



INTERVIEW WITH LEN HASKEW

MATTHEW:- This is a tape of an interview by Matthew Higgins with Len Haskew for the NPA Oral History Project taking place at Len's home on the 17th December 1999.

Len, thanks very much for putting some time aside to participate in the project, I know that the Committee will be very appreciative.

LEN:- OK, it's no problem to me.

MATTHEW:- Now, we will get onto your NPA involvement shortly, but just very briefly your life prior to that time: you were born in 1933 in Orange and studied at Wagga Teachers College 1950/51 and then a primary teacher in various bush schools from 1952 through to coming to Canberra in 1966. Then you retired from teaching in 1989, just a few years after joining the NPA?

LEN:- Yes, I joined in 1987. I poked around during the week to find out when I joined, 1987 as far as I can work out.

MATTHEW:- Do you think there were any signs there from that earlier period of your life which led to an interest in bushwalking or the outdoors or conservation?

LEN:- I think I have always been interested in the outdoors, you know. I've been brought up in the country so I saw a lot of the country. We used to go and cut wood and that sort of thing with my father when I was a kid and I got to like the bush. He had some maiden aunts, my great aunts, who had a farm in Narrandera right on the river so that was an annual pilgrimage. I got to like the gum trees and water and so on.

MATTHEW:- That was the Murrumbidgee River?

LEN:- That was the Murrumbidgee, yes, and I've been very fond of the Murrumbidgee ever since, I think.

MATTHEW:- So here you are, you settled further up.

LEN:- Yes.

MATTHEW:- So what specifically were the factors that led you to join NPA in 1987?

LEN:- Well, it was mainly by chance. After we came here my kids got busy in sport, and so my weekends were sort of all tied up with kids sports. When they finished sport, the people I worked with said, let's play golf and so I played golf which I never enjoyed. I don't know how many years I wasted playing golf, but I really wasted them. Then I got something called trigger finger and I couldn't straighten that finger, the index finger, unless I did it manually and the doctor said, it would cure with rest. I said, "That's good. I'm a school teacher, I never use it, all I ever do is play golf" and he said, "You can't play golf for 6 months". I said, "Well, what am I going to do, because I've been used to doing something every weekend for many years now". I went into the library and happened to pick up an *NPA Bulletin* with the walks program, and that's what attracted me to NPA. I went on one walk with NPA and haven't played golf since.

MATTHEW:- You made a good decision?

LEN:- I think so.

MATTHEW:- Now, you've been on the Committee for a good while; you began with the Committee in 1990, I think, on the publicity, marketing and education sub-committee. What was that about, and what do you think you were trying to achieve?

LEN:- Well, Les Pyke was President, and I think he more or less initiated that sub-committee and it was to stage little exhibitions, like we used to go to Sunday in the Park. Also I used to buy the



books and sell them at the meetings; we used to sell books at one stage, we still do but not on the same scale, that's sort of fallen by the wayside over the years. I think that was Les's idea for the sub-committee, to get a few books sold, to hand a bit of information out, and we used to hand out membership applications. I think the success of the sub-committee was judged by the number of people who joined over the years and on the number of books we sold.

MATTHEW:- So, those book sales were they done at a profit for NPA?

LEN:- Yes, but a very small one, we undercut the booksellers, I think, if their margin was 60% ours was 20%, something like that. So we still made a little bit but we ran up against a few authors who got a bit upset, so that was scaled down from there on.

MATTHEW:- You were on that for, I think, a couple of years, 1990/91 and then became Secretary in 1991, and you remained in that position until 1995, that's a span of a few years. So what has been your role as Secretary, and do you think you brought anything new or tried to change direction of that position?

LEN:- No, I don't think I did. I think I just was a steady as it goes Secretary. I took the minutes and that was about it.

MATTHEW:- Were you in much contact with, say, Les Pyke as President or Syd Comfort?

LEN:- Well, Syd wasn't there in my time, but Les and Bev [Hammond] and Eleanor [Stodart] were. I never really played a strong role, I don't think, in executive decisions, that was probably my choice, I was just happy to sit on the sidelines. So I don't think I brought anything to the role other than the ability to read and write.

MATTHEW:- And doing the right thing by filling that fairly important position?

LEN:- Well, that's right, they were a bit desperate at the time and that's why I decided I'd do it, but I had no goals, only to just help out.

MATTHEW:- Just thinking of that need for community organisations to have members who are committed enough to actually take on an office bearing role, not just be a member and get the newsletter every quarter. It's often a bit of a struggle, isn't it, for community groups?

LEN:- Well, NPA proves it, now we can't find a President. NPA is really the only community involvement I have had in Canberra, I suppose, when I think about it. But we seem to be struggling to get people to take on office bearers. I don't know whether it's anything like that in other organisations. When the kids were little they sailed with the YMCA, and they wanted a club captain to run races. Theoretically you should have known what to do, but nobody else would do it, so I put my hand up for that. It was much the same, it just had to be done; and I'd get abused every Saturday afternoon because I would set the course 15 degrees further north than I should or something, because I didn't understand sailing. We talked about Black Mountain Tower when you were here before, that was my indication, whatever way the booms that were building the tower stood in the wind, that was the way I set the course for the race, as I had no other way.

MATTHEW:- Do you think earlier in the 1990s there was a greater willingness amongst the NPA membership to take on those particular roles?

LEN:- I think there was. I think it's been since the public service has been downsized and people have a lot more to do at work; they spend a lot more hours at work. I've just noticed over the years we had lots and lots of people who were in the public service prepared to write letters and do submissions, but they are not prepared to do that anymore. They don't come to meetings and they don't join the committees anymore. I think that's the way society has gone.

MATTHEW:- I know that you have remained on the Committee since 1995?

LEN:- I finished last August, the end of that financial year.



MATTHEW:- So, in remaining on the Committee what do you think you were trying to do there?

LEN:- Well, I was still interested in work parties, that was my main interest apart from walking and just generally helping out. Early in the piece, while I was Secretary, I got involved in Orroral Homestead, almost as soon as I retired, but there had been a lot of work gone on before I came there. I took over organising the work parties, and I found I really enjoyed that. Then there were other work parties; building that track from the [Orroral] Tracking Station down towards the camping ground, we built part of that, and did part of the track around the top of the hill behind the homestead, and briar cutting and pine wilding cutting and Tennent Homestead. That's where I got my main enjoyment out of committee work with NPA, I think.

MATTHEW:- Well, let's talk about those in a bit more detail then, and Orroral Homestead; so you would have started to get involved with work there from when?

