

**THE IMPORTANCE OF FOOD AND DRINK
IN THE POLITICAL AND PRIVATE LIFE
OF
DON DUNSTAN**

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The Importance of Food and Drink in the Political and Private Life of Don Dunstan

ABSTRACT

In this thesis I argue that food and drink were of central importance to Don Dunstan throughout much of his political and private life. The conventional view of Dunstan always proclaimed that his passionate interest in food and drink was merely peripheral to his life. Food and drink were simply an aberration, of the same idiosyncratic order of importance as his song and dance routine with Keith Michell, his piano playing, or his reciting poetry from the back of an elephant. These various accomplishments were merely confirmation that Dunstan was different from other politicians. I argue that Dunstan was indeed different, but that the difference was rooted firmly in his life-long love affair with food and drink. I argue that his fascination with food and drink drove much of his reform agenda, that it helped his day-to-day survival, and that it provided him with the means of expressing his love for others. Dunstan's 1976 cookbook announced his arrival as a devotee of gastronomy and furthers my argument that he helped to introduce and establish a new Australian cuisine. After Dunstan left political life in 1979 he tried to establish himself in other spheres, but it was his almost obsessive interest in all of the aspects of a gastronomic life that triumphed. In the final decade of Dunstan's life his long love affair with food and drink became a full-blown passion. I argue that, with his long-overdue adventure as a restaurateur, he finally became the complete Don Dunstan.

Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no other material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

I give consent to a copy of my dissertation, when deposited in the University Library, being available for photocopying and loan if accepted for the award of the degree.

Peter Dale Strawhan

__10/11/04_____

Date

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

To say that food and drink are the basis of our lives is to state the obvious. However, as worthy subjects for serious historical research both found wider academic acceptance only in the latter decades of the twentieth century. Food and drink were regarded academically as mostly peripheral to the main game. The seminal 1982 work of former restaurateur turned academic, Michael Symons, *One Continuous Picnic: A History of Eating in Australia*, led the way for serious writing on food in this country. Symons followed this in 1993 with *The Shared Table: Ideas for Australian Cuisine*, which was commissioned by the Office of Multicultural affairs. In that same year Cherry Ripe looked at Australian food from a variety of perspectives in her book *Goodbye Culinary Cringe*, and concluded that ‘in developing a culinary identity of our own, we are finally casting off our colonial baggage.’¹ Food historian Barbara Santich continues to add to our knowledge of the Australian scene with a stream of learned articles in various journals, as well as her books. The latter include *What the Doctors Ordered: 150 Years of Dietary Advice in Australia* 1995 and *Looking For Flavour* 1996.

At least one recent historical analysis of capitalism cites food and drink as an illustration of what has happened to our society in recent times:

Businesses have taken over the replenishment of our capacity to labour through their provision of food, drink and leisure, offering KFC in place of pot-roast chicken, Sprite not home-made lemonade, videos instead of parlour games.²

¹Cherry Ripe, *Goodbye Cultural Cringe*, St Leonards, New South Wales, 1993, p 216.

²Humphrey McQueen, *The Essence of Capitalism: The Origins of Our Future*, Sydney, 2001, p X.

In other words, the relevance of food to our history has come to centre stage, and the subject is no longer relegated to the shadows for only brief mention in passing. That the business of food in Australia is indeed big business, was explored by Sarah Sargent in her detailed 1985 study *The Foodmakers* Sargent wanted economists to realise that the study of food related not just to ‘statistics and hypothetical models...[but also to] cultural and social well-being.’³ For food enthusiasts the question has never been in doubt. Anthropologist Sidney Mintz has written, ‘if we leave aside the food enthusiasts, ordinary mortals do not enshrine food in some special niche of the sort we save for love.’⁴ You may argue that Don Dunstan was no ordinary mortal, but he was certainly a food and drink enthusiast. This thesis examines his life-long enthusiasm as a child and student, lawyer and family man, politician, ‘polymath of the arts,’⁵ radio broadcaster, television presenter and commentator, writer, cookbook author, social justice campaigner, gastronome, and restaurateur. Not only did Dunstan ‘enshrine food’, but, as I will argue, he used it as a metaphor for love, both with his family and especially with friends.

Historian Robert Dare has cautioned other historians writing about food that ‘nothing we consider important is as Janus-faced as food.’ To illustrate this point he provides various examples, including the following:

We gorge on it or purge it, and some of us do both. Weight for weight the most valuable things we eat, such as pepper and saffron, are the least necessary to our survival. The food that caused the most deaths to produce, sugar, does its work best when we cannot see it.

³Sarah Sargent, *The Foodmakers*, Ringwood, Victoria, 1985, p 18.

⁴Sidney W Mintz, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture and the Past*, Boston, 1996, p 9.

⁵Tim Lloyd, *Advertiser*, 13 February 1999.

As a consequence he believes, ‘historians who write about food must be ready to work in both registers...[in order to] catch these ambiguities and contradictions.’⁶ In the case of Don Dunstan the ambiguities and contradictions relate to the life of the man, rather than the food that so captured his interest. Apart from arguing to support my thesis as to ‘the importance of food and drink in the political and private life of Don Dunstan,’ the Janus-face calls for another question to be addressed. How important, or how significant, was Don Dunstan’s contribution to changing the culture of food and drink in South Australia, or indeed, Australia? This dissertation is an attempt to tease out the thread relating to food and drink from the other threads making up the complex life of a significant Australian. Throughout his public life Dunstan’s numerous interviewers relegated his interest in food to a minor quirk, it went with his piano playing. Even as a politician who had written a cookbook food remained an aberration in the minds of most observers. The main thrust of my argument is that food and drink were central to Dunstan’s life and not peripheral.

Dunstan became the Australian Labor Party member for the state, House of Assembly, electoral seat of Norwood in 1953, at a time when South Australia was often referred to as the Cinderella State. Adelaide was variously dismissed as the city of churches, or to many ‘interstate libertarians’,⁷ as the city of wowsers. His party had been in opposition since 1933. A survey by the London *Financial Times* described the Adelaide of the 1950s as ‘a conservative, back-ward thinking and genteel city of churches and church-goers.’⁸ Early in 1951 Dunstan closed his short-lived law practice

⁶Robert Dare, ‘Introduction,’ *Food, Power and Community: Essays in the History of Food and Drink*, Robert Dare (ed.), Kent Town, South Australia, 1999, p 14.

⁷Derek Whitelock, *Adelaide 1836-1976: A History of Difference*, St Lucia, Queensland, 1977, p 124.

⁸Michael Southern, ‘The States, South Australia’, Michael Southern (ed.), *Australia In The Seventies: A Survey by the Financial Times*, 1973, p 177.

in Fiji and returned to Adelaide with the intention, as he later claimed, of turning South Australia into his own experimental social laboratory for change, using the Labor Party as his chosen vehicle.⁹ Dunstan had decided against launching his campaign in Fiji because ‘the restrictions and peculiar nature of the place meant that whatever was done there was unlikely to be a model for anything else very much.’ Dunstan reasoned that Adelaide ‘was of a manageable size, but nevertheless, at the stage of development where it could be seen to be an example.’ Dunstan later told an interviewer he

believed that it could be shown, in a developed industrial society, that the programs of social democracy, for democratising the community and making it a freer and a better and a happier place with deliberate government planning to that end [would work.]¹⁰

Historically, the colony of South Australia had its beginnings in 1836 as a planned settlement, with freedom and happiness as components of the package presented to potential investors and immigrants. Along with those early utopian ideals went a sense of being different to the other Australian colonies. According to Douglas Pike, this new society had its origins in ‘ideals...[of] civil liberties, social opportunity and equality for all religions.’¹¹ Perhaps inevitably, by the middle years of the twentieth century this radical nineteenth century model, this ‘paradise of dissent,’ had yielded to atrophy. As Pike also wrote, ‘after its lusty youth Adelaide became sedate, gentle and unenterprising.’¹² While a period of industrialisation again quickened the state’s pulse for a time, it was at the expense of personal freedoms and the pursuit of happiness. As

⁹Don Dunstan, *Felicia, the political memoirs of Don Dunstan*, South Melbourne, 1981, pp viii-1.

¹⁰Don Dunstan, interviewed by Andrew Dodd, ABC Radio National, 1992, replayed by Peter Thompson 2004, ‘Summer Season on Australian Leaders’, transcribed by the writer February 2004.

¹¹ Douglas Pike, *Paradise Of Dissent: South Australia 1829-1857*, Carlton, Victoria, 1967, p 3.

¹²*Ibid*, p 516.

this thesis demonstrates, Dunstan was well aware of his state's history and would set about restoring its vital sense of difference with his 'vision of a cultural renaissance.'¹³

Sources and Methodology

Writing about food and food-related topics has become a recognised cross-disciplinary venture, with anthropologists in the vanguard.¹⁴ The following quotation from two anthropologists captures the complexities of the subject:

Food touches everything. Food is the foundation of every economy. It is a central pawn in political strategies of states and households. Food marks social differences, boundaries, bonds, and contradictions. Eating is an endlessly evolving enactment of gender, family, and community relationships...Food is life, and life can be studied and understood through food.¹⁵

This quotation is, I believe, a not too fanciful summation of Dunstan's life, as I hope to demonstrate. This thesis is not a biography, although necessarily, partly biographical; neither is it chronological, as will become apparent. It is in part institutional and in part political history, with aspects of social and cultural history. It traverses the food connections, the network of contributors, the many influences that went towards making up these dominant aspects of Dunstan's life. It relies in part on the contribution from oral sources, supported by documentary evidence where available. Because Dunstan was such a public figure, he was much interviewed and written about in the print media, and I have utilised this source together with videotapes of television interviews.

¹³Robert Dare, 'History and Historians,' in *The Wakefield Companion to South Australian History*, Wifred Prest, Kerrie Round, Carol Fort (eds.), Kent Town, South Australia, 2001, p 259.

¹⁴Carole Counihan, Penny Van Esterik, 'Introduction', *Food and Culture: A Reader*, Carole Counihan, Penny Van Esterik (eds.), New York, 1997, p 1.

¹⁵*Ibid*, p 1.

Early in my research I decided it would be necessary to interview some of Dunstan's friends and colleagues, because of the gaps in the records available to researchers. As time went on I recorded and transcribed over 40 interviews, and exchanged a number of emails with people who either live overseas, or would not agree to be interviewed. Former Dunstan associate Peter Ward declined to be interviewed, but nevertheless provided a good deal of information and useful suggestions by email. He also allowed me access to his papers in the Mortlock Library of South Australiana. I had no difficulty in obtaining permission to research the Dunstan Collection at the Flinders University of South Australia Library, Special Collections. Unfortunately, although this collection contains some valuable material, it is far from complete, and often comprises photocopies of photocopies only. Dunstan's other papers and records are scattered among members of his family, or, like his cookbook collection, remain in his Clara Street house with his partner Steven Cheng. I was granted permission from the Premier's Department to research departmental correspondence deposited with State Records at Netley, after discovering the thirty year access rule did not apply. On the other hand, I was denied access to Dunstan's reports to cabinet on his numerous overseas trips, his submissions, or cabinet minutes. All such records are regarded as State Secrets, and held by the department, presumably in perpetuity. Fortunately the occasional item, a photocopy, or part thereof, has found its way onto a correspondence file, or into the Dunstan Collection. State Records also hold the records of the 1966 Royal Commission into the Licensing Act, and this large record group is on open access. Apart from sometimes indiscriminate culling, first by the department responsible for generating the records, and sometimes by archivists, files are often 'lost' to other departments. In addition, retiring public servants (including politicians) are prone to take boxes of 'their own' government files with them when they go.

Secondary Source Material

Although this thesis is about food and drink and not politics *per se*, any examination of the measures taken by Dunstan when he was a politician requires some knowledge of the political scene and the players. There are various standard works, all of which provide useful studies of the political history of Dunstan and his era. They include Neal Blewett and Dean Jaensch, *Playford to Dunstan: The Politics of Transition*, 1971, *The Dunstan Decade: Social Democracy at the State Level*, Andrew Parkin and Allan Patience, editors, 1981. *Don Dunstan: The First 25 Years In Parliament*, compiled by Richard Yeeles, 1978, is simply a compendium of quotations from Hansard, but conveys something of the flavour of the man and his verbal style. Dunstan's own work, *Felicia: the political memoirs of Don Dunstan*, 1981, gives a patchy account of events. The reviewers at the time, whatever their political loyalty, were not impressed. A former Whitlam minister Jim McClelland described it as 'boring',¹⁶ while a previous Dunstan aide Tony Baker found the memoirs 'idiosyncratic, [and] disappointing overall.'¹⁷ *The Flinders History of South Australia: Political History*, edited by Dean Jaensch, 1986, contains 'An evaluation of the Dunstan Decade', and 'Embracing the Dunstan Decade: A Tale of Two Elections', both by Andrew Parkin. Parkin notes that 'scholarly and popular judgements about the achievements of the Dunstan Decade' remain contentious.¹⁸ In the absence of any more recent work this is still an accurate comment. Stewart Cockburn, assisted by John Playford, in *Playford: Benevolent Despot*, 1996, (first published 1991), devotes a chapter to Dunstan, 'The Dunstan Factor'. Cockburn sent the draft version to Dunstan

¹⁶*Courier Mail*, 28 November 1981.

¹⁷*Weekend Australian*, 21-22 November 1981.

for correction and comment. Dunstan did so, and commented, 'I think you are probably being rather too kind to me, but who am I to complain?'¹⁹ A PhD thesis, "Social Democracy: A Study Of The Dunstan Labor Government", by Richard Cox 1979, has much of interest to the student of Dunstan's policies and politics. Prior to the 1977 state election Cox interviewed 21 out of the 34 Labor parliamentarians, six of whom were ministers, thus creating a unique information source.²⁰ This is borne out by Cox's note that 'not one respondent thought that the A.L.P. should give priority to libertarian issues.'²¹ That consensus perhaps makes Dunstan's food and drink related reforms even more noteworthy. Apart from liquor licensing, the only reference to food or drink in the works referred to above is the noteworthy mention of 'restaurant socialism' in the following comment by Allan Patience:

Mr Dunstan's special interest in tourism and the arts and his desire to see Adelaide establish a reputation as a design-centre led some of his more churlish critics to dismiss his plans as mere 'restaurant socialism' based on a 'knitting and tatting economy'. These kinds of attacks say more about their proponents than the Labor government.²²

However, at a later date even Dunstan's Labor mate Bob Ellis joined the chorus of the 'churlish critics.' Ellis wrote disparagingly about 'the flashier, shallower things – the

¹⁸Andrew Parkin, 'Transition, Innovation, Consolidation, Readjustment: The Political History of South Australia since 1965', *The Flinders History of South Australia: Political History*, Dean Jaensch (ed.) Netley, South Australia, 1986, p 292.

¹⁹Flinders University of South Australia, [FUSA], Dunstan Collection, draft reply, undated and unsigned, Miscellaneous Correspondence. Cockburn was 'mortified' at his own 'careless mistakes' and thanked Dunstan for his 'prompt reply', Dunstan Collection, Personal Correspondence 1991, 26 January 1991.

²⁰Richard Cox, 1979, pp 189-190.

²¹*Ibid*, p 207.

sidewalk cafes, the art gallery wine tastings, the orchestra performances among lions at the zoo, the heady trail of international celebrities.’²³ The point Ellis and the other critics miss is the significance to Dunstan of these ‘things,’ in particular, not only the sheer importance of a food and drink based lifestyle, but also his desire to give others the opportunity to follow suit. So far as I can ascertain, my work on the food and drink related aspects of Dunstan’s life is unique in its focus.

Who Was Don Dunstan?

