper house, and to do that he wanted a running partner in Avon. There were provinces in those days, and I think a province in those days had three lower house seats, or maybe four, so he needed a running mate, and, as I said, I was prepared to do that with the full knowledge that I couldn't win. He was the person responsible for getting me involved. He's primarily the reason I am here.

JF Was there a selection process that you had to go through or was it enough for him, as the candidate they were backing, to nominate his running mates?

TRENORDEN In those days there were strong branches through the Avon; there was very strong membership through the Avon. There was a contest. A fellow called Bert Llewellyn strongly contested that first process. He always says I beat him by a vote. I cannot remember what the result was. He spent many, many years as Shire President at Northam. There was a very strong and formal process. My recollection is that there were quite a few in the room when we did the speeches and went for preselection (probably 40 to 50 people). It was quite a strong process.

JF That would have been repeated, I guess, in 1986 then when you decided to stand for real.

TRENORDEN Yes, but at that stage they had been pushing me, including the branches, for some time to run, so the branches arranged that I basically went in unopposed in 1986. That was not because I demanded all that. The branches knew that to get me involved they just cleared the deck, and John Paterson was a part of that, and there was very strong support. I did campaign very hard during 1983. I spent a lot of time campaigning, so I got to know many of them. When the '86 election came up, I cannot recall whether any other name was in the pot, but it was definitely clear that I would be the candidate.

JF You had done the groundwork really in '83 for '86.

TRENORDEN Yes. As I said, I dramatically improved the National Party vote in '83 (doubled it around about, from memory). Also, as I said last week, in '86 there was a definite chance that I could win, even though nearly everyone used to laugh at me and say Ken McIver was unbeatable, but that is another thing you learn from going around and keeping your eyes open. Winning seats is more about mathematics than anything else. I could see the maths were going against Ken McIver. I think, though, the fact that I won was the maths plus. I wouldn't have been surprised if I had not have won in '86 but I knew I would go close, but a few things went against Ken McIver at the time, which ended up with me being the member and Ken missing out.

JF About campaigning then in the 1986 campaign (you can talk about it generally too, but particularly thinking about that one) how did you organise yourself and who did you have supporting you and so on to do your campaigning?

TRENORDEN Each branch did some organising, plus also I had a personal campaign manager. The first time in 1983 it was a Northam person called Graham Kingston, in the year I lost, but in the year that I won, a local individual called Barry Smith took over the role and there was a person in each of my branches who would also be looking at campaigning. Each of my branches fund raised, which was not a major component, I might add, but mainly just getting me out. I played a very minor part in that process. I would sit down with my campaign manager and we would map out where we would be, but when we got to, say, Brookton, the Brookton people would take over and we would go out and campaign, but I just made sure that we did the basic things, like not going to see all your party members. For some of the party members all they want you to do is to go around and see all their mates, but you

make sure you are going to see the people where you can actually win a vote in places where you are not expected to get a vote. Other than that, it was very strong. The groundswell was quite significant. I can remember being in Sacramento 10 or 15 years ago talking to an American politician. He said to me, "How much did it cost you to win your first election?" I said to him, "You don't want to know." He said, "I do." I said, "I can assure you, you don't." He said, "I do." He said, "I can tell you it cost me quarter of a million." I said, "It cost me \$6 000." He was stunned. That is what I think it cost. It certainly didn't cost any more than that. It wasn't a money-orientated campaign; it was out and about. I made sure I was everywhere and the people I was with made sure I was everywhere.

JF In terms of branches, National Party branches, I suppose, existed in most of the major towns in that electorate, did they?

TRENORDEN All the ones except Northam. It was not hard for me to get a group of people and we had a branch very quickly in Northam. Yes, there were branches everywhere. In fact, it could be done now, there are not as many branches now, but if I really wanted to do that—and the reason why I don't do it is that people will form branches these days to support me instead of forming branches to participate in a party process, because that is one of the serious things that have happened to Western Australian politics, that Western Australian politics is now driven from top down instead of grass roots up.

JF It is not only politics, is it?

TRENORDEN No, everything; that is right.

JF People are not getting in there.

TRENORDEN That is right. In my day, when we went to a branch meeting or went to a district council meeting, there would be a lot of people there debating policy, but now, or the last time when we were in government, for example, policy comes out of Premier and Cabinet and goes down through the system. Even now, running into the next election, the policy hit will come out of the National Party members of Parliament and the grass roots will say yes or no to it, which is a direct reverse to what it used to be.

JF Yes. In some respects that's what was at issue in the original tussle with Charles Court, was it, that really the Country Party branch members weren't getting what they wanted their fellows to do because the fellows were doing what the Charlie Court government and the Liberals wanted them to do? Is that too simplistic?

TRENORDEN Oh, no. That's not too simplistic at all. Sir Charles Court was a very strong leader. (Not that I was ever in a party room with him.) But if you didn't do what Sir Charles wanted you to do, you weren't in the game. So grass roots was out.

END OF TAPE FOUR SIDE A

TAPE FOUR SIDE B

Tape four, side B, interviews with Max Trenorden.

JF Max, just backing off the party aspect for a moment, when and where did you learn about the parliamentary system? I mean, did it start at school or did you pick it up out in the society? Where did you learn about even the basic things, like that there are two houses of government in each state, except Queensland, and there are two houses in the federal Parliament, and the way the system works?

TRENORDEN As I said, I'd say I got the bulk of that from my mother, but reading and listening to radio and those sorts of processes in my house were very strong, so much of that was about what was happening on the day. Of course, that is about individuals being in different houses, being Prime Minister, being Leaders of the Opposition; "Cocky" Calwell, for example, I remember well. I remember often listened to what "Cocky" Calwell had to say. I was a young man then. I was listening to that out of interest and certainly not out of a desire to be a part of all that. I just knew that is where authority was, that is where direction came from, and I was just naturally aware of those things. There was a bit out of school, but school was a bit like the argument about the First World War, about the country, Empire and King, and all that sort of stuff. The curriculum in those days, as you are very aware, was pretty much about that collective process and not so much about detail. I am sure it came out of my family, and certainly my mother, and just watching what happened. I was aware that her father was in those days the Chairman of the Roads Board. I knew those structures existed. Unlike some of my colleagues, I guess, and my friends as I knocked around as a young fellow, I always listened to that without having any urge to be a part of it, but I did definitely listen to it.

JF Did you ever find, or do you ever find, that as you talk to people in the community there's any high level of confusion amongst voters out there as to the parliamentary system?

TRENORDEN Absolutely. At the last federal election, I had many people asking me how I went and whether I won. [They said], "You don't seem to be campaigning too hard, Max", and that sort of stuff. The bulk of the population actually just don't think about it. They just know the system sits there. I think if you asked some of those people, "Do you really think I am a federal politician?" and they stopped and thought

about it, they'd say, "Oh, no, you are not", but just in straight conversation there is not a large consciousness. I was talking to a person only a few days ago, who is definitely intelligent and definitely involved in his industry, who just couldn't get the concept of [an] upper house and lower house in Western Australia; he just couldn't quite understand that. No, it is not well known. I think to most people Alan Carpenter runs the state.

JF Does that bother you, that people are so confused rather than ignorant perhaps?

TRENORDEN I think it is more 'disconnected'. I think we will pay a price. I believe Australians, as every year goes by, are getting a little bit more disconnected from politicians: "Politicians are rogues, politicians are liars, and certainly there are not there to do what I want them to do." If the attitude remains that way, in due course that will lead to disaster, because we know it does. Refer to things like the Roman Empire, and the Greeks, and you can go through it, and Egypt, as I said. As there's a disconnect with the community from leadership, that leads to disaster. I think we are in a process. That does not necessarily mean that we end up in a disaster, because these things ebb and flow, but at the moment there's definitely an ebb. One of the sad things about that is that good people are very reluctant to run for Parliament.

JF That brings up another issue, of course: where are all the good people going and why aren't they going into Parliament? Just briefly perhaps, have you got some ideas on that?

TRENORDEN I think at the moment, certainly in the regions, you can look at some pretty exceptional people. If you look at WAFF (the Western Australian Farmers Federation), PGA (the Pastoralists and Graziers Association) and local government, they are not in those either. They are out there doing their industry bit and concentrating in a period when they can actually achieve outside of the mob, if you put it that way. There are many people out in the regions doing fantastic things, thinking laterally, and that is what they are doing. They are doing it for themselves and they are doing it for their family. When I say "family", I mean close family. They are not doing it for anyone else. They don't appear in local government. Certainly, they don't appear in WAFF and PGA. The individuals out there are doing an individual thing.

JF This is a sensitive issue, I know, but do you think salary or income to be made in the political realm is a factor?

TRENORDEN I think it is a significant factor for those people. I always believe there are three types of pollies. There are the politicians who come in for the party, politicians who come in for themselves and politicians who come in for the people. I always say to people when I talk about this that it is about a third, a third and a third, which is not true, obviously, but that is basically what happens. In terms of people who are prepared to come into Parliament, there are two reasons why they want to do it. One is because they want to do something for themselves and the other is that they want to do something for their community. If you want to do something for your community, salary is not an issue, but if you want to do something for yourself, salary is a significant issue. There should be that blend in Parliament. Therefore, there's no question, and I am not saying from a personal basis, but the salary situation is really important. We made a very foolish knee-jerk reaction here a few years ago about changing the superannuation, because one of the things that a member of Parliament could get above a job in private enterprise or even in public service was ending up with a sizeable superannuation package. Now pollies aren't even going to get that. They are on the same superannuation package as the person in the street. People love to say that makes them equal, but what it does is make the better ones not do it. When I was in AMP, I was putting \$25 000 a year into my superannuation. Even as a young man I knew that was a good thing for me to be doing. Your own welfare and your family's welfare, is really important to a lot of people. Yes, we made some serious mistakes with salaries. What happens now is that we have all these allowances that come in that actually make up a portion of your package, because they think the public can't see that. It would be better if it was a straight salary and a straight package out of that salary. The super wouldn't matter so much if members were paid a great deal more and, therefore, a percentage of their super was a great deal more, but members can do two terms of Parliament and significantly do their family damage and their financial position damage. They can also do the community good. There are many good members of Parliament who can do that process, but a lot of them will look at that and say, "If that's what I'm going to do, I'm going to basically half divorce myself from my family and I'm also going to put my financial position in neutral for eight years." Many people say, "I'm not going to do that." I can certainly tell you that many partners tell the other half, male or female, "You're NOT going to do that", particularly when there are one, two or three young children in the process.

JF Yes, and you can understand it.

TRENORDEN I totally understand it.

JF Coming then to your entry into Parliament, what did you specifically do to prepare yourself for being a member of the Legislative Assembly?

TRENORDEN Probably very little, because I remember when I first became an insurance agent I went to a seminar. We used to have these quirky American life insurance salesmen come through and they were fantastic entertainment. One of them, whose name escapes me, (I was listening to him) said that the day he joined he went into his office and they gave him two things: one was a rate book and one was a mirror. He said he knew what the rate book was for because that is where you made your sales from, but he didn't understand that the mirror was there to watch himself starve. I think insurance was a fantastic grounding for politics. I have always taken on politics in the same way as I've taken on insurance. Unless you go out there and do something, you don't get a return. I've always been a great believer in output. When you do output, you get a return. Every action gets a reaction. I have always seen politics as that process. Some people have chastised me, even recently, in my attitude to politics. I'm a very strong believer that I'm there for my constituency and I'm not there for my own personal views. I understand the argument, and I think we talked a little bit about that last week or we may not have. Many of the Liberal Party people actually say that their responsibility is to put their attitude forward and if the party selects them, then they back their attitudes. I don't believe in that process. I believe I'm there to represent my constituency. I guess it comes from a very strong desire to do better for the regions, and the regions still don't do well (I guess all those things are mixed in), but I do concede from time to time that there is a leadership role in politics. There is obviously a bigger leadership role in leadership as against being a backbencher, but there are some bills that I would give consideration to voting against what I think the majority of my constituency would want, but they would need to be bills of some note. The most bitter time I ever saw in politics was the passing of the abortion bill. I voted for abortion because my constituency clearly wanted me to, even Catholic women were approaching me and telling me that they wanted me to do that. It was very strongly put to me by a large slice of my constituency that that is what I was to do, so I was happy to do that. Somebody would say that should be a

leadership position, but I would see a leadership position being more in the areas of direction of the state and those types of issues.

JF I notice that you referred in your maiden speech to a seminar for new MPs. What did that consist of?

TRENORDEN They still do it and they still struggle about that process. There was a two-day seminar in my day. I'm not sure that it's any longer now; it might be three days. It's a bit hard for the staff and others to do that, because one of the things that new members strike as bewilderment is that they come to this hugely different process, very formal, so it is not like anything you have ever done before. Those two-day seminars, I think, are only useful in showing you basically where the toilet is and where the chamber is. It gives some bit of a speech about the formalities and some of the big no-noes, because most of that is that you are going through this big spin about life change. For most members it is just a huge change. I go to those seminars now as at the other end of the spectrum. I am the father of the house. I talk to new members and try to give them my view of the best way to operate as a member, but I am sure members only listen to a portion of that, like any training process. It is learning on the ground. Again, I think that is one of the great faults of this Parliament. We learn from the current people. I learnt from Brian Burke, because he was the man. He was just so dominant at the time. You could say that my trainer was not probably the best trainer there ever was.

JF Yes. When you were contemplating standing for Parliament, in the first instance, of course, in '83 it had to be the Legislative Assembly because your mate Byfield was standing for the other one, but would you, given your preference, have gone straight off towards the Council?

TRENORDEN No, I have always known, and I can't really say when I knew, going back to conversations a little while ago, that the lower house was the house of activity. I am forever grateful that I have been able to be in the Assembly. My only interest in the upper house is just what does the upper house do? I think there are significant issues about that. That is one of the reasons why I have agreed to go there, because some people, not necessarily in politics, are saying to me, "Max, you do know the system, so you might be able to make some change." We will see if that happens, but I am forever grateful that I was in the Assembly.

JF That is probably something that we will come back to. What about the recent changes, say, since about 2000, that have happened, and even slightly before that under the Labor government? Are you in favour of the direction of change in the upper house?

TRENORDEN I don't see any direction in the upper house. I am in favour of some of the rhetoric, but I think that the Senate is outrageous. I would probably like to use even stronger language, because the Senate, even the Clerk in the Senate, is really trying to make the Senate a photocopy of the Assembly, and that's not the point of it. The other thing about the Senate is that the Constitution actually says it's the states' house, and it has never been, not even from day one was it ever the states' house, so we really do need to think about that. If the Senate is there to run the government as well as the lower house is there to run the government, why do we have two of them? I know all the answers about checks and balances and all the rest, and I actually agree with most of those processes, but I find that senators aren't actually wanting to do that. They want their hands on the levers. I think the Australian public is being very foolish in allowing them to do that. I think people like the Greens, who federally have been big drivers of that process because they want to be in the power process, have misled the Australian public about the purpose of the Senate as against the lower house. The Senate is to make sure that a Hitler doesn't turn up in this country and that a major disruption doesn't fall upon us. That means the Senate really has to be a house of review and a house of contemplation and examination, as does our house here, but the Senate is desperately trying not to do that. The Senate is desperately trying to be second-guessing the lower house. I just wonder why we do that. It's the same here. There is a good argument for an upper house in those terms of balance. Particularly in the last decade, what I have noticed here, which is quite unusual probably, and it may be driven by the pressures of government, but the quality of the legislation going through our chamber, in terms of written legislation, not the quality of what we are trying to do but the actual writing of the legislation, is quite poor, and getting poorer as the years go by. An upper house does have an opportunity to structurally fix bills up and examine them and just say, "Does this clause actually do what you are stating it's going to do?" I think that is a very useful purpose of the upper house, and it will be one of the reasons why lower house people will say, "You are slow, because we rammed it through in three days", but perhaps an upper house should be slow, particularly on senior pieces of legislation, but I am not in favour of an upper house that wants to be in the action in terms of running the state.

JF Okay. Let's pick up now your first opportunity to address the house—your maiden speech. How did you feel about making it?

TRENORDEN It was a great moment and it was really interesting because one of the things that happened was Mick Gayfer was giving me a hand with my maiden speech and he said to me, "Why don't you come around to my place and have a meal and we'll have a look at your maiden speech." I went around to his place and we had a meal and about a bottle of scotch. That's the country way. He still laughs about that, because he put me right onto my left foot and I gave my maiden speech feeling not that flash. I'm not a huge drinker. I think that was an important part of the process. What he was saying to me was, "Don't take this too seriously. It's your maiden speech. It's not going to change the world." That was pretty good advice. People often refer back to my maiden speech. Even just a few months ago, a person came to me with my maiden speech in hand and quoted back to me quite a few of the things I said. What she was saying, which I was grateful for, was, "Max, you've never changed from those things you talked about." I think that is what members need to do, and that is what I advise people to do. Your maiden speech should really be about who you are and what you think you are. Going back to the four persons in your life process, the person you want to be and the things you want to do. That is what I think I did in my maiden speech, and I can remember talking about white chargers and a few other bits and pieces in that speech. It was a bit flowery. I had 1 000 copies printed. My mother took one and the other 999 are still in my office.

JF It's good that you had your mother onside [laughter]. That brings me back to something I was going to ask a while ago. To what extent were your family involved in the campaigning for you?

TRENORDEN We've always been a strong family. Even now, with my brothers, we have very infrequent contact, but when we meet it's like we've never been apart. When election time appears, they appear and they say, "Max, give us a polling booth. Give us something to do", or whatever, and it's a pretty pleasant process, but they have never rung me and said, "Max, why aren't you doing this? Why aren't you doing that?" whatever the process may be. Sometimes they've rung me and said, "I've been approached by Fred Nerk to approach you." I say, "Tell Fred Nerk to approach me." Often people do it that way, so my brothers often (not often; I should not say often) sometimes pass on information, but they have never ever tried in any way to

discuss with me my direction and what I am doing. I think the reality of my father and mother appeared and we all went back to the dining room and we were all the same as brothers. We are very similar minded. I think that came out of that family process. The people who are more aggressive are my sisters-in-law. They have taken to tune up far more aggressively than my brothers, who will talk to me very strongly, and I appreciate it; I think they are fantastic. They will talk to me very strongly about their beliefs and so forth. I think it is just the difference of the family process as to their background.

JF What about the kids? Did they join in the campaigning business?

TRENORDEN There are some good stories about my kids. As I said, my daughter, when I was out, said that she'd lost her dad, which she still denies but that actually did happen. My eldest son did work experience with the police department. One of the senior police officers said to him, "Trenorden? Trenorden? You wouldn't be related to Max Trenorden?" The cock crowed, so he denied it absolutely. My other son did work experience in Mundaring for CALM at the time, and someone said to him (this person rang me), "What's your father do?" He said, "Oh, he's a professional liar." So there's been a very strong disconnect with my children from politics, although my eldest son has always been very strong. He often talks to me about processes and so forth. All of them have been supportive, very supportive in fact, but my eldest son has a political view. My daughter is massively concerned about what's around her, like a lot of women tend to be, but she is very, very concerned about all issues and regularly talks to me about the issues that are affecting her life, not so much saying to me, "Dad, you should do this; you should do that." It's more about how it's affecting her and how she deals with it and what do I think is going to happen in the future and those sorts of things.

JF Just for a few minutes, how did life change for you when you entered the house?

TRENORDEN Quite significantly obviously, because you spend a lot of time in Perth, but in terms of time and those sorts of issues, not a lot. I was a busy person and out and about a lot as an insurance agent, so I am still out and about a lot. In some ways it was easier to be a single father as a politician because you knew when Parliament was on and you knew when wasn't on, so it's a little easier at times to structure your time, and you knew Parliament didn't sit through school holidays and those sorts of

processes. The opposite was true too; if Parliament was sitting, Parliament was sitting. I couldn't draw a line through the diary and say, "I'll go away for this week." If Parliament was sitting, that was it. Also, it's not just when Parliament's sitting. There are things in your electorate that you just have to be at. I've got the dilemma right now. I've just had a telephone call from the Beverley Arts Society wanting me to open their arts society's 40th art exhibition, which I will do but 'church' meets that day and the Eagles are playing the Brisbane Bears at Subiaco, but I'll be at the opening of the arts society.

JF You would have had a pied-à-terre in Perth as well as at Northam then, would you, or not, in those days?

TRENORDEN No, I did not. That was interesting. As I have said, my divorce happened in '82, but I have always remained very, very friendly with my ex-wife's brothers and her mother. We are very close friends and I am always happy to see them. One of my brothers-in-law lived in Willetton and I lived with him for a long time. I stayed with him when I was in Parliament House for a long time, which was a real burden on him, because I would turn up at midnight, one o'clock, two o'clock or three o'clock in the morning. They were in bed. They had young children. That was not all that easy. It took me quite a few years before I bought a house. When I decided that it was just being unfair to them, I started to stay in hotels and motels, which was the pits. I just can't tell you how bad that is. So I ended up buying a place in Daglish, which financially was a good decision, but I didn't actually make the decision. It just got to the stage that having a shirt and suit or change of clothes, and when your day changed even (sometimes your day just changes) to actually have that bolthole makes your life a lot easier. I only did that in about 2000.

JF Daglish, of course, is a good choice in terms of being adjacent to West Perth or to Parliament.

TRENORDEN It is just a few minutes into Parliament, and that's why I picked it. I'd go under a subway and down a few 'kays' [kilometres] of road and I'm here. It has been excellent for me, and it is good for me in terms of peace of mind. It has a small garden out the back. It is definitely a better process and makes politics a little easier to handle. I should have done it much earlier.

JF Just to round off today's session, what are some of the surprises you got when you actually got into sitting in the house and participating in parliamentary procedure?

TRENORDEN The procedure itself was significant, just the strong formality of the process, but also your ability to be heard. Two things stick in my mind, and both are people who are currently around. There was a fellow called Vince Garappa, I think is name is, a butcher from Midland, who is now very prominent on radio and so forth as a chef. He was strongly affected by some activity that the government of the day was doing, that the Burke government was doing, and I went out and batted for him, even though I did not know him. I was just frustrated that I had seven minutes, which is one of the proceedings here, to do that. The minister didn't care. I thought that at least the minister should listen to me. I thought that ministers would listen, the government would listen and the government would be responsive. To find that all those things were not true was a fairly significant hit, because in those days I thought that government was benevolent. Now I know that there has never been a benevolent government. The other one was with Geoff Parry. I remember David Parker at his height as a minister. I stood up and gave a speech on WA Inc in the late '80s, and what I thought I needed to do, because as an insurance agent I gave a speech that I think was probably 90 or 95 per cent accurate before all the WA Inc stuff broke open, and David Parker just verbally abused me and Geoff Parry (the same Geoff Parry who is around now) said, "Trenorden's contribution was useless", whereas in fact my contribution was 100 per cent correct (close enough, to it) and David Parker's contribution in reality was useless. I learnt that day that the glitter is more important to the process than the substance. That was a big learning curve, and that is a lesson that I have never forgotten. One of the sad things about Parliament that people don't understand about Parliament is that information from the opposition is not welcome here. Most Parliaments are, but this Parliament is run by the executive and for the executive. It is sad that new members coming into the place expect it to be like that: "This is the government and therefore this is the way the government acts." Whereas in fact to have many parliamentarians go all the way through Parliament (sometimes 10 years and more), and never understand there should be a parliament *and* a government, not just a government— [and] I find that frustrating and I still find that frustrating today.

END OF TAPE FOUR SIDE B

TAPE FIVE SIDE A

This is tape five, side A, in the series of interviews with Mr Max Trenorden, MLA. This one being recorded at Parliament House on the 19th of March 2008 with interviewer John Ferrell.

JF Max, today we will continue looking at that period of opposition from 1986 to '93, and we won't go outside that, I don't imagine.

TRENORDEN Well, there's a lot to talk about in that area.

JF Yes, and I thought perhaps just as a starting point, we got you into Parliament last time and we didn't really talk about colleagues at the time, so think about colleagues that were important to you and perhaps deal firstly with those within the National Party to whom you were probably closest. You can talk about others as well when you have exhausted the party.

TRENORDEN The person who was the most paramount in my mind at the time was definitely Mick Gayfer. He's a Corrigin farmer, a person who was around a great deal. As I said, I knew him before I got actively interested, even though I knew him as a councillor and not so much as a political activist. Eric Charlton showed a massive amount of passion and enthusiasm for amalgamating or reglueing the broken party back in those days. I had a lot of passion . . . perhaps I shouldn't use the word "passion" but I think that Eric's energy was excellent at that time, because there were a lot of hurt egos and a lot of people who were adamant that they'd never talk to the other side ever again and all those sorts of questions. Eric's passion about the constituent and are we about you or are we about delivering services and those sort of arguments were very important to me. People who came along a bit later like Dexter Davies . . . Dexter was a lifetime friend, a different individual, a next-door neighbour basically, so I knew him on a personal level as well as on a political level. That was fairly important too because I knew him well and I spoke before on these tapes about his family. [It was] a massive family. [They were] fantastic individuals, his parents; just rocks of people. I always will hold admiration for the Davies family full stop.

JF Dexter was a backbencher with you then at that time, was he?

TRENORDEN No, he came in much later, and only came in at the retirement of Eric Charlton and didn't win election. He only did a couple of years in a term, but he was president of the National Party for a long period of time — long before he got into politics. John Patterson is another person I mentioned who was the Western Australian president. [He was] an enormous contributor to the National Party [and] is another person I've always had a high regard for. There were a lot of people in the Labor Party also and many people around my own electorate who I have always held highly, particularly in their decency and their thought processes about themselves and [the] community and [their] aspirations and all those sort of questions. They're probably far too large to number and [it would be] unfair because I'd miss as many as I'd pick up, and of course they come and go. Individuals get really involved for five or 10 years and then drop out and some come back in and some don't come back in.

JF Just backstepping for a moment to the business of reuniting the party, you hadn't been in the party when it broke up. Did you have a role to play at all in securing support for a new-look party?