LEN:- About 1989/90 was when I started, and that was when a lot of work was done. There had only been little bits done till that stage, but then we got some money and some approvals. The first thing that, I think, I was involved with was getting the chimneys done. We employed a stonemason to build the one where the old kitchen had been and to repair the others. That meant that we had to have a lot of work done before he could come, and so for weekend after weekend and sometimes during the week as well, because I had retired by this time, I'd organise people to come out and we would work bit by bit on the stonework or whatever else was necessary at that time to clean up, so the stonemason could come in. That was 2 or 3 weeks of almost day to day work towards the end of 1990 it would have been or, I think, it might have been 1991, I'm not sure.

MATTHEW:- It was in 1991 when half of the kitchen chimney collapsed.

LEN:- So it might have been later than that then, it might have been 1992 at that rate.

MATTHEW:- Would it be true to say that NPA had felt rather frustrated at the lack of progress?

LEN:- I wasn't involved in the work parties before that, they had fallen into abeyance, but there was a lot of frustration, almost anger, I think, on some peoples' part that so little had been done, I mean the place was deteriorating very badly. I think Reg [Alder] wrote an article in one of the *Bulletins*, 'Orroral Homestead, a Quarter of a Century of Neglect' or words to that effect. There was a lot of concern, we had been given a grant and weren't able to spend it for years and years because we couldn't get the approvals to do anything.

MATTHEW:- And who needed to give those approvals?

LEN:- It had to come from the Parks & Conservation Service, but I don't know what was holding them up. I think they didn't have any plans organised which was part of the problem as I understand it. Once they got their act together we had pretty harmonious relations with them, I thought.

MATTHEW:- So, do you think ultimately the work NPA did at Orroral was valued by the Service?

LEN:- I think so, in the long run. I think, in the short run sometimes we were a jolly nuisance because they had one set of priorities and we had another. We were very adamant that we wanted to finish Orroral but, I think, we used to forget at times that they had to look after other parts of Namadgi as well as just that little bit around the homestead. I think there were some strong words spoken between us (well, I know I did) and the rangers who were in charge of the project. Really when you think about it in the big picture, we were harassing them but nonetheless, I think, when it was all over they were very pleased it was done.

MATTHEW:- Did you stay with that conservation program right through to completion?

LEN:- To completion, yes.



MATTHEW:- It was opened, I think, in 1997?

LEN:- Yes, and that was a great day for NPA. You were there, weren't you, there was a big crowd came.

MATTHEW:- Which were the main tasks that NPA was involved in?

LEN:- Well, the restoration of the chimneys was a big job; we paid somebody to do most of that but we had to finish it off ourselves. The big pillars on the wall near the road, the verandah posts all had to be changed and that was a big job, re-flooring the premises was another huge task. The wood had been stored and not able to be used for one reason or another, it was stored in their depot and was pretty bow legged when it came to us, and I remember 3 or 4 men leaning on a crowbar trying to butt these boards together. That was a big job, it took several work parties to re-floor it.

MATTHEW:- And those boards had to be drilled first to nail then, weren't they?

LEN:- That's right, and it was like drilling a sheet of steel, they were so hard and so old. I think we did a fair bit of the plastering of the inside wall ourselves, that was to be done but didn't get finished and we had to do a fair bit of that. There were a few hiccups, we cleaned all the stones of the chimney up and re-put mortar in all around the chimneys and then went out and spent two weekends linseed oiling them, making them all look shiny. Then somebody in the Parks Service found that the chimneys had been rendered sometime, so all that work was hidden again when it was rendered and that caused a bit of ill-feeling too, but in the long run it didn't matter.

MATTHEW:- Was there a strong conscientiousness among NPA to take the building back to a definite original condition?

LEN:- Well, what we considered to be an original condition, but the Parks Service, I think, had a later photo than we had in our minds, and that was their idea of the original condition. We thought, with the chimneys again, that they wouldn't have been rendered, they would have been stone when they began, but the Parks Service said no, that's the oldest photo we have so that's what we have to go back to. I don't think it mattered in the long run.

MATTHEW:- So clearly you got a lot of personal satisfaction?

LEN:- I got a lot of personal satisfaction and I met a lot of people. It was very interesting arranging work parties. The Parks Service would say, we want 16 to 20 people and I could get about half of those very easily, but then I would have to get the membership list and ring and ring and ring until I found another 8 people who were free that weekend and willing to come. There was another interesting thing, I found that there were a lot of people in the NPA who are opposed to cultural heritage, you know people would say, I'd prefer to put a match to the place than come and help on it, which was a bit of a revelation to me.

MATTHEW:- Were those words actually said?

LEN:- That was actually said, those words were said.

MATTHEW:- About a place like Orroral Homestead?

LEN:- Yes, that's right, they wanted to remove all trace of European civilisation. It was quite interesting to see. Over the years I kept, for a long time, a list of all the people who had worked; people who would come to briar cutting or even track maintenance would not come anywhere near Orroral; it was very interesting to see the people who were very opposed to us doing that work.

MATTHEW:- This may be a hard question to answer objectively, but nonetheless give it a go. If NPA hadn't got involved in Orroral Homestead do you think the building would still be standing today?



LEN:- I don't think so, it was getting into a pretty bad state of disrepair. When I got involved in the late 1980s or early 1990s, the floor was rotting, the chimneys were ready to fall and the iron was coming off the roof, so I think time would have taken its toll by now. I'm still worried about the place; I'm very frightened that someone will light a fire there, I don't say deliberately burn it. While it's in reasonably good shape people perhaps respect it more than they would if it was derelict. That 1950s cottage that was next door was vandalised, whereas the old homestead wasn't. I think people have some sort of appreciation of old places, but when they look like falling apart I don't think they would care.

MATTHEW:- You mentioned there the division within the membership about cultural heritage and whether you should work on a project like that. All in all, once the job was finished and it was opened officially in 1997, how important do you think that project was over all those years to NPA's own cohesiveness and a sense of worth?

LEN:- I think it gave NPA a focus that perhaps we are missing now that we don't have any projects; we have the Boboyan pines project but that's run by the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group. I think we are missing that focus; people would be anxious to come and anxious to help or anxious to have a say why we shouldn't be doing it. I thought it was good for NPA; when you go walking you see one group of people, when you go to meetings you see another group of people, but at the work parties all sorts of people came and helped out. People who had skills were very keen to offer them; if someone was pretty good with a hammer and nail they took some pride in what they did and they got satisfaction plus a bit of kudos in other peoples' eyes. So I think it was very important.

MATTHEW:- Now, another project since that time has been the Tennent Homestead conservation. Now, NPA was involved in backing a conservation plan, so I believe?

