

WOMEN'S INFORMATION SERVICE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Transcript of Interview with Gai Dudley

Interviewee: Gai Dudley

Interviewer: Allison Murchie

Date: 30th November

[00:00:01]

MURCHIE: This is oral history eleven hundred and twenty the WIS (Women's Information Service) forty year anniversary project. It is Allison Murchie interviewing Gai Dudley at the State Library (State Library of South Australia) on the 30th November 2017.

Firstly Gai can I have your full name.

DUDLEY: Gai Dudley

MURCHIE: Ah so that ---

DUDLEY: Very simple.

MURCHIE: Gai's not an abbreviation of anything else. And what about --- have you got a maiden name or is that the name you have always gone by?

DUDLEY: No, no no, my maiden name was Lyons - l-y-o-n-s.

MURCHIE: Right and where and when were you born?

DUDLEY: I was born in Gosford, New South Wales. In Nineteen Forty, February Nineteen Forty. Twelfth of February. So I share the birthday with Abraham Lincoln -

MURCHIE: Yes.

DUDLEY: And Charles Darwin.

MURCHIE: Well done that's -

DUDLEY: (Laugh) I think that is pretty good.(Laugh)

MURCHIE: That's some very impressive, prestigious sort of characters. For the first few minutes, I'd just like to get a bit of a potted picture of your background. So obviously, you grew up in Gosford did you and when did you come to South Australia?

DUDLEY: Nineteen sixty six.

MURCHIE: And what prompted the move?

DUDLEY: Got married.

MURCHIE: I thought it might have been (both laugh). So your husband was from Adelaide.

DUDLEY: No, he's from; he's from Sydney from Roseville. We met at Punchbowl Boys High School. Previous year, In Nineteen Sixty Five I was teaching Art and he was teaching music and he had to put on a Gilbert and Sullivan opera at Punchbowl Boys High School cos that was what you did then, and I did the seats -

MURCHIE: And that was where you met?

DUDLEY: And we got together and we did a lot of afterhours work. (Laugh)

MURCHIE: She says with a giggle. And so was it for work opportunities you came to Adelaide?

DUDLEY: He won a scholarship to study here at Adelaide Uni (University) in the Elder Con (Elder Conservatory) to work with Peter Maxwell-Davies who was then one of the up and coming new British composers and he was going to be here for six months on a residency and Grahame was one of I think there was six scholarships awarded Australia wide and -

MURCHIE: Hang on your mics not picking up really well, can we just ---

DUDLEY: Have I --- I've dropped it

MURCHIE: It's just fallen off --- ah that why the volume had just --- just clip it on again and we'll see how we go.

DUDLEY: How's that?

MURCHIE: Yep that's fine, okay. So you didn't have any problem coming to Adelaide, being a New South Wales girl you were happy to move?

DUDLEY: No, I just wanted to be with him (Laugh).

MURCHIE: Okay so that's --- and did you teach here as well?

DUDLEY: I did, I taught at East Adelaide Junior Primary, or Infants as it was called then.

MURCHIE: You'd always wanted to be a teacher, had you?

DUDLEY: I resisted it when I left school because I was sick of school. And -- --so I did a six months stint in our local council in a brand new town planning department, training as a draftsman, as they called it then, and then I really didn't want to do that, I got a scholarship, went to Sydney and trained, yep.

[00:03:19]

MURCHIE: So how long after Adel --- did you get into Adelaide did you even hear about WIS. Did you know anything about it?

DUDLEY: Funny thing ---

MURCHIE: I'm always interested in how people get involved in organisations that aren't particularly well known.

DUDLEY: I'd heard about it, don't know how I heard about it. But I had a friend called Margaret King who was a volunteer ---

MURCHIE: At WIS?

DUDLEY: At WIS. And she said --- I said to her 'what do they do there?' Because it wasn't called --- I never referred to it as WIS it was always Women's Information Switchboard and I'd probably seen the sign up on North Terrace. So I asked Margie and said 'what did they do there' and she said, 'if you really want to know I'll put your name down as a volunteer' and you can find ----

MURCHIE: So she really wasn't going to tell you.

DUDLEY: No (Laugh).

MURCHIE: And you were cool with that?

DUDLEY: I was a bit --- slightly taken aback but I said 'oh okay I'll give it a shot'. I had a ---

MURCHIE: And at that time, which was eighty one I think you started,

DUDLEY: I started ---

MURCHIE: We were at --- not far from where we are sitting now actually at the Institute Building on the corner of Kintore and North Terrace.

DUDLEY: Yep.

MURCHIE: Tell me about you starting to work there?