I provide a discontinuous *curriculum vitae* as the chapters of this thesis evolve, beginning with Dunstan the politician in the next chapter. Inevitably, the various threads relating to food and drink do not always lead in conveniently straight lines, but may double back on themselves, or travel in parallel, as the various segments of his political and private life are examined. At the risk of later repetition, an outline of the central character is provided at this point. Donald Allan Dunstan was born in Fiji on 21 September 1926 and died at his Clara Street, Norwood, home on 6 February 1999 after losing a long fight with cancer. He was survived by his divorced first wife, their three children, two grandchildren and the partner of his final years Steven Cheng. His second wife, Adele Koh, died in 1978 also from cancer, aged 35, only two years after their marriage. The ancestors of his parents came mainly from Cornwall, and he had an older sister, Beth. In 1939 Dunstan was sent back to South Australia from Fiji for a second time, to live with a great aunt at Glenelg. He became a day-boy at St. Peter’s College, bastion of the Adelaide Establishment. Dunstan graduated in law and arts from the University of Adelaide, married Gretel Ellis in 1949, took his bride off to Fiji,

²²Allan Patience, ‘Social Democracy in South Australia in the 1970s’, *The Dunstan Decade: Social Democracy at the State Level*, Andrew Parkin and Allan Patience (eds.), Melbourne, 1981, p 294. Patience does not give his sources.

where his mother had recently died, and practised law in Suva for a couple of years. They returned to Adelaide, with a small daughter, where Dunstan continued in law and joined the Labor Party. He thus became one of first of a new breed of ALP intellectuals drawn from the professional classes, rather than from the traditional working class-trade union background.

Dunstan was elected the Member for Norwood in 1953 and he held the seat in nine more elections, until his sudden retirement from politics in February 1979. He was appointed a Queens Counsel [QC], in 1965, while serving as Attorney-General, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister of Social Welfare, in the Walsh Labor Government, 1965-1967. He became Premier, Treasurer, Attorney-General, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Minister of Housing in 1967 but was defeated in the 1968 election, becoming Leader of the Opposition, 1968-1970. Dunstan again became Premier and Treasurer following Labor's victory in the 1970 election and he continued in both roles until 1979. He also held other portfolios at various times during this period.

Dunstan was awarded Companion of the Order of Australia in 1979. In 1953 he helped an old friend and Labor supporter, the late Doris Taylor, set up Meals on Wheels, a cheap meal service for the elderly, run by volunteers and still operating today. He published his successful cookbook in 1976, followed by *Don Dunstan's Australia* in 1978. *Australia: A personal view* (the book of the ABC TV series) appeared in 1981, and in that same year, *Felicia: The political memoirs of Don Dunstan*. Victoria's Labor Premier John Cain enticed Dunstan to Victoria in 1982 as director, then chairman, of the Victorian Tourism Commission. Following his

²³Bob Ellis, *Goodbye Babylon: Further Journeys in Time and Politics*, Camberwell, Victoria, 2002, p 460.

involvement in a controversial 'Gay' book launch,²⁴ and tired of being constantly under attack from a virulent Opposition with little right of reply, he resigned in December 1986, returning to Norwood soon after. While in Victoria Dunstan was also Deputy Chairman, Alpine Resorts Commission; Board member Victorian Economic Development Corporation; and Chairman, Melbourne Chinatown Statutory Committee, 1983-1986. Dunstan also maintained a strong connection with various human rights organisations. He was National President of the Freedom From Hunger Campaign, 1982-1987, then National Chair, Community Aid Abroad, 1992-1993. He became Chair of the Nelson Mandela Foundation from 1987 until 1993, and following the first Fijian coup, President of the Movement for Democracy in Fiji, from 1987 until his death. Dunstan set up the Jam Factory Craft and Design Centre while he was premier and his support was recognised with the chairmanship from 1990 until 1994. The Department of Social Inquiry at the University of Adelaide appointed Dunstan its first Adjunct Professor in 1997.²⁵ These long lists of Dunstan's awards, positions, appointments and achievements illustrate something of the full and varied life he led. His active support for social justice organisations continued well after his political life had ended. It is of little wonder then that Dunstan's interest in food and drink are regarded as merely of passing importance in such a full life. What I attempt to do in this thesis is to turn that conventional assessment on its head.

When Dunstan entered public life in 1953, the Liberal and Country League premier, Tom Playford, had already held sway since 1938. Apart from his youthful

²⁴*Sun*, 11 December 1986.

²⁵This biographical material was compiled from a number of sources, including the Dunstan Collection and the Dunstan Foundation. It was incorporated in 'Don Dunstan's Contribution to Food and Eating in South Australia', a talk presented by the writer to the South Australian Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia on 20 July 2002. A slightly edited version appears in the branch newsletter *Word of Mouth*, Spring 2002, pp 9-13.

appearance, the 27 year-old solicitor at first blended impeccably with the image of stolid respectability presented on both sides of the House. Between 1953 and the early 1960s Dunstan reinvented both his image and his physical appearance. The classic ‘seven stone weakling’ of the body-building advertisements, and of his own election handouts, disappeared. Seemingly overnight, Dunstan became a snappily dressed, sun-tanned, man-about-town.²⁶ A member of Adelaide’s new ‘Business Establishment’ has written of Dunstan that ‘he developed a highly personalised lifestyle. His dressing was unconventional and designed to attract notice. He displayed an interest in exotic foods and quality wines.’²⁷ As attorney-general from 1965 until 1968, Dunstan drove a program of social reform which continued at least for the first few of his nearly ten years as premier.²⁸ One academic has commented that ‘the legislative output of the South Australian Parliament between 1970 and 1973, at the beginning of Dunstan’s second term as premier, has had few if any equals in Australia.’²⁹

During the early period, Dunstan drew on his experience as a part-time actor from university days. He mainly performed on ABC radio, becoming a life-long member of Actor’s Equity. Thanks to a mellifluous speaking voice that had benefited from childhood elocution lessons, and natural ability, he became one of Australia’s first effective ‘television politicians’. Sir Norman Young believed that Dunstan’s

success lay in his unique ability to expound the Labor Party’s political platform to the electorate. His television appearances were persuasive and delivered with

²⁶See Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, p 34, for Dunstan’s own reference to his physique. Also Clyde Cameron, *The Confessions of Clyde Cameron 1913-1990*, as told to Daniel Connell, Crows Nest, New South Wales, 1990, p 158.

²⁷Sir Norman Young, *Figuratively Speaking: The Reminiscences, Experiences and Observations of Sir Norman Young*, Adelaide, 1991, p 285.

²⁸Parkin, 1986, p 311, see also pp 317-320, for ‘An evaluation of the Dunstan decade’.

²⁹Alex Castles, *Advertiser*, reviewing Dunstan’s *Felicia*, 20 November 1981.

professional polish. He commanded the interest and soon the votes of the increasing numbers of ‘young marrieds’ who were attracted by his promises of a liberated society.³⁰

Humphrey McQueen writes that ‘Dunstan worked hard to become the creature of television,’ and further comments that

throughout the 1970s, Dunstan lived off the progressive reputation he had established as Attorney-General in the mid-1960s when he reformed the laws relating to Aborigines, town planning, drinking hours, Sunday entertainments and industrial safety. The 1973 Workers’ Compensation Act was the last and most important of the Dunstan reforms. Thereafter his great victories were on television, and once he stopped appearing there he ceased to exist.³¹

Far from ceasing to exist however, Dunstan remained in the public spotlight for the rest of his life, sometimes to his own bemusement.³² In death he was eulogised by friend and foe alike, and even posthumously cannot escape mention. A newspaper report of controversial comments about Adelaide’s history of serial murders ‘that would have had Don Dunstan turning in his grave,’ continued, ‘under Dunstan’s colourful leadership Adelaide had been the “Athens of the South”, “a hive of political, cultural and social” innovation’.³³ In her maiden speech to the South Australian Parliament, a much-touted ‘future leader’ of the Liberal Party launched an unprecedented attack on the deceased Dunstan and his long-vanished government.

³⁰Young, 1991, p 286.

³¹Humphrey McQueen, *Gone Tomorrow: Australia In The 80s*, Sydney, 1982, pp 8-9.

³²*Woman’s Day*, 1 June 1987, p 9.

³³‘Southern Sensitivities’, *Weekend Australian*, 20-21 September 2003, commenting on an article in the *Bulletin*, by Deborah Bogle, 16 September 2003.

This outburst is an example of the effect mere mention of Dunstan's name still has on some of those inheriting the values of Adelaide's Establishment.³⁴

The Backdrop to Change

Metropolitan Adelaide was not some kind of *tabula rasa*, simply awaiting the arrival of the messiah-like Dunstan. The 1960s had already introduced its citizens, among other things, to the oral contraceptive pill, *marijuana*, the Beatles, and the conflict in Vietnam. Television had arrived in 1959 and advertisers relished the new worldwide culture of youth, as old verities began to disappear, along with the corner store. Perhaps one of the most telling signs of Adelaide being drawn inexorably into an already changing world occurred when the Beatles pop group arrived for two sell-out performances. In June 1964 they stayed at the South Australian Hotel to the screaming delight of thousands of their predominantly young local fans, who turned North Terrace into a pedestrian only maelstrom.³⁵ Adelaide was hardly a 'cultural desert', when Dunstan began to implement his various strategies for change. The biennial Festival of Arts beginning in 1960 would alone have seen to that, but there was also a thriving art, theatre, music, and dance scene.³⁶ As Geoffrey Dutton has written, 'despite the best efforts of Tom Playford, Adelaide was not isolated from the arts.'³⁷

The food scene by the mid-1960s had improved markedly from the bleak 1950 situation Dunstan later chose to portray in *Felicia*. According to his version 'it was well-nigh impossible to find an eating place open in Adelaide after seven p m, other

³⁴ *Advertiser*, 9 May 2002.

³⁵ *Advertiser*, 13 June 1964.

³⁶ Tim Lloyd, 'Dunstan's arts renaissance', *Advertiser*, 13 February 1999.

³⁷ Geoffrey Dutton, 'The Fight for Grog and Tucker', *Adelaide Review*, July 1987.

than street-carts selling meat pies and pea soup,' the infamous 'floater.'³⁸ In 1966 the South Australian Government Tourist Bureau produced a leaflet called *Dining in Adelaide* which listed fifteen 'Continental Cafes And Restaurants With Wine Licence' (although one had yet to receive its licence).³⁹ There were also a further ten 'Continental Restaurants With Music, Dance Floor And Wine Licence.' The long-surviving Ceylon Hut was included in this last list. This 'Continental' curry house was only a short walk from Parliament House and it became a favourite eatery for Labor politicians and party members.⁴⁰ Chinese food was available from six city establishments, while five cafes specialised in fish and oysters. The range of specialised 'foreign' food also included Dutch and Indonesian, Italian regional dishes, and espresso coffee could be obtained from a number of coffee lounges and espresso bars. One city restaurant, the Brussels, alone specialised in French cuisine, although Chateau Fort at Unley, run by a formidable Frenchman, was only a mile away. Many hotels and restaurants boasted of a wine licence to accompany the familiar grills and barbecues. Some of those restaurants were already listed as 'continental'. 'Swedish Buffet Style', or 'smorgasbord', lunches were promoted at three city and three suburban venues. The Buckingham Arms hotel at Gilberton attracted a large clientele of businessmen, society matrons, and their younger counterparts to the state's best-known smorgasbord.

The South Australian Hotel, 'The South' as it was affectionately known, opposite Parliament House on North Terrace, figured in the Tourist Bureau booklet

³⁸Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, p 22.

³⁹*Dining In Adelaide*, South Australian Government Tourist Bureau, Adelaide, 1966, Elizabeth Sexton also refers to this booklet in her MA thesis, 'Out Of The Cellars And Into The Sun: A history of restaurants in the City of Adelaide 1940-80', Department of History, University of Adelaide, 2000, p 24 and *passim*.

⁴⁰Interview with Doug Claessen, Hindmarsh, 23 January 2001.

only among the hotels providing ‘Dinner Dances and Floor Shows’. This was where the Establishment wined and dined their ladies, although the nearby Adelaide Club remained at the service of its male only membership. The South was also a convenient venue for parliamentary dinners. Premier Frank Walsh played host to Governor General Lord Casey and Lady Casey, towards the end of his premiership on 28 October 1965. The menu was the local version of Austral-French, with the bias towards Australian:

Oysters natural or Lobster Cocktail
Fillets of Whiting and Almond Meuniere
Asparagus Maitaise
Roast Breast of Chicken
Strawberry Reve de Bebe
Cheeses Peppermint Creams
Coffee

Happily, the wines were South Australian, and included chablis, riesling, cabernet sauvignon, sparkling moselle, port, brandy; the liqueurs may have been imported.⁴¹

Dutton also commented that

of course, all the visiting cultural celebrities went to the South Australian Hotel, which remained at the peak until its destruction. They winced as the orchestra in the dining room played a signature tune for each favoured couple, entering behind the headwaiter Lewy’s tails.⁴²

The new Hotel Australia at North Adelaide, a short drive away down King William Road, collected the South’s overflow and the lesser *nouveau riche* to its ‘six nights a

⁴¹Barry King Papers, PRG 1166, SLISA.

⁴²Dutton, 1987.

week cabaret' and two restaurants. Premier Tom Playford performed the 'gala' opening ceremony in front of 650 invited guests at the beginning of the decade.⁴³

Meanwhile, to the north of Adelaide at Playford's satellite city of Elizabeth, thousands of mainly British immigrants were discovering the bleak reality of South Australian licensing laws. Playford created Elizabeth to house a migrant workforce, as one of his incentives to persuade General Motors to establish a new motor vehicle plant.⁴⁴ There were no convivial local pubs, where men and women could socialise over a pork pie and a pint or two of ale or cider, no football pools to provide the chance of a weekly gamble paying off. Instead males had only the brief hour or so between the knock off klaxon and the cry of 'Time gentleman please!' a few minutes before the six o'clock deadline. Women could only drink in the lounge bar, or have their shandy brought out to the car by their spouse.⁴⁵ In Port Pirie, a 'New Australian' migrant was arrested on his way home from the pub after six pm. His crime? He was 'carrying two bottles of beer under his arm.'⁴⁶

Other recently arrived European migrants were helping to fill in the ever-expanding north-south suburban sprawl. The arrival of thousands of immigrants from southern Europe out-numbered those from the mother country, and brought their taste for olive oil, garlic, and wine – the essentials of life – to the notice of the 'Anglos'. Dunstan was one of the first prominent Australians to embrace the concept of

⁴³*Advertiser*, 13 August 1960. The ceremony took place on the 12th.

⁴⁴David Rich has written extensively on this subject. For one account see David C. Rich, 'Tom's vision? Playford and Industrialisation', *Playford's South Australia: Essays on the history of South Australia 1933-1968*, Bernard O'Neil, Judith Raftery, Kerrie Round (eds.), Adelaide, 1996, pp 91-116.

⁴⁵The experiences of four migrant couples is related by Genia and Nigel Hart in 'Oranges and Lemonskis: Slices of narrated multi-cultural lives', in *Playford's South Australia*, 1996, pp 337-357.

⁴⁶Speech by Mike Rann, Leader of the Opposition, 'A Tribute To Don Dunstan', courtesy Dunstan Foundation, 1 April 1995.

multiculturalism, thanks to the lessons of his Fijian childhood. Many Greeks and Italians in this post-World War II wave settled with friends and relatives already established nearer the city in Dunstan's Norwood electorate, in Fulham and Lockleys, Thebarton, Campbelltown, or Prospect. Writing about the last suburb, one historian recounts a common migrant strategy:

The Greek-born parents of Bill Zaharis worked in factories until they could afford to buy a property for a fruit and vegetable shop on Prospect Road, one of several shops with Greek or Italian owners.⁴⁷

This historian also mentions the migrant influence on Anglo-Australian food (or Anglo-Celtic) traditions at cross-cultural dinners: 'pasta, baklava, goulash, stollen, were being served by some of the migrant families from Europe who had come to live in Prospect.'⁴⁸ This example of Anglos trying migrant foods was an experience enjoyed by many. One well-known commentator has written, 'as with so many Australians, my first contact with multiculturalism was through the gullet.'⁴⁹

Cooking teacher Rosa Matto, the daughter of Italian immigrant parents, has written about her 'inherited...culinary tradition.'⁵⁰ Of how her parents, like others of their kind, learned to cope in 'a country that was not really convinced...that it either wanted or needed migrants.'⁵¹ Food was, of course, 'one of the symbols that did set them apart.' While not all Anglos were prepared to try migrant foods, the converse

⁴⁷Pauline Payne, 'Living in Prospect', *Playford's South Australia*, 1996, p 196.