LEN:- That's right, we have done some work there and are getting ready to do some more, but that also fell into a sort of trough because the Parks Service didn't have an action plan ready or couldn't get approval to do things. I think money was also another problem. Now there are plans to start on the woolshed there and do some work. The work we did there was very much just stabilisation, it's falling apart and the pisé building has fallen down. We had no work to do on the pisé place, but it had problems that were beyond us, and they didn't ask us ever to do anything.

MATTHEW:- You worked mainly on the garage?

LEN:- Garage and shearing shed, and a little bit on the house where we put some chocks under the floor.

MATTHEW:- The cottage part?

LEN:- Yes, the cottage part, the pine cottage. But the shearing sheds was where we did the bulk of our work, and the garage. I think the garage might have fallen since, but I haven't been there for a while.

MATTHEW:- The fibro clad garage?

LEN:- Yes, it's shifted again and the fibro's pulled away, from what I've heard.

MATTHEW:- One of the main problems with the shearing shed was the white ants, wasn't it?

LEN:- Yes, that's right, they were everywhere. We dug out a lot of nests but there was no poisoning done, and I don't know why that was. I would have thought the sensible thing to do was to have poisoned the ants, but obviously that wasn't acceptable or too costly or something.

MATTHEW:- What was the response like amongst NPA members to get involved in that?

LEN:- Very good. Twelve months ago now, I suppose, I put a little note in the paper saying I'd like people, retired people, who could come during the week to Tennent Homestead. That was in

the paper, in the *Bulletin*, and after about a fortnight I had nearly 30 people ring up and say they could come if they got adequate notice, but after 12 months it just fell into a heap so they weren't wanted. I put a note in the last *Bulletin*, which is a bad time because it's Christmas time, and I've had half a dozen replies since. Perhaps the enthusiasm has gone, they just don't know whether it's going to come to anything or not.

MATTHEW:- Yes, it's a shame when you have got that level of enthusiasm and then the job can't go ahead.

LEN:- Well, it was money and nothing can be done unless the paperwork is done first, and that wasn't able to be done in time for us to do anything.

MATTHEW:- Why do you personally think it's important to conserve these sorts of places?

LEN:- Well, I think we have so little history in the ACT, old history, that they are a portrait of times gone by and nice for people to see. I've taken my grandkids out and they really enjoy an old house, kids don't see that sort of thing anymore, and I think a lot of other people do too. I'd just like to preserve that little piece of history as I feel I can do something about that, but there would be other bits of history I couldn't preserve as you need far more skills.

MATTHEW:- Now, you mentioned some of the other work parties you have been involved in organising such as track work, the Orroral track for example, and maybe the end of the Alps Walking Track?

LEN:- Yes, Syd Comfort and I went and surveyed that bit from Booroomba Rocks to the Tharwa Visitors Centre. We went as far as the bridge across the little stream at the top of the Cypress Pine Walk. I don't think we found a very good way across that as the day was getting pretty late at that time. We walked along and tagged as we went. Two or three people from the Parks Service came with us; they had an idea where they wanted the track to go and just wanted another opinion. I think the big change we made to what they had suggested was we got the track up out of a wet spot much closer to Booroomba Rocks than Tharwa. That was an interesting exercise. There have been a few work parties on that, but I didn't ever organise any of those. I worked on a couple. Syd took over the work there.

MATTHEW:- Yes, I talked to Syd about that. Well, with the Orroral Walking Track, now that was really a Parks project.

LEN:- That's right, Parks initiated and we just volunteered to help as we could. That's the most difficult work parties I've ever organised, because we were asked to do far too heavy work in terms of manual labour. We started at the Tracking Station end. There were big beams there perhaps 5 or 6 metres long and they were very heavy. It would take 5 or 6 adult men to carry them and we had to carry them, not just a few feet but half a kilometre and more; it was back breaking work. We wanted to cut a fence down, but that caused an argument about cutting the fence.

MATTHEW:- So as to shorten the carry route?

LEN:- So as we did not have to make a great circuitous route. I think that broke the back of a lot of people, people weren't so keen on work parties after that. We were really knocked up. We had said, we would try and help as much as we can to try and get it down to the homestead, but I couldn't raise enough enthusiasm or energy to finish it off. The Parks Service finished it off under their own steam, but they brought in machinery to carry the planks and machinery to dig the holes to put the footing in.

MATTHEW:- Well, it seems the obvious thing to do with those sorts of loads is to get machinery in there in the first place?

LEN:- That's right, when I got there and saw this heap of wood, I just couldn't understand why they just didn't drop two bits there and two bits further on, it wouldn't have been much more dif-



ficult, I think. But anyway, that was the way it was done.

MATTHEW:- And when was this going on, early 1990s?

LEN:- Early 1990s, it was while I was still Secretary, 1993/94 probably.

MATTHEW:- Was there a feeling then that NPA members were being a bit exploited and treated like serfs?

LEN:- Yes, there was a lot of bad feeling at that time between NPA and some members of the Parks Service. I don't know about all, but I think we were seen as a bit of a nuisance.

MATTHEW:- Even though you were asked to assist on this?

LEN:- Yes, that's right, but we had our own ideas and they had their ideas and they didn't always mesh. We'd argue and often, I think, as time went on proven to be right. On that walkway, initially we were asked to lay the planks which was a far too big a job, and then cover them with short bits of wood. They had to be all sawn to size on site with hand saws, (there may have been better ways to do that, but I don't know) and then bolt them, 4 bolts, 2 bolts on each side. That was a huge, huge job because the wood was hard and we only had battery powered drills and they would wear out; a lot of swearing in frustration.

MATTHEW:- So how many days would you have had on that?

LEN:- I don't know, perhaps 4 or 5 weekends for a very short bit of work and then after that we were able to nail a bit, and that made us go a lot quicker. That's what we had said in the first place, that we could do quite well with a few nails here and there. I don't know why they chose this method.

MATTHEW:- Now NPA has also been involved in track work in the Budawangs, were you involved in that?

LEN:- Yes, but I never organised that, but I've done a fair bit. Di Thompson used to do most of the organising and we took control of the piece from Wog-Wog parking area on towards Canowie Brook. We went past Canowie Brook well up the track towards Bibbenluke, not that far, but did a lot of work there, very interesting work there. That was a different story again, all the equipment was brought in by helicopter and dropped at strategic places. We still had some big carries to do, but there was no alternative there but to carry. Two men could carry any log that we were given there, where it had taken 5 or 6 to struggle on with one at Namadgi.

MATTHEW:- Do you think the working relationship with the NSW Parks Service in that case was a good one?

LEN:- Yes, it was a good one. Di could tell you the name of the ranger, but he was very keen to get the work done and very cooperative. It also, from their point of view, was only done once or twice a year. One of the problems with the work that we did here [*Namadgi*], it was possibly once a month, perhaps twice a month at times, and I think it was just a bit much to manage the park and manage NPA as well, and that made tempers a bit short.