DUDLEY: Well I did the volunteer training. I'd never been a volunteer for anything before.

MURCHIE: So you were actually interested enough to follow through.

DUDLEY: Yeah, yeah. I thought it was interesting and I thought it was a good idea. And I'd had --- at that stage in Prospect quite near us on Prospect Road there was a women's ---

MURCHIE: You lived in Prospect.

DUDLEY: I lived in Prospect. We've lived in the same house ever since we moved back to Prospect from London in Seventy end of Seventy-Two. But the --- there was a women's refuge on Prospect Road and with a group of other young mothers I remember my kids were three and one. I had a three year old who was busting to get out of the house but a one year old as well, and I had no family in South Australia, and someone in the next street put a little ad in the Messenger saying they wanted to form an informal playgroup and so I went along to this person's house for a meeting. So this would have been still in the Seventies and we started --- it was a fabulous little playgroup and we all held it in our backyards and it was a real cooperative effort.

We even organised our fellas to go and get a trailer load of sand and we delivered sand to everybody's backyard. So we all had sand, we all had water, we made paints. Someone's father worked in a food dye company so we made paints with flour and water paste boiled up on the stove with the food dyes. We got rolls of extra paper from the Messenger Press and we ran our own playgroup long before the play---

[00:06:36]

MURCHIE: So that really was your first effort at volunteering wasn't it.

DUDLEY: It was actually, yeah but it was a fabulous thing, I loved it. And one of the --- one of the mothers --- the stipulation was that you could join our playgroup but you had to stay with your child. I even got a phone call once from a woman saying 'are you the woman who takes in children' and I said 'no not actually'. (Laugh).

So we had a very interesting, a very diverse group of people. We end up with about, probably about six, seven people involved and one of our members was a lovely woman who was a former nun and she had quite a

small baby coming up to a year old and she joined our playgroup. And she was one of those women who ended up being belted up by her husband, tossed out with the baby, almost at midnight and ended up in that women's refuge centre.

MURCHIE: So really even before, you had even heard of the Women's Information Switchboard you knew of the sort of work that was happening in the women's movement so I can understand that curiosity when you heard about it.

DUDLEY: Yeah

MURCHIE: So what was the training like that you did to become a volunteer?

DUDLEY: I honestly don't remember (Laugh).

MURCHIE: So it provided by the organisation themselves?

DUDLEY: Yes it was. It was in that little backroom where little sort of training --- all the training sessions went --- apart from the ones that were outside that building. But it was --- it would have been pretty sort of down to earth stuff like --- because we had to answer the phones, you had to --- and in those days it was open from nine in the morning to nine at night, seven days a week and it was walk in, which I always thought was terrific. And so you learnt - you were taught how to deal with people face-to-face. It was a kind of training in --- not counselling we were always told we're not counsellors but it was a training in listening to people and --- I mean we did some training session with counsellors, which I thought was very funny actually.

MURCHIE: But it was made clear you were not a counsellor.

DUDLEY: Oh absolutely, absolutely, because we weren't professionals. And I'm fine with that but for listening to people you had to sit, had to part

your legs and lean forward and do lots of mm, mm, mms and no leading questions. So I send that bit up but however -

MURCHIE: But it is a good listening skill isn't it and -

DUDLEY: It is a good listening skill.

MURCHIE: It may have been natural for some but for others it might have been ---

DUDLEY: Yeah exactly.

MURCHIE: Culturally something new to them so --- yeah

DUDLEY: Exactly, yeah.

[00:09:33]

MURCHIE: You said you had the walk-ins and the phone room where did the majority of the contacts enquiries come from. The walk-ins or where they both heavily used.

DUDLEY: Probably the phones I think. I mean some days the phone just never stopped ringing. We had --- because we had the professionals, there was Helga [Lemon] there was Nicky [Dimitropoulos] who handled --- who did the Greek speaking people, Luisa [Sheehan] who handled Italian speaking people. There was --- later on there was someone who worked with Indigenous people, she was great fun.

MURCHIE: I have got her name in my records here somewhere -

DUDLEY: She was lovely, she was wonderful. I remember she wore such heavy earrings. Watch this she stretched the earlobe and actually stretched the hole in her (Laugh) earlobe and I know that because I had to help her put her earrings in. Well I just ---crikey --- well you know (Laugh) anyway she was great fun. There were --- the phones that we answered were on a desk and at the back -

MURCHIE: A separate room?

DUDLEY: No all in this one room. There were two separate offices and whoever was the Director in one and there was I don't know, can even remember, but there were two separate offices that were off, off the main, the main room. But the --- at the back of the room were all the filing cabinets which had all your information - oh that was the other thing we were --- as part of training you were given information sessions on a whole host of things.