TRENORDEN No, none whatsoever. I came in right at the tail end of that process, just at the time that Eric Charlton was getting to his peak. Hendy Cowan was trying hard in those days to do something himself, but he was also seen as being opportunistic in that he's up for his own ambition, and as well he was the leader of one section of it — one half of it. Eric Charlton actually got elected to the upper house as a National Party member instead of a National Country Party member. He was the first united member. Then in 1986 we all came in under that banner, and that was a highly successful campaign and a great credit to Hendy Cowan but also the John Patersons and others who constructed that particular election, and to some degree a person who I have spent a bit of time with and have a little passion for for a different reason. Bill Hassell, who was the Leader of the Liberal Party, misjudged all that process quite badly. That's what happens in politics.

JF Do you want to say more about that and what they —

TRENORDEN It was just the usual divide between the Liberal Party and the National Party. As I read in the press the other day, the National Party is dead. I've been hearing about the National Party is dead for the 22 years I've been a member. Some sections of the Liberal Party really believed in '86 they'd just wipe the National Party out. That was fairly naive. It may not have been naive at a political level in terms of

operatives, but it was very naive on the public level, because what actually happened was the Bill Hassell push actually significantly helped us because people made a decision they didn't want us to go. He was actually plugging us without realising it, and that's the argument. As a salesman, I've learnt that many times: if you want to sell something, you never talk about the opposing company or the opposing product or whatever because every time you do, you promote it. Bill Hassell did that so he was out in those adverts at the time with his broad-brimmed hat and his checked shirt and his moleskins and his boots looking like I'd look if I tried to go into Wall Street. He looked well out of place and the ads just screamed that he was out of place. It was probably a defining time for the National Party. I think quite a few of the Liberal Party politicians of some of the administration decided after '86 that that aggressive effort to get rid of the National Party was pretty much a waste of time, and it is a waste of time. Some of those people since then, like Norman Moore, for example, at the time were very aggressively anti-National. Norman Moore and I get on well these days, and I think quite a few people like him observed that process and decided that they wouldn't do that again. That was very much to our benefit. We had a very successful election, and we came in with the National Party revitalised for the first time in probably 20 years or 15 years.

JF Side by side in the house, day to day, who did you deal with?

TRENORDEN I sat next to Crawford Nalder.

JF This is young Crawford, is it? [Crawford Nalder's son]

TRENORDEN Yes. I've got to get the name right; it was not Crawford. It's a few years ago now. What was his name? That's sad. We'll get that, though.

JF That's C.C. Nalder, I think, in the books. [Campbell Nalder]

TRENORDEN He wasn't around very long; unfortunately, he developed cancer and died. It was interesting; he was a very passionate member and I sat beside him and watched him in operation as against a few of the others. The member for Moore, who was again . . . I'm struggling with names; I'll have to go back and have a look. He was only here one term, who struggled with being a member as against Nalder, who was very outgoing and very aggressive in his passion for politics. Of course, Monty House came in at the same time. Monty came from a very strong agricultural base

and had very strong views about what agriculture should be. We had Eric Charlton, who was always Eric Charlton. I believe in the 22 years I've been here, he was the best minister I saw. I think a lot of technical people would cringe when they hear me say that, but he had vision about what he wanted to do and he went and did it, whereas a lot of good ministers have vision but get told why they can't do it and in the end don't do it. I'm a doer myself. I enjoyed watching. In some ways Alannah MacTiernan is a bit similar to Eric, even though she was his greatest enemy in the Parliament. In a lot of ways, she's the same sort of person, and I like to see ministers who are prepared to have a go and take a risk.

Hilda Turnbull was an enormous passion in our party room. I had a lot of time for Hilda. Hilda won on her third or fourth attempt at Collie, but brought a very human face into the National Party. [She was the] only woman in the process, and that's one of the difficulties. In the regions it's very hard to get women elected. There's no proof of it, but I would say overwhelmingly you can't get women elected because women won't vote for them. It's not that men won't vote for women; it's women. Women are highly judgemental of each other. If you've got something that they think that you've done wrong—that is, you're doing it too early for your family or you're not supportive enough of your family and so forth—they're very, very critical. In the last election, we had an excellent candidate in Esperance who didn't get up and I think that significantly the reason that she didn't get up is she was seen as soft and gentle and that's not an image that people want in their politicians. I've heard for 22 years people say what they want is considerate, kind, gentle politicians, but when you put them up they never get elected. People actually like leadership, and strong leadership, particularly women; women who are focused on their family and on education and health and focus more clearly than men on those issues. They judge those things quite strongly, and if they don't think that leadership is going to be coming for one reason or another, they won't vote that way. Hilda was our woman. She was fantastic in the party room, a very passionate politician, very aggressive interviews and a very decent person.

An interesting thing in those years right through to now is our party room doesn't leak. When we would go into the joint party room with the Liberal Party and National Party, you'd hear 10 minutes after you got out of the room from the press what happened in the room. Our party room has never leaked. I guess it's easy to say that because it's a much smaller bunch. Back in those '86 years, there were 10 of us. We'd go into those meetings and have furious rows at times, but by the time we got

to the door we'd be speaking on a person-to-person basis. I think an example of that is Hendy. Hendy and I never got on, but we did. As two human beings we had no problems with each other, but, politically, Hendy and I just clashed, and that's all there was to it. He didn't believe in a lot of the things that I believed in. Eric Charlton used to take Hendy on in an enormous fashion in our party room; he'd just take him on aggressively. Because I think we're all country people, Hendy, to his great credit, and Eric, to his great credit, would not take that personally. Even though sometimes the debates got really touchy, within minutes they'd be talking football again and so forth and so on, but the issue didn't go away of course. It was a pretty good time and I was quite appreciative of that time. There are a lot of things we could talk about, I suppose; rambling all over the place. Some of the same pressures are the reason why the National Party doesn't hold water as well as it should. I can remember going to a luncheon five or six years ago where a federal administrator came across and he was just chatting to a table of polities. There were Labor Party polities on the table and Liberal Party polities on the table and he just said, "In terms of administration, the only people to deal with is the National Party because they're practical people; they go and do practical things", which you can imagine didn't go over well with some of the people at the table, but I think that's true. Our constituents say that too, but often don't vote for us because of that leadership process. You'll hear people say that all the time. "Thank God we've got you, Max" or "Thank God we've got you, Hendy, but we're going to vote Liberal or Labor", and that's because of that leadership-type process. Some of the processes that we actually went through we were seen [to be] too close to the Liberal Party too often and the fact that when Hendy was Deputy Premier, a lot of things happened, but what actually happened in our constituency, there was an animosity built up; they blamed us for all the things that didn't happen, as against not seeing the things that Hendy and Monty and others actually did do. The things that didn't happen became a crisis for us.

Trying to get back to the question you asked me, it was a good grouping then. It was a harmonious grouping, [with] very different personalities, [and] very few clashed personally. I'm not a clashing person; I'm actually a warm cuddly type. Monty and I didn't get on too well either. Hendy and I didn't get on too well. [unclear] both of those in terms of a policy outcome, not personality outcome. There are many things we could talk about in that —

JF What was your biggest difference, say, with Hendy on policy?

TRENORDEN For example, one of the things that happened early on and I just went to a conference the other day and a couple of hundred people sounded . . . just building our praises, but I went to a meeting in Goomalling where I'm going today, which is not in my electorate and never has been, and there was a meeting there for the closing of the last bank in Goomalling, the National Bank. [There were a] significant number in the hall; the hall was packed. Whatever that number is; 300 or 400—whatever the figure would be. Bill McNee [was] there, a Liberal, but McNees and Trenordens farm side by side, so we're close families. I was there to observe and not long into the meeting I was taking the charge of the population and Bill had vanished. Bill was sitting down the back and people were saying to me, "You've got to go down to the Terrace. You've got to go to the National Bank and bring them back." I was saying to them, "Why would I do that, because National Bank don't want you. Why would you want the National Bank? Why don't I go and get you something else?" I went and spoke to Hendy about that and Hendy was quite critical of it, but he did in the end back me and I did actually do a task force under his ministry and I actually brought Bendigo Bank to Western Australia. In terms of region, that's been a really significant win for regional WA. Hendy kept on saying to me, "I don't know why you're wasting your time; you're doing something that just will not work and just can't be achieved." On that level we were significantly different. We thought differently; we had different conduits, I think, into the community, even though we had basically the same communities. We just thought differently about those people [and] interacted differently with those people. I was less agriculture orientated, and where I was agriculture orientated, I was more about the bigger picture than the micro picture.

JF And that, I suppose, is partly explainable in your having been in insurance, which is a bigger world in a way than just the farm community, without meaning to disparage the farm community.

TRENORDEN But also whether it was my mother or whether it was my reading, or wherever I picked it up, I understood early that the world was about change and you really should not be arguing about keeping something, a fixture. That's one of the things I'm concerned about now. I think a lot of people who are arguing about climate change really believe that because they're alive now, the world has to be as it is now. Climate has always changed. You'd only have to read history for a little while to understand that the climate's always changed. The question about carbon is a different matter to climate change. A lot of people actually think things have to be as

they are now. I actually get amused in politics when I hear people assume that the pinnacle of mankind is at its highest now that it's ever been, and that's basically saying, because I'm alive now, things are better than they've ever been. I think there are huge arguments about whether that's right or wrong. I think in some areas that's very true and in other areas that's not so true.

But getting back to the context, I think I did have a different way of looking at my community than others. Hendy was a very good Deputy Premier. I would give him large ticks for the job he did, but his way of operating was very different from mine. We sort of had Eric Charlton between he and I. The good thing about Eric [was] he would listen. Hendy would listen too, but Hendy would listen on the basis of his knowledge and he'd act on what you added to his knowledge, where Eric was happy to take new stuff in and think about it and react. I often think about the National Party as being Hendy, Eric and myself, because I never think of it on a personal basis because I wasn't that important a process. Monty House resisted everything that I wanted to do; in fact, I can't remember having too many wins with Monty House at all. In all of that we had Bob Wiese, who came in after Campbell Nalder died.

JF Campbell; that's right, yes.

TRENORDEN Bob was just, again, a wonderful fellow, but enormously conservative, just absolutely hugely conservative. We all had great difficulty with Bob just trying to get him to move away from the current base. We had those things happening in a small party. It was quite an interesting time.

JF We have actually strayed a bit beyond 1993 in talking about some of those things, but it is a useful comment.

TRENORDEN '93 was just a wakening for me. In reality I ran because I was divorced. I really needed something to occupy my mind.

JF Sorry, . . . '83?

TRENORDEN Sorry; '83.

JF I said we had actually strayed in our discussion past '93 in talking about [the period?]

TRENORDEN Sorry; '93. We need to go back to '83 and '86. '83 was a time when I needed to do something. I was politically aware in terms of local politically aware. I was naturally a National or a Country Party or whatever you want to term that. I was always a bit uncomfortable with the Liberal Party mainly because I saw a lot of theory in the Liberal Party as against practicality. I have never been comfortable with the Labor Party. My problem with the Labor Party is they actually believe in institutions instead of actually believing in people. Everything the Labor Party does even now is about doing the collective. Their argument is the collective is good for you. They believe it totally. I'm not saying that they're not genuine, but they do believe that you do things in a collective and the collective will look after you. I don't believe that for a moment. I think life is about individuals and giving people chances. In all of that with individuals, their collective is like school and churches and so forth, but individuals go in and out of those. The Labor Party has always had, to me, this philosophy that we've got a scheme for you and the scheme is going to be good for you, whereas in fact I don't think I've ever seen a scheme, including the Catholic Church or whatever you want to say, that's been always good for people. So collectives are a good thing. People gravitate to them, but I also like to think that people like to gravitate out of them. Even church people like to get into the process and then leave it. I could never be a Labor Party individual because of that philosophy.

JF That said, how did you relate to some of the Labor people in the house?

TRENORDEN [There were] some excellent people and I think, with politics, a lot of people are Labor, Liberal or National by accident as against politics. For example, I think the Vietnam War had brought a lot of people into the federal Labor Party who wouldn't have been there if it had not been for the war and the movement of the early '70s. That goes back to the fact, and I said this on the previous tapes, that people go into politics for different reasons—some for themselves, some for the party, some for the community. That depends on where your base is. If you go into politics because you want to be a politician, you want to do it yourself, it is prudent to read the tea-leaves and see where the political mood of the nation is going or state is going and get with that movement. I think there are quite a few people who have done that. In terms of Labor Party people sitting opposite me, there are quite a few of those people I quite liked. In fact, in the current Parliament I can genuinely say there's no-one I

don't like, but I am not a hater anyhow. In fact, one of my great passions is disliking haters. People who hate are a real bane on society. I think hate is one of the terrible, terrible things. That is actually another small slice of the Labor Party. The really good haters tend to come up through the Labor Party for some reason.

JF Really?

TRENORDEN I often wonder if that is [because of] the intense battles they have in the union movement perhaps, that some people actually get some very strong hatred of individuals. They will express their hatred of individuals, whereas I've never felt that emotion, I've got to say. There have been members I have disliked quite a bit.

JF Although you were not in coalition whilst you were in government, you would have had quite a lot of interaction with the Liberal Party at the time, so how did you get on with people on a practical level there? You've talked a lot about some of the Country Party members. What about some of the Liberal members?

TRENORDEN I've always believed in getting on with people; that's always been a part of my process. I've always spent time getting to know people, including backbenchers of the Labor Party and backbenchers of the Liberal Party. There were some interesting times with people like Ian Laurance, [who was] a very strong contributor to the Liberal Party; Bill Hassell himself. Why I've got a bit of time for Bill Hassell [is] I was in the chamber one day when he was trying to do a charge against the government of the day and he moved a suspension motion to turn around and find out his members had left the chamber and left him standing by himself, and he broke down. That was the end of his leadership of the Liberal Party, but it was a time [that] I felt a great deal of [com]passion for him because I just think [it was a] pretty ordinary thing to do. Even if you disagree with your leader, that's a pretty ordinary thing to do, so I've always felt a bit of [com]passion for Bill. He's just one of those people that throws himself wholeheartedly into each debate, though many times I would disagree with where he wanted to go, but you could never disagree that he had the passion to try to do it. Barry MacKinnon—we the National Party killed Barry MacKinnon unfortunately. We killed him as a leader because we tried to preserve him. We actually had long talks in our party room about how we'd keep Barry MacKinnon there and what we could do, but it was a bit like the same old argument I said before; once it was clear that we were promoting him, that meant a few Liberals decided it must be a good reason to get rid of him. I had a lot of time for Barry

MacKinnon; he was a very strong contributor in the process. Jim Clarko. One of the things I think is probably missing more than it's been for some time is having characters in the chambers, and people who can make people laugh. Even in the hottest debate, the people who can throw a bit of humour into the process . . . [it] is a skill and particularly if their humour is actually useful in the debate. Many times humour can actually be useful in a debate; it actually clears the tension of the chamber. Jim Clarko was a person who could do that. Bob Pearce was a person who could do that. Brian Burke was a person who could do that. Brian Burke was a stellar performer in the house, and he's probably a person we should spend a bit of time talking about. He controlled the house significantly. In fact, the standing orders of the chamber would be broken just by his presence. He'd have some of his less able ministers struggling on a question and he'd just wave at them and they'd sit down and he'd stand up, which is against the rules of the chamber in many cases, but that's what he'd do. He spent a lot of the time debating those issues within the chamber where he thought his minister of the day was not carrying the day.

In fact, there's probably a little story [it'll take a bit of time, but it's worth telling] about humour. Monty House, early after he got elected in 1986, approached Brian Burke and said, "Your environmental minister isn't in the chamber; I want to talk about an incident down at Albany." Brian Burke said, "It doesn't matter; I'm here, Monty." So Monty, at question time, jumped up and asked a question about a seal that had been shot in Albany and what a terrible thing it was and what was the Premier going to do about that. Brian Burke stood up and said, "The member hasn't been here very long, but he knows he should be sending that message to the Minister for the Environment who isn't here, so he is at fault on that point. Anyhow, it wasn't a seal; it was a walrus" and sat down. Of course, everyone roared with laughter. That's not a negative process, so Monty got set up for a few minutes, but Monty laughed his head off because it was just a process. Brian Burke was a good people person and that's why he's still around now, because people gravitate to him and he has that strong leadership component. When we were sitting there and watching his cabinet with people like Julian Grill, Bob Pearce, David Parker [I'm trying to think who else was there] Wilson, who was the health minister [I can't think of his Christian name].

JF Keith.

TRENORDEN Keith Wilson. There were some very strong, capable members at that time and they deserved to be the government of the day. In terms of what was

reflecting on the other side, we were far weaker, but I think we are weaker now. I thought I was lucky to live through that period because I saw a dip in the conservative side, but I think the dip is actually deeper now.

END OF TAPE FIVE SIDE A

TAPE FIVE SIDE B

This is tape five, side B, in the interviews with Max Trenorden.

JF Max, perhaps now, since you brought up the Burke government in particular, can you talk to me about WA Inc —

TRENORDEN I have a great fascination with that.

JF — and perhaps give me sort of your account of what you observed as it was taking place and what you tried to do about it, if anything?

TRENORDEN Yes, I am happy to do that. We could probably spend many hours on that. Brian Burke, for people like myself, and I know Hendy Cowan and Monty House and Eric Charlton and those sorts of people, we would hear the rumours about what was happening around town, not only rumours but very significant Western Australian people come to us and tell us that these things were happening. Frankly, they were so horrible that we did not believe them, even in opposition.

JF The things you are talking about are?

TRENORDEN Are the things that actually were happening—the Rothwells, the Laurie Connell processes, Holmes a Court and all of those things of corporate WA happening outside of Parliament. What Western Australians don't realise is the vast majority of activity happened outside of Parliament not inside Parliament. The argument, why didn't Parliament do something about that, is offbeat to some degree because many of the things that Brian Burke did was "move it away from Parliament". That was his skill; he created a range of corporations and changed a range of acts that moved that activity and decision-making process away from Parliament and also away from the public service for a significant part. I think the public service process was he did have a really strong fear that the public service was conservative orientated, that it was not on his side. He did want to drive the state in a particular way. He talked about 'four-on-the-floor' all the time himself, but he got the 'four-on-the-floor' people and put them together in a movement outside of Parliament. We only heard about most things incidentally. Most of those things that we all know that came up and ended up in the royal commission and the commission on government, we saw little of that in the chamber, or if we did, we only saw facets of it and not the

full deal. When people were coming in and telling us that the Laurie Connell deals and the Holmes a Courts and the Alan Bond deals were occurring, we thought no. We could understand Brian Burke playing a significant, strong game, but we could not actually understand him being corrupt, and he was totally corrupt. One of the things I think sadly about all that is people look back at that bit of history and say, "This is what he got prosecuted for." He got charged but he never got prosecuted for the serious things he did. He got prosecuted for the minor things he did—the things that are reasonably pinning for—and once you put him in jail the argument is, "Well, we've got him." But his brown paper bag in his safe was a significant part of his corruption, but it was not really the crime he did against Western Australian people. What he did was take the process of involving Western Australian people in government away. He was basically a dictator, but with a handful of people significantly helping him because he was helping them. We were very sceptical for a long time that what we were hearing was actually true. I had come out of the insurance industry and I had a range of people coming to me, and I only spoke about this in passing in the house last night. It was a defining moment for me because I, being fairly naïve, organised a debate against David Parker, and I stood up and put the argument—and I was pretty pleased with my speech—about what was happening in the insurance industry, what had happened with SGIO and SGIC, which were significantly trashed by the government of the day. All the classic assets were sold off and bad assets were purchased and the prudential running of places like the SGIC was appalling. They were way outside industry requirements and it was just a cash cow for Brian Burke and the people around him. I got up and said all those things. David Parker, in response, got up and just got stuck right into me personally, and said it was great nonsense and so forth. Geof Parry, who is now back here, said my effort was appalling. In reality, if you look back on politics, it was because politics is really a head-to-head clash; it is not really about facts. I actually thought at that time that if I put the facts on the table, that that would be important, but the facts weren't important, certainly not to the press. Geof Parry in all the years I have known him has never said to me, "Oh, Max, you were right", because if you go back to that particular speech, I was right. Probably 90 per cent of what I said was more than right; it was right on the money, because I had gathered the information from industry and just put it to the house. That was a big lesson to me that politics is substantially not about that factual process; it is about who's got the levers, who's got control, and perhaps it's another thing we could talk at great length about. From that day on, not that day but the day that Brian Burke started to get that control, I've had an immense concern that there is no Parliament here. We have a meeting room here for the

cabinet and for the executive. The backbenchers of the Labor Party or the government of the day are just that. They sit there and make no contribution to the debate. You are there to vote; there to keep the numbers of the government and that is it, so you are not a part of government because the executive is government. The government of the day's backbenchers really—we used to call them the vegie patch—but basically that is it, because they get told, "You can't speak on this issue, and certainly, if you are going to speak on this issue, you are not allowed to be controversial." Other Parliaments, like Westminster, encourage. If you go to Westminster, often the hardest questions that get thrown at the Prime Minister are coming from his own side, where that is not tolerated in Australia, and I think that is a sad thing. That process of having a Parliament that is actually not alive, where 57 members aren't actually having a consciousness. They have got two roles to play here. We are parliamentarians as well as politicians. I am still really concerned right now that the Parliament itself hasn't got the function that it should have. Of course, politicians don't want it to have that function, because it is about coming in here and taking power. Nearly everyone who comes in here wants to be in the power process. I don't see any drive amongst too many politicians to actually recreate or have a Parliament in its correct entity, because they want to be in the power process. If you go back to the Brian Burke process where Julian Grill was running up—himself, not his staff members, himself—and down the Terrace delivering cheques to make sure that institutions, including Rothwells, could end the week on a balance, it is just a remarkable period; that whole process where it just disintegrated. There is an important part of that disintegration which is also I think not too well on the record. We had a party meeting where Hendy had come to agreement with Peter Dowding when he was Premier about the petrochemical plant. Hendy's view was, "This is all a done deal. We ought to get on with it." Eric's view was, "I'm not too keen about this." So we had the party meeting and Eric and I, off memory, were the only two that argued fairly strongly the other way, but what actually happened was that Hendy didn't. Hendy was a big man to sit up and put his presence in front of the meeting and say, "No. This is what we are going to do," but Eric actually changed it that day and voted against the bill in the upper house off his own bat, basically conned a couple of other National Party upper house members because they came into the chamber later and said, "Aren't we meant to be over here?" Eric said, "Oh, no. There's a late change. Come over here." He killed all that. That was the end of that keeping that WA Inc process respectable, because the end of the PICL process was really the collapse of that process, even though that was in Peter Dowding's time. It all sort of hung around until that time. Eric Charlton played a significant part in that,

and that was just his nose and his nous that did that, and his ability to be an individual, to act on his own instinct. I do not think he has ever got a great deal of credit for that.

JF How did that play out afterwards between him and Hendy?

TRENORDEN Furious. Hendy and Brian Burke were quite close friends and used to meet fairly regularly. I do not say that is any terrible thing, because personally if Brian Burke came up to me right now and said, "Max, I want to talk to you," I would talk to him, because there is nothing Brian Burke can do to me to make me do anything at all. What people don't understand is Brian Burke's control is on preselection. If he does not control your preselection, he doesn't control you. That is the problem they have in the Labor Party. Because he controls so many elements in the union movement, he actually controls quite a few members' preselection. If you control the preselection, you control them. It is not about Brian Burke himself being corrupt. I think as Premier there is no question he was corrupt, but the question is how members conduct themselves in the climate. I am not critical that Hendy used to meet with Brian Burke regularly, but there was good communication between the Premier Brian Burke and Hendy. We used to see a fair bit of that in the party room. Eric used to oppose quite a bit of that quite strongly as well, not because of any pure political process—just personal instinct on Eric's part. There was some anti-Liberal feeling, I guess particularly from Hendy, who went through that 1986 period and it was pretty intense personally against him, but not a lot. The argument was always more about how do we actually achieve for people. As I said, Hendy becoming Deputy Premier and Eric and Monty and Bob and other people taking roles was important at the time, because if you look at the roads that Eric Charlton built and the infrastructure that Eric Charlton put it, he would not have done that without the control, but at the same time it is the roads he didn't do that lost it for us, if that makes sense, or the things that Monty didn't do as against what he did do, because we were then seen very close to the Liberal Party, One Nation and through.

But going back to Brian Burke, we did after a while start to realise because it was just a constant stream of prominent Western Australians coming to us and saying that these things were happening, but also to a lesser degree people like Larry Graham, who was the member for Pilbara, who I have always been a close friend to, but to Larry's credit, and a couple of others, they'd wander across to us and say, "You're right. You don't know how right you are" because we didn't know how right we were.

Some people in the ALP were coming across saying, "You should keep that argument up because you are very close to the mark." That is something the public probably don't understand about politicians, and that still happens down there today. Some of that might be animosity towards ministers, it might be animosity towards Premiers, but in the end that was a good thing.

JF In the end it is good sense, I suppose.