⁴⁸*Ibid*, p 195.

⁴⁹Mungo MacCallum, *Mungo: The Man Who Laughs*, Sydney, 2001, p 15.

⁵⁰Rosa Matto, 'Women As Custodians Of Tradition', *Proceedings of the Eighth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy: Sustaining Gastronomy*, Barbara Santich, Jennifer Hillier, Catherine Kerry (eds.), Adelaide, 1996, p 101.

⁵¹*Ibid*, p 103.

also applied. Her ‘father hated the smell of lamb roasts – a lot of Italians do – I love them. On Sunday morning, all of Prospect would have this smell.’⁵² Matto also touches on a great Australian paradox. The quirk that gave Dunstan a chance to sell his concept of Adelaide embracing a Mediterranean culture, based on a new appreciation of food and drink – the readiness to ‘give it a go’. Matto as an adult visited the area her parents came from in southern Italy and found people only ate the traditional fare, ‘tomato sauces and fusilli’. She found their minds were closed to any hint of the new. Unlike Australians, where even in Adelaide, with all the anti-migrant negativity she found as a schoolgirl, Matto still maintains that most are ‘ready and willing to absorb and learn.’⁵³ Her opinion is shared by other food writers, including Stephen Downes. He has noted ‘Australians’ eagerness to give new things a go.’⁵⁴

The food industry had already observed and acted upon this paradoxical receptiveness and tailored their products and advertising to suit.⁵⁵ The advent of television in the mid-fifties, plus the ever-increasing sales of motorcars to an ever-increasing number of young newly-weds, also marked the arrival of supermarkets.⁵⁶ This life-changing trio greatly assisted the process, as with Britain, where early post-war austerities finally began to disappear, ‘when the good times of the 1950s finally arrived.’⁵⁷ The same researcher accurately described this decade as ‘the aspiration-

⁵²Rosa Matto, quoted by John Newton, *WogFood: An Oral History With Recipes*, Milsons Point, New South Wales, 1996, p 137.

⁵³Matto, *WogFood*, 1996, p 145.

⁵⁴Stephen Downes, *Advanced Australian Fare: How Australian Cooking Became The World’s Best*, Crows Nest, New South Wales, 2002, p 8.

⁵⁵Michel Symons has written extensively on this area, see especially *The Pudding That Took a Thousand Cooks: The story of cooking in civilisation and daily life*, Ringwood, Victoria, 1998, pp 340-341, *The Shared Table: Ideas For Australian Cuisine*, Canberra, 1993, *One Continuous Picnic: A history of eating in Australia*, Adelaide, 1982

⁵⁶Symons, 1993, p 16.

⁵⁷Christina Hardyment, *Slice of Life: The British Way of Eating Since 1945*, London, 1995, p 6.

hungry 1950s’, and went on to describe the seminal effect Elizabeth David’s food writing had on a generation of British food lovers. ‘If interest in food now amounts to a new kind of religion, then David was its Messiah.’⁵⁸ Like Elizabeth David, Don Dunstan was soon to demonstrate how to ‘combine cooking, something that had been considered a household chore, with a very easy and pleasant lifestyle.’⁵⁹ While David wrote extensively on the food of Provence and the Mediterranean, another, even more powerful and lasting influence resulted from ‘Britain’s [post-war] culinary love affair with America...[which] brought instant food of all kinds on to the high street and into the home.’⁶⁰ Hardyment sums up this development in relation to Britain, but could just as well have been writing about Australia:

It is the transformation of our shopping patterns from high street to supermarket, from fresh food to frozen, that has allowed an upper middle-class taste for foreign food to turn into a national commonplace.⁶¹

There are other parallels between the British experience and Australia. The large numbers of Southern European migrants brought here post-World War II, by virtue of the ‘White Australia’ policy, were not matched in Britain, but there had been ‘a sizable Italian community...since the end of the nineteenth century,’ which equated with metropolitan Adelaide’s own pre-war influx. As with Australia, many ex-prisoners-of-war stayed on and found employment with their compatriots in the restaurant industry;

⁵⁸Hardyment, 1995, p 72.

⁵⁹*Ibid*, p 96.

⁶⁰*Ibid*, p 91.

⁶¹*Ibid*, p 114.

'by the mid-1960s, trattorias had become so successful that chains of restaurants developed.'⁶²

The myth has arisen that the continuing revolution in Australian cooking was attributable solely to the influence of the flood of new immigrants to our shores.⁶³ But there were other important factors involved. Margaret Fulton refers to one of them, overseas travel:

By the mid-1950s, Australians were becoming food conscious. With post-war travel, the well-heeled were able to eat in restaurants...[in Paris, London, or New York]...where they could choose *haute cuisine* style 'silver service' or the less formal but elegant grill. Others were eating at Latin Quarter bistros or chic boulevard restaurants. We were becoming educated about food and wine.⁶⁴

Before long, the less 'well-heeled' younger generation of Australian travellers followed, at first overland to Europe via Asia, enjoying the fresh and exotic flavours of alien foods in the countries they traversed, then in the 1970s by Boeing airliners. The 'American War' in Vietnam and ever-increasing travel by a largely peripatetic population added to Australian awareness of our neighbours and their cuisines, including Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, China and Japan. This was reinforced by Asian refugees, many of whom were forced to learn new skills in their new home, often on the job. Some began growing their traditional vegetables. They supplied others, who opened small eateries and soon attracted a growing clientele of students and others seeking a cheap, fresh alternative to the old 'mono-culinary' norm.⁶⁵ In the

⁶²Hardyment, p 88.

⁶³Symons, 1993, p 7. Downes, 2002, p viii.

⁶⁴Margaret Fulton, *I Sang For My Supper: Memories of a Food Writer*, Sydney, 1999, p 84.

⁶⁵Cherry Ripe, 1993, p 8.

restaurant industry, Asian and Western cuisines began to be combined or ‘fused’. Cherry Ripe has noted that ‘this fusing of Asian and Western flavours is more widespread in Australia than in any other Western country.’⁶⁶ Another food writer has commented:

Increasing affluence allowed Australians to be adventurous: We had plenty of money to try strange foods, to go out to the new restaurants and also to travel overseas and broaden our culinary experiences still further. The result was a complete re-education of the Australian palate. Our tastes and what we considered acceptable to eat widened immensely.⁶⁷

This broadening of the Australian palate of tastes and variety in food was undoubtedly part of what Dunstan hoped to achieve for South Australians, with his own social laboratory and by his support of multiculturalism. He preached the doctrine of ‘fusion’ in his own cookbook, long before the latter day food writers.⁶⁸

In the Australian kitchens of most immigrants the daughters of the house learned how to cook from their mothers and grandmothers in the traditional way.⁶⁹ In Anglo homes, more often than not, the source of such knowledge was the cooking pages of the *Australian Women’s Weekly*, or *Woman* (later *Woman’s Day*).⁷⁰ The *doyenne* of Australian cookbook authors, Margaret Fulton, began her craft writing for *Woman* and her first cookbook launched in 1968 sold a then record 100,000 copies

⁶⁶Cherry Ripe, p 9.

⁶⁷Laurel Evelyn Dyson, *How to Cook a Galah: Celebrating Australia’s Culinary Heritage*, South Melbourne, 2002, p 24.

⁶⁸Don Dunstan, *Don Dunstan’s Cookbook*, Adelaide, 1976, pp 28-29.

⁶⁹See Rosa Matto, ‘Women As Custodians of Tradition’, *Proceedings of the Eighth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, Barbara Santich, Jennifer Hillier, Catherine Kerry (eds.), Adelaide, 1996, p 101.

⁷⁰Gabriel Gate, ‘the Upstart Cuisine’, *Proceedings of the First Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, Barbara Santich (ed.), Adelaide, 1984, p 17.

with its first print run.⁷¹ Cookbooks were then (and remain) another major source of cooking information for Australian women (and increasingly men), soon supplemented by a parade of television ‘chefs’. Writing in 1999, Joanna Jenkins noted the difficulty of ‘separat[ing] cause and effect’ when considering the question:

Does more writing about food occur now because Australians are more interested in food? Or are Australians more interested in food because more writing about food exists that tells them they should be interested?⁷²

The answer may lie in the overarching fact of globalisation – of food, of advertising, of the media, and the induced search for instant gratification. In relation to gastronomy, Stephen Downes wrote recently:

Italy and France, which are recognised eating-and-drinking cultures (unlike ours), will profit massively from any intellectual initiatives they set up. We can’t, until we’ve convinced others we’re gastronomically legitimate.⁷³

This desire for recognition relates to a continuing debate as to whether or not we have evolved a distinct Australian cuisine. Dunstan first called for the development of ‘an Australian cuisine which is inevitably derivative, but which will take the best from everywhere’ in 1976.⁷⁴

⁷¹Fulton, 1999, p 159.

⁷²Joanna Jenkins, ‘Consuming Words: The Development of Food Writing in South Australia from Post-World War II to the Present’, BA (Hons) Thesis, Department of History, University of Adelaide, 1999, p 36.

⁷³Stephen Downes, *Weekend Australian*, 29-30 November 2003.

⁷⁴Dunstan, 1976, p 28.

Thesis and Chapter Outline

Following this introductory chapter (Chapter One), the thesis is divided into three sections. Part I: Political Life, explores food and drink related initiatives Dunstan introduced during his political life and begins with Chapter Two (Liquor Licensing Change: The Sangster Royal Commission). This chapter concentrates on Dunstan's moves while attorney-general in the Walsh Government to bring South Australia into line with the rest of the Commonwealth by introducing 10 o' clock closing of hotel bars. He also introduced other measures designed to free up the legal and social constrictions accumulated over 32 years of 'essentially conservative Liberal and Country League' government.⁷⁵ Dunstan used a Royal Commission to legitimise change. The process also provided time for the electorate to become accustomed to the idea of change, after long years of predominantly dull conformity. The changes to liquor licensing needed to be in place in order for Dunstan to later introduce his other food and drink related reforms. However, I argue that his claim of an overall grand design was not in place at the time of the Royal Commission. Chapter Three (Tourism), examines one of the central planks of Dunstan's attempt at an economic 'New Deal' for his state, based on the expansion and revitalisation of tourism as an alternative engine of progress. Dunstan planned to put in place the necessary infrastructure to overcome excessive reliance on South Australia's narrow manufacturing base and seasonal rural economy, the one unduly dependent on the fluctuation of eastern states' demand, the other on the vagaries of the climate and commodity prices. His tourism concept was ahead of its time and not regarded as worthy of serious consideration by contemporary Federal governments or in general their state counterparts. Part of Dunstan's rationale was his desire not only to improve

⁷⁵Stewart Cockburn, *The Salisbury Affair*, Melbourne, 1979, p 2.

amenities for tourists, but also to improve the quality of life for South Australians in the process.⁷⁶ Tourism is also strongly linked to food and drink, as the next chapter explains. Chapter Four (The School of Food and Catering: Regency Hotel School) details a continuing success story, the Dunstan instigated School of Food and Catering at Regency Park. The school is now the world-renowned Regency Hotel School, with direct links to the equally prestigious Le Cordon Bleu culinary school of Paris, and the Swiss Hotel Association. Dunstan believed it was the role of government to lead where private enterprise was sometimes loath to go. He used public money where he deemed it necessary to show reluctant entrepreneurs a possible way ahead. In the case of Regency, his rationale was the necessity to provide improved and increased restaurant services, or in the language of the day ‘catering’, for the larger volume of tourists he wanted to attract to South Australia. In Dunstan’s words, ‘I was determined that in the tourism area we must steadily build the infra structure for tourism over a period.’⁷⁷ The chapter includes a study of the working group set up by Dunstan to improve the supply of specialised fresh fruit and vegetables needed by the school. Chapter Five (Government Restaurants, *Al Fresco* and Asian to follow) looks at Ayers House and the two restaurant complex Dunstan conceived as a major component of its restoration. After saving the historic building from demolition, Dunstan persuaded his reluctant cabinet to authorise the redevelopment and to provide government sponsorship for the restaurants. Next to be examined is the private dining facility Dunstan later added to the premier’s suite. The chapter continues with another of Dunstan’s concepts that was well ahead of accepted norms, ‘open air’ or ‘sidewalk’ eating, along the lines long practised in Southern Europe. Dunstan used frequent overseas trips, primarily to Europe, but also to Asia and Japan, to investigate economic trends, trade prospects,

⁷⁶Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, p 205.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

and developments, and to create a network of personal contacts. He paid particular note of the increasing popularity of open-air eating venues in Scandinavian countries, which suggested such ventures would fare even better in Adelaide's Mediterranean climate.⁷⁸ The chapter concludes with the Asian food festivals Dunstan's set in train after establishing economic links with Malaysia.

The completion of Chapter Five also finalises the survey of Dunstan's food and drink related measures while he held political power. Premier Mike Rann revealed recently that 'Dunstan [had] taught...[him] the importance of symbolism in achieving change.'⁷⁹ For Dunstan, the symbols of his food-related political moves as I see them are his liquor licensing amendments, his tourism agenda, the Regency School of Food and Catering, the government restaurants, open-air eating, and the Asian festivals.

Part II, Political and Private: Transition, switches the focus to Dunstan's private life, although while he was premier the line between the political and the private is often difficult to determine. It begins with Chapter Six (Dunstan and John Ceruto's restaurants) which delves into the saga of Dunstan's involvement, while he was still premier, with John Ceruto's two restaurants, The Red Garter and The Coalyard. Dunstan enjoyed wining and dining in restaurants long before he became premier, and continued to sample, savour, and comment on that scene throughout his life. Chapter Seven (Dunstan's Love Affair with Food: The Cookbook and other Food Writing) investigates the historical basis for Dunstan's personal 'love affair with food' and climaxes with the story of his 1976 cookbook. This was an unprecedented, and unmatched activity for an Australian politician, written, of course, while he was still

⁷⁸Mortlock Library of South Australia, [MLSA], PRG 1078, Peter Ward Papers, Tony Baker to Peter Ward, "'Aide Memoire" re government policy for our London/Stockholm journey during Premier's return to Adelaide,' 4 September 1974.

⁷⁹*Weekend Australian*, 6-7 March 2004.

premier, and able to take full advantage of that position to promote sales of his most successful publication. A fellow restaurateur recently commented:

You know, here was someone who could actually live what he preached and that was the impressive thing. That he had a garden. That he grew things in it, and possibly he had the money to have it tended by someone, but the point was he actually wanted a garden. That he actually cooked for people. See, no one has anybody to dinner anymore, you know food is like pornography now. People only look, they look and they leer and they salivate, but the more cooking programs we have, the more magazines we have, the less people actually practise it.⁸⁰

Dunstan would no doubt argue that in promoting his cookbook he was also promoting South Australia. In view of the influx of like-minded individuals from the eastern states, attracted by a premier who wrote a cookbook and spent government money on the arts, there is a sustainable argument.⁸¹ The chapter also discusses other published food writing

Part III Fusion explores the coming together of Dunstan's public and private lives through his involvement with food. Chapter Eight (Dunstan and Gastronomy: The Ongoing Search), discusses Dunstan's growing status in the newly developing world of Australian gastronomy after the triumph of his cook book. This chapter is also concerned with the various symposia of gastronomy in which Dunstan participated. The symposia reflected increasing professional and academic interest in the subject. This interest was paralleled by a growing awareness of food in the wider community, driven by the food industry, via television chefs, glossy magazines, 'celebrity' cookbooks, and colour features in newspapers. In particular, the 'fusion'

⁸⁰Interview with Cath Kerry, Adelaide, 27 May 2002.