MURCHIE: What sort of things?

DUDLEY: Information, well information about to do with women's refuges because there were several in Adelaide. Information to do with the Women's Health Centre, which was in Pennington Terrace. But also health issues that were likely to arise. Everything from sexually transmitted diseases. I remember my first day as a volunteer when you don't --- didn't answer the phone or didn't attend to anyone coming in you were encouraged to read through as many files as possible of all this information and for some reason I got really interested in genital warts. I did --- I just --- it was a whole new world for me I just thought wow. (Laugh). Anyway on this range of filing cabinets at the back was a big book like a log book and whenever you'd received a call immediately afterwards you had to go and fill that in and write whether it was a male or female what ---

MURCHIE: Did you get many male calls?

[00:12:45]

DUDLEY: Not many, but you certainly got some.

MURCHIE: Sorry for interrupting you.

DUDLEY: No that's fine. My husband use to love ringing up. And he'd ring up with a really general query because we also did that as well, like you know things to do with washing, or getting stains out of ---

MURCHIE: So you were a ready reference centre for anything.

DUDLEY: Yes absolutely. And I thought, I thought that was a really good --- that was a good approach because it made it completely open to everybody. I can't remember any specific calls that I would have had from men. But also men would come into the building. One classic morning I was there by myself, this was when I was paid, I think, and it was a Saturday morning and 9 o'clock, it's pretty quiet around there, and I was just sitting at the desk and this guy walked in and I thought aha this is not good. And he walked up to me and I moved instantly and started moving towards the door and that he really wanted to ask me about did I believe there was life on other planets or something like that, and I said 'look there's a wonderful library next door'. I directed him to the Library and they got lots of information, they've got a whole reference library in there, I think that would be a good place to ask and walked him to the door. Shut the door really quickly because he really was a very odd character.

MURCHIE: That was the smart thing to do but a few other women have mentioned particularly at nights or late if they were there by themselves it could become quite threatening.

DUDLEY: Yes absolutely.

MURCHIE: How did you handle those sorts of situations?

DUDLEY: Well that's what I ---

MURCHIE: That type of thing.

DUDLEY: Yeah I would, I would always be very friendly towards the person then, walk them towards the door and then shut the door and lock it. And then I rang the Library and said I'm really sorry but I've just sent a man over your way (Chuckle) and he said --- I mean all these public buildings you get use to people who are just coming in off the streets.

MURCHIE: Did you ever have the need to call Police or any form of security and so ----

DUDLEY: No I didn't, I didn't.

MURCHIE: Just your own strategies of getting them out of the building and locking up. Yeah.

DUDLEY: Yeah. But the scariest moment was when we --- the Women's Switchboard acted as a --- an exchange --- what do you call it --- a handover when someone had --- well they didn't actually have access to the children it's the wrong way around isn't it, the child has the access to the parent. So but there would be a handover time and there had to be a kind of impartial zone and whether Women's Switchboard put up its hand and said yes we will be in this --- I think they did --- hoping it would be a non-threatening thing. But I can remember then there's some Saturday afternoons and hearing yells and screams from the room next door which was normally our training room which is where this was carried on. And I wasn't very happy about that and I don't think that situation lasted very long.

[00:16:16]

MURCHIE: So was that done by the paid staff, the handover?

DUDLEY: Yes oh absolutely.

MURCHIE: Because they would have needed those extra training skills in, in ---

DUDLEY: Oh, oh totally. No we weren't ---

MURCHIE: How to handle the situations ---

DUDLEY: Volunteers weren't involved in that at all. I just happened to be there on a Saturday afternoon. I mean maybe I was paid staff, but I was volunteer.

MURCHIE: Okay let's go back to that early time when you were --- started as a volunteer.

DUDLEY: As a volunteer.

MURCHIE: Not being paid just in that early --- that first year or so.

DUDLEY: I love not being paid its good fun (Laugh).

MURCHIE: I've been doing it here for a long time it is good fun isn't it.

DUDLEY: Have you oh good. Yeah.

MURCHIE: Yeah what were your duties then both phone and walk -ins?

DUDLEY: Oh yes. Very definitely.

MURCHIE: Did you have preference.

DUDLEY: Nope. No. I've always like people. I've always liked a whole range of people. When we went to live in London Grahame was being a student in England and I wanted to teach, always wanted to teach in England. Back in those days in the late, very late Sixties through --- about half through the Seventies it was the most wonderful place to teach and when I went to County Hall in London to apply for a job and they said they'd give me a job close to where I lived, which was North London in Highbury, and I said no I don't want a school where I'm living I want to go there and pointed to the middle of the East End and this guy almost slid of his chair on the floor and he said would you really go there and I said yep. It turned out to be Tower Hamlets side of Millwall Football Club and oh but great fun, terrific fun, great kids, great people. Very hard work.