MATTHEW:- So was it a difficult task for the Parks staff?

LEN:- I think so, I didn't think so at the time, but in retrospect I'm sure we were a nuisance at times, inadvertently as we didn't mean to be, but we were. They had other things to do and then they had to think about us. Sometimes the work party would be called and on the worst couple of occasions you would get everybody all fired up and you would go out there only to find out, "oh sorry, the timber hasn't arrived" or something like that and that, of course, would cause friction.

MATTHEW:- Because you hadn't been advised?

LEN:- We hadn't been advised until we got on site, and then we asked, "what do we do now?"



"Oh you can cut briars". So briar cutting became sort of synonymous with what we do when we don't know what to do.

MATTHEW:- So briar cutting went on in the Orroral Valley?

LEN:- In the Orroral Valley we worked from the homestead up to the Tracking Station, and all around the big rocks between Orroral and the campground and the Nursery Swamp carpark.

MATTHEW:- How were you doing that?

LEN:- With difficulty I suppose. We used to cut the briars and then spray them or dab them with weedicide, I think it was a 'Zero' based weedicide, I've forgotten what it was called now, a ready chemical. We just cut and dab, cut and dab.

MATTHEW:- Has that been successful?

LEN:- I went back the other day to have a look at some of the work we did 5 or 6 years ago and it's still surprising how good it's been; there is still a lot of briars, a lot more to be done but it was just surprising it was worthwhile, in the sense it killed quite a few. Many times you felt as though "well we can't think what else to do with these blighters, we'll let them cut briars". Some people didn't like the chemicals too much, so it was a bit of an ask if they had gone out to nail boards to a piece of wood to be given gloves and some weedicide.

MATTHEW:- Were there any specific purpose or if you like, purpose-built work parties to do briar cutting?

LEN:- Yes, there were purpose-built work parties, but they were mainly out at Boboyan or Gudgenby where that was done and they were the same sort of thing; we get as many as you can out of this area. People were quite happy to do that, especially when they had been rung up and told that there was a briar work party on Sunday week, can you come to that. People were very glad to, but they weren't glad when it was dropped on them without warning.

MATTHEW:- Do you think there at Gudgenby the NPA's efforts were worthwhile or significant in the long run?

LEN:- I don't think they were significant, but I think they might have been worthwhile, they were done to the best of their will. I don't know there is any answer, I think, to briars. It's just manual labour once every now and then.

MATTHEW:- So it needs a more concerted effort?

LEN:- I think so, but I don't know how you do it, it will cost a lot of money, I suppose.

MATTHEW:- Do you ever feel like at the beginning of a day, "Gee we can make quite an impression here" and then the more you did, the more briars you saw there?

LEN:- The more you saw, that's right. You would sit down to lunch after you'd cut them down and heaped them up and you would be patting yourself on the back saying, "Gee, we have done a great day's work" and then you would swing around and look somewhere else, and there would be a heap more to be cut. The worst part was going home you would walk along through where you had cut and see there was one missed there, and one missed there, and one missed there.

MATTHEW:- Of course, NPA also has done some pine wilding work?

LEN:- A lot of pine wilding work, we have done that in the Boboyan pine forest, and along the Murrumbidgee River Corridor from Kambah Pool back towards Casuarina Sands down as far as Grieves Corner. We did a lot in the Boboyan area. Before the regeneration program was on we went into the natural bush, the native bush, and cut out as many as we could. They were always good fun because you could see something for what you did, and the big trees were always a bit of a challenge. You got to walk around some pretty interesting bits of the country, just poking



around looking for pines and they were miles away, it was surprising how far they had spread.

MATTHEW:- This again is the early 1990s, mid 1990s?

LEN:- Early 1990s, mid 1990s, yes.

MATTHEW:- How were you felling those, with an axe or a saw?

LEN:- Axe and saw, bushman's saw or an axe was the way we did it.

MATTHEW:- No chainsaws?

LEN:- Well, we weren't allowed, we didn't have chainsaw certificates, you have got to be an approved chainsaw operator apparently.

MATTHEW:- Did you apply 'Zero'?

LEN:- No, just cut the pine down. If you cut it low enough apparently, it won't re-grow.

MATTHEW:- OK. Well just to round off this discussion of NPA's volunteer work parties within Namadgi and the Corridor. By the way, were there any work parties in any parts of Canberra Nature Park, briars or whatever?

LEN:- No, not that I participated in, there may well have been, but I'm not aware of them.

MATTHEW:- Just to round this off, do you have any closing or philosophical or reflective comments on the place of volunteers within national parks and how you get on, the two organisations?

LEN:- I think the Parks Service would probably welcome volunteer help, but I think we have got to realise that our program or our agenda is not the only one they have. I think if the two of us can get together and perhaps make it a twelve month plan or a long-term plan instead of what happened. I used to ring up once every 3 months as the *Bulletins* came out and say, we want two work parties in this program, what are we going to do? I think that was too short a notice for those people or it was too long a notice, too, in some ways. Say, on the 1st February you would ring for a work party that might be happening in June. They hadn't a picture of what they wanted to do by June, so that's how some of them became ad hoc-ish I think. I think, had we approached it from a different way and said, "Well, now look we want to do 10 work parties this year, let's sit down and see what we could do" it might have been better. Another problem is the rangers are rostered on some sort of rotating roster, and they really don't know in February what they are going to be doing in November, and that makes it difficult to talk with individual rangers. I feel, if there was more consultation perhaps between the management of the park and us we could work pretty well together. It's good for us, it's good for NPA because it gives us a bit of a focus, and I think it would be good for them because they get a bit of work done that they can't manage to have done otherwise.

MATTHEW:- Now, just to go on to a couple of other areas, now of course Namadgi National Park had already been achieved by the time you joined; however there were extensions to the park in either 1990 or 1991, and those extensions into the northern Cotter were actually as a result of an NPA commissioned report by Ian Fraser?

LEN:- That's right, but that was before my time, that report. I wasn't involved in that report, but it came to fruition round about the time, just when I was getting really involved.

MATTHEW:- Would you like to make any comment on, say, the committee or just NPA's role as you experienced it at the time of those extensions?

LEN:- I really can't say that I had any knowledge of it, it just seemed to be a fait accompli when I became involved. I think people were very pleased to see it happen and I had heard some fables of the stories behind it, but I really wasn't involved in any of that so I really couldn't make any



considered comment.

MATTHEW:- NPA of course has a very strong advocacy role in terms of protecting environment and conservation, and that extends particularly to its park, Namadgi. Constantly, I guess, being on the committee there would have been management issues within Namadgi that NPA was commenting on. Would you like to discuss any of those issues or some of the main ones, as you saw it?

