



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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Impact on social life, fishing routine, lifestyle and long-lining process

0.03.45 (part two)

- CD:** What qualities do you think a person needed to be a good fisherman? What makes a good fisherman?
- DB:** Well you needed to be able to handle getting up early hours of the morning. You know, and you needed to be able to put up with the cold and the bad conditions.
- FB:** And no social life.
- DB:** A bit of mongrel in you, you know?
- CD:** A bit of mongrel! *[Laughs]* And is that a label you’d be happy to apply to yourself?
- DB:** I had my moments didn’t I?
- FB:** Mmm, yes. *[Laughs]*
- DB:** Yes, I never let anyone shit on me. *[Laughs]* I had 200 angry Greeks out downstairs one day and I threatened to - I told them if they didn’t shut up “I’ll chuck the lot of you’s out.”
[Laughs]
- CD:** Why were they angry?
- DB:** Well they used to all wait out the front for us when we came home with the fish, you know? And when we opened the gate, some of them used to be there, they’d get there 8 o’clock in the morning and be there for two hours or something.
- CD:** Lining up for your fish?
- DB:** Yes, lining up, but then we’d open the gate, of course they’d all rush in and the ones that had been there two hours would, you know, get run over in the stampede. And then they’d get in there and start arguing, you know? And they’re in there, and they’re arguing the toss over the fish for this day. Oh fair dinkum, it was bloody terrible wasn’t it?
- FB:** Oh, yes. *[Laughs]*
- DB:** And I said - I had enough of it and I said “Shut up!” I said, “Shut up you pack of bastards or I’ll chuck the whole effing lot of you’s out!” *[Laughs]* And they went *[mimes a surprised face]*. Like that, like stunned mullet didn’t they? *[Laughs]*
- FB:** And in five minutes –
- DB:** Yes, then it’s on again, and I just went “Oh!” – *[shakes his head.] [Laughs]*
- CD:** Give up?
- DB:** Give up, yes.

0.05.47

CD: So you mentioned that fishing had a big impact on your social life?

DB: Yes, well - You know you'd be tired all the time wouldn't you? I was anyway. And there used to be different things on and I couldn't go. Like if there was something on, I didn't just lose one day over it, I'd have to lose two days because if there was something on and we were going to go to it, I'd have to stop home that day otherwise I'd be, you know, by 5 o'clock my eyes would be hanging out of my head. So I'd have to stop home, and then I'd go out that night and we wouldn't get home 'til bloody all hours of the morning or night or something. So I wouldn't get up the next morning, so, yes, so we just didn't go. But since I've retired you know, we've done 17 000 miles down 'round Australia. And we've been up to Sydney twice, haven't we?

[...]

(Near 0.12.29 - part two)

CD: ...When did you have time off when you were working as a fisherman?

DB: I didn't have any time off at all.

CD: You didn't have any time off?

DB: No I used to just - I'm a workaholic! *[Laughs]*

CD: Were you working a sort of regular number of days a week? How did it -

DB: No, I used to go - If the weather was right for it, you know, I'd just go every day.

CD: Right. So seven days a week if the weather was right? So it all depended on the weather?

DB: Mmm.

CD: And did it depend also on the season? Did it -

DB: Well it depended on the seasons, yes. Because different times of year we used to do different things, you know, like in the winter months we didn't have to get up at 2 o'clock in the morning for instance. We used to have to get up at about 5 o'clock because we'd have to go down to Geelong. And yes, but we wouldn't be getting out - Sometimes we'd get out every day of the week down there, but when you're netting you've got to pick your weather a little bit. You've got to use your little brains a little bit. You don't want to get caught on a lee shore, what they call a lee shore with the wind northerly or something like that...

Yes, you might go and shoot the nets over Point Henry you know and the wind would be blowing right in there, so, they'd have to stop there until the weather fined up, you know? Sometimes you mightn't get out for a week, you know? But when the springtime came and I started long-line fishing, catching Snapper, with the boat I got, I used to go every day. From October 'til February I used to average 28 days a month.

0.14.32

CD: Right. And so, in that part of the year what would the common getting up time be in the morning?

DB: Two o'clock in the morning.

DB: Usually when I start in October we'd be getting up 3 o'clock. Three o'clock was early enough, but as the days got shorter, by the middle of December, I'd be getting up at 2 o'clock in the morning.

CD: Did you resent that, or did you just spring out of bed?

DB: No, well, I didn't mind it and I had no trouble doing it. And as far as springing out of bed is concerned, I didn't spring out of bed anymore, but the point was I used to come home in the night time. We always have our tea at 6 o'clock don't we, more or less?

FB: Yes.

DB: And after tea I would always sit down and watch the telly and I used to watch the channel 2 news and sometimes I'd watch the *7.30 Report* or something afterwards, but 8 o'clock I'd go and have a shower, you know, and go to bed. And then, I'd get up at 2 or 3 o'clock, but I used to always set the alarm clock, but I used to always, virtually always, wake up before then. I had it built in to me to, didn't I?

FB: Mmm.

DB: Yes. There was plenty of times I'd got up and gone and Frances would have to turn the alarm off afterwards, didn't she?

CD: [*Laughs.*] I'm sure that's the last thing you wanted at 2 o'clock in the morning Frances.

DB: Yes, but I'd be sitting there by about 5 o'clock you know, and my eyes would be hanging out of my head.

CD: This is in the afternoon?

DB: Yes, in the afternoon, yes. I'd come up here and sit down and you know, or I'd sit down over on the couch and go to sleep...