MURCHIE: But probably gave you a lot of very good skills for when you continued your teaching and the work you did at WIS as well.

DUDLEY: Yeah, absolutely.

MURCHIE: Because you were use to handling all sorts of people.

DUDLEY: All sorts of people.

MURCHIE: What sorts of people were your clients here, at WIS.

DUDLEY: All sorts of people.

MURCHIE: Yeah, give me some examples of ---

DUDLEY: Well I was just thinking as I came in on the bus there are three walk-ins that I remember in particular. One was a Saturday morning and I was in there by myself I obviously was paid staff by then, and I'd taken our two kids in who sort of early primary school and they used to love going into the offices because no one was there and they'd write poetry on the typewriters (Laugh) and our son who is now in his forties was telling me the other day 'I remember that Mum and I remember we used to get lunches in a little box' and I said 'did we' and he said 'yes you'd ordered our --- order these lunches and we'd go and pick them up or something like that'. He remembered it well, it was great fun.

But they were there, we had only just opened not long after nine o'clock and I remember seeing a taxi drawing up on Kintore Avenue and a woman who would have been in her fifties I reckon got out of the back of the cab and with baggage and one thing that I particularly remember she carried was a plastic bag that was just full of coat hangers. It's very weird but --- and she'd just left, she'd left her husband.

MURCHIE: Just like that.

DUDLEY: Just like that and came in and so we spent, me and who ever else was there, we spend the rest of the day finding somewhere where she could go.

MURCHIE: How hard was that to do in those sorts of circumstances, when there weren't a lot of public services for find housing, were there.

[00:20:08]

DUDLEY: It was --- well we were looking for a women's refuge. We did finally get her in but that wasn't until the end of the day. It took a long time and there was the --- there was crisis care I remember. But it always seemed to me that people in things like that, people in the women' refuge centres, people in crisis care they really did care, they really wanted to do something. And so you felt that what you were doing had a lot of work, but I remember that woman and that bag of coat hangers. It was just why would you grab a bag of coat hangers that ---

MURCHIE: Who knows ---

DUDLEY: Who knows ---

MURCHIE: The stress and the confusion that their under in those circumstances.

DUDLEY: Exactly, exactly and I mean we all know anybody who is living in any kind of relationship, even my mother said to me, who would never admit anything --- one day I said 'there are those days when you just want to go to the front door and just keep on walking' and she said 'yeah I know'. And I nearly died because ---

MURCHIE: That generation didn't ---

DUDLEY: No.

MURCHIE: Didn't say things like that did they, yeah.

DUDLEY: (Laugh) No, that's right.

MURCHIE: You said there's three cases that ---

DUDLEY: There're two others, two others where we had a spate of --- there were --- there were three more actually. At one stage --- I've written it down here --- thirty year marriages. At one stage and it happened within a couple of weeks.

The first one was a woman who walked in and it was something like a Tuesday afternoon, not long after lunch she just walked in. We had a little table with chairs right near the window and --- so looking down onto Kintore Avenue and she --- there was a box of tissues on the table and she just sat, just came straight in, just didn't approach anyone didn't come to see anyone and it was --- she just sat down and just started crying and crying and crying and crying. And I went and sat with her and just sat for a while and we started talking, she would have been --- she would have been in her fifties. She'd had, she'd has a thirty year marriage, she loved her husband, he'd told her that he loved someone else who had a ten year old child, was much younger and she was just utterly broken and she had no idea.

And it's --- I mean it's, it's happened to women that I know as well. That you can have what seems to be the perfect relationship and everyone thinks it's wonderful and then one morning at breakfast, this happened to a friend of mine, husband just announces he's leaving, he's got another women. She's maybe even twenty years younger than you are, she's probably got kids, younger kids and my friend describe it as --- she said most awful --- like having --- being struck on the head with an axe --- that feeling --- and so there was that woman. Only about a week later there were two other women who came in with exactly the same story. I remember another woman saying --- she said only two nights ago we were sitting in front of the telly holding hands and he was telling me how happy he was and then you know he's out of there.

[00:24:15]

MURCHIE: And that where you are almost a counsellor.

DUDLEY: Yes.

MURCHIE: But a non-professional counsellor being able to handle --- just the --- sit with her and help where you can.

DUDLEY: Yes and listen and just -

MURCHIE: And I guess that is one of the strengths of WIS is that you know all those resources that are out there and -

DUDLEY: Yes, yes.