TRENORDEN Yes, because they would come to you and say, "Just keep on with that argument. Even I could see you wavering in your debate. Just go and do some more research. You will find that you are right." That focuses you and allows you to do things. Of course, those people involved in the ALP at the time weren't demons; they weren't evil people; they were just people caught near the circumstances. I would suggest to some degree Brian Burke was the same. He used to speak a lot about his father. Tom, I think his father was. I must admit before I got here I was not conscious of Tom Burke, but after having listened to Brian Burke as Premier speak from the Premier's chair, I learnt fairly quickly that his father was a significant ALP member, kicked out of the ALP at a conference in Tasmania, and that was a blight on the Burke family as far as Brian Burke was concerned. I am certain it played a significant role in his attitude to how things should happen. I am sure he felt great pain for his father. Terry Burke, who was in here at the same time, was a totally different individual, but Brian was a driven man and a very clever speaker, very clever at the political process, reading the times. Also, when I first got here, you would sit down on occasions and from the opposition you would see Brian Burke or one of the ministers write a note and it would be passed down the front bench and up to the Speaker, Mike Barnett. We would then get a ruling that had just been written two or three minutes before. It was just appalling process. To say "appalling"; it was just a disgusting process. Mike Barnett, after the next election, was Speaker again and he was a good Speaker. In the end I had a lot of time for Mike Barnett's capacity in the chair, but when he was first there, and a part of that emotion of Brian Burke busting through and, if you can remember, "This man is going to be Prime Minister of Australia at some stage. This man is a saint of some sort" and the Catholic mafia that people like to talk about was definitely—everywhere you looked you saw Catholic mafia. There was just a whole movement happening in the state, and he wasn't going to let Parliament, or even the people of Western Australia, get in the road of that, so he designed mechanisms to get it out of Parliament and to have people like Laurie Connell and Bond and Holmes a Court and Potter—a range of individuals—who were

actually doing his will. He was having breakfast meetings at his house or at Laurie Connell's house basically every day with a range of those people, and that was actually cabinet. For all functional purposes that was cabinet. Cabinet was just doing his will, even though he had very strong individuals.

Just something else I probably should say there that was fairly negative. One day I was sitting beside Hendy having a discussion with him on whatever the issue was and Brian Burke came over and sat beside us on the opposition benches. Hendy said to him, "Brian, you are going to have to watch yourself because you have all this talent on the backbench and one of them is going to tip you out." I will keep it pretty close to what he actually said. He said, "Well, I'll always beat him because he can't keep his dick in his pants. This bloke's an alcoholic. This bloke's a gambler" and he ran through the process.

JF All his cabinet members.

TRENORDEN Senior cabinet members. He was actually telling Hendy and I. That was the control method. He knew his people, but those people were in fact quite talented ministers and quite a few of those were, in the 22 years that I have been here, people who achieved, but like all human beings, like Brian Burke himself, we had that edge, but he used that edge to keep those people in line. We did not see a lot of revolt against Brian Burke from people—strong people like Julian Grill or Bob Pearce or whichever one you wanted to go to. He had five or six or seven really strong, performing ministers who could hold their own, even David Parker. I can remember David Parker putting in an article in the *Independent*, if that was the newspaper that ran for a short period of time, saying that he was Minister for Resources and Treasurer and there was nowhere near enough to do and he was bored because he didn't have enough to occupy his time. That was the arrogance of that moment. We now know in hindsight that David Parker was a disaster, but I am sure David Parker didn't set out to be a disaster. It was just a mood that probably came—almost certainly came—with Brian Burke, and that emotion that he was going to move things and he wasn't going to wait around for the public service or Parliament or anything else to catch up with him; he was just going to take it and go. When he had these lieutenants, like Bond, Laurie Potter and all these sorts of people, they were great soldiers to him, but what they did not understand in the end is they were running him when he thought he was running them. We all know that is how the game actually played out. In the end they were running him when he thought

he was running them. It was a sad time actually, but we have not learnt the lessons from those times. We just passed a new Auditor General's bill last year— independence of the Auditor General. The Auditor General, after the passage of that bill, is not independent here; he is paid by the executive, he is funded by the executive still, and you would think in any strong democracy you would make your Auditor General independent. He wasn't dependent on the executive for his or her own salary or particularly the budget of audit. When, I think his name was Neville Smith, was an acting Auditor General back in the time of—if my memory is right— Peter Dowding or it may have been Carmen Lawrence, he was appointed acting Auditor General, so he went and saw cabinet and said, "I just want to give you a bit of a lowdown on things I want to do this year." He left cabinet and they cut his budget by half a million because they just didn't like what he was going to do. That is relatively recent history. It is now, say, 18 years old or whatever it is, but still in terms of this it is relatively recent, but right now it could happen today. Cabinet could just say to the Auditor General—even not cutting his budget—just saying, "Your budget will stay as it is," because the Auditor General may come in and say, "I want to do a particular bit that is going to cost \$400,000." "No, you can't have it."

JF So you are really arguing that they ought to have the independence that the judiciary has.

TRENORDEN Yes, the parliamentary officers must have. If the Ombudsman, the Auditor General, the one we haven't got, which we got rid of during the COG process, that is the commissioner of public service—I just don't believe. COG recommended we didn't have that, but we don't have leadership in the public service, but we should have a position of leadership in the public service who is also independent of the executive, otherwise it is a little bit of that counterbalance we all talked about, removed. Really, now it is the goodwill of the cabinet and the goodwill of the ministers of cabinet to keep those things working, and I would not argue with anyone, 99 per cent of the time that goodwill will work, but it is the one per cent when Brian Burke turns up that matters. That is why we build this elaborate process for that one occasion when it turns up. Unfortunate for me, I saw it. There's still a lot of denial in the ALP about the Brian Burke days. Most ALP members will tell me that he was a wonderful Premier and he actually did nothing wrong, whereas in fact I just can't see how people can hold that view. Even if you had loyalty to Brian Burke personally, the whole process of democracy was trashed in that period. The Commission on Government, which I sat on the parliamentary side of that for many years, did try to

deal with a lot of those issues and there has been a lot of change, but I am not sure that change has been good. For example, I think now, and a really important process, is Margaret Thatcher brought into the UK a revised public service, which was based on looking after the government of the day. The Australian government saw that back in the Hawke years and quickly took the same process up. Brian Burke saw it and quickly took up the same process. So we actually now don't have a public service. We have an administration that does the function of the executive. It is hard to see any public service component and what people would expect the public service to be. If you go and see anyone from the middle range of the public service up, you know you don't get on in the Western Australian public service unless you do the bidding of the minister of the day. The minister is never going to come into you and say, "This is what you've got to do, Max." The minister says, "This is where we want to go." The system knows if you are not going in that direction, you are not going to get a promotion or whatever in the public service. The senior people are on a three or five-year contract. If you don't do the bidding of the government during that period, your contract is not extended. In that balance between Auditor General, Ombudsman and, I would say, the public service is now absent, and one of the desperate things that needs to happen is a leadership component put back in there. The balance is out of kilter in this state. The chances of another Brian Burke or something like that occurring are quite significant and they are quite strong. It is a very small Parliament. A charismatic person like Brian Burke, a man who has considerable skills, arrives, gets to the head of either the Liberal Party or the Labor Party, it could all be repeated.

JF A terrible thought.

TRENORDEN I strongly feel that. I often debate that in the house. There is a range of issues which I talk around, but that is from watching Brian Burke under the process. It is people like, as I say, Julian Grill personally delivering cheques up and down the Terrace—a just amazing thing to happen. Also these very competent ministers prepared to go along with this whole movement that Brian Burke was.

JF Those cheques were coming out of the leader's fund, were they?

TRENORDEN No, those cheques were coming out of SGIO, SGIC or the state superannuation board or some of the corporations that he had set up. I can't remember; they were famous corporations at the time. I am just trying to think—

almost in mind—but there were several corporations that he set up that were dealing in state matters, so whoever had a bit of balance on the day, the money was just shuffled around. The three keys ones were the superannuation board, SGIC and SGIO, because money was coming into those corporations obviously on an hourly basis. They would just gather up any surplus, if you can call it a surplus, but positive cash in there, and take it down to somewhere else, particular Rothwells, where the money was needed. I am not too sure, but if you don't have an independent Auditor General and those types of people, then those sorts of circumstances can arise again. The reality is, and it is for all Australian politics, not just here, that we in Australia don't fund oppositions, so oppositions are usually seen in very poor light, but part of the reason why oppositions are seen in poor light is that there are no resources. There is very little capacity to really probe government. The Parliament itself these days does not offer much opportunity, because anyone who watches question time for a short period of time, even in the federal scene . . . I keep on telling new members they need to understand it is actually question time not answer time, so questions get asked but the answer that comes back is rarely addressed to the question. A lot of those processes about obtaining information are very difficult for the opposition.

One of the other clear factors that I learnt back then, and I have been desperately and unsuccessfully till now to try to change, is that as we have gone through cash accounting through to accrual accounting and now to international standards in accountancy, the way the books of the state are put together has changed significantly. The Western Australian budget papers are world class and have clarity for professors at the upper end of the accountancy world, like the big four operators, but for the moderate person they are unreadable. For the individual, if you were a CEO of a Western Australian company or CEO of a local government or a member of Parliament or the like, you can't read the budget papers and find out what is happening. You can find out that the state's in good stead in terms of cash and those sorts of processes, but you really don't by reading the budget papers understand what is happening to Western Power, what is happening to the water authority, what is happening to the health department or what is happening to the education department, because you get a global picture and not a micro picture, but politicians and administrators actually need a micro picture. They need to understand this particular program which is \$1 million, which has been set up to do whatever it is. Is it actually working? When you read the budget papers you can't find that out. The budget debates in Parliament and the estimates process in Parliament have fallen

away significantly because no-one can comprehend the accounts of the state. I think that should be changed. I don't think that means you get rid of the quality of the documentation in terms of professionalism that has to happen, but there should be a secondary process that breaks that down to a more digestible process, so if someone in the industry wants to know what Western Power are doing and whether what they are going to do will be compatible and where is all the money in Western Power going to go, you can't find that out. Politicians can't find that out. Certainly, the minister is never going to tell you. That is part of the difficulty. When you ask questions in opposition, it doesn't mean the other side must answer it; in fact, our system says they don't have to answer it. The process of making it more accountable is getting quite blurred. I would like to see that change. That is one of the reasons I have been hanging in there as a member, but I think I am going to be unsuccessful in that process.

END OF TAPE FIVE SIDE B

TAPE SIX SIDE A

This is tape six, side A, in interviews with Max Trenorden, MLA, this one being recorded on 26 March 2008 with interviewer John Ferrell at Parliament House in WA.

JF Max, carrying on our discussion about the period that you were in opposition from '86 to '93, we covered pretty fully last week, I think, the WA Inc issue. But I wanted to start with whether there might be some problem in talking about issues other than the WA Inc matters that concerned you at the time that you were first in Parliament.

TRENORDEN There's two issues and we did talk about one of them briefly last time. Just yesterday my accountant happened to be in my office doing my tax return. I arrived back mid-afternoon and he'd been there all day. He'd had a sandwich at lunchtime and for some unknown reason he opened a section of *Hansard* of '86 and started reading it. He picked up an area where I'd been questioning one of the WA Inc activities and he just pointed out, having read most of it, that we'd got no answers. That's the process that shocks new members most that even though you try in opposition to get answers, there's no compulsion in our system for people to give you answers. That's getting worse now. When I first got elected, ministers just wouldn't give you answers and it's the same the other side. I am not saying it was any better when we were in government. But now also the public service won't give you answers (I think that's a worrying trend) even basic answers, just like "What did it cost?", "What were the processes?" and "What were the tender prices?", what I consider reasonable questions. You were told then and told now that they are private transactions of government and basically secret. In places like California, commercial in-confidence is not allowed. In California if you're dealing with the state, if you're not prepared to have an open process, you don't deal with the state. I just don't understand why we don't have it here. For such a small state with such a small economy it would be very useful if the players in our political process here would be more open. Their political risk in terms of reputation but also survival are very small and the chances of ministers going down for those reasons are quite slim. It has become a procedural process. The other thing that struck me during the Bill Hassell times was just how starved oppositions are. That's another feature of Australian politics. American, Canadian, many of the European parliaments resource opposition a lot better than we do. You'll even notice with Kevin Rudd great complaints about being starved in opposition but as soon as they get there they make sure that the

other side's starved. That's a part of Australian politics, but I think it's an ordinary part of Australian politics. The cost of reasonably resourcing the opposition is quite small. I think the benefit to the Australian taxpayer or to the Western Australian taxpayer is quite large if you have a well-resourced opposition.

The other thing is the value of committees. It became pretty clear to me pretty early that members of Parliament are prepared to do good work on committees. It varies. I think the current Parliament is not going so well in committees. But over the 22 years now that I have been here, there's been periods where committee work has shone pretty brightly and committees have done some fairly outstanding work. I am not saying some good work hasn't been done here in this Parliament either. I think the Esperance port example is an example of five members who were just genuinely concerned about Esperance and did their level best to write a good report. I think committee work is much underrated by the public. In fact, I think if the public knew more about our committee processes and accessed them more, that would add little bit extra to our democratic process.

JF What about bills that are memorable. You briefly referred a few interviews ago to the abortion bill that went through. Are there any matters that were akin to that that were of some moment to you at the time?

TRENORDEN Well, there's been fairly substantial bills go through in my time. But without any doubt the one of great moment was the abortion bill because it just changed the teams in the Parliament. You had Labor and Liberal members getting close together for one side or the other. I had a personal friend and he was calling me a murderer. So it was a fairly significant bill in those times. But also the Kierath bills were important because that was the first time I've ever seen hate in my life, just raw hatred. I walked out one day at the end of those bills with Hilda Turnbull and Katie Hodson-Thomas behind me and Ross Ainsworth behind them into the members' car park. There was quite a crowd in the members' car park. I was getting sort of punched on the arm and spat at and those sort of things. But at the end of the process, this big man with a million tattoos was coming at me with just hate in his eyes. And I could see I was in a lot of strife. When he was about a metre away, this very large police officer I just happened to know grabbed him by the collar and hauled backwards. But that man had just pure hatred on his face. I am sure all in his mind was to damage me. I would suspect that he wouldn't have a clue who I was either.

JF That would have been in the Richard Court government era.

TRENORDEN Yes.

JF So we are jumping ahead.

TRENORDEN That's right. That's the second most prominent bill that I saw. There were a lot of bills that went through that made a significant amount of difference to the operation of the [unclear] but there was none in the '80s period that I recall that was of huge moment. Nothing jumps straight to my mind anyhow.

JF No. Well at that time you began being a party spokesman, I believe, for some issues—I think labour and productivity, racing and gaming, consumer affairs, regional development. How did that work out in practice? What did that mean if you were their spokesman? What did you have to do?

TRENORDEN I just spent time researching those processes, getting to know the people in those industries. As a result of that, racing and gaming, for example, that has remained with me all the time. I regularly get approached. In fact Friday morning I'm going out with one of the people from racing and gaming WA to look at the York racetrack. They just called me out of the blue. I know they normally wouldn't do that with a member of Parliament, but I have built that respect with them over a lot of years, that I am fair with them and I think I give them a value judgement so they are prepared to get me involved at the beginning of the process, which is very useful. Things like regional development has always been a passion of mine and I've spent a lot of time looking at regional development. I can't say that I've seen any, I mean really seen any.

JF It's been going the opposite way in a way in WA, hasn't it?

TRENORDEN Yes. It's a very hard argument to win. The pencil sharpeners, the bureaucrats, really are making the process . . . they're loading the system against regional development. These days even if they just got off people's backs it would happen faster than it currently is. Currently they just say user-pays, so if you need to put a powerline in or a waterline in, you have to pay tens of thousands of dollars, but if you're [in] the metropolitan area it's free—well, virtually free. So where do they go? That's been the process but people just don't think that activities are basically

subsidised in the metropolitan area and penalised in the country areas. There is a little bit of regional development happening, but not a lot. Much more is happening in the last few years in my electorate because my own electorate is becoming urbanised, more than a government decision about balancing population, balancing resources. There's communities out there that have schools half fallen, communities that could take another 2 000 or 3 000 people without any infrastructure costs, but the system doesn't even pretend to think about that anymore.

JF Do you recall any particular incidents or things related to your party spokesman portfolios that involved you at the time?

TRENORDEN At the time the racing industry was imploding and right through that period there were courses in trotting and racing being closed fairly regularly. There were pretty dramatic moments. My own electorate with the York, Toodyay and Northam race clubs, each of them had periods where they were . . . either York was closed for a period, so there were some pretty dramatic moments, really. And that's just not based on the race horsing industry. The Avon area has a very sizeable industry in feeding horses. We have an interest in horses full stop because of chaff, hay, oats and those sort of . . . pretty sizeable industry. I really have a lot of attention to it through those areas. Many of those years were quite dramatic. [There were] very strong debates about the provincial clubs or the Perth clubs at times taking unfair slices out of the process. And in those days that's what happened. Because the principal clubs controlled racing . . . Perth [was] – now Perth Racing – controlled gallops and Gloucester Park controlled trots. Often the country clubs were donating about 50 per cent of their earnings to go into those key places because those major clubs could do it. With the stroke of pencil they could just take the money. Places like Northam were often putting up half their profits to go back into the system. They were pretty bitter and angry fights, but unfortunately the racing industry's always been driven by vested interests more than an industry. Even now I would argue there's still a big slice of strong individuals wanting particular outcomes and saying they deserve certain benefits and the industry tends to go their way instead of looking upon it as an industry where everyone participates in it.

JF I think you told me a long time ago that you hadn't even ridden a horse

TRENORDEN Still haven't!

JF Is horse racing a personal interest of yours or was it before you became a shadow spokesman for that?

TRENORDEN It is now, but it wasn't when I started, so I've taken an interest in it. These days I know a lot of people who've got horses. Last night I went to the Northam trots. My secretary's husband's got a horse. I went to see that and it ran second. It was good to see them all happy and jumping up and down and excited. Yes, I've developed a definite interest in horseracing, trotting and to some degree dogs. I was very impressed with the Northam people who worked supremely hard to get the Northam greyhound track going. That was just a massive effort. And I was of as much support to them as I could be. Even now the voluntary effort that goes into keeping that going is quite impressive. I've always tried to support other sports like football and netball and so forth because I think they're the core of country living, particularly for anyone under 35 years of age it's the major social pastime. I don't think racing and trotting necessarily is that, but it is to a portion of the community. Horses in the Avon have always been popular, whether it's for racing or for showjumping or carting or whatever. In fact, my electorate is just full of horses.

JF Yes. As far as the party spokesman portfolios are concerned did you have any choice in what you were spokesman for or was that thrust upon you?

TRENORDEN Well some of it was, but I was more business orientated than most of my colleagues so things like industrial relations were quite important. When Graham Kierath was the minister for industrial relations I did a survey for him on workers' compensation because I knew the workers' compensation system quite well. I did have an IR interest because I'd employed people; I'd been in that process and do have a belief about it. The sad thing I think about IR is that the big runs it, because in a community like Northam or any other country town, the really good thing about those towns is the rich and the poor all play golf together, all play bowls together, all go to church together. So there isn't that division between boss and employee. Even if you're a timid employee, you can still approach your boss and say, "I'd like to go and watch my kid play sport on Friday, can I do that?" Far easier than many large organisations. So industrial relations in the regions are a different matter than in Perth.

JF Yes. Now thinking about coming to know Parliament House, you will have known a whole lot of the non-political staff —

TRENORDEN Oh, yes.

JF People like Clerks, controllers, Hansard people, library people. Can you just reminisce for a few moments about some of the characters that you've know amongst the staff and how they make a difference for politicians?

TRENORDEN There's been too numerous to count characters and staff who've played a significant role in Parliament, let alone just being staff members. Some current staff members are just constantly happy and just people who just never alter that they do actually affect the mood of what happens in the chamber. There'd be some half a dozen or more here currently who are just like that. They are truly apolitical. There's an occasional one that it's not, but in general they're truly apolitical. And they do actually make the place work. In terms of the senior people, the Chief Clerk here has been here nearly all the time I have. I saw a little bit of the previous one. I am just trying to think who the deputy was. What was Doug's surname? You will have to do a bit of research to find that out. He was here for a long time. He was a very reliable character. I am just trying to think if anyone stood out of that process. I had an unusual situation where two people in the dining room staff bought a hotel in my electorate in Green Hills, which had been shut for quite a few years. They opened it up and made it quite successful. It was, I think, primarily because they were homosexual. They had that skill that often goes with them. They had a real flare for entertaining and a real flare for good food and hospitality. It was interesting that they came from Parliament House and went out there. Unfortunately one of them got very ill and they had to sell it. That was of note to me because that hotel had been shut for probably 10 years. To pick up a building that had been closed that long, probably spend \$100 000 on it and make it a successful business was a quite an achievement. I'm just wondering who would I talk about. I think the Presiding Officers play a big role. For the whole time I was there we had the President of the world, Clive Griffiths, in the Council. I don't know how many years he was President, but many, many years. And then we've had our range of Speakers, which I started to speak about a little bit last time. The Speakers of my time were Mike Barnett, who started bad and finished very well. I think a lot of those Speakers have made an impression but I have to give credit to the last couple to having improved Parliament House. It's off out of sight.

JF Who are you talking about in particular?

TRENORDEN Fred Riebeling and George Strickland in this side. So George Strickland first and then Fred Riebeling. They've been able to get out of Richard Court and now Gallop and Carpenter monies to spend on this place. Then John Cowdell, who I had a lot of time for, as President immediately prior to Nick Griffiths. They've also been able to be a part of the process where they've extracted a fair bit of money. And this, you wouldn't say it's a grand old building, but it's still a fine heritage building in Western Australia. [It] has had quite a few millions spent on it over the last five years, which it desperately needed. So I've seen that happen and there's been a whole big reluctance to put reasonable facilities in here. The public often go berserk on occasions. When we put new lights into the chamber 10 years ago, it was \$700 000, off memory. They weren't very good lights, either. But it was front page of *The West* and so forth. I just wonder about the mentality of the public for doing that. I think there's 170 people work here. Pollies come and go. There's 170 work here every day and they are the ones who really need the conditions and so forth. But even now, every parliamentarian other than me (we won't talk about me; I've got a room to myself) but most parliamentarians here have two people to a room, which is really unacceptable when a lot of your time is spent meeting people and it's hard to get privacy. That's really a silly thing in a Parliament House, so it desperately needs to be fixed up. But your original question was characters. Well, I wouldn't like to start running through too many staff. I've personally had a fantastic relationship with the staff. Over the years there's really been quite remarkable and excellent people who've made this place go very, very well. I don't think I want to highlight anyone. There would be at least 20 to 30 people who I think have been outstanding in their service to the Parliament.

JF Good. What about . . . you referred to Parliament House as a workplace and not really being terribly satisfactory. What was the state of affairs when you first came in contrasted with later?

TRENORDEN There was a period that someone had a look at the ceiling of the Assembly a number of years ago, maybe 10 years ago, and it was falling down. Someone did an inspection here to put a power point in and told the staff (this would be the same period) that he was amazed that Parliament House hadn't burnt down with the state of the wiring. There was just no maintenance spent on Parliament House for many years. And as I say, in the last say seven or eight years there's been a slow pick up in the pace of the renovations here and it's been outstanding. Just up

the corridor from me now a brand new library, which is a beautiful library. Only recently put in place. The Aboriginal Room on the other side, which was the old library, now a substantial room in the Parliament. It's good use. Liz Constable heads a committee that buys Aboriginal art and puts it in there and I think it's a credit to the place. We just refurbished our chamber of new seating. The old seating, it wasn't highly uncomfortable, it wasn't very satisfactory either and the new seating not only is the seating better, but you can hear the operations of the parliament far better. When Andrew Mensaros, who was a very competent politician sitting in front of me for most of most of my years on the backbench, I didn't understand a word he said. He was facing the Speaker, his back to me. Just could never hear him. And often in the chamber there were many places in the chamber where people battled to hear normal debate, not screaming and carrying on that occasionally occurs. So the aspect of the chamber has improved out of sight. I would suggest the professionalism of the immediate staff in the chamber has improved, but I think in recent years that's under a severe challenge. The CCC and the activities of some of our members has put that under significant pressure. The role of Peter McHugh, the chief Clerk here, I think that role has changed in the last couple of years. And Laurie Marquet, we just couldn't let things go. I was as shocked as anyone to hear that Laurie Marquet had done what he'd done. Mrs Rayner, how she got off those charges, is beyond my belief. Her being second in charge of the ACC and warning him that he's under investigation and not get prosecuted for it, I think that's a significant moment in this Parliament. Laurie Marquet, just a very dominant personality, very competent in his advice, in the end was a criminal. You know, major shock for the chamber. But what that has flowed on is those two people doing the role now, Peter McHugh here and the person in the Council, there was clear to everyone at one stage that if you had a problem you went to the Clerk and discussed it. Now you can't do that because the Clerk is honour bound to pass that on. And I think that's a serious deficiency in the chamber right now, because if you're a member of Parliament, you may have only been here a few months or even a year or two, you've got a dilemma, who do you discuss it with? There was a time you went to the Clerk, but if you go the Clerk now and say something to the Clerk and the Clerk believes that's either criminal or could be criminal in the end or could affect the running of the chamber or could affect a raft of laws, he must immediately report you. If a person went into the chamber unsure about what they should be doing (and it happens more than people think it would happen) there's no place for that person to get advice. I would say in many cases they're getting their advice from their colleagues and many of their colleagues wouldn't have a clue of how this place runs let alone should be giving their

colleagues advice on how to handle things. So there's been worrying changes in the last couple of years and I'd say the house right now is in a fair degree of turmoil.

JF Coming back then over the time that you were there, obviously the electorate is all-important in that you're representing them. Some of the things you've said have probably shown this, but what sort of deliberate policy did you have as regards looking after your electorate?

TRENORDEN Well I was one of the handful of polities for a long while who used to ask my electorate questions. I'd mail out a question saying, "How do you want me to vote on these issues?" That went really well for some years, but in the end it went bad or turned sour because people would get back in touch with me and say they want to research [unclear] processes. In those days one person in the office, it was impossible to keep up with that. It was just physically impossible. Even now with two positions in an electorate office, it still would have been close to impossible to keep up with it. So I thought that was a very useful thing I'd do. I'd send out to private individuals bills coming up. I'd send out to Chamber and Commerce movements bills on industry keeping up, which is a much easier thing to do because there's less of them and more precise answer because you're only talking about two or three chambers of commerce. When private individuals have interests in the environment and a whole raft of issues and have a passionate interest in it, I found that just too hard to resource. I'd still like to be doing that. But I used to get myself abused saying I didn't respond and so forth. Well the truth is in many cases I didn't respond because I didn't have the capacity to respond.