LEN:- Well, the management plans were always a great bone of contention, we were always concerned that the management plans weren't up to par or weren't being worked on continuously to make them appropriate for the time. That caused a lot of the contention when I was there. Then there was the dreadful debacle of the carpark at Yankee Hat, and that was a big furore.

MATTHEW:- Why was that a debacle, what was the problem?

LEN:- Well, they re-built a carpark and just lifted rocks from everywhere around the area and dropped them to delineate a carpark without caring where the rocks came from and what sort of scar it was on the landscape. A lot of people thought the rocks were significant culturally to the Aboriginals, other people thought they were significant parts of the landscape that shouldn't have been disturbed. It was no way to make a carpark in a national park anyway, to fence it off with boulders. So that was a big issue.

MATTHEW:- Did NPA play a significant role in having that carpark taken away?

LEN:- Yes, very significantly. I'm sure it was NPA's involvement that brought the matter to a head and had it removed and re-sited at the end of the road rather than where it was.

MATTHEW:- So taken back to where it had been?

LEN:- Yes, that's where it had been originally.

MATTHEW:- Any other issues that you think were significant?

LEN:- The Territory Plan was a thing that occupied us a lot, too, during the years that I was on the Committee. We were concerned about the way the Territory Plan was going. Then the Optus towers was another big issue. Another big issue was that they were going to charge entry fees to enter the park, and NPA was opposed to that for one reason or another. That occupied a lot of time and thought.

MATTHEW:- How did you respond to these issues? Was it a matter of writing submissions?

LEN:- Submissions and a lot of lobbying of people. I didn't ever take part but whoever was President at the time and generally one other went along to see either a Member of Parliament or the Parks staff.

MATTHEW:- When you say a Member of Parliament?

LEN:- A local MLA, sorry, I think the Federal Government were well and truly out of it by that time.

MATTHEW:- You mentioned earlier about the unfortunate rivalry between, I guess you could call it, natural heritage and cultural heritage. How do you think that has developed now, do you think that conflict between the two has improved?

LEN:- I don't think it's an issue anymore because we are not involved in much cultural heritage at the moment. The thrust of NPA at the moment would seem to me to be more along the natural environment. I don't think there is any conflict at the moment, but I don't think it's gone away, it's just under the surface.

MATTHEW:- In 1994, of course, the NPA Constitution and its objectives was changed?

LEN:- It was changed to incorporate cultural heritage, well, that wasn't without opposition but



that was carried quite comprehensively.

MATTHEW:- There was opposition by certain Committee members?

LEN:- Yes, by certain Committee members that thought we should not make those changes. There were articles in the *Bulletin*.

MATTHEW:- And what sort of vote was it in the end percentage wise?

LEN:- On the Committee it was say 75% in favour, but at the meeting which only a very small proportion of NPA people attended it was a unanimous decision as I recall. I don't know that's indicative of the feeling of the Association, but it probably was. It was only a few that were vocally opposed.

MATTHEW:- Are there any individuals who during your time on the Committee you think made a major contribution, whether they were other Committee members or just members themselves, you think should be recognised?

LEN:- Well, I think the three presidents I served under, Les [Pyke], Bev [Hammond] and Eleanor [Stodart] and of course Clive [Hurlstone], 4 not 3, they have all made big individual contributions, they put in a lot of time. The job of President, I think, is out of hand as far as NPA goes, it's almost a full time job, and those people were willing to do it and put an awful lot of their own effort and resources into making sure NPA kept going and that our voice was heard and that we lobbied very effectively. So I'd say all of those.

MATTHEW:- Say, on the work parties, say, on Tennent and the briars?

LEN:- Well, Reg [Alder] has got to be the man who gets the guernsey there because there wasn't a work party that was on that he wasn't there, at Orroral, at cutting briars, at cutting down pines or building a track. He had all the skills, it didn't matter which task we had Reg was the man who could find an answer for it, and when this track building got beyond a joke he brought his own generator out so that we could run power tools. I think had Reg been listened to a bit more by the Parks Service there would have been a lot less problems. That was the way it was.

MATTHEW:- Anyone else you would like to mention?

LEN:- Well, at Orroral it's pretty hard to single out people, but Ken Johnston was a great carpenter, Syd Comfort was a great carpenter and Fiona Brand was there every work party just about. There was so much enthusiasm, it's pretty hard to single out people above others, I don't really like to do that too much.

MATTHEW:- Alright, let's go on to some of the issues that were significant to NPA elsewhere in the ACT, outside of Namadgi. Now Mulligans Flat, for example the recognition of its particularly natural heritage properties, there was Kevin Frawley's report in 1991. What was going on there? You were on the Committee at the time?

LEN:- At that time we were lobbying to have it as a reserve, and I think Beverley [Hammond] was President when it was eventually declared as a reserve. I think NPA can take a lot of the credit for that. It occupied the Committee's deliberations and Beverley and others did a lot of lobbying and meeting and submission making.

MATTHEW:- How did NPA become aware that it was significant, because to the average Canberra it was just a few old sheep paddocks?

LEN:- That's right, I assume through Kevin Frawley's report. I hadn't heard of the place until it was brought up to a Committee meeting and I went out and had a look around. You have only got to go there once to realise what's there. But I assume it came from Kevin Frawley's report.

MATTHEW:- Were there issues elsewhere in Canberra Nature Park?



LEN:- Well, the Lower Molonglo Gorge was one of our concerns. We took Bill Wood, the Minister, down there then to show him what we thought was worth preserving.

MATTHEW:- So that had no protection and NPA wanted it to be protected?

LEN:- Yes. I think the Nature Park and the Murrumbidgee River Corridor weren't our initiatives, they were Government initiatives or somebody else's initiatives and we supported them, but I don't think we had a big role in their coming together.

MATTHEW:- With the Lower Molonglo, has that been given any sort of reserve status now or is that part of the Corridor?

LEN:- It's part of the Corridor now, fairly recently, but it's part of the Corridor and there is a management plan or a draft management plan out for it.

MATTHEW:- Do you think that stems from NPA's lobbying there?

LEN:- Well, partly, I'm sure.

MATTHEW:- Bill Wood, was he easy to impress out there, was he good to work with?

LEN:- He was a very supportive person, I think he had a real feel for the environment. I found him very approachable and of a like mind, so you think he is pretty good if he thinks like you; that's how I see it really.

MATTHEW:- For the sake of people listening to this tape in years to come, Bill Wood was the Environment Minister within the Legislative Assembly.

LEN:- That's right, I've forgotten what years they were.

MATTHEW:- Under Labor.