MURCHIE: And the longer your experience is then you are able to help them.

DUDLEY: Yes and you pick up an awful lot of knowledge. The one thing that it decided me on was a woman should always have her own bank account in her own name. And my husband just thinks it's funny because almost everything is in my name (Laugh). But then we have been married now for over fifty years but its --- I just --- I find it funny, but I still remember a phone call from a woman who gone joint account, it was the only account, she had gone to get money out of the bank and the account had been completely cleared out. And so had the husband he has just, whew, just gone.

MURCHIE: When you were there either at the start or during the process, that you were there did you considered yourself as a feminist?

DUDLEY: No that's funny, that's funny, because initially I kind of resisted that, that kind of --- the label I suppose, but then I've always resisted labels. I'm the kind of person that sort off --- I like to be a bit more fluid but aw it didn't --- certainly after a while probably after I had been there for a few years I was definitely a feminist, quite definitely. But I mean feminists came in so many, so many shapes and sizes back in the eighties.

MURCHIE: And you would have found it --- particularly the eighties which was such a strong time for people realising, oh yes I am actually a feminist.

DUDLEY: Oh yeah.

MURCHIE: And it was a really strong part of the ethos of WIS was to help women and even though the women may not have realised it for a while, they were all very strong feminist, weren't they?

DUDLEY: Yeah, absolutely. It was --- I think I'd, I'd always been brought up to be independent and because I was an only child and I remember I wanted to be a window dresser at one stage and my father said to me I think you should concentrate on teaching they'll always need tea.... they won't always need window dressers, but they'll always need teachers. And later on when they didn't need teachers I remember thinking ha (Laugh).

MURCHIE: But they usually need teachers --- it was ---

DUDLEY: You can usually find something along the way, yeah. But it was -- - one of the things that also hit me was coming to South Australia to teach in Nineteen Sixty Six. I'd, I'd spent six years teaching in New South Wales, four of those years I'd been in a demonstration school where I got extra money, which was very nice, but had a lot of contact with the Teacher's Colleges and Lecturers, and then I went to Sydney I became a high school art teacher and then coming here I wanted to do junior primary teaching again because I loved teaching everything. And I was immediately downgraded because (a) I was not trained in South Australia so I was like a creature with two heads, I was female, there was no equal pay which absolutely astounded me because there was back in New South Wales and I was married. So I was not eligible for a what was it called -

[00:28:38]

MURCHIE: Permanency?

DUDLEY: Oh certainly not for permanency. So no promotion and no superannuation. And I --- it just appalled me (Laugh) so probably -

MURCHIE: And this was the good old days, wasn't it.

DUDLEY: Ah yeah (Laugh)

MURCHIE: So you already had some fairly strong values systems of your own when you started at WIS.

DUDLEY: Yeah.

MURCHIE: What were the value systems that WIS had that you could identify with?

DUDLEY: I guess it was knowledge, knowledge for women and a kind of empathy with a wide range of women. I mean it wasn't smooth sailing as well. I can remember not long after I started someone being a bit sort of snitchy about the fact that I wore a wedding ring and I just felt like saying well its none of your business anyway so (Laugh).

MURCHIE: What was the problem with you wearing a wedding ring?

DUDLEY: Oh you're not supposed to do that apparently. But that was just someone who was so way down the other end of the scale and --- but it was yeah it was imparting knowledge and --- to a very wide range of women.

MURCHIE: Your job satisfaction level must have been pretty high.

DUDLEY: I loved it. I really did. And I loved the other volunteers.

MURCHIE: Who were some of the people who were there?

DUDLEY: Can't remember their names.

MURCHIE: Did you keep in touch after you left. You tend - people tend to drift off, don't they?

DUDLEY: I'm a big drifter and also I'd, I'd was back to teaching full-time. And that really took up my time cos my kids were --- our daughter was about twelve or thirteen so I had one at high --- who had just started high school, one at primary school.

MURCHIE: Now you were an unpaid volunteer for the first year and then were --- you ---

DUDLEY: Oh for more than the first year I think.

MURCHIE: First year. So how long did that go for?

DUDLEY: I don't know (Laugh).

MURCHIE: A year or so. But didn't you end up with a paid position

DUDLEY: Yes I did.

MURCHIE: What was that as?

DUDLEY: Volunteer Co-ordinator.

MURCHIE: What was involved in that?

DUDLEY: Well I was job sharing that with another former volunteer. We did half time each and we had one day in the middle of the week where we shared a shift so that we could ---

MURCHIE: What do a handover type of thing?