JF You've always had an electorate office, have you?

TRENORDEN Yes. It's always been in Northam. I used to run an electorate office in Pingelly for a period of time, but again, I did that for probably a couple of years but again you're time is too fragmented to do that. That meant I had to be at Pingelly one day every fortnight. When I first started the process I thought that was good and there's nothing wrong with being in Pingelly one day per fortnight. But the pressures in the electorate where they pop up where there's problems and you find that something will happen at a particular community where you need to go to regularly for some time to try to help them resolve that and other communities will have less troubles and you don't need to go there as much. For a country member, that's a dilemma. So as you get more experienced and you understand more and more

what's happening not only in the electorate but also in the affect of law on the electorate, you actually get busier. In fact, considerably busier, because you actually see what's happening and you can see where you get a result. When you're a new member it's more about taking information in. For the first few years you just absorb information and then try to seek to get an answer for it. But once you learn the ropes, you can actually, like many things in life, see it coming and try to intercede with it and you also know what you can do and often what you can't do.

JF Just very briefly, how active were you in the lay party in the time you were there in Parliament?

TRENORDEN Very active. I took a high interest. Once I nominated back in '83 from that time on, not so much between '83 and '86, I did attend conferences and those things, but after '86 to currently I've been extremely active in the lay party.

END OF TAPE SIX SIDE A

TAPE SIX SIDE B

JF This is tape 6, interviews with Max Trenorden, MLA, side B. Max, to come back now to your observation of other people within the house in that earlier period, I wonder if you could spend a little bit of time talking about your impressions of Peter Dowding as a follow-up leader to Brian Burke?

TRENORDEN I think he was the most capable ALP leader I've seen, but had this flaw of an uncontrollable temper. He's of high intellect without question. I think he could have been a successful ALP leader but he actually took on all the burdens of Brian Burke and clearly in the end he was a sacrifice to the ALP to move on to Carmen Lawrence when things of the WA Inc ilk was building up and Carmen Lawrence, as we all know, broke it by having the royal commission part way through her term. But Peter Dowding was a very competent person, just had a side to him of anger which I think turned a lot of his colleagues against him. When he was unimpressed with someone, he told them in very colourful language and I think over a period of time he burnt enough people out that when they needed a scapegoat, he was the one. My memory of it was he was in Europe somewhere and they decided to get rid of him and he hopped on an aeroplane, but by the time he got here to defend himself it was all over. So we never saw the best of Peter Dowding, but the campaign he ran (I've got a distinct memory of him being on a mountain bike with short-sleeved shirts and dressed) a very clever campaign. He won that election after Brian Burke; a very competent Premier. I think he will go to his grave wondering what he could have been like if he had been a Premier in another time.

JF Did you have any personal associations with him that come to mind?

TRENORDEN He and I had spirited discussions across the chamber. I can remember debating one day with Peter Dowding, when I said to him, "In all due respect," and he said, "Usually that's said when there's no respect!" and I said, "If that's the case, let's keep going", because he was just an aggressive individual and wore his heart on his sleeve. I actually liked Peter Dowding, I see him from time to time, I always stop and have a chat to him. But I do that, I must admit, with old colleagues because I actually believe you shouldn't hold animosities, you shouldn't hold anger. He was aggressive; never disliked him though. I often wondered about his capabilities when he'd go pretty feral in the chamber, but he used to get pretty feral anywhere. I had a lot of time for Peter Dowding.

JF What about Carmen Lawrence?

TRENORDEN I was really impressed when she came on the scene. I thought that she was a leading light and, as we've already said in the previous tapes, I have no problems at all with authority in women. My mother was a capable woman so when other capable women turn up, it doesn't worry me in the slightest. Carmen Lawrence as a Minister for Education I thought was doing an outstanding job. But she went downhill very quickly. That Easton affair was . . . I just don't believe she recovered after that, even in the federal process, and she was in fact guilty. She knew that petition was there and as a lot of politicians do, tried to defend the indefensible. I think that not only damaged her reputation, it actually damaged her personally. That's a private view, but that's my view of it. I think from that day on, from the Sheila or Sheena Easton, or the Easton petition —

JF Penny Easton.

TRENORDEN Sorry, Penny Easton. That was a terrible moment and I think that damaged her. So she was going up sharply before that occasion; definitely a talented person. I think from that time on she had difficulty with the truth. She sacked two ministers at one stage, Ian Alexander and Frank Donovan, who went to the back bench and caused her a lot of pain. Frank Donovan was on the Public Accounts Committee with me and she had given Independents a budget of \$10 000 each and Frank spent his time working on issues to do with Carmen Lawrence and also with the Notre Dame affair, which was a big issue at the time. Frank believed that the ALP was a religion, he was just a fanatic ALP individual, but he just kept on calling her a liar. I think probably she did incline to take a position and just hold the ground, which some politicians do but I just think it's a difficult position to win. I think that cost her dearly. So two things—Penny Easton affair and her personal decisions to take positions and hold them even if it meant not being fully truthful about them—that cost her dearly.

JF You didn't have any personal dealings with her that are notable?

TRENORDEN I liked Carmen Lawrence, I have to say. Again, very infrequently I run into Carmen Lawrence and I speak to her. I think she did women in politics a lot of good outside of the things we are talking about, because she was obviously

competent and well liked. I used to have quite a bit to do with her. I guess again things may have been different for her if it hadn't have been for Brian Burke and WA Inc because she was the . . . her premiership died on that process. Things like the Midland yards select committee which she chaired which was a fiasco. She had a few things happen to her at that time which weren't useful for a successful political career and I guess she may have thought it was her job to try to hide the demons of WA Inc from the public. I had a lot to do with her during that period but that was a time . . . even though she went federal, she never rose above that time because I think she had done so much damage to herself.

JF Thanks. You were on the Public Accounts and Expenditure Committee for a long, long time.

TRENORDEN Yes.

JF And you started being on that within that period of opposition I believe.

TRENORDEN Yes.

JF Tell me about that early appointment of that committee and what it was doing then.

TRENORDEN Hendy Cowan put me on it, over my dead body. I complained bitterly about being put on the Public Accounts Committee. I was told by a few polities not to go on any committees but in the end that was the greatest favour Hendy ever did to me. I'm a salesperson by training and by nature. I keep on telling the world I like to do things 70 per cent. I like to find something which I think will work, I like to sell it and I leave it to someone who's a 100 per cent person to finish things off. But Public Accounts Committee taught me over those long years about how Parliament and government actually work. I spent many years, as you say (I think much longer than any other West Australian politician has) and I would argue that I understand the process better than anyone else in the current chamber, including Premiers and senior ministers, because I've spent many years with Auditor Generals, with CEOs. Many of the CEOs out there now I know well, not that they were CEOs in that time, but over the years in dealing with the public service, they've risen through the ranks. I like and respect nearly all of them. I could see why they do things and how they do things and why the Auditor General does what he does and what the drivers are

because I've sat and watched them and debated them for many, many years. The peak of my time I think in Parliament, definitely, was chairing the Public Accounts Committee and also the Australasian committee, which was in a rotational process so it wasn't any great election to get there. I was probably, even saying so myself, the most prominent person in public accounts in Australia for quite a few years. I'm even well known in places like Canada still, from my stances that I took on the Public Accounts Committee over public matters. Foreign auditor generals had long conversations with me about how I thought things should happen, not that I think that I changed anything, but I just helped in that process of debating out their methods against our methods and their weaknesses and strengths and our weaknesses and strengths and those sort of questions. So it's a time that I learnt a great deal from. There were some pretty prominent people. The staff members through that process were outstanding, and had the capacity to meet the personalities. When I first chaired the Public Accounts Committee, my first four years wasn't that flash, but my second four years was very good and that was because of the learning process. I tried to be too democratic in the first four years. The second four years I wasn't as democratic. But even so, the first four years we still did quite a few good things. But strong staff members, Andrew Young, who is now in the Victorian Parliament, one person in particular who was really solid; but Jill Pyvis—anyway, I could run through a range of people in the Public Accounts Committee who did fantastic service for West Australians, who West Australians would have never heard of. Hopefully they're all doing similar good work. With the parliamentarians, Larry Graham was a very strong supporter and debater about the public accounts process and the processes. He and I teamed up for the second term. He was my deputy and he had a lot to do with the success of the second four years because even though we were opposite sides of the Parliament and we often had heated debates, I can remember we finished a report in April and the process of examining the report, which every committee requires, line by line, was finished in October. Mainly that was Larry and I arguing over points. There were a few people who used to dot the i's and cross the t's, which was never my interest; my interest was the content. So those reports were never lightly put together, they were always strongly contested. I think many of them, in the years I was there, were quite outstanding. We were talking earlier about the racing industry. We did one into the TAB which I think, even though people don't talk about it very often, it actually set down some of the basic rules and which the industry then ran on, basically who owned the TAB, there was an argument it was put there by industry money or whether it was a government body. It was run under a statute, state money in fact, it was a government body. Some of those reports were excellent.

Those years certainly I got a very strong reputation during that, at the peak of the process. In the Richard Court years, there was a Global Dance process where as chair and a conservative, we brought the Premier before the Public Accounts Committee—the first time that had happened in 80-90 years. Richard Court was not happy and Hendy Cowan was not happy, but it didn't concern me that they were happy or unhappy. I believe there was a process that had to be gone through. In the end, Richard Court handled himself well and it didn't cost him politically, in my view. Though some might argue differently, in my view he conducted himself well on that committee and the process was a correct one. I wonder if there are too many chairmen in the future who will be game enough to pull a Premier before them. I had a situation where a crown solicitor came and saw me in this office and just said, "It doesn't matter" (this is during the Global Dance inquiry) it doesn't matter what you want in information, you're not going to get it; that's it." I said, "Well, that's interesting. I hope you'll be happy standing in front of the bar when I ask the Parliament to drag you in front of the bar." The next day we had the information. Committees are extremely powerful bodies, if they want to use it. I'd be the first one to agree that a power shouldn't be abused, but when committees believe they're doing the right thing, they should follow their instincts, where I think often now they don't. They were significant years for me. I think I did the West Australian public a lot of good in those years, I think I did the Parliament some good in those years. I had a fantastic working relationship with the Auditor General at the time, Des Pearson. I think he was an outstanding Auditor General. He was fiercely independent, even with me. Even though we were very, very friendly, he would always stand his ground where he needed to as an Auditor General. We didn't always agree, but in my time we used to sign annual agreements to protect the Auditor General just to let the system know—the Parliament know and the executive know—that if we thought there was anything untoward we would fight for the role of the Auditor General. I'm not sure that still happens; I'm pretty sure it doesn't still happen. But it was after, and I think I mentioned it earlier, where a time where an Auditor General had his budget cut and I was determined that while I was there, even though I don't think Auditor Generals should have unlimited budgets, it should be a very open process on how his budget is determined. I was concerned a lot about Public Accounts Committee but it was a fantastic time for me and a time I thought that I did my best service for the West Australian public.

JF Tell me some of the nitty-gritty of it. How often does the committee meet, what amount of time does it take out of your week, and that sort of thing?

TRENORDEN It's like all things, it's up to the group. When we were firing we met very often. We'd be meeting weekly or twice weekly. Most committees would meet probably 20 to 30 times; we were meeting 70 to 80 times a year because we had interesting issues, issues we had our teeth into, many of them not negative, many of them on the positive. Our members were keen to meet and keen to do the work, but it did take them away from their electorates. I think that's one thing that federal politicians don't get enough credit for. I think the Senate and the Assembly do do a lot of good committee work in the federal scene and members do spend a lot of time on committees which the constituency don't know. I just noticed in today's *West*, for example, Bill Heffernan has been making a lot of noise about water in the north and aquaculture. The new Labor Party minister is credited with a certain amount of knowledge and said, "We'll take notice of him because of his committee work, not because he is a Liberal Party member of Parliament but because of his proven committee work." I think that's a credit to him. I don't know the man, but to have a minister say that to him is of some note. I would hope that is the case here where members put many hours into committee work and don't get it recognised. I was the first chairman of the Public Accounts Committee who never became a minister because before me, the chairman of public accounts was the next step to become a minister, but one thing I can, I think, credit to myself is I broke that. I always argued that being chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, which is a premier committee of the state, should be an independent role. If you're using that role to become the next minister, then you're not doing your job. I would heavily argue that process. You should be annoying your executive as chairman of the Public Accounts Committee on a regular basis, in my view.

JF And the agenda for the committees' work, that's pretty well set by the audited accounts, is it?

TRENORDEN Any committee of the house must take a direction from the house, but outside of that you generate your own. So we'd spend a lot of time going through the budget and the budget papers and the Auditor General's reports, and just looking at individual members' concerns. I'd ask regularly, "Is there anything that members want to look at?" and then we'd debate the merit of that. We wouldn't just instantly take people up. We would debate the merit of what the person was talking about, as inquiries arose. I constituted a process where we had a long-term inquiry, where we'd be looking at something over a year, we'd have one or two short-term inquiries which

were maybe three or four months, and then we'd have a range of one-meeting inquiries. The Auditor General would say a particular agency had messed up on a particular issue and we'd pull them in. I have had several public servants say to me that they've respected me but didn't like me in my role in public accounts. But again I think it's a serious role when you bring a CEO in and say, "The Auditor General says you've messed up. How did you do that? You've done it. What are you going to do to fix it? We'll be watching you. In six months' time we're going to want to know what you've done about that." Many of the CEOs were very unhappy at that process because it was in the public, it was in the paper. But nevertheless I think it's a very healthy process in administration for those administrators to know that not only is the minister watching, who has got another reason for watching and that's his own backside or her own backside, but a body like the Public Accounts Committee saying, "We're watching you." A very successful process, run well.

JF Yes. Now also in that period, or after '89, you were on a Joint Select Committee on Parole I believe?

TRENORDEN Yes. That was one of my early experiences of committee work and it was before I actually got on the Public Accounts Committee. I just can't quite remember who chaired it. An ALP upper house member, I think, chaired it. One of the Labor Party members moved a motion for Cheryl Edwardes, who was a Liberal Party member, not to be on the committee. We said, "Why? Why shouldn't she be on the committee?" This person said, "Because the minister doesn't want her there," which was, in my view, one of the early times when I realised executive works for the Parliament. The minister should have no role, nil role, in who is on a committee. It should be the Parliament deciding who should be on committees and the fact the minister didn't like a member of the committee should be of no note at all. But to one of the ALP members it was an important matter that the minister didn't want her on it, because she was capable basically. So I learnt from that and in reality they could have voted her up, because there's always 3-2 in government side but there were more experienced ALP members there who knew the rules and said, "No, we shouldn't be proceeding with that." That was one of the early processes, but again that committee I learnt a lot about a process I had known almost nothing of and that's the sentencing, jailing, remanding, all of those questions, and it was a learning curve for me. I'm not sure it was a really successful committee because that was the committee where the recommendation that no-one should do less than six months jail came out of. But it was also the committee that got rid of a lot of the one-third,

one-third, one-third process. In those days it used to be if you got a nine-year period of jail, it would be three years in jail minimum, three years for good behaviour, three years parole basically. We did get rid of that, so that's a good thing. That was a recommended—even though it didn't happen immediately, but that filtered through the process. It was done away with. But I do still understand that good behaviour is an important process for people who are trying to run jails, because if you can reward good behaviour, obviously that's useful in administration. I think parole is a big question that we need to still debate because it's not administered. If parole and community work was actually better resourced, maybe it would work, but no government wants to resource them.

JF Another little thing to pick up from that period before 1993, you went to an international trip to Zimbabwe, I think it was.

TRENORDEN Yes. I went on a CPA trip, which was very interesting. Unfortunately I think I saw some of the things that we're now reading about in the paper daily. As I've said earlier (and I just read the notes this morning before you came) I was a person who read a lot about Africa so I wasn't ignorant of Africa. Reading history books doesn't mean you always get the absolute correct slant on life, but I had read a lot about Africa. Shaka Zulu was a particular favourite of mine, who was just a fascinating character. Equal in substance, I think, of Caesar and Napoleon. As a man living a tribal life and what he did there was just quite remarkable. But to go to Zimbabwe and say that the tribe or the historic nature of life in that part of the world had always been communists, I almost fell off the chair when I heard that, when they've had kings as long as you can remember and a serfdom-type process. Then also to get told that HIV and AIDS were unrelated—HIV was a disease and AIDS was a CIA-driven process to get rid of black people in Africa—being told to us by the health minister of Zimbabwe, I knew then that there were significant problems on the way. Speaking to two American nurses that we ran into at a hotel, where they were using the same needle up to 100 times, places had 60-70 per cent male infestation of HIV. The belief, and I'd read it before so I didn't doubt it, the belief that unless there's pain involved in healing, then it will be no good. So that came from their old traditional system; unless there was pain involved, you weren't going to get healed. Some very, very sad scenes. I think that was '90, around about, and you could see then that the country was in a fair bit of trouble.

JF Who were you on that trip with?

TRENORDEN It was actually taken by the Speaker, so it was a parliamentary exchange with Zimbabwe from here. I must admit the people in Zimbabwe were fantastic. There was a large number of us—I can't remember exactly the number. We toured extensively. One of the things I do remember is going to a dairy farm and we spoke to the young farmer there and he said, "I've got to get out of here. This place is going to rack and ruin. I need to fear for my children, I need to fear for my wife." We spoke to his father, who had retired, and he said, "No, no, no. I know my son is excited, but he's got it wrong." He said, "Zimbabwe needs our milk. Zimbabwe needs our experience. We've survived together for a long time, we can still survive together. It might be a little rough, but it will be all right." So we heard those two arguments in one house. We've seen actually what happened. It was a good learning experience but I just can't read about Zimbabwe now without feeling very passionate for the people there; terrible times.

JF Was that CPA trip just directly to Zimbabwe and back, or were you going elsewhere on the way?

TRENORDEN No. Well, we went to Zimbabwe and back, but we came back, a number of us, through the Seychelles, which is not the worst thing we ever did! A beautiful place. So we were able to spend a few days in the Seychelles. We did some minor things in the Seychelles in terms of looking at what they do there, but the Seychelles was 40-something thousand people and not much happening. So I can't say we learnt a great deal about the Seychelles other than it's a magnificent place. Beautiful beaches like we have here and the rainforest right down to the edge of the beach, so it's a beautiful clash; a lovely place. So we flew into Harare, went to the Seychelles, and came back. Recently—when I say "recently", my daughter got married in South Africa and I went back and went to Zambia and stayed on the Zambian side and crossed across the bridge. We took all day—it all took a long time. They just ripped us off for money and that was the whole process. We'd go to the beautiful Victoria Falls Hotel, which I'd been to on that previous trip, just a beautiful hotel—empty. Still fully staffed, but empty. Very sad to see those things.

JF Just briefly before we end this session, what about talking about the 1989 election? There had been some changes to the electoral boundaries, hadn't there? Did that affect you and how did you approach the election at the time?

TRENORDEN We approached the election with a fair bit of confidence because of the WA Inc times and so forth. But that was the election I was talking about that Peter Dowding led and he ran a very good campaign. But also tensions in the Liberal Party-National Party side was not useful. Off memory, I'd have to get it right, but I think right at the end there was an occasion where Bill Hassell made a speech down at Fremantle off the back of a truck about Brian Burke then refused to front the press, and Hendy Cowan got stuck into him about that. I can remember watching TV of Eric Charlton saying, "We've just lost the election." I think we did; I think the election was close up to that time. We were confident of winning the election at the time. Redistribution in those days happened every second election and it wasn't a substantial redistribution, even though my electorate changed a fair bit. I picked up some extra territory. But we approached that election with a fair bit of confidence and again, it was one that a good campaign beat a bad campaign I would suggest.

END OF TAPE SIX SIDE B

TAPE SEVEN SIDE A

This is tape seven, side A, in the series of interviews with Max Trenorden, MLA. This one is being recorded on the 2nd of April 2008 at Parliament House, Perth, the interviewer being John Ferrell.

JF Max, as the 1993 election approached, what was the state of the National Party? When you first came into Parliament, of course, the split was being healed, so what was the state of affairs this seven years or so later?

TRENORDEN We had lost a couple of upper house members along the way. There had been reforms to the upper house, which went from provinces to a proportional representation process, which slowly started to reduce our upper house component, but the lower house component remained strong and pretty much unchanged. It was an interesting time because it was clear that we were heading into government and it was clear that Labor couldn't win; even clear to Labor. Here in [19] '92 there was much . . . there was a lot of drinking and going on in terms of . . . not of being drunk sort of process, but people just having their farewells because the Labor Party was well aware that people would not be re-elected and they wouldn't be re-elected. Of course, as always, quite a few people not standing. It was a pretty heady time and of great relief after being elected in 1986 to actually see some sign of government.

JF Do you think the ills of the National Party were substantially healed?

TRENORDEN The good thing about the National Party through all of this period was even though we would have some strong debates, we were a close team in terms of we all were friendly to each other, even though I have said in the past I had some differences with Monty House and Hendy, but that didn't stop us from being friendly. I quite liked both of them. I had no personal problems with them. So the party room, even though it was robust, was united and also we did have a common cause, we were heading into government. For Hendy to be looking to be Deputy Premier and others looking to be ministers was a pretty exciting time.

JF Your role within the parliamentary party, was there any formality about what you did within the party?

TRENORDEN I was secretary at the time, but that is really of no consequence whatsoever. No, I had roles I had played from time to time. At that time I was just going into the Public Accounts Committee, as we talked about in the past; the chairmanship, that is. I was looking forward to that. There is probably a story that should be told about how I became chairman too, because in the carve-up after the election there was agreement to all positions down to committees and there was no agreement on committees. Richard Court and the Liberal Party decided that Phil Pandal would chair the Public Accounts Committee and Hendy Cowan decided . . . I obviously suggested I would like to do it too. So we had a meeting with the Liberal Party leadership, and Phil Pandal and I were there, and it was had out. It was unresolved, so when we went to the five-person committee, Phil Pandal put himself forward and I put myself forward, but the Labor Party supported me and I became the chairperson. That was a pretty hot moment at the time. He was a person I was always quite friendly with, Phil Pandal, but that's, I guess, the way politics goes. I felt sorry for Phil because at the time, coming into the election, he had worked hard in the area of environment and he fell out with the Liberal Party and, shortly after that, he became an Independent. It's one of those stories of the National Party that the Labor Party put me in as chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.

JF Well, now, the actual election itself, just briefly, what are your memories of the 1993 campaign?

TRENORDEN My memories of it were just the knowledge that we were going to win and the public telling us so as we went around. So I actually don't have any very strong memories of that campaign at all, because it was just one of those moments in history where it was clear what the outcome was going to be.

JF You weren't at all at any stage needing to be worried for your own seat.

TRENORDEN No. Earlier on there was . . . in later years, there were a couple of occasions when I had to fight hard for my seat. The first was obviously the first time I won it. The second time was a little bit later on when a naltrexone clinic was formed in Northam to help drug addicts and some of my community strongly opposed me and that process. That's another story that perhaps is worth telling. I didn't actually support the naltrexone clinic where it was going (I supported it to be in another

location) but a candidate stood and ran on that issue and got 11 per cent of the vote. But back in '93 it was pretty clear that a reasonable campaign would get me elected.

JF Of course when you came into government, or came into being a member of the coalition, and you had to deal with Richard Court, talk for a little while about how you found Richard and how you managed to work together.

TRENORDEN One thing I probably should say, prior to the '93 election, the National Party tried to shore up Barry MacKinnon and we were probably the cause of his demise, because I think once it became clear that we were attempting to do that, I think a few Liberals changed their view and Barry MacKinnon was voted out and Richard Court came in. Richard Court and Hendy Cowan were a good team as Premier and Deputy Premier, and I think history will show it that way. One of the things about Richard was that he was open as a Premier, comparatively to his father, soft, and Hendy was the hard man. There would be occasions in the party room, and I'm not sure that everyone was aware of this, but I was certainly aware of it, Richard Court would get a message for a telephone call, which is quite rare, and he would go outside the room and then Hendy would say, "Well, while the leader's not here. . ." and then get into people. Because of his great bulk and so forth, he would dress a few people down. Richard would come back in and on the meeting would go. So Richard always let people have their say and there were quite a few times when people railed against him for whatever the position was. And unlike his father, who I was never in the room with, but wouldn't tolerate this sort of process, Richard would. I think that is not a weakness at all. I thought Richard was a good Premier. Certainly Hendy was a good Deputy Premier. They made a good team and worked well together. In that eight years I don't recall a single National Party-Liberal Party rift. There were quite a few city-country rifts where National and Liberal country members would get on to a position as against the city, but as a party room we worked well. It was interesting to watch how it works too, because the difference between the party room in the conservative side and the Labor side is that in our meetings the cabinet weren't allowed to vote. So the cabinet had to win their positions by persuasion where, in the Labor Party, cabinet votes, so the majority basically rules. But in the joint party room with the coalition, a minister has to carry his day. The Premier can persuade but can't vote. The Deputy Premier can't vote. No cabinet members can vote. So there were quite a few occasions where positions were lost by ministers and they had to go away and come back and re-present something or just understand it wouldn't be carried. I thought that was a pretty good system that allowed

backbenchers to have a say. It got the system a little bit closer to the grassroots, so if members were doing the right thing and understood what the constituency was concerned about, they had an opportunity to change it in the party room.

JF This is the joint party meeting?

TRENORDEN Yes, the joint party meeting. What would happen is the National Party would meet separately and the Liberal Party would meet separately for a short period of time on Tuesday, then we'd have a joint party meeting. So we would go into our National Party meetings and talk about the issues before our ministers or issues that other ministers were going to bring in, and what was our position going to be. There were many occasions where, as a party, we certainly were very vocal, but often other Liberal Party members would join in and support us. As I said, I don't recall a Liberal-National Party split. And as I said, we often sat in our party room and decided on positions we took but there'd always be Liberals who would agree with our point of view. So the system worked quite well.