Yes, but anyway, I'd have my tea and that. I used to battle along, have my tea and go to bed. But in the morning I'd just go, [*clicks his fingers together.*] Switch on. Like that, just bright as a button, ready. Raring to go.

CD: And would you have some breakfast before you left? Here?

DB: Oh yes. Yes, big bowl of weeties and a cup of tea. Yes.

CD: And then out the door how quickly? From getting up to heading out the door?

DB: Well, from the time I got up 'til I'd leave I'd be half hour.

CD: And then off to where?

DB: Down to St Kilda. That's at 2 o'clock in the morning. We'd usually - If I got up at 2 o'clock we'd be leaving the harbour at three. Yes.

CD: Ok, and then on the boat, you'd have to get to the spot that you wanted to fish?

DB: Yes.

CD: And how long would that take? How far would you normally travel?

DB: Oh, well it would depend on if we were catching the snapper, but you know, the average trip - A long trip would be an hour and a half. A short trip would be an hour.

0.17.46

CD: And then you'd shoot the nets?

DB: Shoot the long-line.

CD: Shoot the long-line, ok. So describe to me what that is actually like. I haven't seen that happen before.

DB: Well a long line is in a basket. And I have my hooks 30 feet apart, that's say 10 metres apart.

CD: Is that unique to you? Or do other fisherman do that too?

DB: Well that's the way everyone had it. That's the old way of doing it. They don't do it like that anymore. But every 30 foot you have a, what you call a snood, which is - I make them about 5 foot long.

CD: Ok.

DB: It's attached to the line, with a hook on the end. And it's in the basket and the hooks are stuck into cork. You know, around the top of the basket? So on your way down the Bay you pull the hook out, put a bait on it, and the basket has got what you call a lip on it. The basket's round, but around the outside it's got what we call a lip, like a little ledge.

CD: How big would the basket be?

DB: Well about as wide as the table.

DB: And about as high.

CD: A bit over a metre say?

DB: Yes, about a metre high and a metre wide. Yes and you lay the baits on the side of it. But when you're going along in the boat, you're going along about 5 or 6 knots, and the line is going out. And you just, as you come to them, you flick them out. Like a robot. [*Dugga thumps the table with his hand.*]

CD: And so that's getting it out in to the water? And then -

DB: Takes 200 hooks. It used to take me 15 minutes to put in the water and 400 hooks was a half hour. Used to take us half hour to shoot the line. Then we'd motor slowly back to where we started and we'd leave it down for an hour and start pulling in.

CD: What did you do in that hour that it was down?

DB: Well I used to go, I used to go and get in the bunk. [*Laughs*]

CD: So the boat was big enough for a bunk?

DB: Oh yes, it had two bunks in it. Yes.

CD: And you'd have a bit of a rest?

DB: Yes, I used to just - Yes, it depends who was with me. It depends, like, when David was with me it was him in the bunk. *[Laughs]* I'd never seen anyone who could sleep like him. He used to get in the bunk and he used to hit that and you hear *[makes a snoring sound.]* *[Both laugh.]* Just like that.

CD: I guess when you're in that kind of work you just have to sleep when you can, and he was good at it.

DB: Well yes, yes. When I had Todd with me, my son-in-law, and before him, Brett. When David was crook, he had a mate called Brett who used to do a bit of fishing with us. David got hold of him and said "Look, I want you to go fishing with my old man." So I had to cart him out for about a year or two years, didn't I? Yes, but he bought a house down Portland and he moved down to Portland. And, so I took Todd with me, which is my son-in-law you know? Yes, but when they were, especially Brett, when he was going I used to get a chance to have a bit of a lay down. Because he used to - When we'd finish shooting the line he used to get up and sit on top of the cabin and smoke pot. *[Laughs]*

CD: And did you mind that?

DB: Well I didn't actually know what he was doing, because he'd get up there and that'd blow the fumes away see?

CD: Right.

DB: But it was Melissa who woke me up to it because when David died she started going with me. And Brett was there too, and she knew what he was doing. Yes.

0.21.43

CD: And after the hour was up, and you were pulling it back in - Tell me a bit about what that's like.

DB: Ah, yes, feel the old snapper kicking on the line. Yes. Yes, pretty good. Used to love catching the snapper. Yes.

CD: Why's that?

DB: Oh, they're beautiful. They come up and they're all colours, they've got these blue spots on their back, on the sides. They gleam, you know? And you're bringing them up the top, I get them up the top and we get them out and into the boat, and in their last few seconds they look at you. They're looking at you and you feel sorry for them. What you're doing, you're killing something of beauty, you know? When God created the earth, he made three things, and not necessarily in the same order. Three things of beauty. One was women. The other one was boats. And the third one was snapper.

FB: Yes.

DB: Yes, not necessarily in that order. *[Laughs]*

CD: So when you were looking them in the eye -

DB: Yes. I was the last thing they saw.

CD: Yes. Lucky fish! [*Laughs*] Did you have to take them off the hooks or anything then, or what happened next?

DB: Yes, well some of them, some of them were just what you called 'lipped'. It was in the side of their mouth or in their lip or something like that and I'd just chuck them under my arm, put them under my arm, just pull them, unhook them, chuck them in the box. But if they were down their throat, most of them were, most of them were in their throat so we used to just cut them off. Leave the hook in there.

CD: Ok, so cut the line that was attached to the hook?

DB: Just cut the line yes, tying the hook on, yes.