



City of Port Phillip Living Heritage Project
Edited transcript – Leonard “Dugga” Beazley
Interviewees: Leonard “Dugga” Beazley [DB] and Frances Beazley [FB]
Interviewer: Cathy Dodson [CD]
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Becoming a fisherman

0.04.00

CD: ...Alright let's talk a little bit about growing up in Port Melbourne. So, I'd like to begin with what your earliest memory is, from when you were a child.

DB: Well, I can remember a good way back and one of my earliest - I can always remember being in the boats with the old man. One of my main memories from when I was very young, which would have been about 1945 or 1946 was the American Fleet coming to Melbourne, just after the war. And at that time the ships were still painted in camouflage. That was at Station and Princes Pier. And as you know there was a lot of patriotism – Because of the war with America and that. And there were thousands of people going down to the ships. But the day they left the Princes Pier and Station Pier, my mother took me down there. And I can remember as if it was yesterday, thousands of people there. The ships were at the pier. All the girls were kissing the American sailors on the pier - Then most of them went aboard. And when the ships started leaving the pier everyone was cheering them. And the bands on the big ships, the cruisers, they were playing *Anchor's Away*.

0.06.02

DB: The earliest I can remember being in a boat, was with my Uncle, George. He was my father's brother. And he had a little couta boat, 21 foot couta boat which wasn't suitable for the work they were doing. And he exchanged it for a double-ended boat called the *Greta*. But the boat was up between the Spencer Street and Queen's Street Bridge. And I can remember him, going up there with him in the couta boat and getting the other boat and bringing it back to Port Melbourne.

CD: And that's a boat that you still have today, is that right? The *Greta*?

DB: Well, they had it for quite a long time and he sold it in around about 1958. And, I always kept my eye on it, you know? And it finished up at St Leonards, and anyway I knew the fisherman down there. Vin Rigby his name was. And I told him, I said, "Keep your eye on that boat, if it ever comes up for sale let me know." And he rang me one day, and he said that the bloke wanted to sell it. So I went straight down and bought it, and bought it back home. It's down St Kilda now with the rest of them, so, yes.

CD: What was it that made you want to have that boat again do you think? Were you sentimental about it?

DB: Yes. History.

0.07.39

CD: Now your Uncle ... gave you your nickname?

DB: Yes, Dugga. Used to call me "Dugga the Bugger".

CD: Why do you think he called you that?

DB: Oh, I don't know, I must have been a bit of a bugger, mustn't I? *[Laughs.]* I can't remember it, but from as long as I can remember everyone has called me Dugga you know?

CD: And so the nickname stuck? Everyone uses that name, and everyone knows you as Dugga.

CD: Did your parent's call you that too?

DB: Ah, well my mother used to always call me Lenny. *[Laughs]*

CD: And what were you known as at school?

DB: Oh, yes, Dugga. Oh early on, you know when I first started and that, they used to call me Lenny, but yes, but when it became known that it was Dugga, most of my school time was Dugga.

0.09.25

CD: Tell me a little bit about school. Where did you go to school?

DB: Nott Street.

CD: And that was from the very beginning of school, through to about how old?

DB: Well I actually left school when I was 13. I was 14 in August, but I left in April because in those days, when they were fishing, the net season used to start in April. Anyway, of course, I was adamant that I wanted to go fishing. All of my mates at Nott Street all went to South Melbourne Tech from the sixth grade. But if I had have stopped at South Tech I would have had to go to school until I was 16. And anyway, if I stopped at Nott Street I could've left when I was 14, see? So I stopped at Nott Street until I was old enough to leave and the old man, well my mother actually went up to see the headmaster and explained the situation to the headmaster and they let me out of school six months early.

CD: So your parents were obviously supportive of you leaving school to go fishing?

DB: My mother didn't want me to go fishing.

CD: Oh, she didn't?

DB: Yes, she wanted me to be a school teacher. *[Laughs]* Can you believe it? *[Laughs]*.