JF How did this work? When you say they weren't voting . . . so somebody makes a proposal, how then is it decided that it will or will not go ahead?

TRENORDEN Only backbenchers vote.

JF Oh, only backbenchers voted. Right, yes.

TRENORDEN So anyone who didn't hold an executive position voted.

JF What about you as Public Accounts Committee chairman?

TRENORDEN That is part of the Parliament, not part of the executive.

JF Right.

TRENORDEN So I'd be able to vote and be able to debate those issues. The other thing, while you're in government of course, there's always jobs to be done where positions had to be proven up and so forth. I went and did a few of those. I think we've talked about Bendigo Bank, but that was one of the ones that I did and am still very proud of it. I think I said a few weeks ago that I went down to the annual

conference and it's good to be recognised as a person who at least achieved that. It's a great little movement. And workers' compensation and a range of other issues where you can get the authority of the minister to go out and do some things. I have to say, I am still doing that in opposition. Other Labor Party ministers will occasionally see the wisdom of allowing someone like me to do some work. But they were heady years. It's interesting when you see all that effort that happened over that period of time and the ministers and the characters of the ministers and who was strong and who was weak and all those sorts of questions, but at the end of it, you could see it dying. Four years were strong. The next four years weren't so strong, but there was an attitude, particularly of Hendy and Richard, that things were going to be okay when clearly, as we were going around the constituency, we knew it wasn't okay. When you walk down the streets of Northam and people you've known for years deliberately walk across to the other side of the street, you know things aren't going well. There were some interesting characters. We've talked about Graham Kierath a bit in that process. We always used to call Eric Charlton "Reckless" Eric, but Eric was a person who was clearly bent on making sure things happened, whether they happened right or wrong, but they happened. I still think he was the best minister I ever saw. But Hendy Cowan was very solid as a minister. Colin Barnett was very solid as a minister. Cheryl Edwardes was a massively hard-working individual. Of course, all ministries had those ministers that still occupied the chair. There's probably no point going through who I thought a few of those people were. It's interesting to be inside and watching an executive at work. Also, the people who advised the Premier. I think that's a worry with the current administration. Even back then there were a couple of people who I thought were good operators, but in general I was reasonably concerned about where the Premier and the Deputy Premier and cabinet took advice. I think in the Westminster system here . . . there isn't really a Westminster system here, but in the system here, I think that's one of the real weaknesses of cabinet.

JF So you're talking about the people who are retained as advisers?

TRENORDEN Political advisers. I think that pool in Western Australia is very shallow for both sides. That's one of the problems with executive governments in Western Australia.

JF You were talking about some of the things that you were able to go out and do and investigate on behalf of ministers. Can you bring up some of what those things were? You've mentioned the Bendigo Bank as an example. Are there other examples that you'd like to mention?

TRENORDEN There were issues to do with health in the wheatbelt that I went and did some short jobs on. In transport, issues about which roads and what sections of roads would be done, particularly in the central wheatbelt where my influences were. Just trying to think off the top of my head. The Public Accounts Committee, of course, was taking up my time. We were doing things in the Public Accounts Committee like assistance in industry, things like the TAB inquiry. That was always a pretty busy time. In fact, as a backbencher in government, your time was chewed up pretty strongly. And I think that's a good thing, because if a government wants to remain strong, I think it's not just . . . there are two attitudes about it. You just keep your back bench busy so they don't bother you, is one attitude of the executive, but for some of the better ministers they actually use the back bench to bring information or just check circumstances out before decisions were made. There was a bit of both. There was a bit of making sure the back bench was preoccupied. There were quite a few trips at the time. I certainly went overseas quite a bit, but much of that was related to the Public Accounts Committee, although I did go on another trip, like we talked, the one about Zimbabwe, last week. I also went to one in Indonesia, which was quite an eye-opener, just to see Indonesia up close.

JF Was that a CPA one also?

TRENORDEN It was organised by the Speaker. I don't think it was officially a CPA process, I think it was a Speaker's sponsored process, which happens from time to time now. Mike Barnett led that. There were quite a few of us, maybe seven or eight of us, who went to Indonesia. Interesting, I remember going to a textile processor and looking at cotton and all the things he was doing and we asked him about wool. Basically, [he had] no knowledge of wool, never handled wool. But also it was interesting at the time . . . and this must have been in the mid-'90s somewhere . . . basically the Indonesians didn't really know Australia existed. We were sort of a lump of land below them. They really didn't know much about us. When you get back here, the high interest in Australia in Indonesia, and the opposite in Indonesia where we weren't really important to them at all. We occasionally used to hear people talk about invasions prior to the East Timor process when there was a bit of tension

around, but certainly in Indonesia there is a curiosity about Australia, but that was about it. They were heavily linked into Asia.

JF Were the objectives of that trip spelled out very specifically, or was it more a general fact-finding sort of exercise?

TRENORDEN More about introducing members of Parliament to Indonesia. I think those things are understated. I know the public go berserk from time to time, but I believe it's important that members of Parliament get an opportunity to see it up close and personal. For example, I had no idea that Indonesians weren't really focused on Australia at all. When you think about a couple of hundred million people struggling to exist there, and having a hard struggle many of them, they are looking for, or at the time in the mid-'90s, they were looking for food and all other processes out of Asia more than out of Australia. There still are obvious advantages to us if we could make Indonesia a domestic market for us.

JF Yes.

TRENORDEN And for them, too.

JF Mm. I don't think there's even much in the way of student exchange any longer from Indonesia, is there? I mean, I can remember myself, as a result of the Colombo Plan I think it would have been, when I was at teachers' college and uni, that there were Indonesian students that we were rubbing shoulders with, but that seems to have vanished. Would that be the case?

TRENORDEN I am very sure that's true. In recent years, and again this year, I've been going across to Sandakan for Anzac Day. Nearly every individual you run into there that's in authority has a house in Perth and children in Perth. Malaysians know. And I've been to Sabah and I've been across to the mainland and met a lot of people in Malaya. Many in the upper echelon and business areas have houses in Perth, where Indonesians did the opposite. Their focus is certainly not into Australia.

JF When you were on that trip, were you mainly located in Java or did you get around to see other parts of Indonesia?

TRENORDEN They spread us around a bit. It wasn't a long trip; maybe a week. But we saw a fair bit of the countryside and a bit of Jakarta. So the idea was to give us some idea basically how Indonesians lived. We spent most of our time on Java, but inland Java. I can't remember the locations off the top of my head. We went to an agriculture college that was basically run by ex-Murdoch people, or there was a Muresk person there at the time we visited, and we went to a number of, as I say, manufacturing processors. [It was a] pretty short trip.

JF What other trips did you take in that period, since we've started talking about trips?

TRENORDEN I went to Canada a lot, and learnt a lot in that process. In the Public Accounts Committee we struck up an affinity with Alberta. Canadians used to come to the Australasian Public Accounts Committees on a reasonably regular basis, and so did some of their Auditor Generals. The Canadian system is very similar to our own and you can actually take direct comparisons out of Canada. And particularly for Western Australia, Alberta, if you replace dust for snow, it's pretty close. It's very useful in looking at matters that drove those provinces or principalities.

JF Provinces I think they are in Canada.

TRENORDEN Yes. And the influence of Douglas Credit on the political process over there for many years and the highly conservative western bloc of Canada in terms of economics. Even now there's a major divide west and east in Canada in the attitude to politics. Much of that is not conservative versus Labour, it's conservative versus the opposite financially. In my view, that's a spin-off of Douglas Credit, which was very strong after the Second World War. Also, the massive influence of pro and anti-American feelings, because all of them were both that; pro-American and anti-American. And the French influence of Quebec —

JF I was just going to ask you about that. I thought it would have been perhaps one of the things that was notable when you went in, which is absent perhaps from our society.

TRENORDEN It's very interesting because even though you are miles away from Quebec, you'll drive through Canadian countryside with French and English signage,

but in the western provinces of Canada, they had a very anti-Quebec view. Many of them would say openly, "Let them go."

JF What—secession in Canada?

TRENORDEN Yes, secession in Canada; let them go. If they want to be a province by themselves, let them be. Why should we keep them, and all that. That is part of the conservative —

JF Is that in Alberta or is that over on the coast and more around Vancouver?

TRENORDEN I think quite common right through the western sections of Canada.

JF I was wondering whether the barrier of the Rockies was what made the difference!

TRENORDEN In Vancouver, the attitude wasn't greatly different. At the time, and particularly at the time because it is notably different now, the French element weren't very inclusive. They weren't saying they wanted to be a part of Canada. A lot of the extreme language coming out of Quebec was about "We're French and we want nothing to do with being Canadian". I notice that's changed dramatically in the last 10 years or so. The whole thing has calmed down. And what a beautiful city Quebec is. It's good to stand on the fields of Abraham and see where Montcalm took on —

JF Montcalm took on Wolfe.

TRENORDEN Montcalm took on Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham, yes. I enjoy those sorts of processes where those sorts of events occurred. A beautiful city and a good attitude. It's interesting to see how the two nations, Australia and Canada, have just taken different directions in development. They have different views on economic attitudes, they have different ways of recording their budgetary processes, different emphasis on what's important in a budget, and certainly different ways in what they want to get out of a Parliament, even though their Parliaments are very similar to ours. They picked up the English system, or they've even got an upper house in their federal system that's appointed; but, nevertheless, very similar.

JF They are more a union than a federation, aren't they? Would that be true to say?

TRENORDEN They're not a federation, no. The view of the east coast is the same sort of divide as Western Australia versus the east coast, but the west coast of Canada is much more strongly populated obviously than here. Even though the east coast is again more heavily populated than the west, the balance isn't quite as out of kilter as us.

JF How would you compare, say, the provincial government of, say, Alberta, and the state government in WA? Is there a parallel to be drawn?

TRENORDEN A very strong parallel. Particularly when I was going there, they had just finished a gas and oil boom. Everyone, on both sides of politics, were saying they wasted their money. They got all excited about the gas and oil boom and spent the money very quickly on things that people thought were important at the time, but when the downturn came, they found the things that were put in place were of little value. I suspect that's what we're doing here today in Western Australia. I'm not only certain, I'm sure that's what we're doing. As a result of that, they actually started a future fund, like Costello used to talk about, but they started it a long time ago and put much of their royalties into a future fund, to try to spread the benefit of that flow of money over a longer period of time and take away the enthusiasm for spending. That was supported by both sides of politics in Alberta. It's very similar. A very similar style of government. Very strong Premiers. The focus is on the Premier and on half a dozen cabinet members outside of the Premier.

JF Do they have a dual house system in the provinces?

TRENORDEN No, they don't. They have a lot lower accountability regime than we've got, which is probably to their credit, not to ours. I think a lot of our accountability stifles activity whereas their provinces tend to be able to get on with the service delivery process. Again, probably a bit more on the provinces over there than here, they have a different sort of attitude to the federal administration. They do obviously oppose the other side and all those sort of arguments, but they do tend to have a better working relationship with their federal process than Australian states do with the federal government. Maybe there is something in that we can learn here too.

JF Yes. How many times did you go to Canada?

TRENORDEN Five times probably.

JF Was this always in association with the Public Accounts Committee?

TRENORDEN Yes. Every time it was with the Public Accounts Committee. We went to their conference a number of years in a row. I might be exaggerating and it may have been four, but I certainly went a number of times. It got to the stage where I got to know quite a few Canadians really well and took some time to just listen to their debate about their budgetary process and their processes in the Parliament. Their budget process is far more important to them than it is to us, but I think all money issues are more important to Canadians than they are to Australians . . . I mean government funding. They don't trust governments with money so much in Canada.

JF Is there something about a lethargy or lackadaisical attitude in Australia that is not there?

TRENORDEN I think it's part of the process of having such a strong neighbour in the United States. They are aware that decisions that are made in the United States are going to affect them, even though the borders are very open, but trade issues across the border, financial decisions made by administrations in the USA affected Canada. So they are much more aware of their neighbours and how a decision some thousands of miles away would affect them, where we're much more isolated.

END OF TAPE SEVEN SIDE A

TAPE SEVEN SIDE B

This is tape seven, side B, in the interviews with Max Trenorden.

JF Max, did you take trips to other countries than Canada that you would like to mention at this stage?

TRENORDEN At this stage personally I saw a lot of the world. As we've said in earlier tapes, I contested for control of my children and won that. Because my ex-wife was a very decent, responsible and good person I had no trouble giving her the children for long blocks of time. Often I would just go, the bulk of that on my own expense. I would go by myself and just go and experience the world. I found that really fascinating. I loved a trip I did through Egypt one particular time through the Mediterranean. There's a love of history and I just found that fascinating going down the Nile on a very small cruise ship and every few kays there was a temple and there was a reason for it, and learnt about it, and go through places like Valley of the Kings, just remarkable places. I'd just love to go back to the Cairo museum for a few days. When I was there in the late '80s it was just piles and piles and piles of stuff put wherever they could find a space. I'm sure it would be a lot better organised now. Just remarkable things in the museum. I can recall driving down a road going to some old mud-brick pyramids that pre-dated the pyramids we all know. I said to the tour operator as we were going past these obvious walls, "What's there?" and they said, "We really don't know. That's another 50 or 60 years before they'll get to look at that area." They knew what had been there but they didn't know what was physically there. There was so much in Egypt —

JF Had they walled that off so that people wouldn't loot it or just —

TRENORDEN No. It was just the desert was rolling over the top of it. No, it was just sitting there and you could just see the remains of the old brick walls, not very high, but who knows how far it was buried under the sand. Also, the simple things I remember. The tour guides were university students, Egyptologists. I remember this young woman and I'd poop-pooed horoscopes, which I still do, but she just looked in my eye and told me my life story in about five minutes, which I found a little bit off-putting, but I still wonder if it was good guessing or whatever. Nevertheless, fantastic experiences, having a little bit of a run through Turkey. I've spent five weeks in Chile. I've been to the United States on three or four occasions. The Americans inside

America are just wonderful people. A couple of times I've spent a number of weeks in places like Denver. I just loved the opportunity to go through those things we don't have—the mountains and the lakes and the things we don't have, the permanent snow and so forth. I found that fascinating. Only really done one swing through Europe, I'll do that a bit later on. I haven't been to the eastern bloc at all, but I spent a lot of time travelling.

JF What about Cornwall? Did you ever go and look up your forebears?

TRENORDEN Yes, several times, and kept on going back 'cos someone would keep on doing a bit more work and finally, in recent times, someone has tracked the family back to the fourteenth century. Cornwall is a bit of a joy when you go to the UK. I haven't been to Scotland because I keep on heading for Cornwall, but heading out of London and heading down to the sunshine of Cornwall is a significant relief. It's beautiful down there and to be able to look around amongst your own history, but also just seeing the history lying around . . . farmers driving around stone that has been there and set up as tombs, no doubt, probably a thousand years ago. They just plough around them and keep going. Yes, I've been to Cornwall probably three times, but I'll be back, as I find a bit more about our history and where my ancestors lived, which most of it was pretty close to Land's End, between Penzance and St Ives. Very pleasant going down there.

JF You have mentioned the Australasian meeting of public accounts committees. How often does that take place?

TRENORDEN It meets every two years. The executive meet every year and there's a two-yearly conference. In the in-between period, the chairs meet to plan the conference. The conference usually isn't just public accounts. Usually Auditor Generals meet at the same time, and a portion of the conference they meet together. They were the things that I actually introduced, or others around me introduced at the time. Very useful for those members of Parliament lucky enough to be on a public accounts committee. Public accounts committees are very boring. I shouldn't say they are boring, but the topic of accounts is not my great love in life, but it's a fantastic way to learn the system and understand the system, and understand why things happen and how things happen. So it was one of the better things I did and, as I said, Hendy Cowan made me do it. But it was of significant benefit to me and I think to a lot of other members. Some of the other states have long-term members on

public accounts committees who know they get a satisfaction of serving on the public accounts committee and they know they're doing their state a good service, but the public don't know about that. A lot of things, like you were talking about your old profession of teaching, teachers turn up and know they do a good job but the public doesn't necessarily agree with it.

JF No, the public looks at the holidays!

TRENORDEN Exactly. Even a half-functioning public accounts committee does very solid work and has good outcomes for their states.

JF Yes. Now, I'm just thinking about which way to go next. I think perhaps if we look at some of the things that the Court government —

TRENORDEN What about the important things like the establishment of the Eagles and the Dockers!

JF [laughs] All right, whatever.

TRENORDEN It's always a good laugh. When I'm on a controversial meeting, I usually say, "The world is in balance; the Eagles have won and the Dockers have lost!"

JF I, as a person who taught at South Fremantle, can't very well take that attitude! [laughs]

TRENORDEN No, you can't. It's good to have something to laugh about.

JF Yes. You mentioned last time briefly the effects of the industrial relations changes that the Court government pushed very heavily. Would you like to talk a little bit about that process within the Parliament and how it played out?

TRENORDEN Or through the party room. It didn't go through the party room instantly. It was debated very strongly in the party room. I felt strongly that there wasn't a good enough safety net in the process. In the current example, the AWAs, I think they are just a natural, good process and I know many employees who just really enjoy being on AWAs. There's not a week that goes by in my current office

where people don't come in and ask me whether they stay on their AWA. Politicians are more hyped up about industrial relations than employees, I've noticed. Employees just want a good benefit and something they can have some security in. The IR process probably did have too much of an anti-labour element in it, but in the debate that was never really a core issue. When the debates were happening in the party room, there wasn't a lot about putting the union down and so forth, it was more about allowing industry to have an easier process and backing the labour movement down to things like safety and a lot of issues where . . . and I still am concerned about that. I think quite a few of the unions get involved in safety issues purely for membership more than safety and use those processes as a power mechanism, which I think is inappropriate for everyone. But on the other hand, unions do fantastic work in areas like workers' compensation. I just don't think anyone represents injured workers better than unions in the system. So unions have a very strong role to play in the community and most conservative politicians would agree that unions have a role to play and should be there. So there was a very strong debate about exactly what the make-up should be. Graham Kierath was an engaging character and won the debate in the end. I think the debate mostly was about philosophy rather than practicality, but it would have survived the passage of time a little better if there had been more emphasis put on a safety net. There was a safety net in the process but I always argued, and some other members in the party room argued, that it was not strong enough. That's the same with Rudd now getting rid of the AWAs. I mean, he's not prepared to say that no-one will be worse off because people will be worse off. Whatever move you make, people are going to be worse off. I guess the concentration for politicians is the majority and just arguing about the majority, but there's always a minority. Every piece of legislation we bring in causes interference to somebody. There's not a single, solitary piece of legislation that doesn't do that. So you need to think about those people who are affected. That was a weakness of the process but it was, in the end, very strongly supported by the party room. The debate here was heady because the gallery was full of unionists and people that most of us didn't have a lot of respect for; that is, some of the leaders of that sort of process. Again, it was all part of the play and all part of the game, but they seemed to have little regard for Australia or all things of authority, and we were authority at the time. It was heady times. The legislation, I would say, was 80 per cent sound or probably a bit better than that. I wouldn't say too many pieces of legislation that go through now are any better than 70 or 80 per cent sound.

JF Yes. What about other things that the government attempted in the Richard Court era?

TRENORDEN There was a lot of emphasis on infrastructure and infrastructure development, particularly matters of the north west and ports. We used to spend a lot of time in the National Party discussing ports because Eric Charlton had that responsibility and Hendy had the regional development process. So railway lines, ports and roads were of significant debate. For us, unfortunately, it wasn't at a time when the state was booming like it is now, so it was harder to find the money for those processes. I would suggest that in those times all the ports were set up, probably not so much the Pilbara ports which were pretty strong, but by the time we left the ports all but Albany, I would say, were in a good operational process. There wasn't anything wrong with Albany in terms of structure, it's just Albany didn't have the tonnage going through it even like Esperance or even like Bunbury. The concentration on the ports, on the railway lines, the ports, the roads, the ports, transport linkages through the state; we spent a lot of time on those issues.

JF What about some of the things that might be considered periphery? The belltower? [laughs]

TRENORDEN I think the belltower was an accident, actually. I saw no great motivation in Richard Court about the belltower. In fact, I have strong memories of him coming into the party room and saying, "We've got these bells that have been given to us that are sitting in a shed somewhere," and he gave the expression to stick them in something or other. I think that's one of the great disasters of this state, the belltower. Not long after it was opened, I went down and sat on the lawn on New Year's Eve to see the New Year come in, and I couldn't hear the belltower and it was 100 metres away. I think the public reaction and the Labor Party process . . . but if the belltower is to be there, let it be a belltower. I was never excited about a belltower but now it's there, I think it's a reasonable process. It was a successful sales process of the ALP to bill it as a Richard Court monument, because I saw no motivation from Richard Court for it to be a monument. But it certainly was an issue and it hurt the government, but that wasn't what brought us down. It was the One Nation issues that brought us down. The growth of One Nation, the phenomenon of Pauline Hanson, the angry people, the disconnected people; I think that is still strong now. Recently I cancelled my [subscription to] *The Weekend Australian*. I always had a great love of spreading *The Weekend Australian* out over my table on a Sunday morning, not a

Saturday morning. I'd read a bit of it on the Saturday morning, but go through it and read it. *The Weekend Australian* just got further and further and further away from the Australia that I knew, and in fact was mostly about Sydney, and it talked about issues that were so far away from me they might as well have been in Egypt. That's what happened to the regional population. There appeared to be a huge disconnect with Perth and it's still there now. There's an anger and a percentage of the population out there that watch TV at night, read their newspaper and see all these wonderful things and see sales at Myer, at David Jones, and see the concerts in Kings Park and say, "This is nothing to do with me. I'm not a part of this". They viewed that in the Pauline Hanson process. Very few of the 10-11, sometimes up to 20 per cent vote in some of the electorates, were actually hardcore One Nation people. They were just people with a very serious disconnect with Perth and even more serious disconnect with the eastern states. Personally I feel that myself. As I say, I often read or used to read it, 'cos I've now cancelled it 'cos I found that I wasn't even unwrapping it. It's not an angry mood in me, it's not a lost process, it's just something that I've just picked up over the years. Fifteen years ago you'd open *The Weekend Australian* and any page would have someone opposing something and someone supporting something. So you'd be able to read an issue and say, "Well, that's in-depth". Now *The Weekend Australian*, and all newspapers, just have one view. They'll just give you one view of the process. Often that's a very focused view. Certainly, reading a paper like *The Weekend Australian* for me, sitting in Northam, I do feel as if it's talking about another country which I hardly even know. I'm hardly downtrodden. I have plenty of intellectual stimulation, I have a solid income, I have a great family, so I haven't got anything to be angry about or anything to be disturbed about but I still get that feeling. I know from my trips around the wheatbelt that many are angry about it. There's no One Nation banner out there anymore, but the people are still there. That was brewing all the way through the second term of our process. Surprisingly, Hendy and Richard Court ignored that; thought it was some sort of phenomenon that would go away. Hendy fought them hard, and I supported them in fighting the political party hard because One Nation's first statement was they were going to get rid of the National Party. It is pretty hard to be friendly with someone who wants to kill you. There are still some people out in the regions who left the National Party and will not go back because of that attitude. What it has actually done is divided the regions more. You now have Liberal Party and Labor Party in lesser numbers than before out there, and this other large slice of people who vote but are really not Liberal, not Labor, just disconnected people.

JF And in your own seat, did you lose a lot of support to One Nation, do you think?

TRENORDEN Yes, I definitely did, but not as much as quite a few others. I can remember just little stories. How the system works. I approached Colin Barnett at one stage. I have a wonderful school in my electorate called Bakers Hill, just a fantastic school. I had been going across to Sabah for the Sandakan death marches with them, and I'll be going this year as well. They had some appalling conditions, so I got on to Colin Barnett's back a few times and one day Colin Barnett basically said, "Oh, Max, I'll listen to it." Then I got him to say yes, so we got a brand new building at Bakers Hill, a beautiful little school. So I turn up at the Bakers Hill polling booth and there's a long line of people lining up with the table with One Nation and I wandered over to them and quite a few people said, "Max, you did a fantastic job getting this school, but we can't vote for you." They said, "If we could vote for you, we would, but we can't. We're actually voting for Richard Court and we can't vote for him." There was a long, long queue there. So it didn't matter in that particular place where they were clearly saying to me, "Max, you've done a fantastic job but we're not going to vote for you". That's just how strong the mood was.

JF Did that actually turn out to be the case through the ballot box? Had they deserted you in numbers?

TRENORDEN In those sorts of numbers. I think in my electorate it might have been eight per cent or so, but in some electorates . . . in Greenough it was 21 per cent, in Moore it was 11 per cent. So it was stronger in different parts. I've got a fairly urban electorate so that dampened . . . some of my people are really urban people, not regional people. That dampened it down a bit in my patch, but it was still strong. Still very angry at people's . . . many of them really not interested in what Pauline Hanson was standing for, just voting against the government.

JF Sort of a protest.

TRENORDEN Definite strong protest. I think you'll see it raised again. It just needs a banner and at the moment there's no banner around for them, but I think it will come again.

JF Yes. Of course the frustration of what had been going on in the Burke era had paved the way for people's disaffection, I guess.

TRENORDEN All of that. Then we got into power, then there was an enormous expectation that we would do all the things that they wanted done. A lot was done but, as I said, we didn't actually . . . Richard Court went into that process where the coffers weren't just bare, they had been robbed. I mean, the thief had been in and stolen it. We went into the process where the Treasury was absolutely bare. That had to be repaired and then get on with doing the process. So the Court-Cowan government had a very significant penalty to start with. I don't hear now a lot of criticism of the sale processes that occurred at the time, but at the time they were quite strongly criticised. Again, two things were happening; one was that the Productivity Commission in the eastern states and the state grant system was geared to reforming all those government institutions, and the other one was that there was no money in the bank. We were in administration. As I said, we had high interest in trying to get a few things in the regions going. We were much more regionally orientated than the current government, but in particular in the north west. But even there, people were saying it wasn't happening quick enough. Frankly, it probably wasn't. But I wouldn't put that down to an inability of Richard and Hendy and their cabinet, it was more about the financial restrictions they had at the time.