⁸¹Mike Rann, 'Don Dunstan – maestro of the possible', *Don Dunstan 1926-1999: A Labor Herald Tribute*, Gary Orr (ed.), Barton, Australian Capital Territory, February 1999, p 4.

food of the re-born Australian cuisine is none other than the model Dunstan urged in his cookbook.

Chapter Nine (Don's Tables, Birthdays and Other Celebrations) describes Dunstan's apparently bizarre final venture, when, towards the end of his life, he became a restaurateur, in a move that saddened many of his friends and former colleagues. In spite of his illness and infirmity, he was determined on the course he had set himself, and succeeded to the satisfaction of his loyal customers. Dunstan called his style of food multicultural Australian cuisine, and its eclectic origins grew from the fusion techniques first laid out in his cookbook. This chapter does not end with Dunstan's death, instead continuing on to join with the theme of celebration, which was very much part of his devotion to food and drink. He seemed never to tire of providing the opportunity for sharing food, drink and conversation, whether on his birthdays or on a host of other occasions. Thus reinforcing my contention that food and drink were of paramount importance to Dunstan.

Dunstan and His Private Life

I refer to Dunstan's political life and his private life as if they were two separate entities, while demonstrating the inevitable overlapping. Dunstan's association while premier with John Ceruto during The Red Garter and The Coalyard restaurants' saga, as well as his cookbook venture, best illustrate the point. To put this another way – with Dunstan, the line between self-promotion and promotion of the state was frequently blurred. However, there is still another dimension to Dunstan's 'private' life, and that is his determination, to the point of obsession, with guarding his inner, or personal privacy. A long-time friend of Dunstan's described him as an

enigma,⁸² as also have other observers.⁸³ Interviewer Craig McGregor noted that ‘journalists...write about him as “a very private person” but he isn’t; he has simply learned to be wary.’ Undoubtedly much of that wariness stemmed from the assiduous pursuit of journalists, bent on dissecting his ambiguous sexuality, a subject Dunstan refused to discuss. His sex life he maintained was entirely his own business, and he dismissed it with the comment, ‘I am not the gay guru of Australia.’⁸⁴ Dunstan’s friend George Negus, in a last television interview, referred to Dunstan’s refusal to ever compromise on the subject of his privacy. Dunstan acknowledged that this was so: ‘I never wavered, never wavered.’⁸⁵ However, I argue that there is an additional explanation for Dunstan’s reputation as an enigma. He discovered quite early in his first marriage that preparing and cooking food provided him with a reliable means of relaxation. He soon found that reading and researching about the history of food had a similar effect. In a later chapter I refer to Dunstan the incumbent premier, buried in a French cookbook at the height of a crucial election campaign. Away from the lectern on formal or other social occasions he revealed an apparent inability to make casual conversation. When he did engage in conversation the subject often centred on his vegetable garden or recipes. In my view, by the time Dunstan reached middle age food had become his overriding and comfortable obsession. Elizabeth Wynn, a close friend of Dunstan’s, likens her understanding of him to looking at a prism:

Well going to see Don at his house for me was like holding a prism in your hand, because when you first went in he’d be all welcoming. And then ten minutes later he’d be out in the kitchen with his pinny on.

⁸²Chris Winzar, *Don Dunstan Retrospective*, FEAST, Dunstan Foundation audio-tape, transcript by the writer, 8 November 1999

⁸³Craig McGregor, *Good Weekend*, 6 March 1987, p 9.

⁸⁴*Ibid*, p 12.

⁸⁵‘Don Dunstan: The State’s Man,’ *Stateline Special*, ABC TV, 5 February 1999.

Starting cooking. And then during a tremendous meal a whole range of subjects would come up, not the ones you would necessarily expect.⁸⁶

In the McGregor interview Dunstan said, 'I was a child who very much craved affection.' He pause[d]. "I still do." [He paused again] 'Most politicians want to be loved.' McGregor deduced from what Dunstan told him of his childhood, and later experiences as a day boy at St Peters College, that 'personal hurt translated into public action: a familiar process.' Accordingly, he argued that 'nearly all of ...Dunstan's great reforming legislation...has a personal base,' and continued:

He is probably best known for his pioneering liberalisation of South Australia's way of life, which found expression in everything from easing licensing laws and dress codes to key homosexual and abortion law reforms. As he says, rightly: "What we accomplished there set a pattern for the rest of Australia. While there is still great conformity here, people are much freer to be themselves than they were."⁸⁷

I find this emphasis on the personal basis of Dunstan's liberalising legislation a persuasive argument, which my own research tends to support. In my view, Dunstan's food and drink related legislation also owe their origins to his own personal interests and predilections. The next chapter examines the Liquor Licensing Royal Commission and the resultant changes to the Liquor Licensing Act. Thereafter Dunstan was identified as the politician who 'transformed the licensing laws' of South Australia and then led his followers to a promised land of wining and dining.⁸⁸

⁸⁶Interview with Elizabeth Wynn, Carrickalinga, 19 April 2002.

⁸⁷McGregor, 1987, p 11.

⁸⁸Michael Symons, 'Dining in South Australia: A Tribute to Don Dunstan,' *Mietta's Eating and Drinking in Australia*, Melbourne, 2001.

PART I

PUBLIC LIFE

PART I

Chapter Two

LIQUOR LICENSING CHANGE: THE SANGSTER ROYAL COMMISSION

At the time of the 1966 Sangster Royal Commission into liquor licensing South Australia was the last state to look at modernising its licensing laws. Whilst the other states and territories of the Commonwealth allowed hotels to sell liquor – predominantly beer – to bar room customers – predominantly male – until ten pm, South Australia required hotels to stop serving liquor over their bars at six o'clock in deference to a referendum held more than fifty years before. The sale and consumption of alcoholic liquor had been a focus of legislation since the early days of settlement and such legislation followed a long tradition in English law dating back to the Magna Carta.¹ The decade that would become known as the 'Swinging Sixties' had already wrought considerable change in Australia. Even Adelaide, that 'farthest flung outpost of wowseryism – prim, proper, [and] asleep in the sun', would inevitably succumb.²

In 2002 Stephen Downes wrote that Dunstan

liberalised liquor laws, ending the State's six o'clock swill in September 1967, and moved to encourage outdoor and footpath eating – an apt move in Australia's only capital with a true Mediterranean climate.³

Towards the end of his life Don Dunstan claimed that 'by negotiating with all the associations to achieve flexible licensing laws...[he] set in train his plans for a State

¹Andrea S. Cast, *Women Drinking in Early Modern England*, PhD. Thesis, Department of History, University of Adelaide, 2001, p 15.

²Ian Mackay, *Advertiser*, 26 April 1976.

³Stephen Downes, *Advanced Australian Fare: How Australian Cooking Became the World's Best*, Crows Nest, New South Wales, 2002, p 51.

tourism industry based on wine and food.’⁴ During 1998 Dunstan wrote of himself that:

Don Dunstan while Premier of South Australia introduced and had passed through the Parliament the most comprehensive revision of the Liquor Licensing Act the State had seen. Included was the first provision in the history of the State for fully licensed restaurants. In seeking to promote the development of food and wine services he set up...Australia’s leading (and best equipped and staffed) food school.⁵

What each of these three variations on a theme suggest is that Dunstan in 1966 was working from a seamless plan to implement his food and wine based vision, in my view that was not the case. Former Dunstan aide Mike Rann commented recently that:

He [Dunstan] believed that you could not have Mediterranean culture in our Mediterranean climate which the rest of society could taste and be enriched by, unless you changed the licensing laws, and he thought that you couldn’t possibly celebrate an Italian or Greek lifestyle in an Australian context by having six o’clock closing.⁶

Here once again the orthodox recreation of events prevails, but Dunstan was yet to form his vision of a Mediterranean lifestyle in 1966, as the following reference to his overseas trip of 1969 confirms:

I also had the opportunity, while in Rome, to see something of the Mediterranean life-style I came to love, and which I believed could improve the quality of life in South Australia, where the climate was better than Italy.⁷

⁴Susan Mitchell, *Weekend Australian*, 20-21 January 1996.

⁵Don Dunstan, ‘Background – Don Dunstan’, courtesy of John Spoehr, *circa* 1998.

⁶Interview with Mike Rann, Adelaide, 16 January 2001.

However, without the liquor licensing reforms Dunstan could not have pursued his food and drink related agenda of 1971 onwards. Accordingly this chapter focuses on attorney-general Dunstan's convoluted agenda for introducing liquor licensing reform. This later description by Dunstan provides a valid summary of this aspect of the times:

In such a climate, the Australian drinker became a guilt-ridden object and the pubs, enchained by a myriad regulations, became joyless oases where the sexes were segregated and entertainment forbidden. No wonder they concentrated upon selling the maximum amount of liquor in the minimum possible time.⁸

Not the least of the demands for change stemmed from the city's 'new cosmopolitanism', which was largely due to the arrival of increased numbers of immigrants from Britain and Europe.⁹ Compliance with some of the Licensing Act's provisions was rare, and the South Australian Police Force had long been accustomed to turning a blind eye to more common infringements on instructions from their political masters.¹⁰ The recently deposed Liberal and Country League premier, Tom Playford, had chosen to preserve the increasingly unpopular *status quo* and paid the price at the hands of the electorate. Playford ignored a warning from one of his own MPs, Condor Laucke, that English migrants wanted a replication of conditions they had enjoyed in their former local pubs plus their football pools. In addition, a noted prohibitionist Methodist minister, the Reverend E.H. Woollacott, had told Laucke that

⁷Don Dunstan, *Felicia, the political memoirs of Don Dunstan*, South Melbourne, 1981, p 166.

⁸Don Dunstan, *Australia: a personal view. The Dunstan Documentaries*, Kenthurst, New South Wales, 1981, p 47.

⁹Eric Richards, "South Australia Observed, 1836-1986", *The Flinders History Of South Australia: Social History*, Eric Richards (ed.), Netley, 1986, p 27.

¹⁰*Report of the Royal Commission into the Law relating to the sale, supply and consumption of intoxicating liquors and other matters (including matters dealt with by the Licensing act, 1932-1966)*, Parliamentary Paper 104, Adelaide, 1966, p 7, report henceforth referred to as the Sangster Report. The

‘unless the Premier lets a little water out of the big reservoir I’m afraid the dam will soon burst over him.’¹¹

Most of the publicans were more or less content with their lot as beer sellers to a more or less complaisant, predominantly working-class clientele.¹² Ex-servicemen who joined the Returned Services League enjoyed special drinking rights at their clubrooms, courtesy of their wartime comrade Tom Playford’s first private member’s Bill in 1934.¹³ This eliminated a potentially significant block of beer drinkers from the ranks of those wanting an end to six o’ clock closing. A younger generation of workers, ‘the baby-boomers’, not long out of school uniform and ripe for change, were beginning to take their place alongside older workmates at the front bars of suburban hotels, but could not legally buy alcohol until reaching the age of majority at twenty-one. The following account of one apprentice in the motor trade illustrates his experience of the period:

I would leave work [on Unley Road], race up with all the guys and have a drink, [the] usual ten to six. Line up the three schooners on the bar, throw them down. Five past six was the last drink, six o’clock, ‘time gentleman please’. Ten past six you’re on the street.¹⁴

Apart from Tom Playford, among those opposing change were various church and temperance groups, ‘God’s battalions’, determined on lessening the social cost of

submissions, (exhibits) indexes and other papers are at State Records South Australia, [SRSA], listed under GRG 96/1.

¹¹Stewart Cockburn, assisted by John Playford, *Playford-Benevolent Despot*, Kent Town, South Australia, 1996, p 33.

¹²Interview with Bill Connelly, Lower Mitcham, 26 September 2000.

¹³Cockburn, 1996, p 74. See also Peter Howell, ‘Playford, politics and parliament,’ *Playford’s South Australia, Essays on the history of South Australia 1933-1968*, Bernie O’Neil, Judith Raftery and Kerrie Round (eds.), Adelaide, 1996, p 52.

¹⁴Interview with Aaron Penley, Goolwa, 13 January 2001.

excessive alcohol consumption, thereby contributing to the preservation of South Australia's long held reputation as the 'Wowser State'. The hotel industry as a whole, with a virtual monopoly over beer sales, was not anxious to see any change to the situation it had long enjoyed. The Australian Hotels Association, its main representative body, had a well-earned reputation as a powerful and effective, Australia-wide lobby group.¹⁵

Publicans were licensed to sell beer, wine and spirits, but a permit system limited restaurants to the sale of Australian wines, perry and cider. Because of the outmoded liquor laws restaurateurs faced increasing numbers of unhappy diners, especially visitors from overseas. At lunchtime wine service had to cease by two pm, the cut off point with dinner was 10.45 pm, with short grace periods to allow diners to finish their drinks. Guests could drink wine only with proper or *bona fide* meals at table and the law did not allow them to enjoy pre-or post-dinner drinks; in any event liqueurs were forbidden.¹⁶ The standard practice in Hindley Street and elsewhere was to serve regular clients with wine in coffee cups, to avoid confrontation with the guardians of the law. One-time Dunstan protégé Mike Rann recalls that 'we had the ludicrous situation that Italian restaurants in Adelaide served their patrons red wine in teacups. Rigoni's was one that I remember.' Grahame Latham, former head of the Regency Hotel School, commented recently, 'I can still remember drinking wine out of a teacup in Hindley street, and I'm not that old.'¹⁷ Couples who wished to dance during dinner were breaking the law, although the police usually chose not to intrude on this particular activity. Families who managed to find a restaurant open for business

¹⁵Interview with Bill Spurr, Adelaide, 19 September 2000. Spurr was executive director of the Australian Hotels Association in this state from 1981 to 1986.

¹⁶Peter F Young, *Review of South Australian Liquor Licensing Laws*, Adelaide, 1984, p 109, review henceforth referred to as the Young Report. See also the submission of Ernest Balogh referred to below.

¹⁷Interview with then Leader of the Opposition, Mike Rann, Adelaide, 16 January 2001. Interview with Grahame Latham, Fullarton, 14 March 2001.

on a Sunday could not enjoy a glass of wine with their meal.¹⁸ Because of the permit system, restaurateurs felt that the police regarded them as beneath the hotels in importance and treated them accordingly.¹⁹ Dunstan had become well known to the largely ethnic Hindley Street community as a lawyer and politician, but also as a patron of the coffee shops and restaurants. Primo Caon remembers Dunstan as a frequent visitor to the Caon brothers' La Cantina bistro in the early 1960s:

He brought other politicians as well, and he was making his presence [felt] quietly and securely in the area, and he showed interest in Europeans and people. I think that was the thing he was very good at, he was good at. Irrespective of what nationality you were, he made you feel as if you were an important person. What then became interesting was that he became interested in food and he would discuss food down there.²⁰

Caon's last observation clearly shows that Dunstan was in a state of transition with regard to food and drink, just as newly fledged entrepreneurs like the Caons were finding their own way in the evolving restaurant scene.

Dunstan became attorney-general in the Walsh Labor government of 1965-1967, and was thus responsible for introducing a number of measures aimed at freeing South Australian society from some of the restraints of its recent past. A referendum late in 1965 approved Labor's plans for a state lottery, but Premier Frank Walsh, not his attorney-general, 'formally piloted the lottery and TAB [Totalisator Agency Betting] measures through the House.'²¹ Dunstan, who was regarded as 'the

¹⁸State Records South Australia, [SRSA], GRG 96/1, *Royal Commission on the Licensing Act*, exhibit A191, Submission of Ernest Balogh. Balogh, a Hungarian migrant, was the proprietor of Ernest's Torrens Lake restaurant.