DUDLEY: Yes which was good. I liked that. I thought that was a really sensible way of working. And I don't --- only did that for a couple of years I think.

MURCHIE: How did that differ from your volunteer role?

DUDLEY: Well you had more --- you had responsibility. You were responsible for volunteer training and ---

MURCHIE: Did you do the training or you had to coordinate it?

DUDLEY: I think, I think, I think we did some of the training but there were always people from outside who were --- that did the training and we also organised things like training days, training weekends.

[00:32:05]

MURCHIE: What were they like?

DUDLEY: The weekend one I found a bit much, I must admit.

MURCHIE: That wasn't onsite I take it. Did you go away somewhere for that.

DUDLEY: No we went somewhere down on East Terrace. Can't remember the place.

MURCHIE: So why a whole weekend of training, or was that team building stuff as well?

DUDLEY: I suppose so.

MURCHIE: Yeah, that was all pretty big in the eighties and nineties wasn't it.

DUDLEY: It was very big in the eighties. And it was --- I could go along with it to some extent but I really got to --- I mean we all use to send up --- I now feel the core stuff going round the circle one after the other and you think - do I have to listen to this (laugh).

MURCHIE: Did you have any sort of help in debrief and things like you had a few pretty rough sessions. Like when that guy came in that day it could have become a lot more awkward.

DUDLEY: Yes could become horrible actually.

MURCHIE: On those occasions when you were on your own or if you just had really difficult cases.

DUDLEY: Oh yes

MURCHIE: How did you manage after that.

DUDLEY: I don't know. I guess you would just talk to someone.

MURCHIE: Just other people there.

DUDLEY: Yeah, yeah. And Carmel, Carmel O'Reilly was the --- what is she now O'Loughlin ---

MURCHIE: O'Loughlin now yeah.

DUDLEY: Yes, she's back to O'Loughlin. Carmel O'Reilly was the volunteer coordinator when I first started and she was a good person to talk to.

MURCHIE: Still is.

DUDLEY: Yeah I know. (Laugh). Well I don't know haven't seen her for years, but I can, I can well imagine, yeah.

MURCHIE: And its people like that, their names stick in your mind because they had those skills, didn't they.

DUDLEY: Yes, yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. I mean not everybody was like that. Nicky was always a good person to talk too.

MURCHIE: Who was Nicky?

DUDLEY: Nicky can't remember her other name, who was the Greek ---

MURCHIE: Oh the Greek one, yes I would have her name, yes.

DUDLEY: Greek language and Luisa. Luisa was lovely. I remember talking to Luisa we had new next door neighbours who were Italian, which we were very happy about until we found out until we found out what our next door neighbour was like and I remember saying to ---- having a grizzle about our next door neighbour and she said 'where's he from' and I said 'Oh originally from Venice' and just went 'Ugh Venetians'

(Both Laugh)

MURCHIE: How did you celebrate things at --- I'd asked --- I've asked other about that ---

DUDLEY: We seemed to have a lot of parties.

MURCHIE: A lot of parties, yes

DUDLEY: Yeah, and I'm all for that.

MURCHIE: Whose initiative would that have been? Or were they almost spontaneous.

DUDLEY: I think so (Laugh)

MURCHIE: Because that really wouldn't be allowed as much nowadays even ---.

DUDLEY: Its funny isn't it.

MURCHIE: Yeah.

DUDLEY: I was talking to someone when the Bank the ANZ Bank used to be the Bank in --- down in the University and then the new Vice Chancellor decided that they weren't going to be the favourite Bank it was going to be BankSA and so we went to the last day of their Bank because we'd been --- our house mortgage was --- had been there and we'd been there forever and they had a party with black balloons all over the place (Laugh) we had a wonderful time. Yeah I think, I think it's ---I did the same thing when I was at Prospect Gallery --- it was work hard really work hard, I like working hard and I think people who work hard and work well together they deserve to have a party and the Library Staff at Prospect Library, every Friday afternoon, there would be a party down in, down in the back room and it was good fun.

[00:36:17]

MURCHIE: And it just does so much for building the moral, your friendships with these people also at WIS it's all female staff. How good was that?

DUDLEY: It was great. I was use to all female staff because of teaching in Junior Primary Schools. There --- I don't --- I never ever taught in a primary, in a junior primary which was always a separate department sometimes called an Infants Department, it was the same in England called an Infants Department but we were part of a Primary School so we were all together. But it was usually women only and that was it. And usually you were dealing with mothers as well.

MURCHIE: You've already mentioned a couple of organisations like the shelters and various places like that but there were quite a lot of organisations that you worked with or referred people to like Women's Working Centre and stuff. What were some of the other organisations that you worked with.