JF You are talking about the splitting of the SEC and that sort of thing?

TRENORDEN The Labor Party had started the sale of SGIO, so the SGIC-SGIO split of the commission, selling off SGIO, was one process. BankWest was another process. Then the power arguments . . . not so much gas, but the sale of the pipeline, which I don't think anyone could criticise now. Maybe criticise the process of how it happened, and I think that's another significant issue. I just don't think there's enough intellect in the Western Australia public service to do those things well. I think the break-up of Western Power has been a disaster. And to actually have the public service come into Parliament predicting all these things that have got even nowhere near their targets shows that the ability of the administration of Western Australia to do these significant projects well is very limited. What we do do well is the start up of new industries. But I don't think the selling of the pipeline was a particular disaster and I don't think the selling of BankWest was. I think Western Australians haven't particularly felt any pain in that. But the regional people really didn't like the sale of BankWest because they believed while there was a state bank in process, the state

could help agriculture and other processes; it balanced their problems out. Now, every process in the region is about saying that the regions are going to go full cost recovery, which means people in the regions are going to pay a lot more for services, which [will mean that] more and more people will come to the city. I just don't understand. But the economic drive to make full cost recovery has been on for some time, but I think Western Australia will pay a price for that. Why would you live even in Northam when you can go to Kings Park and see a show that's basically subsidised for you, and wander home? Why wouldn't you live here? I think those issues are strong. Those sales processes did bring a lot of revenue into the state, but they were fought hard at the time. BankWest, no-one talks about it now so much. SGIO was set in place by the Labor administration but done by us, finalised by us. BankWest, the pipeline; there were probably others.

JF In that period you were on various other committees from time to time. You were on a committee on procedure in the early stages, 1994-1996.

TRENORDEN Yes. I am currently on that committee now. I enjoy spending time on that and, as I said earlier, I have a fair bit of despair that Western Australian politicians don't want a Parliament; they just want a meeting place and a place where executive can reign supreme. Even the opposition don't want a Parliament, because they dream about being on the other side. All the years I've been here, Parliament has been slowly whittled away. I think well-intentioned ministers here in this government now are doing that, I don't think even deliberately. I think they think that's the process; that the Parliament is the place where the executive comes in and controls. There's a real danger in that because if you go back to the time I started in politics, or further, but certainly it was still alive when I was in politics, if you take any political party, but let's just talk about the National Party, where you hold a meeting in Avon, 60 people would turn up and we'd debate agriculture or roads or whatever all day, and the politician on the day would be there defending a position or trying to argue a position and in due course that would end up in the party. That doesn't happen now. It doesn't happen with any of the political parties now. Policy is created by the executive, so by the time a bill is thought up now, maybe 30-40 people get involved in the construction of that bill, it gets constructed in a minister's office, it goes through the caucus meeting if the ALP is in power, and into the house, and most Western Australians have no idea. Look at daylight saving. There is huge angst right now about daylight saving. The prostitution bill. Did the public go out and demand the prostitution bill? No. So most bills are generated within the political

process now. It hasn't got tentacles out into the public so the attitude is, "We're elected, we're the government of the day, we will do these things. We will bring them into the house and the house will be compliant to us." The house does have to be compliant but not totally compliant, so there are times now where there's a distinct lack of will to debate things, not because they don't want to debate it but because there are so many things that are jammed through this place you need all the time to jam it through, and you don't want to take time off to do things you don't want to do; if there's something the opposition wants to do or even the public want to do, want to put pressure on. Answering questions and getting information out of the administration is harder now than at any time in my 22 years. You just don't get a question answered; nothing gets answered. You get an answer and the answer is substantially correct but has no detail in it. There was a desire years ago, when I was first in here. Ministers often worked hard to make sure they answered questions. I've been with public servants . . . a few of these things I do . . . who are writing answers to the opposition and I actually hear them say, "No, don't give them that answer. That's not what they asked for. That's the answer they're seeking, but they didn't actually ask that. You answer what they ask." And all that is about protecting the minister, not about trying to give West Australians or the opposition information on which they can act.

END OF TAPE SEVEN SIDE B

TAPE EIGHT SIDE A

This is tape eight, side A, in the series of interviews with Max Trenorden, MLA. This one is being recorded at Parliament House in Perth on the 9th April, 2008.

JF Max, two or three times you've referred to the matter of the Bendigo Bank coming to Western Australia and you had a big role in researching that. I thought today we'd first of all unpack that in some detail because it is probably a story to be told that we have not really picked up on the details.

TRENORDEN Well, it is a significant part of the Western Australian financial scene now but it is not just the fact it is Bendigo Bank; it is really a great deal more than that. What actually happens is a franchise. A local community buys a franchise and actually runs the branch and splits the profit of running the bank 50/50 with Bendigo Bank. The local branch supplies the premises, the power, the water and all the outgoings plus the staff and then pursues the local community for business. Why I am such a fan of it is it is actually a business in the community where money stays within the community but also replaces the traditional agency process, which, particularly a few years ago, the banks were closing those down wholesale. The Bendigo Bank process is there's a local community that actually employs the bank manager. The pretty unique process about it, or what I like about it, is it actually has a bank manager like we used to have bank managers years ago where an individual is the bank manager, not just loans manager or whatever; he is actually the bank manager. That person is controlled by the local board and they go and tout for business like would have happened 40 years ago or 50 years ago and does not happen now with the big four and others because they do it through advertising and so forth. There are 40 branches at this stage, give or take one or two, and they're still going on at a pretty hefty rate. I convinced the Court-Cowan Government (or I convinced Hendy [Cowan]) to have the situation where a community decided they'd have a look at a bank, or replacing in many cases no service at all with a bank. The state used to put up \$10 000 to allow the community to do a due diligence research of whether that bank would actually succeed. Bendigo Bank themselves won't start a branch until the local community can prove there's enough business there to be viable. We thought at the time it was really useful for those communities to also go through that process themselves to make sure that the bank would get enough business to be viable. All 40 . . . I should not say "all 40" because some of them are

brand new. Some have been a bit slow getting going but they've all been profitable so far. It is a pretty unique process.

JF What I wondered was: how did the issue arise at first and how did you specifically become involved?

TRENORDEN I can't exactly remember the timing but I think it's something like 15 years ago, so it would be in the early '90s. The big four in particular were closing branches at a very fast rate; it was when the banking reform was going through. Many communities were getting in touch with their local member to say [that] the last bank's left town, or were saying they were leaving town. Therefore, the community in general was desperately looking for solutions, as was the media and quite a few other people at the time. It was a fairly high-profile story. Most of the media stories were running the closures as they happened so they'd be on TV; they'd be in the paper of whatever the community was that had just lost their last bank. I approached Hendy Cowan to see what we could do in terms of replacing them. For people, unfortunately, it's not just a question of losing the bank. Graham Robertson, who was the first chairman of the Kulin branch said, "I don't need a bank, but I need a community." What happens in the community if there's no bank? People go to where the next bank is and then do their shopping. People just don't lose the bank; they lose the purchasing power as well. I formed a ministerial task force under Hendy's ministry. He gave me resources out of several agencies. We interviewed a lot of people, including the Australian Bankers' Association but also credit societies and all the normal people you'd go through, and also a range of people about what effect these closures were having on their communities. This is long before I knew about Bendigo Bank.

JF Yes. Who was on this task force?

TRENORDEN Just myself and a range of public servants from the Department of Commerce and Trade, as it was called in those days. Fitzpatrick was the main person on it with me. We had a serious, hard look at it. There were options being put forward. Building societies could see it was an opportunity for them. They had a package that really didn't quite work and never really worked but they were attempting to meet the market because they knew that if they could meet the market, they could get a gain out of it. But in all of this time, a pretty remarkable man called Robert Hunt, who was the CEO of Bendigo Bank, had started this process of doing

the same thing: looking at what a small bank like Bendigo Bank . . . the only bank in Australia that has a regional headquarters. He looked at a range of things, including a regional stock exchange and a whole raft of things he put together to look at the financing process in the regions, including one of his big issues was, and still is, the enormous drain out of the regions for superannuation. There are people paying the compulsory nine per cent superannuation but none of it is going to the regions; it all goes to a central point, mostly in Melbourne, and then obviously gets distributed en masse but rarely back to the regions.

JF And this fellow was in Bendigo, was he?

TRENORDEN He was in Bendigo . . . CEO of the Bendigo Bank. I can't really say exactly how I heard about Bendigo Bank the first time. I believe it was from a telephone call. My memory tells me it was from a telephone call to say, "Check this out." So I went across to Bendigo with the CEO of the Kulin community, Mr Hadlow, with David Singe, who's the CEO of the Wheatbelt Development Commission, and with one other person from Commerce and Trade (I'm not quite sure; I can't remember who that was) and met with several of the individuals of Bendigo Bank in a morning and then I met with Rob Hunt in the afternoon. Only recently, I opened a conference for Bendigo Bank here and they keep on telling the story at every conference I go to (they apparently tell it whether I am there or not) but actually what happened (they say this openly because they are country people and country people do act like this) is they just said, "Well, here's another politician doing another politician's task; we will humour him and he will go away." So they said to me, "Well, we'll come to the west if you can give us a minimum of (I can't remember what the figure was but it was five or six) communities that will talk to us. I said, "That's fine," so I went back and I made a few phone calls and came back with . . . I can't remember the figure; it was either 23 or 26 I came back with, and they were just amazed.

JF That indicates how widespread the problem was.

TRENORDEN Yes, and it quickly occurred. So they sent a team over with the current manager of the community bank, a fellow called Russell Jenkins (he and I are now quite close personal friends), and a National Party politician at the time called Dexter Davies also got involved and we started doing road tours. We'd organise these meetings through communities (three a day most days) and off we'd go. It was a lot

of fun but it was also good for the heart because the communities could see that this was something for them. Not that every community decided to take it on, but those who did have really done so with a great deal of enthusiasm and a lot of success. Some communities, like Meekatharra, for example, who would have loved to have taken it on (they were more than enthusiastic) but they just couldn't meet the criteria of guaranteeing enough business. Both the state and Bendigo Bank said to them, "No, we really can't do that." At some of those meetings we had, where it didn't start, have since started. But again, it's like all things in life, but mainly in the regions, it depends on the individuals. If you go to a community where you have one or two capable, motivated individuals, it happens, and if you go to communities where they expect Bendigo Bank to do it for them, it doesn't happen. It is just a simple process. It has been highly successful and I think we have mentioned it in past tapes, but Toodyay (the branch that I'm with) handed out sizeable chunks of money in recent months for an ambulance for the Toodyay community and also for keeping a legal service going for the Central Wheatbelt; not just for Toodyay, but for the benefit of the Central Wheatbelt. They are generating significant profits. What is happening in the communities is the general banking process of Toodyay people is generating something like \$100 000 in profits, which that local board can spend on Toodyay. So it is no small matter for whatever they decide to use it for. I've just been on the phone before you turned up, ringing a school in Labuan Island in Sabah. I'm going over there in a few days to present some computers I have been able to (I should not say "I" because the Premier helped a great deal) weasel out of some poor school that's going to miss 10 computers and it's going to Labuan Island. I've just spoken to the principal, who's so excited she can't speak. She's getting resources that her school just hasn't got. I went over there three years ago in association with some students from Bakers Hill, and this year Toodyay's getting involved very heavily through the Bendigo Bank sponsoring some of those children to be able to go to the Sandakan death march, which I've been going to for a few years (this will probably be my last, but I said that last year) where they experience all of that process and look at what happened and where our soldiers were. Again, it's a great pleasure to watch those students take all that in. In my case, Bendigo Bank's funding part of that process and it means that a few students can go.

JF Yes, that's a wonderful outreach from what looked like a very small, local sort of concern.

TRENORDEN I always felt that there would be a solution. I think, again, in a previous interview, [I said that] this all started from Goomalling where a woman in a crowd challenged me to go and get the National Bank back and bring them back to Goomalling. I said, "Why would I bring someone back who doesn't want to be here?" This solution was a far better one. Even though the Bendigo Bank is a bank and it's not a perfect entity, it certainly works beautifully and there's a genuine contact and a genuine desire to get on with communities. I think it'll be around for a long while.

JF Do you think it's making a bit of an inroad into the business of the other mainstream banks?

TRENORDEN Oh, there's no question. The main banks were fairly aggressive with me when I suggested I do this. In fact, a few very senior individuals in the Australian banking scene told me that when these things crash and I have egg on my face, it'll be a terrible day for me. They put all those sorts of pressures on me where I just couldn't see why that was a significant risk. Also, it *really* irritated a lot of people in the regions because at Kulin, the first one, for example, people who were on the board (in those days it wasn't a board) or who were on the committee trying to get the bank together, the banks were ringing up, often with a two per cent discount on their banking after they started talking about getting a Bendigo Bank, not before. That made a lot of the locals very angry. All of a sudden two per cent was available, or 1.5 per cent, or whatever, depending on the individual and how big they were. That made a lot of people angry. It did make a lot of impact. On the other hand, Bendigo Bank has got well over \$1 billion worth of business (I think that's pretty right) out of Western Australia that they would not have had before either. I might add, I don't get any of that, not that I'm seeking to get any of that, and nor does the National Party. They don't donate to the National Party or any of those sorts of things. It's a big story for Bendigo Bank because Western Australia is usually talked about as 10 per cent of the action. It was the biggest part of their community banking process for a long while; it was bigger than Victoria at one stage. Certainly they now have been branching out to Queensland and New South Wales but the growth rate in Western Australia was significantly higher than in the other states. Western Australia has been a big win for the Bendigo Bank, but that is not my concern; my concern is the service to the community. I really do like the thought that locally generated funds can do things for the local community and people can bank with the knowledge that some of that money is going to flow back to their school or whatever the local board wants to do with the money.

JF Yes. Where do they get all their managers from? Are they people that have come from other banks, or are they —

TRENORDEN Yes. At the time, and in general, there's plenty of ex-managers around so the closure of all these branches in the past has meant that there've been a lot of managers put off . . . a lot of people put out of the banking system, so they've never had any difficulty in getting quality people to not only be managers, but also be staff in the banks. The other thing (it's a small thing) is that right from the start, most of the branches operated on Saturday mornings with longer hours than the standard bank and I see now in my own community the ANZ Bank is doing that, which is a credit to them. It's been (even though I am saying it myself) a really outstanding, unqualified success. Tell me if I've told you this story, but last year I got a phone call from an irate constituent who was having a go at me for being useless and he said, "Why haven't you done something useful like get Bendigo Bank to Western Australia?" Even in my own constituency it's probably not well known that I —

JF That you were behind the scenes.

TRENORDEN Even though Bendigo give me credit for that at every chance they can. Nevertheless, I guess it's useful for them to tell that story as well.

JF Now, were there any implications of this through the Parliament itself, other than the initiative you took as a parliamentarian?

TRENORDEN Well, interestingly, early on, Bayswater was one of the early branches and the chairman of that was John D'Orazio, who's the member out there currently. Tony Simpson, who is also in the chamber, was also heavily involved and I am sure there's a few others. Quickly, quite a few West Australians of some provenance became involved. There were no negative ramifications, though I thought maybe there may have been some sort of argument about the \$10 000 being National Party pork barrelling, whereas in fact it was for the due diligence process and it was available to the metropolitan areas as well. They've opened quite a few branches in Perth and places like Mandurah and very recently in Bunbury. That money is no longer available from the current government but in the previous government I thought there would be some criticism of it but there wasn't because really it was just making sure there was a due diligence process. Communities were forced to have a

hard look at themselves. An individual from Commerce and Trade would monitor each of them just to make sure that no community was getting more excited than their capacity would allow them to be.

JF What sort of attitude does the bank take in general to farmers who are in some sort of distress, because I imagine there would be a lot of people in recent drought conditions and so on who really have their backs to the wall and may be expecting the banks to treat them sympathetically, and the bank has to be a business?

TRENORDEN No, the bank's definitely a business. All the banking decisions are made by Bendigo Bank, not made by the local community. The balance on the other side is there were a couple of wins out of the banking process that I think were relatively important. One is because it was established in Bendigo they had a better knowledge during the '90s of rural pastimes and rural money than the main four. I would say that all banks now are sharper on rural lending than they used to be. Bendigo Bank, I think, had a better understanding of what was viable in farming and what wasn't than the big four. The other thing that was more important is the big four traditionally will only lend you 60 per cent of any valuation in most regional areas in Australia but the Bendigo Bank will lend 80 [per cent] or more, again, because they have a better understanding of prices and movements in regions than the big four. Both those questions in the farming and in purchase of houses and commercial properties and so forth, they do lend on a higher rate, not because they are benevolent but because they understand that business a bit better than the big four.

JF Yes. They would have a lien over the property, obviously, if they are lending that value, so I suppose the bank's not going to lose out in the finish.

TRENORDEN No, correct, but back in the '90s and before the big boom right throughout Australia, a house in some of these country towns like in Kulin . . . you probably could buy a house in Kulin for \$70 000 or \$80 000 and it would probably cost you \$150 000 to build it. Banks had a reason to be cautious. You could build a house for, say, \$150 000 and it might be worth \$100 000 on sale. What I'm saying is that Bendigo understood that process better than most, but I think that's all in recent years, including the farming situation. I think that the big four banks have been very good in this current crisis because they've worked out they're not as much at risk as they thought they were. Back in the '90s when all this activity that I'm describing to

you was going on, they were sacking their corporate management, so when not this current crunch but a previous one came along, the banks searched among themselves to find out who in their system knew agriculture and they found out they'd sacked most of them. Now the big four have regional managers in places like Northam and Geraldton and so forth who do have a good contact with agriculture. The banks have been very good this time around. This has been the biggest crunch by far, particularly for the Northern Wheatbelt. There are people in trouble, I don't have any doubt, but the banks are far more prudent in their processes, whereas in the past they panicked and decided that they had to get out. Now they're having a good look at their business and understand that they do have a lot of it covered.

JF Well, that's a very interesting development of that story. I think we've covered it pretty thoroughly, so we'll move on. What I will pick up next is some of the committee work that we didn't talk about before. I raised the question of a committee on procedure—'94 to '96—last week and you got off on a tangent from that and didn't answer the question.

TRENORDEN I'm good with tangents, so go back to the questions John.

JF [Laughs] Well, yes. On that particular committee . . . I notice you have since been on another procedure and privileges committee —

TRENORDEN I'm currently on one.

JF —currently on the procedure and privileges since 2005, I think. Can you pick up that first one and tell us what was the main issue or issues that were involved in that committee and what was your role in it, and so on?

TRENORDEN It has been a very busy committee and a committee I've enjoyed. It is a committee that looks at the functioning of our chamber, the Assembly. We've made some fairly sizeable changes at the time we're looking at there. One of them was that every year at the end of the year before Christmas [when] the Parliament would close, it would be prorogued. All business would be wiped off the notice paper, we'd start again in February or March the next year, the Governor would open the [Parliament] and we'd start off with a clean notice paper. Some of the issues that had been dropped off the previous year would be, by motion, put back onto that agenda and away we'd go. We now only do that once in every four years so that now the

government comes up once at the beginning of every Parliament and we treat the four years as a process. But because of our standing orders (much of it was picked up from Westminster processes) there's a whole raft of small things that occur in there, even members being absent. It talks about you can't be absent more than whatever the number (I think it's seven [days]) in a term. That was seven in a year and now it's seven in four years. We have had to go through all of those processes to understand and adapt all that. We also made changes to question time.

JF Just coming back to that one, the change in not proroguing but carrying on means that every committee or whatever that's not actually involved in house sitting can continue to work in the gap?

TRENORDEN It continues on. They are very significant changes. We might as well also talk about committees. Up to that time, we used to have a select committee process. We still can; it is still in our standing orders. It was a part of COG [Commission on Government] and if you look at the COG papers, they talk about the Trenorden system of committees. I put a paper in when COG was going on about how committees should function in the house and, substantially, COG picked that up and pretty substantially the Parliament's picked it up. We have a range now of permanent standing committees that get given certain duties like finance, health and so forth. There are not many of them; there are five or six of them. It's a rare thing for a select committee now to be appointed but one was appointed over the Esperance debacle, which is the correct process for a select committee to have a particular purpose. The select committee into the Esperance lead pollution was a very good select committee. Now those [standing] committees are permanent. They have the capacity to take their own charters so they get appointed early in a term of government and they operate non-stop, even though people come and go out of the committees, obviously, but the committee itself goes off and operates for the Parliament. They get allocated staff, they get allocated resources; there's no stop-start process in all of that. It gives a capacity (depending on members of Parliament) for there to be a very useful process for the people. Sometimes it doesn't work because members of Parliament are like the general public; as we talked about with Bendigo Bank, sometimes you get motivated people and sometimes you don't, but that is the roll of the dice. The system is now set up so there's a strong committee process here. The upper house has also done its own work but I've had little or nothing to do with that but they are now also working on a very strong committee process. That was another change that occurred.

In question time, we brought in a process of supplementary questions, which wasn't there beforehand. Now a person who's asking a question can put a direct question on the same topic to the minister as a second question.

JF This should overcome your problem with people not giving specific answers.

TRENORDEN It doesn't, but it helps. At least the member can say, "Minister, you didn't answer my question." It doesn't mean they will get an answer though. I still remain very concerned in the game that gets played. I would say that the current government believe they are accountable, where I believe they are not. I'm not trying to pick on them as individuals; it's just a game that gets played and I think it's a game that's not necessary. We did that to try to open the process out so [the] Opposition has a better chance. I think it was Sir Charles Court who brought in government questions. We did look around the world at question time. In places like New Zealand, if you want to ask a question, you need to submit it in writing a week before, I think the figure is, and you read your question in and the minister reads the response back. We found nowhere where question time was actually working as the public would think it should work where you actually ask a question and get an answer. Politics is played as politics worldwide, but it has improved the process.

We've also looked at questions like, "Is the report coming in now?" It's been a long-term process looking at members' financial interests. It's not as simple as people would think because even though it's absolutely important that people know what assets I have, the question is: is it important to know what assets my children have, even though they're 35? There are members of this Parliament who have quite wealthy children who are business people in their own right or, in some cases, professors and so forth, who don't want their own personal information divulged because their parent is a politician, which I think is more than fair. We've wrestled with that question and we went around Australia and looked at the question of what should be divulged and found that in at least two states they break their own rules. Because we've had a crisis here and one person lost his ministry over it, we've had a closer look at it but these questions in dealing between the public, the Parliament and individuals are pretty hard to handle because none of them are ever straightforward.

END OF TAPE EIGHT SIDE A

TAPE EIGHT SIDE B

This is tape eight, side B, in the interviews with Max Trenorden.

JF Tape eight, side B, interviews with Max Trenorden, MLA. Max, is there more you should say about the procedure and privileges committee?

TRENORDEN Well, I've been keen to be on it and there are significant more changes I'd like to make but which are not going to happen because I'm in my last four or five months in the Assembly. Hopefully I'll be in the upper house the next term. There has been a lot of change recently and a lot of pressure on Parliament, a lot of pressure on privilege. There's a bit of an attitude towards privilege not only by [the] community but by the legal system, who don't quite understand it. People keep on talking about the processes when members inappropriately use privilege as against when privilege is used responsibly. Really, the question is about making sure we have a system that's relevant and responding to making sure that members who do things inappropriately have a negative response to them from Parliament, which is something this Parliament's never done. Until recently, in the last few years, basically, if you broke the rules, you didn't even get a rap on the knuckle. Where now with the advent of the CCC and a closer scrutiny of the process of Parliament, that is starting to change, and appropriately starting to change. In mature Parliaments like the UK, members will actually vote for penalties on their colleagues, like financial fines, suspensions from the house and those sorts of issues on an issues basis more than on a party political basis. In Australia, even in the federal scene, we still do it on a party basis; either the party backs you or it doesn't back you. It shouldn't be like that.

We've had discussions in the past about the Parliament. Yesterday [8 April 2008] there was a desire to debate the question of loss of money through Verve Energy and the Leader of the House, John Kobelke, and the Liberal Party did a deal in debate (sometimes heated) that they would do it under a process called a matter of public interest, which is a one-hour debate, but what it actually did was cut the Independents and the National Party out of the debate. The government of the day is quite happy to do that and the opposition is quite happy to do it too because it suits their needs, but it doesn't give any consciousness to a Parliament and to a requirement of a Parliament. I do despair about the Parliament. I think even though it will always stay there, genuine, decent people in that chamber really do believe that

Parliament's there for the executive to do what it's got to do, where in fact the executive exists outside of Parliament. We have had this conversation before and there's no point going over it.

I've been on that committee for a long time; I've enjoyed it. I'd have liked it to have gone further. I think there's a need for an ombudsman-type person to assist members. I think members now inadvertently get themselves into trouble, mainly because they don't think about the Parliament; they think about politics. They do things that in hindsight they should never have done in the heat of the moment and they really don't have anyone to turn to for —

JF For advice.

TRENORDEN—for advice and for a cool head and not to count to 100 but to count to 1 000 or maybe 10 000 before they do something. It's been a great experience.

JF You mentioned yourself the joint select committee on the Commission on Government. Would you like to go on and talk about that one now?

TRENORDEN It was a really interesting process. We have spoken about the time of WA Inc itself and the royal commission. The committee worked through the royal commission page by page and made recommendations. It was a large joint committee of both houses. At the time, Geoff Gallop was on it when he was Leader of the Opposition and we did debate all those issues. It was a long, long process. Now [it is] a part of history. At the time, it was pretty important. There were significant changes made to the operation of the public service and government in general. I would say that most of the new parliamentarians in the Parliament have been elected since that time, so it becomes part of yesteryear. It did make significant change and it did take a long time. It was a long, slow, hard-fought process. Out of that process, I put my submission in to the Commission on Government for the committee system, for example, so it was a useful process.