LEN:- Yes.

MATTHEW:- Now, the Corin Forest ski area, was that before your time?

LEN:- Before my time.

MATTHEW:- You were saying earlier about the Territory Plan, what were the concerns that NPA had in regard to that?

LEN:- Well, I think we wanted to make sure there were plenty of open spaces left, areas of some natural significance weren't subsumed to become a road or a development. Syd Comfort was very involved and he kept a very close brief on what was being done and kept the Committee informed on what was being done. When we thought the wrong thing was being done, we made the right noises to try and have it changed. I think sometimes we were successful, sometimes we weren't.

MATTHEW:- So you think that NPA has made an achievement?

LEN:- I'm sure they had an input into preserving some areas, I can't give you chapter and verse I'm afraid, I've forgotten as it's so long ago now. I haven't heard of the Territory Plan, until I thought about it the other night, for a long time.

MATTHEW:- Some issues outside of the ACT because NPA has, I think, always had its eyes not only just in its own backyard but elsewhere, and during your time on the Committee, Kosciuszko. Did that feature?

LEN:- That featured a fair bit, especially the "Perisher Plan" and "Kosciuszko Ski 2000". We were very concerned about those. We were very concerned about the loss of huts and amenity in parts of the park, so we spent a lot of interest there. Can't remember any work parties up there, well none that I have taken part in. We have been interested all along in what's going on and have kept fairly close contact with the [NPWS] office in Queanbeyan and let them know our concerns plus all the usual letter writing and submission making.



MATTHEW:- What about coastal parks, for example Jervis Bay?

LEN:- Jervis Bay, when I joined that was the big issue and we kept a very close eye on that and through Den Robin we still keep a pretty close eye on what is going on. I think by and large we are fairly happy with the way it's turned out down there, considering there could have been a nuclear power station and a few other things like that.

MATTHEW:- A huge naval facility?

LEN:- That's right, yes.

MATTHEW:- So it has achieved park status now has it?

LEN:- It has, Booderee, I think, they might call it now.

MATTHEW:- With any of these issues has it ever gone beyond just letter writing and presenting submissions to actual protest?

LEN:- Well, in my time there have been no demonstrations as such, it's always been very civilised sort of dissent rather than physical clashes.

MATTHEW:- Do you think that has been a conscious thing that NPA doesn't engage in that sort of thing?

LEN:- I don't know, I wonder about that and I've worried about that because, I think, we have been seduced by the Government in a way. We are on all sorts of little committees with them now, we are part of planning processes, writing management plans and our inputs are taken and perhaps considered, I don't know. But I feel we have let our hands be tied in a way where we can't object too much because we are part of the process that did it. A lot of people don't agree with me but that's how I feel. I think we have just become a little too involved with the decision making and so we are locked into it. I think the 'Ginini Swamp' decisions were part of that, we went along with what the committee provided because we thought as an environmental organisation we should, and the information was wrong and we weren't able to jump up and down too much because we were part of that decision, NPA had been part of the decision making process. So that's a thing that worries me and is one of the things that might be bad for the future of NPA, we will lose the focus. If we are part of the ruling classes we can't make much of a fuss about what they do.

MATTHEW:- Just one aspect of NPA's work that I meant to ask you before is its use of grants and also the employment of a research officer. That seems to indicate that the organisation over the decades has become increasingly like a professional lobby group. Do you have any comments in that regard?

LEN:- I think that is part and parcel of what I was saying before because we employ a professional person to do things, and he probably does it very well, I'm not being critical of the person who does it, but that's doing work for the Government. I know we are spending their money to do it, but once again we are locked into what the final outcome is because we have been part of the research process. Whether what we said is agreed with or not, in the long run we are still there while the decisions are being made. I'm not sure that's a good thing to have had a permanent professional person to do that. I think, it might have been better to have employed somebody to do this job, and somebody to do another one, and somebody to do another one, then you are less locked in because it's not the same person all the time.

MATTHEW:- There have been different people in that role?

LEN:- There have but over the last few years we have had one person who was not in full time employment, but for everything we do, for every submission we make that person was engaged. Whereas before, once again things have changed, you could rely on somebody, say, who worked in the Department of the Environment having a bit of expertise who could make a submission for



us. But you can't rely on that anymore, so perhaps you have to rely on someone outside the organisation.

MATTHEW:- To look at the other side of what NPA does which is its bushwalking mantle, it is a bushwalking group as well as say a political group. You have led some walks, quite a few different sorts of trips in your years with the NPA. What do you think your philosophy has been in that? Did you have a conscious plan to present a certain type of activity, or did you just see places that looked interesting and lead a trip there?

LEN:- I think that was my aim, mostly I saw places that were interesting for a trip. I took or organised a party to go to Monga Forest the other day which was a different thing. That was for an educational purpose but mainly it's been, "that looks pretty interesting country to poke around in, let's go and have a look at it". That's been my main philosophy, a pretty selfish one, I guess.

MATTHEW:- Do you have some favourite spots?

LEN:- Well, in Namadgi I have got several, I suppose. I like to go up to the foot of Mt Kelly, that area I find nice country.

MATTHEW:- The top of Sam's River?

LEN:- That's right, Sam's Creek fire trail, I enjoy that. I really like the Orroral Valley even though it's gentle easy walking. I find that a lovely valley to walk along.

MATTHEW:- Except when you are carrying a large piece of timber?

LEN:- That's right, yes. I don't find it so good then, but further up from that where we carried the timber. In the Budawangs I like that area around Canowie Brook.

MATTHEW:- Have these sorts of trips with NPA given you, do you think, an increased sense of place?

LEN:- Much, and I'm very grateful to two people. When I first joined I thought I'll be a daywalker but then somebody called Ian Haynes was Outings Convener and then Di Thompson and they sort of adopted me for want of a better word, and introduced me to overnight walking which I hadn't done since I was a kid. That was the best thing that ever happened, I thought, I really do. The best days of my life were the days packwalking.

MATTHEW:- Do you think that the nature of the outings that NPA offers have changed very much in the years you have been in the organisation?

LEN:- Well, not really, I think. I was looking through some old walks programs and they are not much different to what we offer now, and the leaders haven't changed either which is sad. No, I think we are doing much the same sort of thing.

MATTHEW:- Do you think the style of trip, for example in the very early years of NPA back in the 1960s and 1970s when Nancy Burbidge was involved, a lot of her trips were very overtly educational?

LEN:- Educational very much so, well, I don't think that happens as much or it doesn't happen at all today. I wasn't here in the 1960s but bushwalking has become more prevalent among people, I think, a wider cross section of people than it used to be. It used to be a fairly esoteric sort of occupation, but I don't think it is anymore. I really don't know why the change, perhaps there is nobody in the NPA who has the skills Nancy had to offer and none wants to offer, or perhaps people are better educated too perhaps.