¹⁹SRSA, GRG 96/1, exhibit A1, Submission of the South Australian Restaurant Association Inc. The Association wanted 'to be in the same position as holders of publicans Licences.'

²⁰Interview with Primo Caon, Chesser Cellar, Adelaide, 7 March 2001.

²¹Neal Blewett, Dean Jaensch, *Playford to Dunstan: The Politics of Transition*, Melbourne, 1971, p 38.

Government's chief newsmaker [thereby earning Walsh's undying enmity], concentrated on three areas that occupied a large share of parliamentary time: aboriginal policy, town planning and legal reform.'²² Another candidate for change was the early closing of hotel bars, which also fell to Dunstan's lot.

Drinkers and the Law

Six o'clock closing was introduced in 1916 following a referendum victory for the temperance movement a year earlier.²³ A plethora of other restrictive liquor laws existed. For example, on Sundays motorists were driving to hotels situated sixty miles or more from the centre of Adelaide so they could qualify as bona fide travellers and legally buy alcohol. The publican was legally required to obtain a declaration that the customer had complied with the law, but in a busy hotel bar this compliance with the letter of the law was a quite unrealistic expectation. Keith Sangster later commented that 'this has resulted in a substantial Sunday trade in suitably situated hotels which openly invite such trade by advertisements clearly visible from main highways.'²⁴ Police mainly tolerated 'the sale, supply and consumption' of alcohol, a widespread practice by unlicensed sporting clubs.²⁵

The other states and territories had overhauled their licensing laws to varying degrees, but six o'clock closing of hotel bars had everywhere been replaced by the more congenial 10 pm, with Victoria the latest to fall into line. In 1954 the New South Wales Royal Commissioner remarked, 'I am satisfied that the evidence requires the

²² Blewett and Jaensch, 1971, p 38.

²³ See Judith Raftery, 'God's Gift or Demon Drink? Churches and Alcohol In South Australia Between The Two World Wars', *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, Number 15, 1987, pp 16-41, especially p 19.

²⁴ Sangster Report, p 101.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p 102.

finding that there are evils associated with 6 o'clock closing which ought not to be tolerated in a civilised community.'²⁶ Contrary to some predictions the earlier 'swill', when drinkers often fought and jostled for a place at the beer soaked bar, had not been replayed at the later hour. New South Wales could point to a reduction in drunkenness following its introduction of 10 o'clock closing. Western Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory had all recorded 'lower figures for drunkenness in proportion to population than Victoria...[prior to the latter abolishing] 6 p.m. closing.'²⁷ The ordinary trading hours for interstate hotels in 1954 were New South Wales, 10 am-6 pm, Victoria, 9 am-6 pm, Tasmania, 10 am-10 pm, Queensland, 10 am-10 pm, Western Australia, 9 am-9 pm.²⁸ In a rare display of uniformity, by 1966 all the other states together with the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory had set the trading hours for hotels – other than on Sundays – at 10am to 10pm. The Australian Capital Territory allowed an additional 10 minutes' grace and Victoria 15 minutes', while the New South Wales Licensing Court could authorise earlier opening and closing times, provided the hotel remained open for a 12-hour period. On the West Australian goldfields a local provision allowed for longer trading hours.

Sunday was a different proposition, and the majority of jurisdictions disallowed 'general trading' other than beyond specified but varied radii from the capital city. Genuine travellers throughout the nation could buy liquor subject to various criteria. For example, in Queensland they could do so beyond 40 miles from the Brisbane General Post Office, and in Western Australia the distance set was 20 miles from the Perth Town Hall, or on Rottnest Island. Tasmanian publicans could serve liquor with

²⁶*Report of the Royal Commission on Liquor Laws in New South Wales*, 1954, (no.3), p 87.

²⁷ Sangster Report, p 98.

meals and to lodgers, but not to travellers. The lawful trading hours of restaurants were more notable for their differences, with Tasmania solving the problem by having no licensed restaurants. The other states had plumped for 12 noon as opening time, but Queensland and Western Australia had decided that two hours was sufficiently long enough for lunchers, although New South Welshmen were granted an extra half-hour's indulgence. New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australian restaurants could reopen at 6 pm for the dinner trade and closed at midnight, 10 pm and 12.30 am respectively. Western Australia was a touch *avant garde* on Saturday nights, given the 30-minute intrusion into the Sabbath. Diners in the Australian Capital Territory could patronise their restaurants from 12 noon until midnight, save for Sundays and Christmas Day when 10 pm became the witching hour. A total prohibition protected Good Friday in this territory, a position shared by Queensland. In most cases a grace period of 30 minutes applied to restaurant trading hours. Licensed clubs generally followed the same trading hours as hotels, but a court decision in New South Wales enabled members and their guests to drink at any time, provided they were not doing so in a bar. Perhaps not surprisingly, club members in the nation's capital could enjoy unrestricted drinking hours. Their counterparts in the Northern Territory somehow survived with 'limited Sunday trading', but only if their clubroom was at least 65 miles from Darwin or Alice Springs. Trading hours for wholesale and retail 'bottle' sellers varied between the type of outlet, with retail hours generally tied to hotel hours. In Queensland hotels and non-sporting clubs mainly sold bottled beer, even during bar hours. The situation was similar in Tasmania where only hotels and clubs could sell

²⁸*Report of the Royal Commission on Liquor Laws in New South Wales, 1954, (no.3), p 84.*

liquor in quantities of less than ‘two gallons’; in other words, no other retail outlets operated.²⁹

The Royal Commission and the Licensing Act

The *Adelaide Advertiser* in its front page coverage on April Fools’ Day 1966 reminded drinkers that ‘SA is now the only State in Australia with 6 p.m. closing,’ while the headlines thundered, ‘WIDE ENQUIRY INTO S.A. LAWS ON LIQUOR’. The *Advertiser* front page provided Dunstan with a good deal of useful publicity the day after he announced the setting up of a Royal Commission to examine the need for changes to the liquor licensing laws. Dunstan claimed as his rationale an approach by the judge of the Licensing Court, who complained that the Act was ‘virtually unworkable’.³⁰ Dunstan asked the judge to confer with the superintendent of licensed premises to establish the extent of the problems, and the latter soon produced ‘a list of matters some five foolscap pages in length.’³¹ The judge’s complaint followed a recent decision by the Full Court, which had prompted the Chief Justice Sir Mellis Napier to comment:

It seems to me that we should call attention to the fact that this legislation, which was designed to meet the needs of a ‘horse and buggy age,’ is hopelessly out of touch with the needs of the present day.³²

The following example from a 1978 decision by a Judge of the Licensing Court illustrates the daunting complexity of the Act:

²⁹Sangster Report, Appendix “R”, pp 97-110, see especially pp 99, 100-103, 106-109.

³⁰Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, p 120.

³¹*Advertiser*, 1 April 1966. Also Dunstan, 1981, p 120.

³²*Advertiser*, 1 April 1966.

Probably the most substantial relaxation of the previously limited and rigid policy concerning the provision of liquor for consumption with meals on licensed premises was brought about by the Licensing Act Amendment Act No. 38 of 1963. Section 26 of that Amending Act introduced s.198b into the Licensing Act. This section was designed to permit the holders of a Publican's Licence or a Club Licence, provided there was in force in respect of the licensed premises concerned, a permit under s.198, to apply to the Court for a permit authorising the sale, supply and consumption of liquor on the licensed premises subject to the following conditions:-

- (a) That liquor be sold supplied and consumed between the hours of 6 p.m. and 10.45 p. m. on any day except Sunday, Good Friday and Christmas Day;
- (b) The liquor shall not be sold, supplied or consumed except in the room or rooms specified in the permit and on the deposited plan. (Such rooms became known as 'Light Meal Rooms'.);
- (c) No dining room or bar-room could be specified as a Light Meal Room. (No doubt the memory of this prohibition prompted a single member and later the Full Bench of this Court to refuse Supper Permits for the Dining Rooms of the Arkaba and Arkaba Castle Hotels-see *Arkaba Hotels Pty. Ltd. v. Superintendent of Licensed Premises* (1968) S.A.S.R. 122);
- (d) The liquor shall not be sold, or supplied to, or consumed by, any person other than a bona fide taking a light meal in the said room or rooms at the time of the sale, disposal or supply ; and
- (e) Between the hours referred to in (a) above all doors by which access can be had to the Light Meal Room (or rooms) were to be kept unlocked.³³

The judgement goes on to note that under the Licensing Act, a hotel meal in a local government area (that is, an area controlled by a local council) must cost a minimum of 'seven shillings and sixpence' and outside an area (controlled by a council) a minimum of 'two shillings and sixpence.' The Judge regarded this 1963 amendment as 'probably the most substantial relaxation [yet] of the previously limited and rigid

³³*South Australian Licensing Court Reports*, Judge Roy Grubb, John James Lang Ceruto, Tramps Restaurant, reasons for decision given in the Licensing Court, 21 March 1978, p 263.

policy' in respect to drinking with meals in a hotel, a statement that fully highlights the pressing need for an even more comprehensive 'relaxation'. Successive generations of parliamentarians, together with a conservative Licensing Court and its officials, had reinforced the complexity and conservatism of the Act.

The current Act, with occasional amendments added, had been in force since it was last consolidated in 1932 at the height of the Depression years, and in a more affluent era with growing expectations of a freer and easier lifestyle, change was now overdue. However, like his opponents on the other side of Parliament, Dunstan was chary of upsetting voters, because 'questions about the demon drink could arouse South Australians to passionate vehemence.' He was also concerned at the possibility of ructions in the liquor trade resulting in 'vested interests' and 'anti-drink groups' joining to oppose changes. 'Such alliances', he said, 'had proved a powerful force against reform in the past.'³⁴ Dunstan's concerns were well founded, given that strong 'wowsers' elements nursed, in the words of one historian, 'entrenched hostility to immorality,' and their definition of 'immorality' included longer drinking hours.³⁵ Although present in some force at the Sangster Commission, temperance interests did not play any vital role in the results.³⁶ This was due in part to their inability to mount a convincing argument against 10 o'clock closing, an experience already faced by their counterparts in Victoria. Sangster was also critical of the expedient alliance between publicans and temperance activists, who frequently joined forces to resist any application for a new liquor licence on their patch, by utilising the local option poll as the means to their own ends. As Sangster put it, 'the one to protect his economic

³⁴Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981 p 120-121.

³⁵Derek Whitelock, *Adelaide 1836-1976, A History of Difference*, St. Lucia, 1977, p 123.

³⁶Sangster Report, see especially pp 51, 97, 105.

interests, and the other to further his views.’³⁷ The local option poll had a long and litigious history and was a complex method of controlling the number of new licences. Basically, ratepayers were given the choice of increasing the number of licences by one third, maintaining the *status quo*, or decreasing the number of licences by one third. A 1954 amendment confined its application to the specific electoral subdivision for which a licence was sought. If two thirds of those eligible in an area signed a memorial objecting to a licence application, the court could not then grant the licence. South Australia was the last state to abandon the poll system.³⁸ In the not-so-distant 1920s South Australia had escaped joining the United States of America in its bizarre experiment with prohibition. The ferocity of the campaign waged by the reactionary forces in favour of the measure was still fresh in the memory of at least one hotelier:

A State-wide campaign was conducted against the ‘liquor interests’, and...it is a measure of the struggle which then took place that it is still remembered by many as the fiercest such campaign ever waged in South Australia...The effect on hotel interests was deep and long lasting.³⁹

Another significant factor not mentioned by Dunstan was that the restrictive, convoluted and cumbersome nature of the Act had resulted in its breach on a regular basis, over many years. As far back as 1920 the then attorney-general had complained to the police commissioner about a certain country town where ‘there is a wholesale flouting of the [licensing] law’. He blamed the situation on the laxity , or worse, of the

³⁷Sangster Report, p 85.

³⁸SRSA, GRG 96/1, A129, pp 7-9. See also Sangster Report, pp 84-86.

³⁹GRG 96/1, A129, Peter Whallin, submission on behalf of the Australian Hotels Association, p 6.

local police.⁴⁰ The Royal Commission was soon to report on its similar concerns at long-established police tolerance. The Commissioner was

appalled by the nature and extent of the illegal practices actively or tacitly allowed to grow up and thrive in our community.' In his view the practice had been in place over 'a substantial period of time,' and has concerned a long succession of Commissioners and Officers of Police, Cabinet Ministers, and, indeed Parliament and People...without Legislative intervention or public outcry.⁴¹

'The benevolent dictator,' former premier Tom Playford, was often categorised by his opponents as a church-going 'wowsler', although another view regards him as essentially a believer in the precepts of temperance in all things.⁴² Playford, in fact, left the Sunday morning church-going to his family, whom he personally delivered to the local Baptist church. He would usually drive off alone, after asking his wife to, 'Say one for me'.⁴³ In any event, although he had become reluctantly aware that post-World War II society was beginning to demand change, his answer was not to attempt a review of the legislation, but, like some of his predecessors, to have a quiet word with his police commissioner about not enforcing the Act too rigidly where circumstances required a little discretion.

Keith Sangster later commented that by 1966 it was 'Police policy not to enforce a number of laws which [were]...habitually, wilfully, and flagrantly violated.'⁴⁴ Members of the more recently established bowling clubs, football clubs

⁴⁰Young Report, p 261.

⁴¹Sangster Report, p 7.

⁴²Howell, 1996, p 54.

⁴³Interview with Pat Fry (nee Playford), Goolwa, 11 May 2002.

⁴⁴Sangster Report, p 8.

and golf clubs were flouting the licensing laws, even though their number often included members of the police force. This is not to say that clubs were immune from occasional police raids. As Dunstan recalled long after the event, 'bowling clubs used to be raided and people's bowls lockers inspected to see if they were hiding grog. It was ridiculous.'⁴⁵ An even more ridiculous situation arose when police raided a wine-tasting event during the first Adelaide Festival of Arts in 1960.⁴⁶ It was an illegal but accepted practice that visiting lawn bowls players were able to pay round for round with host club members, who were also able to buy their beer supplies at the bar, even on Sundays. The Establishment had always enjoyed unrestricted drinking privileges at the Adelaide Club, as had members of other similarly long-established institutions, the Naval Military and Airforce Club, the Commercial Travellers' Club, the Adelaide Bowling Club and the Royal Adelaide Golf Club.⁴⁷ More recently included in the list of the privileged was the Democratic Club, tucked away in a side street opposite the Central Market. This apparent aberration had resulted from an approach to Dunstan, who was persuaded that because there had been a long association with members of the Labor party, the club should receive a suitable reward.⁴⁸

It was against this background that Dunstan made his announcement about setting up the Royal Commission. Before arriving at this position he had overcome the objections of conservatives in the Walsh cabinet, who were more comfortable with Playford's stance than that of the young attorney-general. At a later date, Dunstan referred to the 'very strong religious, and indeed puritanical tradition within the Labor Party in South Australia.' He also revealed that his 'cabinet in 1973 was the first Labor

⁴⁵Susan Mitchell, 'Last of the Medici Princes', *The Weekend Australian*, 20-21 January 1996.

⁴⁶Whitelock, 1977, p 125.

⁴⁷Howell, 1996, pp 53-54. See also the Young Report, p 160.