JF And that was the chief thing that you contributed in that.

TRENORDEN Well, I was involved in law because I was really keen on it and so I did debate a lot of the issues about public servants and the operation of the house. There were quite a few recommendations on the operation of the house. There were

quite a few issues there that I took a strong interest in but the one that stands out in my mind is the fact that I was able to have some impact on the committee system of the Parliament.

JF Yes. Right, now, it was probably only a fairly short one, but there was a committee on petroleum products pricing that you were involved with.

TRENORDEN Yes, and quite an important one, actually. We all know that you just have to have a conversation with 10 people and this issue will come up: the cost of fuel. These committees are very useful for members of Parliament because it makes you (I shouldn't say "makes") focus on the issue and you get a broader concept. Since that time I have also recently performed a ministerial task force for Fran Logan on the question of domestic gas arrangements. From that committee, I've followed up and done several things. I've got an understanding of the process then and on the question of what can be done. More, the question really is: what is Parliament prepared to do? It is how much you intervene in the market where the industry itself intervenes very heavily in the market. There's no question that the variation of prices is the refinery dumping fuel when it's got a surplus and when it hasn't got a surplus, the price goes the other way. That irritates the public enormously. But there are issues that could be done if the government wants them to be done. From that time, from that committee, my decision was (and I still hold it very strongly) we shouldn't worry about petrol and diesel. We have enormous amounts of gas sitting off our coast and we should be making ourselves self-sufficient on our own gas and convert most of Western Australia to a form of gas, whether it's LPG or natural gas. The transport industry is heavily going towards the natural gas fuel. It will mean they will have a constant-price fuel but they also know they'll be able to get it with the transport industry putting quotes in long term for contracts. If you look at fixed-price fuel, which natural gas would be for them, [it would be] a great advantage for the state. It would be great not only for those transport operators but for the people who are finally paying for those processes.

I learnt a great deal out of that committee and I would like to push on and keep pressing with the gas issue. The other argument is that when the world finally goes to a hydrogen-based fuel, which people tell me is still a long way away, the interim process will be taking the hydrogen (or is likely to be taking the hydrogen) out of gas. If we put in infrastructure in Western Australia based on gas, not only would we be

able to use that now for gas fuels, it is likely to be the base for hydrogen as well some time in the future.

JF That's an interesting point I'd never heard mentioned before. What do you reckon is the length of life? Have you had any figures on for how many years the natural gas resources would last if we started plugging into them to the extent you're suggesting?

TRENORDEN For us, we'd be a pimple on the elephant's backside. Just yesterday there was an announcement about the latest gas field being taken and the field would last 30 years. We should be worried about that, frankly. We have these enormous resources that future Australians might need for their own security and we're happy to sell them really quickly. I'm not sure that's in the best interests of Australia. It may be in the best interests for you and I, who are receiving the benefits out of it now as that money flows through the community but I'm not sure that we should be wholesale charging into these enormous reserves that we've got, because we've got seven or eight of them now being heavily tapped and they're saying they will last for 30 or 40 years. The argument about reserving some of that, which the Premier talks about, I think is a significant argument. He's talking about reserving 15 per cent for the state's future; I think that's a good argument. But also, the state put \$88 million into the gas pipeline and received no benefit out of it. They did that when the pipeline was in crisis and the operator was basically bankrupt. We should also have purchased a guaranteed portion of that pipeline coming down from the North West, even just a small portion of it (two or three per cent) for Western Australian public use. We're only two million people, so the amount of gas that West Australians need to go about their lives is very, very small. It is so small that it's not worth Woodside or anyone else commercially worrying about, but it's important to you and I.

JF Yes [chuckles]. Right. Coming full circle around, was the government prepared ever to do anything, particularly when this committee first came up, about petroleum —

TRENORDEN No.

JF —products pricing?

TRENORDEN It was right at the end of the term of government, there was an election coming up straight after it; it was fairly highly charged in terms of an election issue. I'd been around for a fair while before that process and I knew that would be the case. I used it to learn about the process and just to see if there is . . . No, there wasn't anything the government was prepared to do. I would say it would be a brave government to intervene to [the extent] it was necessary. In law, you could declare what is called a terminal gate price, which companies do now, but it is really a charade at the moment. If you had a situation where if you turned up with appropriately licensed vehicles, cash in your pocket and we made companies issue a daily gate price, then independents could buy fuel at a better price. That has been the argument. The independents have been squeezed out because fuel companies just decided not to give them a reasonable go. The independents, there are very few left. The competition is going down, down and down. Some of the major fuel companies . . . one manager looks after 15 to 30 sites . . . one person. The fuel system for the fuel companies, from the pipeline to the fuel tank it's totally controlled. They really don't mind where they take their profit; whether they take it out of crude oil, refining or the sale process. Anywhere along there they can make a dollar.

JF Ominous. Another committee I noticed you were on is the Anti-Corruption Committee from 1996 to 2001. Would you like to talk about that for a few minutes?

TRENORDEN That was the process leading . . . '96 to 2001. I'm just trying to think of what that committee was actually about; I've been on more committees than you can poke a stick at. How long was I on that for? Did you get that information?

JF Well, it says '96 to 2001 in your —

TRENORDEN Anti-Corruption Commission. Well, it was the process of transferring all that royal commission into a working relationship. That would have been a Court-Cowan government process to make sure those recommendations that came through were put in place for that.

JF Oh, things that had arisen through the Commission.

TRENORDEN You're right. I view that as a part of the one you talked about before.

JF Yes, right.

TRENORDEN I just saw them as being the same thing.

JF Okay, that's fine. There were a number of issues that were being debated publicly, whether or not they particularly lead to legislation and so on. The forests debate was going on at various times during your term. What position did you take on the forests issue . . . the logging of old-growth forests, for example?

TRENORDEN I and the National Party were on the losing side of that argument. I think that was one of the most ordinary debates that were around. In reality, 80 per cent of those marri and karri forests are preserved and six per cent of the jarrah forests are preserved. We didn't go out there to protect jarrah; we went out there and protected marri and karri, which was 80 per cent protected anyhow. What the public actually wanted protected was not the old-growth forest but the new forest because the new forest is the pretty forest they drive through and see. What they actually wanted protected was actually pre-harvested lots. It was one of those public debates and it was the first process where people started talking about the political process of doctors' wives. I think that is a political problem for Western Australia now . . . the doctors' wives syndrome. That basically says that the western suburbs of Perth who have got wealthy on the regions and now that they're wealthy, they don't want anything else to happen and now that they are okay, let's shut it all down. Much of the debate was on emotion, not on fact. For example (I keep on repeating myself) jarrah is the timber that's at risk. Not only is it at risk (only six per cent of the jarrah forest is left) it's at risk from dieback, significant risk from dieback as well. No-one's interested in saving jarrah because it's not a pretty tree, where karri and marri is. I'd be the first to say they're beautiful trees and I love going down that part of the world. I think that debate was ordinary. You only have to drive around the suburbs of Perth and see that we're importing Indonesian forests wholesale. We've taken our own responsibility of having a controlled process of manufacture with karri and marri and a few other timbers, excluding jarrah, and replaced it with Indonesian, unprotected —

JF Rainforest timber.

TRENORDEN Yes, and no-one seems to worry about that. I remain perplexed by that process. I think we are a far better way of having a controlled industry and use our own timber for our own use and debate ourselves about the use of that timber

instead of just driving around the furniture shops and seeing where the timber is actually coming from.

JF Another issue that came up at one stage during, I think it was the early Court years, which I thought the National Party particularly would have had a view on, was school closures . . . of smaller schools.

TRENORDEN And it's still happening today. That question about how people get relevant education in the regions is a very, very, very significant question. I quite regularly go and see the accountancy firms in my electorate just to check to see (I shouldn't say in my electorate; it is wider than my electorate in the Central Wheatbelt) just to see if things have changed. Accountants tell me that many families are expending money they haven't got in the belief that if you want to educate your kids, you've got to send them to Perth, even though there are fantastic teachers out there. I've spent a lot of time in the staff rooms. I have a real appreciation of country teachers. The perception, as against reality, in the education out there is not real (but as an ex-teacher you know that well) and some of those smaller schools are some of the better schools. Yealering, a school in my electorate has a fantastic reputation, and quite a few others, and Baker's Hill, which I talk about regularly. I just love the place. I am going there very soon (in a couple of Fridays) for the Anzac Day process, because they're just a sensational group of teachers and therefore a good school.

I am very concerned, and the National Party remains concerned, about this process of how do you get an education. It really doesn't matter [coughs]. Excuse me. The farms have got money, or the business people have money, and it's not really the issue. What concerns us is our communities are growing, despite what people say in the press; it's the towns that are growing. If you are an employee in the town, and for most country towns . . . not always can the wife in particular, but the other partner [can] work and when they do work, they often work part time or work in lower paid jobs. The capacity to raise money to send your children to a private school is a big issue for people but some of those people who don't have the money feel as if they have to because their children are their greatest resource and they want to give them the greatest chance. The perception is very strongly out there that if you want your children educated, you have to go outside the government schools. I'd love to change that perception and I do work hard at doing that. I have a current process happening in Northam where I want to create an upper school in Northam and it is progressing and I think it will succeed where Curtin University, the Catholic school,

the TAFE college (C.Y. O'Connor College) and the government schools at years 11 and 12 combine. At least the people of the Wheatbelt can see that there is a greater management than currently occurs. In Northam at the moment, we have Muresk college, which has been there for 100 years, which is not seen by general people as being part of the education process. We have Curtin University in Northam substantially already . . . better than 200 students, but all these things operate separate from each other. I would love to put them together so that people can see that together, they've become greater than —

JF There would be economies of scale in doing that, of course.

TRENORDEN And people can get the benefit of that process. When the community's looking for a chemistry teacher, that could be shared between the Catholic school and the public system and the quality of that teacher and so forth. I think [there are] sensational opportunities there. It remains in communities like mine like the Beverlies, the Brooktons, and Pingelly where they lost their upper school a couple of years ago, really important issues for the general population. As I say, those with money can avoid whatever it is. I am very aware that not all people see education as teaching the kids. Some parents really see the social component as just as important as the educational component and I have no problems with choice but I do have a great deal of concern about opportunity for the children out there. It is just as big an issue now as it was then.

JF Another big one: the Aboriginal land rights question.

TRENORDEN Yes. Just the whole Aboriginal question. Just terrible. In recent years (certainly in less than 10 years) the Aboriginal community has got involved in drug trading. In the Central Wheatbelt, the mixture between (from what I gather from people who've talked to me, including the local police) bikie groups and Aboriginals are the biggest movers of drugs in the Central Wheatbelt. That wasn't happening only a short time ago, even though drugs was always out there, it wasn't Aboriginal community involved. This whole question about Aboriginal communities is a really significant issue; well away from the question of ownership of land. For our people . . . for the Aboriginal community in the South West of Western Australia . . . there's only again around that magic figure I used a little while ago, six per cent; there's very little crown land in the South West of Western Australia that native title can affect. Most native title activity's going to be in the north. The benefit will go to those

Aboriginal communities in the north. In the south and South West Aboriginal communities, it's hard to see where Aboriginals are going to get a benefit out of that.

There's a reality that we just don't want to talk about: the violence in Aboriginal communities is just immense; the assault on children and women is significant. I've had . . . in that bracket . . . 30 to 40-year-old Aboriginal women, who I have a lot of contact with in my electorate, telling me now that they've got to check the young blokes' eyes as they come through the front door to see if they've been on drugs. Many of the decent young blokes all of a sudden are violent, not that that is just an Aboriginal issue, but it is a new process in the Aboriginal community. We're having an escalating quality of life issue with Aboriginals right through Western Australia. You don't have to go to Halls Creek to see those issues. We've identified in Northam there is around about 140 children at risk, and that is about a 60-40 split in the community. Sixty per cent are Aboriginal and 40 per cent are white, so it's close to 50-50. In saying it is 50-50 is not good enough because there are only 300 Aboriginal communities in the town of Northam. There has always been a process where someone tries to do something about that, they get branded as racist and all of that question. Also, we always approach this question with wide eyes. The coconut question is strong: that there's black on the outside and white on the inside. In my own community, there's been a McGuire family, a very strong family; John McGuire didn't quite get into shield cricket but should have done. The McGuire family is very strongly respected in the Aboriginal community and in the general community . . . coconuts in Northam because they're seen to have moved away from the Aboriginal culture. We need to be looking for mechanisms that give the Aboriginal community themselves some process here.

I can't count the meetings I've had in my office where I've had the Aboriginal community in just to work out the process; they are not a single community. Everyone looks upon Aboriginals as being Aboriginals. It's like looking at Europe and saying everyone in Europe is the same race or the same nationality; it's just a nonsense approach. I get criticised strongly because I help one Aboriginal family and the other one will come in and say, "Why are you helping that mob?" People are just not looking at this in the right way. Agencies will always fail because they look upon Aboriginals as a single entity, where they're not. It's like looking at wheatbelt towns as a single entity; life doesn't work like that. We need to work on that.

If I can just take a few minutes and give an example of a couple of years ago of just what I am talking about. I was called to Brookton. There were two Aboriginal youths in their school beating up other youths and teachers. It was a major concern. Because I have been around for a while, I asked one of the shire workers to call a meeting of all the parties in the town. We got them all together. I was fairly sure what was going to happen out of this. We met. The police were there, the school was there, the School Council was there, the P&C was there and the RSL. All those groupings in the community, I got them all together. I said, "Who's going to start?" Actually, the local policeman started and just went berserk (I am not saying "berserk", but he was angry), saying, "I've got a problem. I'm a father. My children are at school but I'm also the police officer so I've got to wear these two hats; I've got to be the police officer but I'm a father and I'm really upset about what's happened at the school," and then the meeting just blew open. Of course, a few of the white people in the room just said this family's disgusting, its disgraceful and away they went and looked at the Aboriginal grouping who were there and they said, "Well we think the family's disgraceful and terrible too." The whites just thought that being Aboriginal they'd be part of the Aboriginal community . . . they're not. These people had come from out of town and the local Aboriginals didn't accept them either. What became very clear to people almost instantly was you had an isolated family here. The Aboriginal community didn't want anything to do with them and the white community didn't want anything to do with them. There was a dysfunctional family, definitely a family in crisis, but nobody was looking at them compassionately. I think that's a common story right throughout Western Australia. While we keep on looking at this question of native title and who's going to own land, I think it's gone way past that process.

Even this question of saying sorry, in my constituency there's a lot of people who are still angry about that because some of the Aboriginal people just behave inappropriately in my community [by] shoving elderly ladies off the footpaths saying, "This is my country, what are you doing walking on my footpath." I'm not saying all Aboriginals do that because they don't, but you only need one or two doing that to make a whole white community really upset. Nobody really wants to dig into that question, I think. It's about time we just peeled the surface off and let it go. There is an attitude (quite wrong attitude) that racism is a one-way street. Aboriginals are as racist to whites as some whites are to Aboriginals. I think that process has calmed down a lot but I am concerned. I go to football and sporting entities [events] in my town and I see the whole community mixing together and with genuine affection for

each other, walk out the door and they're not. I've got Polish people in my town who have been there from the Second World War who still haven't integrated into the community. It's not just a question of Aboriginals; it's how people get on with each other. I just don't believe that we look at these things realistically.

I would just say, looking at the well intentioned stuff that John Howard was doing and that Rudd's now talking about, all of it will end in the rubbish bin until we decide we are actually dealing with individuals here and we need to look at people on an individual basis. In terms of Aboriginal communities, I believe we need to give some accountability back to those groupings who are naturally there. Leadership is totally absent in the wheatbelt. People who call themselves elders are doing the job of elders but technically they're not really elders under the true traditional process of being elders. Therefore, not every Aboriginal agrees with that process of them being elders. That's one of the things I feel I will depart politics where nothing's improved. I would say, in my community, the Aboriginal community is getting less services now than they were 15 years ago. Fifteen years ago we used to have these racist ideas of alcohol officers and people teaching a group how to eat and that sort of stuff.

END OF TAPE EIGHT SIDE B

TAPE NINE SIDE A

This is tape nine in the series of interviews with Max Trenorden MLA, this one being recorded on the 15th of April 2008 with interviewer John Ferrell.

JF Max, the main topic to talk about this morning will be your period of leadership in the National Party, and to start off with that tell me the circumstances around the demise of Hendy Cowan.

TRENORDEN Well, it was quite a surprise. In fact I don't think the world knows just how it happened. So I made it clear from after the election that I would be putting my name up for leadership until they were successful. That was not a gambit I decided on; I was pressed by quite a few of the senior National Party lay party people to do that; and in the end what actually happened was that Hendy refused to make changes with his staff, which had been some serious discontent towards the end of the governing period, and it was actually Monty House, his closest friend and ally, who moved the motion for a spill motion, and the resulting successful vote. When I went into that particular meeting, I wasn't expecting to come out leader of the National Party, but it was over members wishing to have a bit of a new broom and a new attitude, where Hendy . . . and a lot to his credit I would guess . . . was very loyal to particular members, who National Party parliamentary members, had lost a fair bit of faith in; and that was the catalyst in the end.

JF Are you able to say on tape who these people were?

TRENORDEN It was the press secretary, a very likeable fellow, this is going back a few years now, Peter . . . [Jackson] again, I'll get that name for you . . . who had been his press person for many years. As I say, I quite liked him but he did have a style about him which annoyed other members. But the other one was what they called the green dragon, which was Hendy's personal assistant who had been in that role for some time and took a personal interest in protecting Hendy, which had a significant reaction from some members. Her name was Joy. . . [Shadbolt] She was from a Mukinbudin family. I will chase both of those names up for you.

JF Yes, and so the motion came from Monty House to have a leadership spill?

TRENORDEN Yes.

JF And so it was a contest between whom?

TRENORDEN Well, in the end there wasn't a contest. Once the spill motion was carried, which was enthusiastically pressed by Ross Ainsworth, once that was carried it was a done deal and it just emerged that I was leader and Terry Waldron was deputy leader. We went out to a press conference, to an amazed press; they were absolutely stunned. I personally think that Hendy designed it that way. It is difficult for a politician, particularly some politicians, to decide on your demise. You have to go at some stage, particularly when you have been leader and particularly when you have been Deputy Premier. You know, how do you organise a demise? I think Hendy was deliberately stubborn and even slightly obnoxious to stir up those feelings. That was my view. I think it was basically a suicide, a political suicide. So I am sure Monty had thought about doing what he did before he came into the room. Monty was just determined to get Hendy to do some things and carry on as leader, but I think Hendy had decided it was his way or no way.

JF And so some people, I think, have conjectured that Monty House also should have been in the running. What's the story there?

TRENORDEN No, Monty was definitely of the view that he was exiting the Parliament. He did not argue about being leader. I don't think he would have won the contest at the time because, as after many elections as we've just seen in the federal scene, the leadership group takes a bit of a pounding once you go from government to opposition.

JF Yes, and so how did you feel? How confident did you feel in taking on the position of leader after a very strong man like Hendy?

TRENORDEN Well, that didn't worry me because, as we've said in the previous papers, Hendy and I were significantly different people; we came from different parts of the planet. What was of more concern to me, and I didn't go into the task with any great panic or concern, my worry was the declining party in a process where you could look at being in opposition for at least two terms. That's normally what happens; unless something outstanding occurs, you're in opposition for two terms. So I knew the real world. I knew that the chances of being successful weren't that

flash. Then we had the opportunity that came a bit later, but we'll talk about that a little bit later today. I wasn't perturbed about it. I believed there was an opportunity for us. I could see One Nation on the decline. I had done a lot of work in Canada and looking at the Canadian political system, which I still think has got a large relevance to the Australian system; so I had some strong views about where we should go.

JF And where would you have taken the party; what was your vision?

TRENORDEN My vision was about being more inclusive and being more individual to people, seeking the aspirations of country people. And what Hendy used to say, "Standing beside them". That was one of Hendy's favourite sayings, which I think is true. You need to stand beside those people who support you and believe in the general concept. So my great passion was always for the regions, and my vision was to look at building those aspirations, but doing it as an independent party, not closely linked with the Liberal Party.

JF What sort of support did you have for that sort of view, firstly amongst the parliamentary party and secondly in the wider party?

TRENORDEN Nearly total support amongst the parliamentary party or close enough to it. There was only a difference on some minor issues from time to time. In the lay party there was some more concern because the lay party had been very used to coalitions with the Liberal Party, and there was always an argument in the National Party that in opposition should we be in coalition or in opposition or not? But in fact most of the time in the last 40-odd years of the history of the Country Party through to National Party, we were always not in coalition in opposition. We came to opposition either towards the end of a term or immediately after election, and I favoured that view because it gave you an opportunity for a period of years to fly your own colours and make your own statements, and more importantly have your own policies. One of the great promises about coalitions is the mooting of regional policies.

JF And I think this issue of whether or not you're able to field members or candidates in the same seat as a Liberal candidate and so on has been a burning issue, hasn't it, on and off with Nationals?

TRENORDEN Well, not so much with Nationals but it's been a hot issue because in reality in terms of contest it doesn't matter; unlike in Queensland where they have an

optional preferential process, where in fact that is a gerrymander for the Labor Party. What the option of preferential process does is split the conservative vote because in Queensland you can vote one and then stop voting. So if you vote one for Labor, you head towards a majority, but if you vote one for National or one for Liberal and don't continue down the ballot paper, you actually vote for opposition, and the public just don't understand that. We have a compulsory preferential system where we must mark the ballot paper most of the way through; whoever gets the majority in that process wins. That system I think has been a strong assistance for the coalition over here because it allows someone who doesn't want to vote Labor but doesn't want to vote Liberal or National to vote for someone else and the vote will still be recorded there; where in the Queensland model that vote just vanishes off to the ether.

JF Yes. Talk about the parliamentary party at this stage when you took it over; how many people were involved and so on?

TRENORDEN Very much as it is now except different seats. There were five lower house members and one upper house member. We had lost a seat in the Ag region, which was disappointing. We always used to have two. It would be interesting in this coming election to see if we can get that back; so we were on a declining base very significantly thanks to One Nation or thanks to people going from us to One Nation. So, it's not to pick on One Nation but that actually was the demise of the process, and some of those people haven't come back to the National Party. So it was a declining base, so we had five lower house members which constituted a party, and one Upper House member, which is still a reasonable slice of the Western Australian Parliament, and I think that will continue for the National Party for some time; and it was an experienced group of members, not a large number of new members.

JF And how did life change for you then by becoming leader?

TRENORDEN Well, the serious part was the lay party was in steep decline. We'd gone from a situation where the lay party had a lot of money. I spent a lot of my time working in a process where we could keep a format going for a lay party and without costing a lot of money. In due course I solved that situation by getting a sponsorship from a large (oh, I'll say rural) accounting firm, but they're not really. I mean, in the last 15 years they've hardly been rural but their origins were rural; and that is what used to be CP Birds and they are now called Birds Cameron, I think, is the current title. They allowed us to use an office in their building and use some of their facilities

to support the National Party. It wouldn't have been expensive for them in money but it would have been in time, but that stabilises a steeply declining lay party problem.

JF And of course that problem had been provoked partly by the problems with Mr Fabulous and so on long before your era.

TRENORDEN Yes, that was a very serious time and it was before my era, and people like John Paterson lost his farm out of that process. So some people got very badly burnt in that process, and that was to seek a commercial activity that would keep the money rolling in for the National Party. But not long after I joined, there was a fundraising process which raised half a million and put it into a trust account, but that was slowly blown over a number of years on good intentions that didn't turn out; so that process basically repeated itself. So when I became the party leader, there was very little left of the lay party and certainly no money. Whereas nearly four years on from the time I left the leadership role, the party is in good stead now. One of the things I was able to do was to stable that basis and allow them to regroup. I spent countless hours out in the corporate world seeking donations for the party and that work, I think, has worked. I always for some reason had a strong acceptance amongst the corporate world. I was liked for some reason. I think I probably shouldn't say "for some reason"; I think significantly that was because of Hendy and Monty who were seen as very practical ministers who often sorted the wheat from the chaff, to use a country term, in terms of activity and industry and were very well and are very well respected in industry. The National Party still is, as we were only told a couple of days ago that another company has given for us a significant amount of money (about \$20 000) because they see us as a moderating force between the Liberal Party and the Labor Party, and don't play the games that the Liberal Party and the Labor Party play. So the lay party right now is financially doing quite well, which is, I think, a great relief, and well administered. So I spent a lot of my time, in fact a great deal of my time, in corporate offices and trying to fix up that process and then, of course, leading towards the last election.

JF Would your life have changed very much in terms of having to appear on media and that sort of thing?

TRENORDEN Yes. That never worried me. One of the things I haven't mentioned, which was a very significant aspect of my life and I should have mentioned it much earlier, was in my younger days in Northam I joined a Rostrum Club, and that taught

me a great deal. The reality about giving public speaking, about being a public speaker, sometimes you start with your left foot and you stay there. Rostrum just taught you that you just do the best you can in those circumstances. Sometimes you start well and you finish well. Rostrum, I found to be an enormous benefit, not just in going from an ordinary speaker to just a bit better speaker, but we were a very aggressive club and we learnt chairmanship. We'd put a member into the chair and we'd give them curry, to say the least, but it just taught you how to control a meeting, how to predict what was coming or try to predict what's coming, and what you'd do to ease circumstances and get out of it. Even though it was play acting, members used to scream and shout and demand, and it was a great experience. But also being in situation where you'd be eating your steak and someone would just say, "Max Trenorden, stand up. You're the best man at a wedding. Give your speech now, no clichés", and away you'd have to go, meaning instantly. So you'd have to think and speak at the same time. So I actually enjoyed the media, I always have enjoyed the media.

JF Was that Rostrum Club in Northam or in the city?