MATTHEW:- And they have more literature available?

LEN:- That's right. It's surprising how many people carry a field guide, especially our bird guide with them, and a lot of people carry flower guides of one sort or another.



MATTHEW:- Do you think there has been much of a change in the numbers of people attending outings during this time?

LEN:- Well, since I joined the numbers have gone down a fair bit, although you get a surprise when you go to a well attended outing. My feeling is there used to be 15 to 20 every weekend in the late 1980s early 1990s, and now 10 or a dozen is a good roll-up. Perhaps our ageing population, ageing membership of NPA; we are not attracting new members. I don't know what the reason for that is.

MATTHEW:- *Is that a concern?*

LEN:- It concerns me because if we don't we won't have an NPA very shortly. I don't know what we have to offer young people; schools have taken over the role of introducing people to bushwalking now, the role that bushwalking clubs used to have. So kids learn and they become very self reliant, and I don't think kids join these sorts of organisations much. I don't know why, but I suppose they have a circle of friends anyway and get together amongst themselves to make up a group to go bushwalking and so on.

MATTHEW:- *Over the years you have played a role in the Bulletin. Just thinking about the Bulletin for a while, especially in writing up reports of the general meeting talks, the speaker and we will talk about those general meetings shortly, but as far as the Bulletin itself goes, what do you see its major value and importance?*

LEN:- Well, it's the only way, I suppose, 90% of the people in the Association know what's happening in the Association. I think it serves the purpose of giving the Association some cohesiveness and sense of community and purpose. I think it's a very useful educational tool, it lets people know what's going on, and we give a lot away to schools and libraries and so on. We put the conservation message out into the community. I think it also gives scope for people to air their hobby-horse and I think that's a very good outlet for them.

MATTHEW:- *During your time with NPA the Bulletin has changed in the way it is produced because it has been taken away from the membership and given to a commercial firm and then has come back. Have you any comment to make on that?*

LEN:- Well, I'm not being critical of Roger Green as I think he did an excellent job, but coming back to the membership has been a very good thing. I think the *Bulletin* has become a livelier journal because it's our journal, people feel as though they have an involvement in it, I think. I feel we are getting more contributions from members than we used to, there is a wider number of people contributing, but when Roger was doing it, it seemed to be the same old by-lines quarter after quarter after quarter. I think that has changed, so I think it's a good thing and I do think the old *Bulletins* (we have been on this project of preparing the 40th anniversary *Bulletin*, so I've been reading the old *Bulletins*) were very, very good journals because they were the journals of people who were very concerned and committed and very involved in its production.

MATTHEW:- *Now other publications, several have come out during your time of membership. The tree guide came out just before, then was re-printed in 1990, and the bird guide in 1993, and reptiles and frogs more recently. Do you think these undertakings have been significant contributions by the NPA to, say, the Canberra community?*

LEN:- I'm sure they have been because the bird guide sells like hot-cakes and even the reptile guide which I thought would not attract a big audience seems to be selling extremely well. It's put a lot of information out into the community, I'm sure.

MATTHEW:- *Do you think there is any sort of relationship between the fact that walk numbers have gone down at the same time that all this supportive literature has come out, and not just these booklets but, say, Graeme Barrow's walking books?*

LEN:- I think it has. People are going bushwalking without any help these days and the park has



got tracks cut through it here, there and everywhere. So if you are not very confident finding your way it doesn't matter, you don't need someone to show you the way anymore, but I think those guide books have cut our numbers down.

MATTHEW:- Which is a bit ironic in a sense?

LEN:- Well, it is ironic in a sense, but I don't know whether it matters except that I would like to see the people with NPA. How they get out there doesn't really matter, and I don't think you become a conservationist if you don't know what you are talking about and don't experience the countryside.

MATTHEW:- The publication of the bird and reptile guides. Do you think they have assisted the progress of conservation within the Territory?

LEN:- Sure, they must have because people are aware that that bird is this and that bird is that and they go out looking for them, and I think they probably would be a bit more kind to reptiles too as a result of the reptile guide.

MATTHEW:- And not only want the species themselves conserved but also the places they come from?

LEN:- But also the habitat conserved, that is what I think is a big part in it.

MATTHEW:- Now, just to talk about the subject of the general meetings, the monthly meetings. Now, you have had the responsibility, certainly for some time now [Len:- since 1993] for getting speakers, and what do you think your underlying philosophy has been in that? Has it been, "gosh, I've got to get someone for next month" or are you trying to get a program going?

LEN:- Well, I try and get a program going, I try to get some entertaining people who would be purely entertaining, and people who have a message to sell, and people who I think we should listen to regardless of whether or not they are good speakers but who have a something we should be concerned about. Plus I like to involve members if I can in talking to us. I think that was my philosophy, to try to mix it up a bit, something that was light and easy to listen to, but sometimes do things that, whether we want to listen to them or not, we should know about.

MATTHEW:- And of course, the venue recently changed in 1998 from the Griffin Centre to Forestry House. It had been at Griffin Centre since 1969. What was the reason behind that?

LEN:- Well, Civic was becoming a bit of an unsavoury place of an evening, we'd been at meeting and had windows smashed and people run their skateboards or bottles, or whatever, up and down the wall while guest speakers were there. I think that was one of the main reasons. It also wasn't a great venue sound-wise. I don't know why we stayed as long as we did quite frankly; I suppose it was its location. As far as showing slides go, everybody's slides were killed by the stray light that roamed in through the windows. So I was very pleased to see us go, not just because Forestry House is much closer but parking was a lot easier. I thought it was a good move to Forestry House because it's a nice pleasant venue with a nice ambience/atmosphere about it, whereas the other place in Civic was sleazy.

MATTHEW:- How do you actually get on to your speakers? You were saying there about the sorts of people you tried to get along, but obviously you have got to hear about who these people are?

LEN:- Well, I did a lot of reading and looked through the paper fairly carefully. Somebody would have an article in or even a letter which I thought, that sounds pretty good I'll follow them up. Sometimes they would agree to speak, sometimes they wouldn't. Principally it was from reading the paper and journals as to where I got my ideas from. Sometimes I'd go out to whoever was managing the park and ask them would their staff like to talk about something or did they have something going on that might be of interest to us. They were always very obliging. I never got a knock back from Peter Hann while he was there, and Brian Tyrell, his predecessor, was the same,



they were always very good and always had someone to offer. Some of our best speakers came from the Parks Service, I feel.

MATTHEW:- I was going to say, do you want to recall some of the better presentations you have had?