⁴⁸Interview with Len King, Norwood, 8 April 2002. Dunstan believed in preserving existing privileges.

cabinet in the history of South Australia not to contain a Methodist lay-preacher.⁴⁹ A recent recruit to Walsh's 1965 ministry, the beer-drinking, ex-Army officer Des Corcoran, who later became Dunstan's deputy, was opposed to the whole idea of the Royal Commission and its potential cost to the taxpayer.⁵⁰ No doubt Dunstan had noted the sage advice of Tom Playford some years earlier when the future Labor leader was still a backbencher: 'Don, you never appoint a Royal Commission unless you know what the answer is going to be.'⁵¹ Certainly, Dunstan had been careful to choose a commissioner who was thought likely to favour an end to six o'clock closing, and who also had no history of professional involvement with the liquor industry.⁵² Dunstan's announcement checkmated the Opposition Leader Steele Hall, who had earlier given notice of his own Private Member's Bill to introduce 10 pm closing. Dunstan's politic choice of commissioner, A. K. Sangster QC, was known in legal circles as 'Mack the Knife'. Dunstan's former attorney general, Len King QC, recalls that Sangster, who later became a judge of the Supreme Court, 'had a very sharp, incisive mind, dogmatic, intolerant, but quite acute.'⁵³ King, the counsel assisting Sangster, was a friend and legal colleague of Dunstan and also happened to be a fellow member of the Norwood sub-branch of the Australian Labor Party.⁵⁴ King remembers Dunstan offering him the job when they chanced to meet while each was buying ice on

⁴⁹Interview with Don Dunstan, Andrew Dodd, ABC Radio National, 1992, replayed 2004 with introduction by Peter Thompson. Transcribed by the writer 18 February 2004.

⁵⁰Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, p 121.

⁵¹Cockburn, 1996, p 316. With Dunstan's announcement of the Sangster Royal Commission this state alone had seen 87 Royal Commissions since 1888. Wray Vamplew, Eric Richards, Dean Jaensch and Joan Hancock, *South Australian Historical Statistics, Monograph No. 3*, pp 286-287. (Curiously the Sangster Royal Commission is missing from the table, which ends at 1981-2.)

⁵²Interview with Len King, Norwood, 8 April 2002.

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴Dunstan, 1981, p 121.

the Norwood Parade one Saturday afternoon.⁵⁵ Secretary to the Commission, John Holland, later occupied a similar position with the Premier's Department.

Sangster was commissioned on 31 March 1966. The Commission was wide-ranging, with a list of evidence alone running into more than eight pages. Sangster heard public submissions in three working sessions spread over the months from May until 1 November. The Commissioner reported that he had held 'most useful' discussions in closed session with various counsel and certain other privileged but unnamed spokespersons.⁵⁶ In addition to inspecting a number of licensed and unlicensed premises locally, the Commission pursued its investigations as far afield as Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Canberra and Mildura. Under his terms of reference Sangster considered both the 1951-1954 New South Wales Royal Commission findings of Justice Maxwell and those of his Victorian counterpart P. D. Phillips QC, who had presided over the most recent inquiry of 1964-1965. The report of the latter was of particular value to Sangster, who acknowledged that he had used it 'as a starting point on a number of topics in my own inquiries, and particularly on the sociological aspects.'⁵⁷ Dunstan was familiar with both Royal Commissions, especially since Labor's Gough Whitlam was junior counsel to the New South Wales Commissioner.⁵⁸ In addition, another very recent Royal Commission had looked at problems in the grape growing and wine industries in South Australia.⁵⁹ In that instance the Commission was made up of parliamentarians appointed by the Walsh Government to look at poor returns to growers and related wine industry matters.

⁵⁵Interview with Len King, Norwood, 8 April 2002.

⁵⁶Sangster Report, p 35.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p 28.

⁵⁸Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, p 121.

One of the cornerstones of Sangster's Commission was Dunstan's directive that any recommendations for amendment of the licensing laws should take into account their effect on holders of existing licences. In the words of a contemporary journalist:

A man who had invested his savings under the present laws should not be wrecked financially by entirely different classes of licence coming into being. Some provision would have to be made for his protection.⁶⁰

Inevitably it was not so much the little man, but rather the best organised and most powerful that would have their own interests protected. Historically, the hotel industry had long occupied a favoured position in terms of the Licensing Act, and the Australian Hotels Association was determined to preserve the *status quo* at all costs. The burgeoning motel industry was already making inroads into the traditional hotel accommodation trade as the use of the motorcar proliferated. Motel guests requiring liquor could buy only wine, to be served with meals in the dining room, provided their host had obtained the necessary restaurant permit.⁶¹ The growth of the motel industry followed a freeing up of the local option poll system, thanks to a 1954 amendment to the Licensing Act. To further confuse this scene, the hotel industry began building 'hotel-motels' in 1960, beginning with the Shandon Motor Hotel at Seaton.⁶² In 1966 however, the motel concept was still so new in South Australia that none of Sangster's witnesses was able to provide him with a satisfactory definition for this type of accommodation.⁶³ In fact, a majority of motel proprietors formed the Motels

⁵⁹*The Royal Commission Into The Grape Growing Industry*, Adelaide, 1966, pp 112

⁶⁰*Advertiser*, 1 April 1966.

⁶¹Young Report, p 104. The motel operator had to obtain a restaurant licence to serve diners, and a publican's licence to supply lodgers with liquor.

⁶²SRSA, GRG 96/1, A129, p 9.

⁶³Sangster Report, p 10.

Association of South Australia expressly to provide evidence to the Commission.⁶⁴

The Hotels Association was anxious to see that any motel obtaining the privilege of a full publican's licence could only do so with the concomitant requirement to provide a public bar service or a bottle shop. In the event, Sangster sensibly decided that it was

highly desirable that the licensed motel should be brought within the hotel industry not only in the form of licensing, but also in membership of the Australian Hotels Association, and should in all respects be considered merely as another hotel, but without bar or bottle department.'⁶⁵

The Hotels Association's legal representation was in the eminent hands of Dr. John J Bray QC. Bray argued long and hard for the preservation of what became known as the 'Holy Trinity', that is, the publicans' well-preserved and much touted belief in their pre-eminence as suppliers of liquor, food, and accommodation to the community. One of their arguments asserted that the mere act of serving a glass of beer when backed by the availability of food, and a bedroom if required, somehow transformed the ambience of the humble pub onto a higher, almost spiritual plane. The local Hotels Association president and Adelaide hotelier Peter Whallin submitted that:

The A.H.A. bases its opposition to any change in the terms and conditions of its licence on the belief that the system of combining the three facets of refreshment, food and shelter have historically gone together, and that the system has worked well in Australia. It believes that the other services apart from liquor have a tempering effect on the establishment and generally gives them a higher aim.⁶⁶

⁶⁴Sangster Report, p 56.

⁶⁵*Ibid*, p 11.

⁶⁶SRSA, GRG 96/1, A129, p 14.

Unfortunately for Whallin and his association the Commission had done its homework and was well aware that many hoteliers, especially in the central business district of Adelaide, were not in the business of supplying either meals or accommodation. Sangster was not happy with the association's reluctance to provide information on some matters; he commented:

In the end I had to resort to my own inquiries, and at one stage in the first working session, I publicly reported upon the result of a survey of a number of hotels in the City of Adelaide, some of which appeared to be operating as an 8 a.m. or 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. lock-up shop.⁶⁷

Hotel patrons and others, including Len King, knew that far from having the so-called 'tempering effect', the provision of 'other services' 'diminished the tone of some of the pubs there in the south-end of Adelaide because that's where the "girls" used to take their clients.'⁶⁸ However, Whallin had continued to labour the point:

Any hotelkeeper would rather the opportunity to be host to the public need for all three things rather than care only for his liquor needs. We maintain that the licensed hotel industry should be left this higher ideal to aim for.⁶⁹

Higher ideals or not, he went on to admit that 'some hotelkeepers are in fact operating only the liquor side of their businesses.' Not surprisingly, the holy trinity concept became something of a joke to other participants in the Commission.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Sangster Report, p 11.

⁶⁸Interview with Len King, Norwood, 8 April 2002.

⁶⁹SRSA, GRG 96/1, A129, p 14.

⁷⁰Interview with Len King, 8 April 2002.

John Bray, in another of his arguments, urged caution in any moves to change the known quantity of the multi-functional hotel, which needed to show a reasonable return in order to maintain standards of service. He cited the situation in New South Wales where the unparalleled growth of licensed clubs was proving an ‘evil’ for the hotel industry. Turning to his Bible, he urged the Commission to

please err on the side of caution...[in the] hope that what is sown as a result of the Commission will be good wheat with the minimum admixture of tares; but we fear that hidden in the sower’s bag there may be dragon’s teeth.⁷¹

However, Sangster was not convinced by Bray or his client and decided that the real objective of the hotel industry was ‘to keep out of the beer trade all who are not similarly saddled with such obligations.’⁷² On another occasion the Commissioner commented, ‘I did discount substantially both the honesty and the sense of the two interstate hotelkeepers, officers of the Australian Hotels association, who were called to give evidence.’⁷³ The difficulty of changing entrenched attitudes is well illustrated by an informal exchange between Bray and Roma Mitchell. Mitchell could not understand why her colleague placed hotels at the ‘peak of importance in the hierarchical set-up of the industry.’ Bray replied, ‘Roma, don’t you know it’s the only place where you can get a counter lunch!’⁷⁴ Sangster was concerned to see that both restaurants and hotels operated to similar standards for the benefit of their customers and wrote:

⁷¹SRSA, GRG 96/1, exhibit D12, p 44.

⁷²Sangster Report, p 59.

⁷³*Ibid*, p 60, see also p 11.

⁷⁴Interview with Doug Claessen, Hindmarsh, 23 January 2001. Claessen was working with Mitchell on the Criminal Law and Penal Methods Reform Committee.

Briefly it is my view that both the hotel and the restaurant should operate under similar conditions and comply with similar standards for the protection of the convenience, health and comfort of the patron.⁷⁵

In considering what appeared to be an overabundance of ‘licence classes’, Sangster had reported that in his view a better system could be achieved by replacing four existing licences with a retail licence and a wholesale licence.⁷⁶ He thought it appropriate that cellar door sales by winemakers should no longer be allowed to escape the licensing net.⁷⁷ He further proposed that the long-established ‘exempt’ clubs should lose their privileged status,⁷⁸ and that no club was to sell liquor for consumption elsewhere. In the interests of uniformity, and since Sangster believed that ‘insufficient case has been made out for their indefinite continuance’, the thirteen existing wine ‘saloon’ (or tavern) licences would be phased out over a five-year period.⁷⁹ He was unable to see any justification for the introduction of the European style ‘bar-café’, since the public were long accustomed to relying on the hotels to provide for their drinking needs. In this view he differed markedly from his assisting counsel King who believed that ‘the system was crying out for tavern licences.’⁸⁰ Given his conservative attitude in this instance, Sangster revealed a perhaps surprising awareness of other changes already taking place:

The provision of liquor with meals under conditions which have operated in Adelaide and elsewhere in South

⁷⁵Sangster Report, p 10.

⁷⁶The old licences were the brewer’s Australian ale, distiller’s storekeeper’s, storekeeper’s, and storekeeper’s Australian wine licence. Young Report, pp 61-62. See also Fig. 6.1, p 64.

⁷⁷Sangster Report, p 13.

⁷⁸The ‘Establishment’ clubs enjoyed unrestricted drinking rights, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Young Report, p 160.

⁷⁹Sangster Report, p 15.

⁸⁰Interview with Len King, Norwood, 8 April 2002.

Australia in recent years shows very clearly that the habits of the public in this regard have changed both as to the general character and atmosphere of the evening meal in public and as to the places at which such meals are available. I am not saying that to enjoy a protracted evening meal at a licensed house as an evening out is a new thing; what is new is the extent to which South Australians are enjoying the facility and the large variety of such facilities available to it. The public by its patronage has clearly shown that it is interested in the quality and variety of food and its manner of preparation and service, the atmosphere in which it may be consumed, and the entertainment offered as an accompaniment, but is very largely indifferent to the question whether what it wants is provided by a hotel or a restaurant.⁸¹

Sangster firmly rejected the concept of wine saloons and café-bars based in part on the long-standing and mainly accurate image of wine saloons as low dives, in which derelict winos drank cheap plonk. To further complicate the issue however, an outstanding exception to this dismal norm had already appeared on the Adelaide scene. A local company, Chesser Cellars, had revamped an old warehouse in a narrow side street between Grenfell and Pirie Streets in the heart of the city. The proprietors had managed to gain Licensing Court approval to transfer an existing licence from a seedy Hanson Street wine saloon in August 1964. From its inception the Chesser Cellar attracted an up-market clientele to enjoy ‘simple but excellent food in a warm, relaxing atmosphere,’ while sampling the best of South Australian and Australian wines. The management could arrange dinners or other private functions, and clients, especially those from interstate, could purchase premium wines in quantity from the bottle shop where ‘350 different wines [were] on display.’⁸² The Cellar was and still is redolent of a Dickensian club, with its oak panelling, gaslights, Hogarth room, polished wooden

⁸¹Sangster Report, p 9.

⁸²SRSA, GRG 96/1, exhibit D19, submission of Allan Archer, managing director, the Chesser Cellar.

bar and substantial buffet.⁸³ Dunstan was soon numbered among the clientele and later described it as ‘a delightful well-furnished eatery.’⁸⁴ In Sangster’s view the proprietors would have to take their chances with the other holders of wine saloon licences and remodel their business to suit, equipped with either his proposed restaurant licence, or alternatively to become a retail bottle outlet.

The idea of a wine saloon licensee selling beer was anathema to the Commissioner, as it was to his assisting counsel. King neatly summed up the situation thus: ‘if the wine saloon is permitted to sell beer and spirits, it is then indistinguishable from the hotel bar and loses its *raison d`être*.’ The Hotels Association and their counsel, of course, heartily endorsed these sentiments.⁸⁵ Before long however, responding to cries of outrage from the Chesser Cellar directors, Dunstan dutifully added yet another amendment to his ever-growing list. The amendment provided for a continuance of wine saloon licences subject to approval by the Licensing Court for such upgrading of premises as their inspector required and a stipulation that ‘substantial’ food must be served.⁸⁶ The transfer value of such licences skyrocketed, when others realised the potential for profit demonstrated by the Chesser Cellar’s example. Dunstan later commented, ‘the amendment was passed and those licences became goldmines – very popular and clearly serving a significant public demand.’⁸⁷ With the upgrading of wine saloons it was not only the ‘inebriates and derelicts’ who lost an appropriate venue in which to while away their days. In his final address to the Commission Len King commented that wine saloons ‘provide a place where

⁸³Interview with Tony Baker, Adelaide, 12 September 2000.

⁸⁴Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, p 122.

⁸⁵SRSA, GRG 96/1, exhibit A19, L.J. King, counsel assisting Sangster, final address.

⁸⁶Young Report, pp 122-123.

⁸⁷Dunstan, 1981, p 122.

pensioners and other elderly people can enjoy a social atmosphere with some alcoholic accompaniment without undue expense.’⁸⁸

Sangster handed his lengthy and detailed report to the Governor Sir Edric Bastyan on 23 December 1966, fresh from the government printer. He offered his assistance in the preparation of a draft bill to amend the Act, but Dunstan chose to ignore the offer, instead making the preservation of existing privileges ‘which worked’ a priority.⁸⁹ Dunstan later damned the report with faint praise as ‘useful’ but found its recommendations ‘far too tidy’ and likely to require time-consuming discussions with interested parties before new legislation could be enacted. As he saw it, the Commission ‘did its job of getting the heat out of some of the debates, accustoming the public to the view that reform was needed and sorting out some of the competing interests.’⁹⁰ Effectively Dunstan then became his own commission of inquiry. First, however, he tabled a draft Bill, which incorporated all but two of Sangster’s recommendations, for members to study during the parliamentary Christmas-New Year break. Legalisation of Sunday-afternoon drinking in metropolitan hotel lounges was a measure that would have to wait. Barmaids had been employed in Queensland, New South Wales, Tasmania and Western Australia for ‘at least 60 years’ and accepted as a *fait accompli* by the liquor unions in those states, but in South Australia a long-standing Labor Party/union prohibition on new barmaids entering the industry

⁸⁸SRSA, GRG 96/1, exhibit A19, L.J. King, counsel assisting Sangster, final address.