DUDLEY: I forgot about the Women's Working Centre.

MURCHIE: Yeah.

DUDLEY: Because someone from Women's Information Switchboard to head up the Working Women's Centre.

MURCHIE: Who would that have been can you re ----

DUDLEY: Can't remember, she was a good woman, small.

MURCHIE: Jude Elton? No, she didn't do Working Women's Centre then did she.

DUDLEY: No can't remember her name.

MURCHIE: Doesn't matter. But there are other organisations you worked with? Either on referrals or just people to for different things.

DUDLEY: Rent Tribunal. I went to one of those with a ---

MURCHIE: So you went with a client.

DUDLEY: Oh yeah, yep. I went with someone to Family Court.

MURCHIE: And that's actually developed into a regular court support system now.

DUDLEY: Oh good. And that was --- I mean you were just there purely as support, you didn't say anything you were just there.

MURCHIE: A physical presence?

DUDLEY: Yeah. Yeah. That's about all I remember. The Women's Health Centre I've mentioned before. There was one over in St Peters as well.

MURCHIE: Ah yes that's right yes, yes.

DUDLEY: Can't remember anything else. And of course the Office for Women or whatever it was called, up in the Premier's Department and that where we ---

MURCHIE: Did you have much to do with them?

DUDLEY: I didn't personally, I don't think.

MURCHIE: But certainly the office would have.

DUDLEY: Oh yeah oh absolutely. Because the --- that was the office that was the kind of overseeing bit of the Women's Information ---

MURCHIE: So that was your main source of funding?

DUDLEY: Oh absolutely, the Premier's Department

MURCHIE: Did funding come from anywhere else or was it all from the Premier's Department.

DUDLEY: I think it was all from the Premier's Department. I can remember Carmel O'Loughlin saying there was this ---this day it might have been just after it started --- she would have talked about this anyway --- where someone said you know quickly come up to the Premier's Department he's signing everything and so somebody did and they --- they I think that way they must have got sort of continuous funding rather than these one of

things where you hold your breath again at the end of the next financial year.

MURCHIE: Well there's still a lot of women's organisations doing that

DUDLEY: Well I know

MURCHIE: Even now, in fact it probably got worse because there seen as, we've been there, done that. Do we still need to keep funding it?

[00:39:54]

DUDLEY: (Laugh)

MURCHIE: I know the Working Women's Centre has a battle every year now on funding, it's, it's, it really is very very sad. There were a couple of specific questions I needed to ask you. Now I'll just find my note. Do you know who the Minister was at the time you were working there? I probably can go back through records just off hand did you know who the Minister was and the Director of Women's Advisor any of those sort of key players at the time?

DUDLEY: Oh, Deborah McCulloch,

MURCHIE: Oh Deb right yeah. She has been instrumental in so many women's organisations and the work that she's, she's actually done.

DUDLEY: Yeah. Someone, someone else that I needed to mention who was really, really useful in Federal Parliament was Janine Haines. You could ring her office and actually, things would get done. She was, she was terrific.

MURCHIE: What sort of stuff would you be asking of her?

DUDLEY: I don't know.

MURCHIE: That's different from the State arena I guess is what I'm looking at.

DUDLEY: It was --- I can remember doing it once and was on behalf of a, behalf of a client but I just remember ringing Janine Haines office and how terrific they were. So and I'm a Labor voter so I just thought wow she's good.

MURCHIE: Did you notice much difference when we changed from Labor to Liberal Governments did that impact on your funding or how you operated in any way? Was there any political influence that you can recall?

DUDLEY: Not really. I mean there was the move that I wasn't around for that. There was the move down to Station Arcade or wherever it was.

MURCHIE: Yes, Station Arcade.

DUDLEY: Yep, but I wasn't involved in it then.

MURCHIE: And I personally don't know the reason why it moved either. What was it that you liked working in the Institute Building, what were some of the strengths of that building?

DUDLEY: The space in the room, there was a lot of space and that was good because people --- you could sort of ---people could go off --- well be in the same room but be more private without having to go into a separate area even though we did have the two offices as well. So it was just about being in the City I suppose. Close to everything. I just like that building, always have (Laugh). It's a fascinating building.

MURCHIE: So you were actually ---you were there for quite a reasonable number of years, maybe four or five years. Why did you decide to leave, what, what changed your circumstances?

DUDLEY: Teaching.

MURCHIE: You went back to teaching?