LEN:- I'm quite happy to. The best presentations were ones that came from our members. Adrienne Nicholson talked to us about Antarctica once and that was fantastic, and she talked to us on another occasion about echidna tracking on Kangaroo Island and that was just as good. Di Thompson talked to us about her trips over to Uzbekistan or one of those '-stans' and that was marvellous. You [*Matthew Higgins*] talked to us about Tidbinbilla and that was great and probably other things I can't remember at the moment. John Webster talked to us about Kangaroo Island and that was good and also one of the other islands, Flinders Island I think. Judy Webster talked on several occasions after her trips, she was very good. Syd [*Comfort*] talked to us. Anytime a member spoke to us it was a great night and the crowds came. They always did NPA proud, I thought, it was amazing the talent we have got in the organisation when it comes to presenting their information. They were always very, very willing and you didn't have to twist anybody's arm unduly.

MATTHEW:- In the earlier years of the organisation there has been an Annual Meeting, not the AGM, but a special meeting put on really for the public as much as for the membership, and these were held in places like the Canberra Theatre where pretty high-profile speakers like Milo Dunphy and Judith Wright and in early years Vincent Serventy came; that's something that seems to have gone?

LEN:- It's gone and I didn't ever manage to get any of those. I asked the Committee once could I have the money to bring one good guest speaker each year but the approval was never forthcoming, I don't know why. It was just felt to be too expensive and a bit of a risky enterprise. I was disappointed about that; it was one thing I was a bit upset about.

MATTHEW:- Do you think it would be worth persisting with that?

LEN:- I think it would be wonderful, I mean there are people who should speak to us, I can't think of a name off the top of my head, but people like the Fraser Island fellow, Sinclair, I feel, we should be after people like that at the cutting edge of conservation as Judith Wright was, Serventy and co. They all must have a lot to offer us but we don't seem able to attract them at the moment.

MATTHEW:- Now the social meetings as opposed to the general meetings, say the Christmas party and President's barbeque. Now, that President's barbeque has gone but was that going when you started?

LEN:- That was going. I went to three or four President's barbeques and I don't know why it fell by the wayside, perhaps the numbers had fallen off, I've forgotten, but they weren't well attended, not in the years I was there. We had a new members' barbeque when we first moved the office to Chifley, that was well attended, but that is the only one I remember going to. The office moving to Chifley was another big change for NPA, when we moved from the ROCKS. The ROCKS used to be a focal point for Committee discussion, too; there was always redevelopment plans and all sorts of things mooted for the ROCKS. We used to be concerned to keep it much as it was, a low key place, but when we left, I think, we left our interest behind too. I haven't heard the ROCKS mentioned for a long time.

MATTHEW:- Again, for the sake of listeners to this tape in centuries to come, 'ROCKS' is the Residents of Childers and Kingsley Streets which is a fascinating older part of Canberra.

LEN:- It's one of the few older parts to be left unaltered, isn't it?

MATTHEW:- So was it that fear of redevelopment that really led NPA to open that office out at



Chifley?

LEN:- I think it was. There were several things, one was the fear that we were going to lose the place eventually, secondly it was very difficult to get to as parking was a problem, and finally for people on the Committee or others who had to go there in the evenings it wasn't always the most savoury place to be strolling about in after dark. And if you had boxes of books - I know I used to have these books for the general meetings and I'd try to return them on the Thursday evening after the meeting what hadn't been sold - and you would park your car half a mile away and fall over three low fences and two fallen trees before you got to the office. It was poorly located in that sense, but it was nice to be with the other conservation groups. I think Dianne [Hastie] must feel very isolated where she is. She never complains, but I often wonder how lonely you feel with nobody to talk to at all, whereas when Lorraine Frawley was the office assistant in my time [at the ROCKS] she could have gone and chatted to anyone she liked on a bit of a break at any time because there was always people about in the daytime. It was in night time the big problem was, plus the parking problem.

MATTHEW:- Another activity that NPA gets itself involved in are annual things like, well, Heritage Week. There were displays put on for example by Anne Robinson, were you involved in those?

LEN:- No, I was not involved in those [Heritage Week]. The first display I saw was the ones I was responsible for at "Sunday in the Park" when I joined the Committee. I think I might have gone to one in the Albert Hall in the first year I joined, but that was all.

MATTHEW:- So for the "Sunday in the Park" you had a role there and what sort of display did you have with those?

LEN:- Well, we had a lot of old photographs, I just inherited them, they were old photographs of Hedda Morrison's and Reg's [Alder], old black and white photos which we used to pin up. We had a few publications for sale and a few pamphlets, *Bulletins*, membership forms and outings programs to give out, but really what we had wasn't the important thing, it was the talking we did. We used to attract a few members from them and get quite a bit of interest one way or another, but even if we didn't get members we at least let people know that conservation was an issue in the ACT.

MATTHEW:- Now, that sort of event has sort of been taken over by "ACT Alive"?

LEN:- That's right, and everybody is there, so I think we have a lot more difficult task getting our message across, there are so many there. There weren't as many competing messages in the early days from different conservation groups or from different organisations altogether. There is everybody there now.

MATTHEW:- Do you find that there is still a similar level of interest expressed by the public?

LEN:- Much the same, but I don't think we get membership applications that we used to get in the early 1990s say, but most people didn't stay; they joined for 12 months and probably didn't renew their subs the next year.

MATTHEW:- Go off to a different stall?

LEN:- Well, go off to a different stall, that's right, exactly.

MATTHEW:- The NPA has also played a role in assisting with school essay competitions and poster competitions, has that gone on in your time?

LEN:- No, that was all before my time. I was surprised, I didn't know about that until I was reading these old *Bulletins* the other day, it was quite a big activity. Perhaps it has a place now in getting to young people.

MATTHEW:- Well, just to close then: would you like to reflect on NPA's achievements during the



time that you've been involved or even prior to that time and where you think both it and conservation in the ACT are going from here?

LEN:- That's a hard question. Well, I think NPA's big achievement has got to be Namadgi itself, and I think its current achievement is in keeping it from being despoiled in any great way. We have kept it pretty sacrosanct and, I think, we have got to continue to ensure that there is no sports facility on the top of Gingera or that sort of thing. I think tourism is going to be a big worry in the future, that's what we are going to have to keep a very close watch on.

MATTHEW:- The opening of fire trails to commercial operators for example?

LEN:- Yes, I'm opposed to that, and I think NPA would be too.

MATTHEW:- OK, well we are just about at the end of the questions I had in mind. Is there anything further you would like to say, anything we haven't covered?

LEN:- I think you have covered it pretty well. I'm just about talked out too, so thanks very much.

MATTHEW:- Well, thanks very much for your time this afternoon.