⁸⁹Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, p 122.

⁹⁰*Ibid*, p121.

was to continue.⁹¹ Government members along with the Opposition were free to cast their votes according to the dictates of their consciences, at least in theory.⁹²

Dunstan's New Bill

On 1 March 1967 Dunstan introduced the new Bill on the floor of the House, and said he hoped to see it into law by September at the latest.⁹³ However, he hastened to add that the Walsh Government was 'not committed to any of the proposals...[within the Bill].'⁹⁴ In a move towards rationality the Bill reduced the number of liquor licence classes to ten, while incorporating a new Restaurant Licence. The latter was a victory for the restaurateurs and their association, who regarded the existing permit system as demeaning and a reflection on their proper status in the community.⁹⁵ In his final submission on behalf of the hoteliers Bray had argued against the granting of licences to restaurants, maintaining that the permit 'denotes something special, limited or fugitive,' exactly the point affronting the restaurateurs.⁹⁶ The second reading debate on the new Licensing Bill began in the House on 9 March. Opposition Leader Steele Hall opened proceedings with a *resumé* of his own attempt to translate public support for extended trading hours into legislation. He attacked the

⁹¹SRSA, GRG 96/1, exhibit B25, submission of J.F. Walsh, President of the Federated Liquor and Allied Industries Employees Union of Australia.

⁹²Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, p 121, Young Report, pp 31-33.

⁹³South Australian Parliamentary Debates:House of Assembly [SAPD:HA], 1 March 1967, p 3348.

⁹⁴SAPD:HA, 1 March 1967, p 3349.

⁹⁵GRG 96/1, exhibit A21, submission of South Australian Restaurant Association. See also A191, submission of Ernest Balogh.

⁹⁶SRSA, GRG 96/1, D12, p 10.

Walsh Government for dismissing the question as being unimportant in 1965 and then blocking his own move with its Royal Commission.⁹⁷

A good deal of debate followed over the perceived restricting effect of the proposed changes to the Act in relation to cellar door sales by vigneron and the threatened removal of ‘the entrenched right of long-established clubs to continue off-sales.’⁹⁸ Percy Quirke, the Member for Burra, who had worked in the wine industry and was regarded as something of an authority, argued that the historic right of the winemaker to sell the ‘product of his own grapes’ with a minimum of restriction should continue. He drew particular attention to the importance of cellar door sales for the health of the industry, and cited the large co-operative wineries in the Riverland that had assumed this collective right on behalf of their individual members.⁹⁹ Later Quirke referred to the need for the small vigneron to maintain an above average product in order to survive. He went on:

I am aware of the Attorney-General’s whimsical fancy of going around and inspecting these places. He likes a dry red wine, and so do I and so do other members. Any move to forestall the sale of wine at cellar doors should be discouraged.¹⁰⁰

Dunstan chose not to respond, but one can almost hear the chorus of ‘and so say all of us.’ Quirke’s comment confirms that Dunstan had already established his credentials as a wine lover and makes it clear that he had embarked on sampling, and promoting,

⁹⁷SAPD: HA, 9 March 1967, p 3578.

⁹⁸Judge Roy Grubb, *Boccaccio Cellars and others, reasons for decision given in the Licensing Court*, 9 January 1981, p 27. The Young Report also contains a reference to this judgement but quotes the date as 7 January 1981, p 32.

⁹⁹SAPD:HA, 16 March 1967, p 3782. The larger wineries were already paying a 5% tax on sales to the government, see p 3781.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, p 3783.

the rich variety of wines his state offered. The second reading concluded on 22 March; the Bill moved on to the committee stage and then disappeared from view.

Following consultation with ‘various interest groups’ over the intervening period, Dunstan, who had become both premier and treasurer on 1 June 1967, tabled what was effectively another Bill on 11 July.¹⁰¹ The same parties who had earlier made submissions and given evidence to the Royal Commission dominated the ‘interest groups’. Dunstan was later to acknowledge that the executive of the local branch of the Hotels Association had been of particular assistance to him. They had helped to facilitate his joint aims, that is, to protect the livelihood of their members, while at the same time providing drinkers with ‘better access to social drinking conditions in clubs and societies, and at restaurants’.¹⁰² Bray had declaimed dramatically that ‘the hotel industry does not wish to die the Death of a Thousand Cuts. Nor is it in the public interest that it should.’¹⁰³ Sangster made a similar point in his report, noting the need to protect the hotel industry from ‘unfair’ competition ‘in the public interest’.¹⁰⁴ Sadly, the Commissioner’s ideal of only ten licence categories had proliferated into fifteen.¹⁰⁵ In 1981 Licensing Court Judge Roy Grubb wrote, ‘it was quite apparent that the lobbyists had been very hard at work.’¹⁰⁶ He became even more scathing as his comments continued:

In spite of the protracted hearings conducted by the
Royal Commissioner; in spite of his careful attention to
all sides of the questions which formed part of his

¹⁰¹Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, p 122.

¹⁰²*Ibid*, p 122.

¹⁰³SRSA, GRG 96/1, A121, p 3.

¹⁰⁴Sangster Report, p 6.

¹⁰⁵Young Report, p 31, Grubb, 1981, p 28.

¹⁰⁶Grubb, 1981, p 28.

Commission; in spite of the unassailable reasoning behind his specific recommendations, all this was as nothing when political expediency came face to face with vested interests (all of whom had had their day before the Commission, anyhow) and the power of the lobbyists, who operated secretly.¹⁰⁷

Dunstan had acknowledged his debt to the Hotels Association executive. What is also apparent was his reluctance to remove any pre-existing right under the old Act. Dunstan later revealed that in the consultative process he worked on the principle that ‘if there was an existing practice on [sic] interest which worked, we would not touch it, although it didn’t fit into a pattern of tidiness.’¹⁰⁸ The following comments by one-time close friend Peter Ward, his press secretary at the time, illustrate something of the conflicting pressures faced by Dunstan. Ward believes that ‘the hotel-biased “philosophy of the act”... held back real reforms for more than a decade.’ He also answers his own question:

Why did he not move against the hotels? The hotel owners were major contributors to both Dunstan’s private political funds and to the ALP. In fact, when I worked for Dunstan when he was in opposition the hotel owners paid part of my salary’.¹⁰⁹

By the same token, the hoteliers had received little in the way of support from Playford’s succession of governments.¹¹⁰ But even more significant was a ‘gentleman’s agreement’ between Dunstan, the Hotels Association and the Breweries:

That there would be hotels spread across metropolitan Adelaide that provided a range of services – meals, lounge for families, some accommodation in some

¹⁰⁷Grubb, 1981, p 29.

¹⁰⁸Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, p122.

¹⁰⁹Peter Ward, email to the writer, 4 October 2000.

¹¹⁰Cockburn, 1996, p 337.

cases...the bottle department, front bar and so on. So they were spread out and there was a range of services...There was a consensus that this was the way to go. Now that wasn't the end that was really the beginning [of Dunstan's reform agenda].¹¹¹

Both the tripartite agreement and Peter Ward's observation about the hoteliers contributing to the Australian Labor Party and Dunstan's war chest, go a long way towards explaining the attorney-general's insistence on untidying Sangster's neatly structured concepts. Not surprisingly both Dunstan and the Hotels Association were chary of upsetting the interests of any of the main players. In an outline of its submission to Sangster, for example, the Association made it clear that it had no wish to 'seek to disturb privileges of existing registered clubs.'¹¹²

The End of Six O' Clock Closing

Notwithstanding the raft of amendments from his Government and the Opposition in both Houses, Dunstan had already decreed that the new Act was to come into force on 28 September. This seemed unlikely given that the Bill was still before the House on 21 September, but the Premier had his way.¹¹³ A triumphant Dunstan, posed uncharacteristically with a schooner glass of beer raised, joined the working-class regulars in the front bar of a suburban hotel to celebrate the demise of six o'clock closing. The next morning's *Advertiser* reported that:

Cheers, shouts and a raucous singing of 'For he's a jolly good fellow' met the premier (Mr. Dunstan) when he sipped his first legal after 6 p.m. beer in the front bar of the Challa Gardens Hotel, West Croydon, last night. In

¹¹¹Interview with Greg Crafter, Adelaide, 6 June 2001.

¹¹²SRSA, GRG 96/1, Exhibit A1.

¹¹³The Legislative Council alone made 90 amendments, of which 84 were agreed to by the House of Assembly. Young Report, p 32.

an interview beamed directly to Channel 7 viewers, Mr. Dunstan sipped, smiled and said through ragged applause that he was pretty happy to be taking part in an occasion of that kind. 'It has been a long struggle,' the Premier said, "but that is all gone now. This is what the people of SA have shown they want, and I believe it is a very important occasion."¹¹⁴

A later report noted that many workers who habitually drank in the city instead went home to the suburbs for dinner, and then to their local pub, while 'the police reported fewer traffic accidents' that night.¹¹⁵ Some of Dunstan's more vocal opponents referred to his modified Licensing Act as the 'Hotelkeepers' Bill.'¹¹⁶ Dunstan later recalled that Tom Playford said at the time, 'Don, you've done a very bad thing here. The people of the State will never forgive you for this.' Dunstan noted that 'in fact they've never stopped thanking me.'¹¹⁷

Post-Act Complications

Dunstan's triumph was to be short lived. His first government had lasted for only 321 days when the election of March 1968 came to a drawn-out conclusion, and the Liberal Party led by Steele Hall took office, albeit by way of a Pyrrhic victory.¹¹⁸ The familiar process of modifying and amending the laws relating to the supply and consumption of liquor was soon back on the legislative agenda. With an unhappy Dunstan back as Leader of the Opposition he was soon under attack from disgruntled parties claiming they were being adversely affected by the new Act, or subsequent

¹¹⁴*Advertiser*, 29 September, 1967.

¹¹⁵Ian Mackay, *Advertiser*, 26 April 1976.

¹¹⁶SAPD:HA, 30 July 1968, p 343.

¹¹⁷Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, p 123, also Young Report, p 32.

¹¹⁸See Andrew Parkin, 'The Dunstan Government: A Political Synopsis,' *The Dunstan Decade*, Andrew Parkin and Allan Patience (eds.), Melbourne, 1981, pp 4-5.

amendments. On 2 December 1968 Associated Co-operative Wholesalers wrote to complain of an anticipated loss of establishment costs and trade if a proposed Bill restricted them ‘practically to the sale of Australian wines.’ According to their ‘reliable information’ the Bill was to be introduced the next day.¹¹⁹ They were soon followed by the Wine and Brandy Producers’ Association, which added their complaints on 6 December, reminding Dunstan of their appreciation for his ‘help in the debate on the Licensing Act.’ In the short time the new Act had been operating, however, they had already found to their cost that to ‘obtain some kind of licence has proved a very expensive operation.’ They went on to say that in their belief ‘this was not the intention of Parliament.’ And further:

Our industry realizes that it has an obligation to contribute to the revenue of the State by paying a licensing fee, but it is extremely concerned at the amount of time, energy, effort and money which it has found it has been forced to spend just to carry on its normal business. We stress that we believe this was not the intention of Parliament.¹²⁰

The vigneron were having to cope with some rapid adjustments, given they were now required to be licensed for the first time. South Australia was the first wine-producing state to introduce this measure, but the other states and the Australian Capital Territory soon followed the leader. In his 1984 report Peter Young commented, ‘it seems that the reason for licensing vigneron and the like was, for consistency, to ensure that all persons selling liquor were covered by the Act.’¹²¹ There is also the matter of fees helping to swell treasury coffers. Licensing Court tax receipts from annual licence fees

¹¹⁹FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Licensing Act file, Associated Co-operative Wholesalers Ltd. to Leader of the Opposition, 2 December 1968.

¹²⁰*Ibid*, Wine and Brandy Producers’ Association of South Australia Inc. to Leader of the Opposition, 6 December 1968.

¹²¹Young Report, p 95.

rose from \$2,148,574 in the financial year 1967-1968, to \$3,212,956 in 1969-1970. By 1977-1978, the last full financial year of Dunstan's premiership, the figure had risen to \$10,958,000, and the next year it was \$11,214,000.¹²²

Between 1967 and Dunstan's abrupt exit from the premiership and parliament early in 1979, the Act was further modified by a number of amendments. In 1968 Dunstan added a licensing provision for tourist-targeted *bona fide* museums and art galleries in wine growing areas.¹²³ The Barn restaurant/gallery opened at McLaren Vale in February 1970 and was the first to take advantage of the new legislation. Joint proprietors were David Hardy of the well-known wine family and artist David Dridan. Food historian Barbara Santich credits Dridan with instigating the amendment to the Licensing Act in 1969.¹²⁴ In that same year the legal age for drinking was reduced from 21 to 20 years. The age of majority remained at 21 until 1971, although 20 year-old males could be conscripted and despatched to fight in Vietnam from 1965. The age of majority and the minimum drinking age became 18 years with a 1971 amendment.¹²⁵ Dunstan's various strategies for freeing up the Liquor Licensing Act during 1966-1967 were only partially successful, in that his new Act, which came into force on 28 September 1967, created at least as many problems as it might have solved. In the case of 'try before you buy' wine sampling, as with cellar door sales, the new Act legalised existing practices of long standing that were of particular importance to any expansion of tourism. Sangster had wanted all clubs to be subject to

¹²²SAPP, no 4, Auditor-General's Report 1969-70, p 112, 1978-79, p 152.

¹²³Young Report, p 123.

¹²⁴Barbara Santich, *McLaren Vale: Sea and Vines*, Kent Town, 1998, p 88.

¹²⁵Young Report, p 364.

the same basic licence provisions; however, the Dunstan Act allowed the six 'privileged' clubs to retain their hallowed rights to 24-hour trading.¹²⁶

Sangster recommended some other important changes that were of ongoing significance. They included the introduction of 'a new statutory offence prohibiting the driving of motor vehicles by persons having a blood alcohol concentration of .08 per cent or more,'¹²⁷ together with the abolition of local option polls and memorials,¹²⁸ and a complete restructuring and expansion of the Licensing Court.¹²⁹ He advocated the previously unheard of notion of flexibility, in relation to the Court dealing with a growing public demand for better service, by tailoring licences to suit the particular circumstances.¹³⁰ In the meantime the Court remained a significant counter to change, because of the mainly reactionary staff. A generational change eventually overcame this stumbling block to progress. The Licensing Court had consisted of a single special magistrate who sat only quarterly. Sangster proposed a permanent, 'three-man' court, headed by a chairman with the title of judge. This expansion was clearly needed to cope with an ever-increasing volume of work.¹³¹ He also wanted to see 'some shift in emphasis in licensing laws so as to induce the consumer to accept his share of responsibility for the safe use of a potentially dangerous commodity.'¹³²

Revisiting Sangster in 1984, the voluminous report of Peter Young, *Review of South Australian Liquor Licensing Laws*, observed that 'in our opinion this first Bill, if

¹²⁶Young Report, p 160.

¹²⁷Sangster Report, p 29.

¹²⁸SRSA, GRG 96/1, A129, p 7-9. See also Sangster Report, pp 84-86.

¹²⁹Sangster Report, pp 17, 20.

¹³⁰Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, p 121.

¹³¹Sangster Report, pp 17, 20.