0.11.00

DB: No, no, I hated the thought of it, you know? Look, all I wanted to do was get in a boat and go fishing. When I left school, my old man carted me up to the Fisheries and Game Department. It was called the Fisheries and Game Department then, to get me a fishing licence. And you couldn't get a fishing licence 'til you were 16. But anyway, the bloke there said "Look, leave it to me and we will have a talk about it." And anyway, he went and seen his superiors and they

talked, and they gave me a special licence. ... they gave me a written licence. I still had to pay the 15 bob, you know, so they got a quid out of me. But it gave me a special licence to go fishing with my old man.

CD: Ok. So you could only use it to work as long as you were with your father, because you were under age?

DB: Yes, yes, 'til I was 16. But anyone else, if they had wanted to take someone with them, the other bloke had to be a commercial fisherman too.

CD: You must have had very persuasive parents by the sound of it.

DB: Yes ... My mother went up to school to get me out of school, and ... the headmaster begged her to send me to higher education. I used to always be in the top three in the grade at school.

CD: But it doesn't sound like you have any regrets about the choice you made?

DB: Not the slightest. Yes, best decision. The only better decision I ever made in my life was marrying Frances.

FB: He's got to say that.

CD: [*Laughs.*] Well it's nice to have that on record I've got to say.

FB: Yes.

0.13.24

CD: So an indoor job would not have suited you, like being a teacher?

DB: [*Laughs.*] No, no, not really. I've never worked for anyone in my life. Only myself. And my old man, I worked for my old man.

CD: And your dad, he wanted you to work for him, by the sound of it?

DB: Oh, well, I think so. You know, I don't know. He never ever said anything about it. I think he was quite happy to take me fishing with him, you know. Like, up until that stage he was fishing with his brother.

CD: And that was the Uncle George that gave you the name?

DB: Yes.

CD: And did you work with both of them when you first started?

0.14.00

DB: Yes, yes. Well I worked with both of them on and off over the years. My old man had a chest problem. He used to catch colds and flus easily, because when he was young he lived in a humpy out the back with his elder [brother], he had another brother called Roy, but he was a heavy smoker, and also they had no electricity, they used to have kerosene lamps...

CD: In the humpy?

DB: Yes, and it damaged my old man's lungs. It kind of saved his life, in a way, because when the war started, they all went up to join the army, and they sent him home again - They said you'd be more a hindrance than you were a help- There was an old doctor in Bay Street there, he used to look after him. Of course he had to go around there for a medical, and he said "Well, waste of time you going in the army because you won't last 5 minutes with the way your lungs are." And anyway they sent him home, but they said, the army or whatever, told him, you know, "Be available" if he was needed. But his exact words were they said "You'd be better off supplying the armed forces with fish." There was very few commercial fisherman in the Bay during World War Two, they had to have a special licence for it, and he was one of them.

CD: So he was doing something equally important, he was providing food.

DB: Yes but the thing was, all the blokes from round here, one of them was my mother's brother, and another one was one of my auntie's boyfriend, or she was engaged to him, his name was Colin Coy. And my mother's brother was named Tom Coleman. But he went up with them, at the time, all them together. They all got taken in to the army, but they were sent up to Singapore. They were captured by the Japanese and both of them died on the Burma railway. So, I reckon my old man would have been with them and he wouldn't have lasted five minutes.

CD: Right. How do you think the other people in the local neighbourhood responded to the fact that he - I mean he'd obviously tried to join up, but hadn't been successful. Did he get any flak from people about that?

DB: No, well I think they were quite aware of the situation. It's not as if - He didn't get called up, they went up there to join up.

CD: Any ill feeling towards him?

DB: No, no.

0.17.02

CD: So, back to - you were working with him from the beginning of your fishing career. So you must have been the youngest fisherman out on the water at that time?

DB: I was. Yes, I was, yes. As far as I know. Most likely there was other kids around the Bay, but I think what they did, the other ones, they just went to school until they was 14, you know? Yes same thing.