TRENORDEN Yes, in Northam. I became an accredited critic. In those days I used to do a fair bit of work, not a great deal but a bit, going around other clubs doing critic working and going to conventions and so forth. I really enjoyed Rostrum for quite a few years. So, yes, the media . . . so I knew you'd either do well or not do well so it didn't worry me; you just put a thought in your mind and tried to get that thought across. I've been told since, to my surprise quite a few people have told me since, that I wasn't a bad TV performer; but I enjoyed those processes and still do whenever the opportunity comes.

JF Now, you said that Hendy had a press officer. Did you have to add staff?

TRENORDEN Well, I just basically took . . . well, I had to take on staff and that was an interesting process. I found myself down at St Georges Terrace in Hendy's old office, which Premier and Cabinet were pressing me to get out of, and Hendy refused to go, but I didn't want to be in St George's Terrace in flash buildings overlooking the river. I ended up coming up very close to Parliament here and it was very functional; I mean, nowhere near as flash but a very functional process and then I appointed staff. Now, I took on quite a few of the previous minister's staff and I have to say they were

outstanding people amongst that. One of my early chiefs-of-staff was Robert Taylor, who is currently the political journalist at *The West*. He was on the outer of *The West*. [He] had some sort of internal dispute and had left in a rage. He told me that he'd only be with me for a short period of time but he taught me a great deal in a short period of time. He was particularly skilful in dealing with the arguments of One Nation and those types of disruptive arguments in the regions. Then Doug Cunningham, who is still with the National Party now, who was Eric Charlton's press person for a long time, amongst others. He would have spent a long time with me and then with Brendon Grylls currently.

JF So just those two were the main players?

TRENORDEN There were many other staff members. . . Aileen Murrell. There were quite a few staff members that passed through in that period. Interestingly, mostly female because I find, in the attributes of male against female, women tend to make very good researchers for some reason; there's something analytical about their processes, I found. There were probably 10 or more or so. I wouldn't like to go through mentioning them. Because many of them were significantly important to me at the time, I wouldn't want to play one up against the other, but one of them, Mia Davies, who is a young person I gave a start, is now the Director of the National Party, and she'll be heading off to Parliament at some stage, I hope, and she's Dexter Davies' daughter.

JF Right, yes, so it's a family attachment in a sense.

TRENORDEN Yes. There was a time there, though, one of the persons who was our chief-of-staff right at the beginning was Tony Marwick who was an AMP colleague, and he had a dreadful run. The Labor Party took a significant dislike to him and despite my attempts to protect him because I thought he was doing more than a good job, they didn't like him because he had some Liberal Party associations in the past. They gave him a terrible time and finally I had to ask him to resign. But he was doing a job which he wasn't trained for and I thought under the circumstances we were in . . . and this is right at the beginning of the process . . . we were doing okay. But things improved after I got the party onto a more, better financial basis and I didn't have to worry about lack of money every day of the week. And then, as I say, Robert Taylor came in and things improved quite sharply after that. My office was in

general a pretty comfortable place to be but there were times, like all leader processes, occasional tension there.

JF You still had to maintain an electoral office as well as your leader's office, of course, so that would immediately split you between two places, I suppose.

TRENORDEN And I had an electorate secretary and a person I just again haven't mentioned up to now. Lorraine Gargett was my first electorate officer and she remained with me for 21 years. I owe a great deal to Lorraine, even going back reading past *Hansards*. From my electorate office Lorraine did a great deal for my family. She'd back me up on many, many occasions when I couldn't be there because she is a very capable lady and she would guess things were going to happen before I knew it. She was always lecturing me about putting too much effort onto my plate and making my life impossible, but she was right most of the time. I'd say, "No, no, I'll manage it", but I, at most times, didn't manage it; I'd always be running late and other matters. I tried to put too much into a day, in other words. She was a significant part of my success. She was a fantastic electorate officer in the electorate. She helped countless people and was fantastic to me in the fact that she was able to take a lot of those roles that bug many members of Parliament and do it basically totally herself and just tell me the outcomes. So I was able to do this and when you ran into a constituent, of course, she'd tell them I did it, of course, like all members of Parliament do. But, nevertheless, I was always running into very grateful people who I had helped, when in fact Lorraine had helped. So she was a fantastic operator, a big part of whatever success I've been, and it's amazing I haven't mentioned that up till now.

JF Yes, and were there other people that were around her; who did she have with her?

TRENORDEN We had quite a few people; not large numbers, I suppose. We had a few people moving through my electoral office and there were a range of people who were very useful. There's a whole range of stories we could tell about that too, but I probably had one person that I considered to be not the best in my office and the rest of them have been outstanding. So I've been supported by . . . for most of my electorate time we were only allowed to have one person, so most of the time there was one person there. In more recent times we were allowed to have a casual or part-time role and that's been carried in my office by a small number of people on a

part-time basis. But in general, I've had a very good office that served the electorate of Avon very well.

JF So you talked about the fact that you always tried to put too much into 24 hours. Did the leadership as such increase the length of your day?

TRENORDEN No, I was pretty much a workaholic. What it did was take a slice away from my electorate activity, which Lorraine used to go berserk about because I spent less time, like all leaders, in my own electorate. But there's a counterbalance, of course; much more time in the media. So there was a balance in that process and Lorraine was more than quite capable of running the office, so I don't think I paid much of a penalty there. What I did do was remove the time from my electorate office to a leadership role. In fact, after I resigned (or got dumped, whichever description you want to use) from the leadership, I did get a few phone calls from prominent people in my electorate saying, "It's good to have you back", because I was always a very hands-on member in my electorate and I still am now. I spent a really enjoyable day yesterday grappling with the local issues which I think will be significant; and so I spent four years not doing that.

JF Coming to the actual business of leadership, how would you describe your management style?

TRENORDEN I was always benevolent but no leader really can be benevolent, and I have said this, I think, in past tapes. But the reality is people love mongrel in their leadership even though they'll agree in talkback programs and talk to the nth degree that they don't like mongrel leadership, but people always like mongrel in leadership. So you've got to have a touch of mongrel, which I never had. I've never been a hater and I've never held grudges and I don't particularly like hurting people. I mean, I would avoid that if I could; not good leadership qualities, I'd have to say. I think I had vision and those sorts of arguments I knew where I wanted to go, but you really can't be Mr Nice Guy and succeed in leadership.

JF And how successful do you think you were at actually getting the party to work for you?

TRENORDEN I don't think it was that. In the National Party that's never a problem. I wasn't sitting over the Labor Party or the Liberal Party where people are working with

you and, in the case of the Labor Party, actually hate you. That's not the case in the National Party. As I've said in previous processes, we'd have enormous fights, but be talking friendly by the time we got to the door. So we didn't take those things personally and the current body still doesn't take those things personally. So they weren't hard, as long as you sat down and discussed the process and said, "This is where I want to go. Are you with me?" In due course they'd say, "Yes", and they would be with you. Even if some of them may not agree about the direction, as long as you had that debate they would be with you. So that wasn't ever the problem. The problem's more about being aggressive and keeping people in tow. There were a couple of people I had troubles with in such a small group. One was Murray Criddle, who is just a wonderful man, a tremendous bloke, but every day he fronted the party room he had a different view. It is very difficult to deal with people who were never in the same place. For me that's what Murray was like. Brendon, who I like a lot, but Brendon was hugely ambitious and if I'd been that sort of leader bit, I would have put him down. But I'm not worried about that. I had my chance and, you know, I was never designed to be Prime Minister of Australia [laughter].

END OF TAPE NINE SIDE A

TAPE NINE SIDE B

Tape nine, side B in the interviews with Max Trenorden, MLA.

JF Max, who were the confidantes that you had? A leader usually needs people to talk to.

TRENORDEN Eric Charlton was definitely one. Doug Cunningham was definitely one. Dexter Davies was another. Tony . . . I mentioned just a few minutes ago; must be getting dementia . . . [Marwick] the chief of staff in the old days but he's not here now. So there was a range of people. In our office Aileen Murrell and Mia Davies; so I didn't have any shortage of people I could go to and seek a point of view. My experience was through my life experiences that I always sought advice so I'd just gauge who was best to give me that particular area of advice. Marwick was the name I was looking for.

JF Tony Marwick, yes.

TRENORDEN So I'd just seek people out. On occasions there would be someone like Mick Gayfer but not often. So I didn't have any shortage of people I could turn to. But people like the chairman of the 500 Club, which I had a fairly significant involvement with and I'm still pretty well involved. I went to a meeting of the 500 Club a few days ago and the executive group there have had a . . . I seem to be very high in their esteem. So Peter Middleton, who is the president of that, I used to spend a bit of time with, and a couple of other industry people I would go to. So I was never short of people I could seek some advice from.

JF Does anything come to mind where you had a significant change of mind because of consultation with valuable people?

TRENORDEN I mean the times that play on my mind are the lead-up to the election where I made a decision, because of a range of circumstances, I'd take a particular role and I'll forever regret doing that. In those circumstances Colin Barnett as Leader of the Liberal Party was struggling to hold any coherent process amongst his colleagues, a lot of his colleagues didn't like him. So I decided that the best thing I could do was be a strong deputy to him to give him some solace, and Colin did speak to me a lot during that campaign where he would speak to very few other people. He

is a very insular man, Colin, very capable and I like him a great deal and I hope we remain friendly for some time in, but in the end that developed into a disaster. In hindsight, whether it was 20-20 vision, there are some things I would liked to have done differently, like the canal that just appeared out of nowhere. It wasn't Colin Barnett's idea; it was an idea from an adviser that came over from the eastern states who unbelievably sat down in a meeting with myself and Colin and a couple of our advisers and told us that we couldn't argue against the Gallop government on taxation, education, health, transport, all the things we should've been arguing against, and we had to come up with a grand vision if we ever wanted to be elected, and that's where the canal came from; very disappointing. This person then went off to the Northern Territory and turned the Northern Territory into a miniscule little party too. The Liberal Party and Country Party under his leadership or guidance also crashed there. He gave us terrible advice. I questioned him strongly at the time but I didn't perform like a seal and I should've done because the advice was just shocking.

JF Who was the person?

TRENORDEN I'd have to go back. I've sort of written him out of my mind. I think his Christian name may have been Ian. [Henke] I'd have to go and seek that name again with some others, because a habit I've got with people that I . . . I don't take dislike to people, I just sort of wipe the CD clean. He was just a terrible influence and I don't blame Colin for listening to him because I believe he was an adviser in Reith's ministerial office when he was the minister. So he came over here as the Liberal Party wise man from the east and was far from that. And, of course, in the last few days of the election Colin made his faux pas about the budget. Between the two events (between the canal and the budget process) we went from a situation where Labor Party ministers were telling me after the election they were shredding their documents (the polling had told them they had lost) to a situation where they won comfortably all within a week or so. Again, that's politics and I won't be burnt by those memories but I will regret not taking a stronger role in that process. I'll never forget Murray Criddle, who was the opposition spokesperson on water, trying to describe the canal on ABC radio the next morning when he'd never heard of it before; not fantastic times in campaigns.

JF No [laughs]. So then before you sort of talk any more about your decline as leader, what about being positive for a minute or two and talk about the things that you think were real gains under your leadership?

TRENORDEN The gains were I put the lay party on to a sound basis. No, the rest of it I don't think of it as gains at all, which really led up to my demise as leader, and we should talk about that for a moment whenever you're ready. But I had spent a lot of time arguing a position where I wanted an independent National Party, where members like Brendon Grylls and Murray Criddle were just full bent on amalgamation with the Liberal Party. That was their intent and we used to have furious arguments about that. I always used to say, "Over my dead body", which was ultimately where it had to go because there was no way I wanted to amalgamate with the Liberal Party, where they were just absolutely intent on it. So was Terry Redman, a newly elected member replacing Monty House; he was just adamant that there had to be amalgamation with the Liberal Party.

JF And they are not actually really any closer to a merger at this stage, are they, some three or four years down the track?

TRENORDEN No; that is right. What actually happened is we decided we'd have a what they love to call a "love-in" so we organised a weekend away in Horrocks Beach and it all came to a head there, and it had to come to a head but it was just said, "With you as leader we'll never be able to amalgamate with the Liberal Party", which is correct, "and you have to go because we've got to amalgamate with the Liberal Party now." I kept on pouring out to them, "Who are you going to do the negotiations with? Are you going to do them with Matt Birney?" who was the leader at the time, "or Danielle Blain?" because they were just extremely naive in their view on just how politics works; because the Liberal Party wouldn't all of a sudden decide to have a meeting because someone turned up and said that the National Party wanted to amalgamate with them. Life just doesn't work like that, particularly with the Liberal Party that has always had the view that if you sit around and wait long enough, the National Party will go away. And the view of the Liberal Party clearly (and I spent a lot of time talking to these people) was that they had nothing to gain by amalgamating with the National Party, and I would agree totally that we had nothing to gain in amalgamating with them. But that was the intention and, of course, it came to a situation where if a vote was held I think it probably would have been 3-3. So, I just don't think a leader should stay on in a situation where the vote is 3-all and my vote is one of those votes. So, I chose to announce at a 500 Club function that I would resign that day, and I did. I didn't do any of that in anger; I didn't do any of that in haste; I just did it in sheer disappointment, and particularly seeing then from a

short time after that Brendon Grylls and Terry Redman came out with this anti, fiercely, violently opposed to the Liberal Party process which they argued for a year against. But that's politics.

JF So it was really the Young Turks that were besieging you, I should safely say.

TRENORDEN Yes, the Young Turks, and they were constantly saying how could I be a minister under the current format, and that used to irritate me greatly too because I just don't think you should be heading into . . . my personal belief is anyway (and we talked about that much earlier) I believe you should go into politics for service and if you do end up being a minister or whatever, that's a reward. I don't think you should be —

JF Aiming at that?

TRENORDEN Aiming at that; particularly blatantly aiming at it, which was Brendon Grylls' and Terry Redman's view, that why would you be in politics if you weren't going to be a minister, which is a view held by quite a few people.

JF Yes. We haven't got an awful lot of time left, but we have not talked at all about relations with the federal party. Is there something to be said about that?

TRENORDEN Well, a great deal in fact. We can talk a great deal about that. I had a tremendous respect for Tim Fischer. Tim Fischer, I think, was one of the greater, better party leaders that any party has ever seen. Two-minute Tim he used to call himself, but he would make two-minute speeches and that's it. But he had a fantastic relationship with most of the people of Australia. No-one's ever got a relationship with everyone, but he had a fantastic rapport with [people] and understood what regional Australia was about. There was a fellow, Charles Blunt, before him. He was a city person who was a disaster for the National Party. Along came Tim Fischer and settled all that down, so I spent a lot of time with Tim. Tim would come through here regularly. I knew him before politics. He visited his family, two of them specifically, and my family just happened to be on the same ship. We became friendly. They came to our farm in the late '70s or early '80s and Tim came with them. He was a state member of Parliament in those days before he was on the federal scene, so I knew him for a long while. I have nothing but praise for he and his operation. As I

said, John Paterson from here was the federal president for some time and did a very good job as federal president. I have had a strong association with quite a few of the senior people of the National Party. I used to enjoy going to the National Party conferences as much for personal contacts as the party process. There were just some wonderfully sound individuals in those days in the National Party: John Anderson, just an immensely decent man. I would describe him as a very decent man, not of the stature of Tim Fischer in his capacity but nevertheless a very decent man; he tried his level best to be just that. Again, going back to Tim, even now his opponents say that he was dead straight, which can't be said of too many politicians, even in my view about leadership. You have to have that touch of mongrel in you, which I didn't even see in Tim Fischer, so perhaps I'm contravening [contradicting] myself. They were the main things I want to say about the federal process. There's always been a large tension. Hendy used to fight very heavily with the federal party, which I always thought was a . . . I didn't know how you could promote the brand of the National Party when you opposed the brand, but that's the salesman in me. But Hendy used to fight quite strongly with the federal leadership when he was there from time to time, not always but from time to time. And, again, that's turned very sour at the moment with Peter McGauran who I've got on very well with over the years wanting to resign and move on; you can't blame him for that, but there's great concern about holding those seats. So the federal party might be in a bit of strife at the moment.

JF So, perhaps this is a moment to talk about what do you see then as the future for the National Party?

TRENORDEN The National Party will keep going on. The question will be about the capacity with the new electoral system to sustain that, but as long as I breathe the conservatives will win elections some time in the future and I'll be pushing to change the electoral system again. I'd be pushing for the Canadian model. There was actually an academic debate in Canada quite a few years ago about what should be a role here instead of a party political debate which happened here. The Canadian High Court in fact, off memory, decided that a 25 per cent variation in seats takes into account stupid situations of Kalgoorlie, for example. [An area] bigger than most countries of the world supplies the bulk of the wealth of Australia and has no representation. In that process, the Canadian process strongly brought in a range of what they called disability factors, which should be brought into account in certain seats, and their constitution puts down a 25 per cent variation in seats where I think

our bill here has something like 10, where the bill here was to suit the Labor Party, not to suit any principle of one vote, one value. And you have this stupid situation where the Labor Party seats are protected; they don't have one vote, one value, so the Kimberley and the Pilbara ducked all that because they were Labor Party seats. Why would they be dealt with any differently than any other seat? So when I finally get out of politics, I'll watch because I don't think I'll see a conservative government while I remain in politics; but shortly thereafter there will be and I'll try to keep an association to make sure that the electoral system gets changed again.

JF Well, then, on that note how long do you expect to stay around?

TRENORDEN I have nominated for the upper house in the next term. There is a chance that the National Party will replace the Greens in having the balance of numbers in the other place, and that would give me an opportunity to be a senior player for the last few years in my life . . . life as a politician, hopefully; I hope I live beyond that . . . but I certainly will not be doing any more than one more term. A great deal of people who I have an enormous amount of time for, want me out now. I'm in a relationship now and have a partner who is a fantastic person. I'm not quite sure I could say she's supportive. She hasn't got a clue about politics, which is one of the things I like about her, so it's easy to see a life and a life beyond all of that. I've got a range of things we spoke about partially I'd very much like to see done. There's a range of reforms that I'd love to see go through the house, particularly in the way the budget and estimates is done in the house. I think it's very inappropriate at the moment, and I think I have the capacity to make that significantly better. I don't get a lot of support on that because, as I said earlier, most members of Parliament just want the theatre; they don't actually want a Parliament, [they're] not really interested in having a Parliament . . . and some other changes I'd like to see if I could finally nail down. Also in the seat of Avon, which I won't be the member for Avon anymore, it's probably appropriate that I leave the lower house as the seat of Avon vanishes for all time, I presume. The area is on fire; a lot of very positive things are happening up there now. I'm in the process of getting an upper school where Curtin University and the local Catholic school and the government school and the TAFE College will be one for years 11 and 12. I'm certain I can win that and I think that would be a very significant issue for the region. There's a range of other very positive things that are happening up there, which I'd just love to see finished. I know there's not a time when there are not issues like that around, but at the moment some decade-old issues are solvable and I'd like to just see some of those solved before I hang up my

boots, but it will not be any further away than the end of the next term. I've been endorsed for the Agricultural Region as the number one ticket holder. That should be a comfortable win. I'll be disappointed if we can't get two up, so I'll be working hard to do that. The National Party has always been able, unlike other parties, to come up with quality candidates and, again, this campaign we've got a range of really quality people and if I could see a few of them safely in the house putting forward the values of regional people, country people, which I think is just so fundamentally important. I was with some business people just the other day just having a general chat in a private function and this person who is a major manager of commercial activities in Perth said the problem in Western Australia is all the power is in Perth politically and commercially; it's all in Perth, and nothing else gets listened to. He's saying it as a Perth person who just deals with Western Australia generally. So I think that's true, and I think the focus has become more and more and more on Perth and less and less on Western Australia. Professor Webb, when he was more active than he currently is, used to argue about having a Perth Parliament and a regional Parliament. Now, I don't believe that will ever happen but it wouldn't be a bad idea, where the budget was split between Perth, and Perth was run as Perth, and Western Australia was run as everything else other than Perth. You would actually see a bit more equity in the process if that happened, but I just see a very heavily declining equity for the regions. In the regions the taps have just been turned off, and in due course Perth will pay the price because the food won't come in, the produce won't come in and the income won't come in. Once the rail stops running and the roads stop being serviceable, the ports stop operating; not that I am saying that's in the short term but if you extend that out over 50 years of neglect, that just might happen.

JF Okay, well changing tack a bit and looking ahead, say, to the possibility of retirement, what's your attitude to the superannuation question for politicians? Do you think they've done the right thing in adjusting it as they have?

TRENORDEN The superannuation for politicians has been a disaster all along, and I'm a bit of an expert on this. What actually happened was they had a standard benefit promise scheme 30 years ago but being polities and being all . . . two things: they concentrated on themselves and concentrated on what the public think about them. When the whole superannuation industry and commercial world changed, ours didn't. It stayed very much frozen because no-one wanted to be in the Western Australian [one] and no-one wanted to promote it. So the scheme got well and truly out of balance. When I was a single father here under my superannuation scheme, if

I died my kids would've got nothing, but now I've survived I'll get a very large sum of money. That is a scheme out of balance, and it was put out of balance not by members demanding great benefits, but by refusing to move with the times, because every time there's a movement here it's on the front page of *The West*. So lack of movement was the first issue. But what's currently happened has been a significant disadvantage for the newer members. The newer members are on the same scheme as everyone else out there, which is in itself not so bad but the argument is about judges and all the other people on the same process. If you don't give people benefits to do the sort of job I'm doing, the bulk of people are not going to choose to do it. I'd say one out of 10 people accept approaches now about being politicians at the best I'd say, and the better people know they'll do better elsewhere. So, if you look forward in your life and say, "What's best in this process, what's best for my family, what's best financially?" you'd never go into politics. Certainly, "What's best for my family?" Politics puts enormous strain on family. So, we spend our time not rewarding wives, not rewarding children and whenever they do get rewarded they're on the front page of *The West Australian*. My children have been in the press, not often but occasionally, and it hurts them significantly; they just don't like that sort of . . . I'm the member of Parliament, not them. So, I think the whole question of superannuation has been handled badly. You either have a situation where we did have where people get paid a modest amount of money to be members of Parliament and get a significant superannuation benefit, or you pay them really well up-front. I think there's a good argument for both processes but we're doing neither at the moment. I get paid less than the . . . I'd probably be the fourth or fifth highest paid person in the town of Northam. The CEO of the Council would be paid considerably more than me, the manager of the development commission and a few other people, [like] the local judge. Not that it matters whether you are paid more or less than those, but if it's going to be a measure which people want good people to go into the process, you're going to have to think about that. As we said in an earlier tape, I was happy to go from \$125 000 to \$34 000. I was probably an idiot to do that, but nevertheless it didn't concern me because I'd never gone through my life concerned about money, but many people do; and it's not about money because that money is actually some of the basis where you do reward your wife or your husband, you do reward your children by saying, "This amount gets taken away from you but this is what I can give you back". But if you can't give too much back, I think again the state will struggle to get quality members of Parliament.

JF Just one or two little things to pick up before the end of the tape, what's your feeling about the republican move?

TRENORDEN I oscillate. I always call myself a republican. I would like to see Australia stand on its own feet, but at the same time there is no more benign a process than the current Governor-General. Apart from Kerr standing up, it is an absolutely benign process that works, and people can actually have a genuine affection for the Governor-General, like we had seen in yesterday's paper for the new announcement, where a person can step in that position and people can say, "Yes, I like that because they're not Labor, they're not Liberal, they're not communists, they're not National Party and they're not green; they're just individuals, prominent Australians." So that Governor-General role, the current role, gives them significant ability to be leaders without a political aroma to it, which I think is important. Once we go to a new system, that would vanish. So if we have a directly elected president, we'll have the American system without any doubt. Once a person starts putting their name up to be the individual that starts campaigning for that position, that will be a party-paid position without question, and it'll be a part of the party process and it will change the nature of Australia totally over a period of time, and Australians don't think enough about that. It'll actually bring in a new level of governance. Even if that person won't have significant managerial roles, they'll have a significant leadership role, and that I worry about. So I would not support a directly elected president, or whatever the title may be. Then you come up with: what is the other method, because at the moment our Governor-Generals have been benign? Even when Hayden was there and did make a few comments about going to [a] republica and a few other things that he promoted politically, people ignored it basically because he was the Governor-General; everyone knew he had no power. And that title of being the Queen's representative without there being any . . . I mean, the Queen never gets advised of any of those things and all that's nonsense. So if we could just cut the Queen in England from that process, I'd probably be happy with the current process because it works. I mean, I just am very concerned that if we do make a fourth tier, although there wouldn't be a fourth tier, it would be a fifth tier, of party activity in the future I think we would regret that.

JF I think probably at this stage there's nothing else that's burning in my mind to talk to you about, unless you've got anything else that you'd like to say at all in the minute or two that's left.

TRENORDEN I remain concerned, after doing 22 years as a member of Parliament, I remain concerned about how we function. In reality, Western Australia is a state of two million people; we are in fact a large local government. I mean, if you look at the state of New York or a few other municipalities that are in theory smaller than us but in fact massively larger than us, we take things out of context too much. I just worry about how the Parliament's going to keep on functioning. There'll always be a Parliament, but at the moment I sit down there, Speakers are very biased; they've been biased on both sides; they remain biased. The executive comes into the chamber with absolute control of the chamber. Just a few days ago there was a deal struck between the Labor Party and the Liberal Party to do something, just cut the National Party and Independents out; and a Parliament shouldn't allow that, even if there's only one Independent sitting in there but they just think no. And the Treasurer actually said, "We've got the votes. Like it or lump it, we've got the votes", which is the truth, but it's not a Parliament. So I am concerned about quite a few of the functions of Parliament, and I'd love to see some changes in that area, John, because if we think Brian Burke won't come back again, where in fact . . . which is basically a decent person had bad life experiences perhaps but caused a lot of pain . . . that can repeat itself.

JF Thank you very much, Max. It's been a great pleasure to talk to you and all the best for the future.

TRENORDEN I hope it's been worthwhile, John.

JF Thanks.

END OF TAPE NINE SIDE B

END OF INTERVIEW