DUDLEY: I was offered --- I'd always done a bit of relief teaching. I'd done some contracts and I had one of those phone calls cos you had to put in an application every year, I had one of those phone calls which was ridiculous, but that's the way they --- the Education Department treated people. I still remember this phone call. It was at --- in the evening --- do you want a full time job, a contract for a whole year, you'll have a year one class at Woodville Primary and I said 'well I'd need to think about it, how much time have I got' 'well you've got until after you have your dessert'. So I had to sit down with my family and say this is an offer and it's going to be different because it's full-time and I'd have my own class, I'd much more involved a lot more time and they all said go for it. So I rang them and that was that.

[00:44:05]

MURCHIE: That's how they treated people you decide now effectively.

DUDLEY: Terrible, absolutely terrible. And they --- the Education Department always --- first of all each year they would change the application form, they would change where it had to be lodged. One year it had to be lodged in the City in Flinders Street, another year it had to be lodged for some reason they had moved their offices to Norwood and one ridiculous year all junior primary applications had to go to Whyalla or Port Lincoln for some reason. It would just change it was absolutely to make you give up, just to make it harder every year. And so ---

MURCHIE: And some people would. They would have had enough of that.

DUDLEY: Well I did eventually. Yeah after three years of that I thought this is it. (Clearing voice) I don't need this. I even went to the Catholic Education to see if they'd give me a job.

MURCHIE: And were you Catholic.

DUDLEY: Nope. No but I sing in an Anglican choir every Sunday I thought that would really come across as a plus in my name. But no it didn't work and I was told there that I would have to do all their marriage guidance counselling to get an insight into Catholicism so I walked out of that building and thought right fine I'll do something else.

MURCHIE: So did you consider you were no longer a teacher then?

DUDLEY: I considered even before then it's a classic case of I get under the shower I think under the shower I'm just not doing this anymore, I'm tired of being treated like this and after thirteen years of teaching. So I just thought why okay I'm going to study I'm going to concentrate on me I'm either going to go to University and do Philosophy or I'm going to go to Art School, which is always what I wanted to do. And within a couple of days there was an ad in the paper for people to apply for a what was then TAFE at North Adelaide School of Art in Stanley Street.

MURCHIE: Oh yes, yes that's a very well-known school.

DUDLEY: And I thought oh I'd like to go there. I'd been three years in the Western Suburbs, last two years in Taperoo and I thought that's it I could ride my bike there I'd be going through the Parklands from Prospect, so I did it and I was convinced that it was the thing to do and I just --- when I started there people who knew me said oh you're going to be an Art Teacher Gai and I said no no I'm going to be an artist or a something.

MURCHIE: And you went on had a career in the Arts.

DUDLEY: I had a fabulous career. (Laugh). I really --- I sometimes pinch myself and think how could that happen. I was fifty six when I applied for the job at Prospect and I mean they knew me but I still didn't put my age on the application and I just knew I could do it and the funny thing was that when I started doing it I just loved it to bits and I always avoided any kind

of administrative job and I remember saying to someone I said I love it so much I love doing all the paperwork.

MURCHIE: Must have been good then.

DUDLEY: It was good (Laugh). And we had lots of parties. Lots of celebrations.

MURCHIE: Perhaps an unusual question to ask, finishing this off. The work and the time you spent in WIS what of that did you take with you. Firstly into teaching and then into your favourite work, the work at Prospect.

DUDLEY: I'd never really had any problems speaking up but I guess it just confirmed that speak up. The ever WIS --- if you disagree with --- I spoke up at Women's Information Switchboard on behalf of the volunteers. I was furious when they appointed someone to a job and none of the volunteers even knew the job was available and it was funny because the --- I didn't have a job there then, I was a volunteer and I think a lot of people there thought I was nuts or else I was cranky and I was cranky and I said I --- that's not the way this organisation works you should have told the volunteers so that they had an opportunity to apply if they wanted to. And I was so adamant about it I went to a meeting and insisted that this get put into the constitution and I remember saying to Luisa who was taking the minutes is that minuted is that written down. (Laugh). I don't know where that went but then the job that Andi Sebastian had been appointed to that job was reopened and I applied for it and I knew I didn't have a hope in hell but I just --- I had to go through the ropes of doing the whole thing. But I did feel very strongly about that, I thought that was not a good way to treat your volunteers.

MURCHIE: Quite correctly. Well let's finish on that really positive note. Thank you very much for participating in this, much appreciated.

DUDLEY: Oh that was a pleasure.

MURCHIE: Thank you very much.

DUDLEY: Thank you.

[00:49:47]

END OF INTERVIEW

Note: Throughout this transcript the abbreviation WIS is used. WIS prior to 1995 is the acronym for the Women's Information Switchboard. After 1995 a name change occurred and WIS became the Women's Information Service.