¹³²*Ibid*, p 6.

passed, would have resulted in an Act more workable and more coherent than that which eventually emerged.¹³³ Be that as it may, a survey by Young of other jurisdictions revealed that all of the mainland states were suffering from similar problems to those prevailing in South Australia. On the question of licence numbers alone, Queensland had 18 general categories. Victoria and Western Australia, with similar legislation to South Australia, had 22 and 17 respectively. And although New South Wales had recently introduced a new ‘simplified’ Act, along the lines of the Australian Capital Territory’s, it still contained 14 categories.¹³⁴ In other words, the subject of controlling the production, sale and consumption of liquor has always been fraught with difficulties and rendered exceedingly complex when combined with Australia’s inherited legal and parliamentary systems. Nevertheless, the arrival of 10 o’clock closing alone gave credence to Dunstan’s claims of a successful outcome for the people of his state. In his comprehensive policy speech as opposition leader for the 1970 state election, he stressed his action plan to provide ‘new freedom for the individual.’¹³⁵ He promised that ‘with Labor, South Australia will become the technological, the design, the social reform, and the artistic centre of Australia.’¹³⁶ Significantly, Dunstan nominated tourism as ‘a special development area.’¹³⁷

Conclusions

It is easy to underestimate the flow-on benefit that the introduction of 10 o’clock closing had in the overly regulated and constricted *milieu* that was Adelaide in the

¹³³Young Report, p 31. The report comprises 701 pages.

¹³⁴Young Report, pp 70-72.

¹³⁵State Library South Australia [SLSA], Australian Labor Party, Policy Speech for the General State Election by the Leader of the Opposition, Hon D A Dunstan QC MP, 1970, p 1.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*

¹³⁷*Ibid*, p 7.

1960s. Not only did this state ‘come of age’ by joining the rest of the Commonwealth, but when Dunstan returned to power in 1970 he was in a position to begin implementing further changes aimed at promoting the better quality of life he had talked about in his election speech. Dunstan said he brought on the Royal Commission because the Chief Justice had told him the Act was no longer workable. Attorney-General Dunstan, himself a newly appointed Queen’s Counsel, could clearly not ignore this complaint from the state’s most senior member of the judiciary. In any case his own courtroom experiences as a barrister and his social visits to Hindley Street meant he would already have been well aware of the problems. The precedent for using a Royal Commission as the preferred method of inquiry was already well established in South Australia and the other states and territories. Given the uniformity of closing hours elsewhere in the Commonwealth since the recent Victorian Royal Commission, and Sangster’s known opinion, it was a foregone conclusion that ten o’ clock closing would be introduced, but it was the cumulative effect of this and the other measures that mattered. Dunstan chose to use the Royal Commission and then, as the pragmatic politician, was forced to become all things to virtually all of the players and rather more so to his close associates at the Australian Hotels Association. The informal agreement between Dunstan, the breweries, and the Hotels Association, which promised benefits to the working-class suburbs from more hotels offering better facilities, suited Labor’s electoral support base and therefore warranted support. The formation of his food-and drink-related reform concepts could well have had their beginnings at this point. However, it was not until 1969 and the European leg of a trip overseas that Dunstan’s grand Mediterranean vision for Adelaide came into sharp focus. The next chapter looks at Dunstan’s 1971 tourism initiatives, most of which relate directly to his new food-and drink-driven agenda, and largely had their origins in that 1969 trip.

Chapter Three

TOURISM

Dunstan's convoluted approach to liquor licensing reform in 1966 while he was attorney-general in the Walsh Government contrasted strongly with his forthright introduction of tourism reform as premier in 1971. The Steele Hall Government's *inter regnum* had provided Dunstan with the opportunity to take up a grant from the State Department to study transport systems, multi-cultural problems, and indigenous communities in the United States during 1969. He also contrived to return home via London and, even more importantly, Italy. Dunstan's sojourn in Rome served to focus his thoughts on the benefits of the Mediterranean lifestyle.¹ In later years the standard version of events held that from the outset Dunstan reformed 'liquor licensing laws to allow (amongst other things) the development of restaurants and better provisions for the sale of wine, and also to allow and encourage outdoor eating to take advantage of our Mediterranean climate.'² But it was not until early 1971 that he unveiled the Dunstan grand plan to boost tourism based on a culture of wining and dining in the southern European tradition.

The former Liberal Premier Tom Playford had concentrated on building up the state's industrial base and exploiting its limited natural resources.³ Dunstan believed the long-neglected area of tourism could provide more employment opportunities and become an important additional means for diversifying and strengthening the state's economy. He also thought that opening up Adelaide to larger scale tourism along

¹Don Dunstan, *Felicia, the political memoirs of Don Dunstan*, South Melbourne, 1981, pp 165-166.

²Flinders University of South Australia, [FUSA], Dunstan Collection, Publicity Material, Don's Table File, July 1994.

³Richard Cox, 'Social Democracy: A Study of the Dunstan Labor Government', PhD Thesis, School of Social Sciences, Flinders University of South Australia 1979, p 349. See also Stewart Cockburn, *Playford: Benevolent Despot*, Kent Town, 1996, pp 188-192, for Playford's attitude to the arts.

southern European lines would benefit the hotel, restaurant, and entertainment industries there would also be an inevitable flow-on effect towards a happier and freer local lifestyle. Dunstan told an interviewer 25 years later that he remained

convinced that in a State whose manufacturing base is narrow, a thriving tourism industry can provide employment even in tough economic times ‘because you can’t have a computer make a bed or prepare a meal.’⁴

In this interview Dunstan mentioned that he had followed Singapore’s lead, and to some extent his tourism development model emulated that of Singapore, where Lee Kuan Yew’s government had established various facilities including a bird park, an aquarium, and a zoo. The government also owned shares in various hotels, but seems to have refrained from entering the restaurant business.⁵ Dunstan was particularly keen to tap into the nascent tourism industry by attracting more of the increasing numbers of tourists from overseas into South Australia.

In February 1971 Dunstan launched his ambitious ten-year plan for ‘Tourist Development in South Australia.’ Rod Hand, a project officer at the time, recalls an increasingly startled, even dumbfounded audience of departmental heads and their minions assembled in the cabinet room.⁶ Dunstan’s manifesto was soon nicknamed ‘the bible’ and in fact became holy writ for the revitalisation of the hidebound South Australian Government Tourist Bureau.⁷ Dunstan added the bureau to his own Department of the Premier and of Development and joined Arts and Tourism in the

⁴Susan Mitchell, ‘Last of the Medici Princes’, *Weekend Australian*, 20-21 January 1996.

⁵Cheng Siok Hwa, ‘Economic Change and Industrialization’, *A History of Singapore*, Ernest C.T. Chew and Edwin Lee (eds.), Singapore, 1996, pp 182-215, see especially p 214.

⁶Interview with Rod Hand, McLaren Vale, 21 December 2000.

⁷*Ibid.*

one portfolio.⁸ He also wanted the Australian Broadcasting Commission's concert manager, Len Amadio, to spearhead his plans in the newly created department. Dunstan aide Peter Ward was deputised to make the approach. Amadio decided the opportunity was not to be missed in spite of some initial misgivings, and accepted Dunstan's offer at a Sunday night party at Ward's city townhouse. The public service formalities were quickly finalised and the ABC lost its concert manager.⁹

Amadio was to prove an excellent choice for the position. He first came to Adelaide with the ABC temporarily in 1959 and then permanently in 1964. He met Dunstan through mutual friends in 1966 and joined the circle of invitees to parties at the Dunstan's George Street, Norwood, home. Amadio continued in the dual area of tourism and arts for some three years, but arts became dominant and he dropped tourism to become Director of Arts, eventually retiring in 1995.¹⁰ The first senior development officer appointed to the Bureau, following Dunstan's briefing and the ensuing restructuring, recalls that when he went to tourism it was 'like going into a black abyss.'¹¹ This was the government instrumentality responsible for enticing tourists to spend their dollars in South Australia. A brief history of the Bureau suggests some of the likely responses to any plans for the kind of expansion of activities envisaged by Dunstan.

In 1908 the state government of the day set up a 'Tourist's Bureau' which was charged with promoting places of likely interest to tourists, together with providing appropriate information for their needs. Three years later the Bureau became

⁸State Records South Australia, [SRSA], GRG 75/1/263/1972, Premier's Correspondence, Tourist Bureau Report, p 13.

⁹Interview with Len Amadio, Sydney, 21 August 2002.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹Interview with Rod Hand, McLaren Vale, 21 December 2000.

responsible for advertising aimed at attracting immigrants from overseas. Prior to World War I the Bureau also functioned as a tour operator and a ticketing agency for railway travel, and promoted 'the formation of local Tourist Associations.'¹² After World War I the Bureau was given the additional task of administering the government's immigration scheme. Not long before World War II brought tourism to a halt for the duration, offices located in existing state bureaus were opened in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. The Adelaide Bureau had relocated to offices in King William Street by the end of the 1940s, and could also boast an international travel section, along with a small documentary film unit.¹³ A review committee observed in 1972 that 'the major events of the 1960s were the relocation of the Melbourne and Sydney offices to their own premises in those cities.'¹⁴

The newly installed Walsh Labor Government had presaged change early in 1965 when the governor's speech to open parliament included the following: 'My Government...will do everything in its power to assist in the growth of the tourist industry.'¹⁵ By and large the operations of the Bureau continued without change, as they had over the decades, especially given former premier Tom Playford's well known lack of interest in such a 'non-productive' area of government.¹⁶ The director of the Bureau in 1971 was Percy F. (Ted) Pollnitz, and according to one source, his notable 'contribution to the development of tourism, was to go up onto the roof of the

¹²SRSA, GRG 75/1/263/1972, Premier's Correspondence, Tourist Bureau Report, p 13.

¹³*Ibid.* In the late 1960s the Bureau was still titled the 'Immigration, Publicity and Tourist Bureau'. *South Australian Year Book*, No.4:1969, Commonwealth Bureau of Statistics, Adelaide, p 219.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, Report, p 13.

¹⁵South Australian Parliamentary Papers, [SAPP], no.1, item 4, p 3. Speech of His Excellency Lieutenant General Sir Edric Bastyan, 13 May 1965.

¹⁶Stewart Cockburn, assisted by John Playford, *Playford: Benevolent Despot*, Kent Town, South Australia, 1996, p 188.

[Bureau] building in King William Street...[look out over the city and say], “Well this is all we’ve got to do. This is it, it’s all here, all round here.”¹⁷ Don Dunstan was Attorney-General, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Minister of Social Welfare in the Walsh government. There was no tourism portfolio. Among the seventeen matters in part one of the terms of reference Dunstan set for his Liquor Licensing Royal Commissioner Keith Sangster to consider, paragraph ‘M’ related to tourism. The question to be addressed was ‘whether the law should be amended with respect to...[giving] financial or other aid or encouragement to the provision of accommodation and other facilities for tourists.’¹⁸ Apart from an ‘unofficial’ submission from the director of the Tourist Bureau, only two submissions from resort operators were lodged and both related to the licensing of liquor sales. Because of the apparent paucity of interest in potential government assistance, Sangster chose not to make any recommendation on this term of reference.¹⁹

In the last year of the Playford administration, the Industries Development Committee delivered its report on the ‘Decentralization of Industry.’ One of the subjects addressed was the Tourist Industry. The committee recommended ‘a greater measure of Government assistance in meeting initial development costs...where insufficiency of local finance is hindering the development of the tourist industry in particular locations.’ The emphasis was on developing ‘scenic or other attractions...at country tourist resorts.’ But more significantly the committee advised that ‘country tourist accommodation...[should be accepted as] an industry for the purposes of the

¹⁷Interview with Len Amadio, Sydney, 21 August 2002.

¹⁸Sangster Report, p 32.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p 27.

Industries Development Act.²⁰ Government financial help had previously been limited to grants or subsidies. In 1961-1962 payments in country areas towards tourist resort development and swimming pools amounted to \$102,822. This amount had fallen to \$90,826 in 1962-1963. The committee 'hoped that that the Government will continue to give financial support to the development of [country] tourist attractions', and maintain the provision of necessary infrastructure. In the metropolitan area the provision of tourist accommodation was regarded as purely a matter for private enterprise. The Playford Government was responsible for capital and maintenance costs of the various near-city National Pleasure 'Resorts', including Morialta Falls, Waterfall Gully, and a small area of scrubby hillside at Windy Point. It had also contributed to a boat haven at Glenelg and the West Beach Reserve. This was not an impressive list even by the standards of the era, and one which paid little heed to improving the tourist potential of metropolitan Adelaide.²¹

Dunstan's Tourism Briefing Paper

In his briefing paper, the apparently prescient Dunstan forecast 'an enormous increase in the number of overseas tourists to Australia as a whole once the larger airliners start flying into Australia,' with the likelihood of increasing numbers of Americans and Japanese. It was expected that the latter would be mainly businessmen looking for investment opportunities. Dunstan suggested that South Australia, although lacking an international airport, could nevertheless attract 'a significant proportion' of this market, but pointed out that Adelaide was the only mainland capital without this facility. Most tourists visiting South Australia at this time were from the eastern states,

²⁰SAPP, no 105, 1964, pp 32-33.

²¹SAPP, no 105, 1964, pp 32-33.

usually on motoring holidays, with or without a caravan attached to the family car.²² In 1966 the total of all visitors to the state was estimated at 500,000, and they were thought to spend at least \$20 million.²³ Dunstan was bent upon attracting a more exotic breed preferably with larger wallets or, even better, expense accounts. Accommodating this new clientele would require a dramatic upgrading of the state's tourism infrastructure, including what would eventually become known as the hospitality industry. In his policy speech for the 1970 state election Dunstan, then Leader of the Opposition, made specific reference to the 'consistently neglected' area of tourism and undertook to provide 'resort facilities of standards comparable with those which have proved so successful in New Zealand.' The locations he mentioned were 'from the Coorong around and across to Kangaroo Island, and within our old Cornish mining centers' [sic].²⁴ In his ministerial tourism brief six major areas were listed for development: Metropolitan, Barossa, River Murray, the crescent running from the Coorong to Goolwa to Kangaroo Island, Flinders Ranges, and the old Cornish mining towns. Dunstan decreed that the immediate focus was to be on the Metropolitan area, the crescent, the Flinders Ranges, and the old mining towns. The Australian National Travel Association was already surveying the Barossa Valley and as other unnamed developments were also in progress that area could be left for the moment. The otherwise undefined River Murray was to be the subject of 'later studies'.²⁵ The

²²SRSA, GRG 75/1/708/1973, Premier's Department file, 'National Tourist Development Week Committee'. The 16-page document is titled 'Tourist Development In South Australia', p 1. Len Amadio also provided me with a copy which, although lacking p 12, has an additional two pages attached which I will refer to as 'Amadio Tourist Document'. Above the title on p 1 of this document is written, 'Premier Don Dunstan January 1971'. However, in a memo to Dunstan dated 1 December 1971 the policy Secretariat refers to his Tourist Development Brief of February 1971, GRG 75/1/153/1973. Des Ryan and Mike McEwen, *It's Grossly Improper*, Adelaide, 1979, also refer to the briefing as taking place in February, p 144.

²³SRSA, GRG 96/A158, Evidence of Percy F. Pollnitz, Director SA Government Tourist Bureau, to the Royal Commission on the Licensing Act, 10 May 1966, p 1.

²⁴State Library South Australia, [SLSA], Mortlock Library, Don Dunstan, policy speech, 1970, p 8.

²⁵SRSA,GRG 75/1/708, pp 2-3.

Dunstan plan called for metropolitan Adelaide to be recreated as the convention mecca of Australia, with development centred on Victoria Square and the embryonic Festival Theatre. To quote from the briefing paper:

Specifically of relevance to tourism is the development of Adelaide as a convention centre, as a centre for the performing arts, as an area where unique historic buildings and facilities are to be readily seen and enjoyed within the city proper or its immediate environs, and the provision of adequate entertainment and, particularly, eating facilities.²⁶

Dunstan's early reference to eating facilities foreshadows a continual return to his theme of food and restaurants. Among his other proposals the premier referred to the 'remodelling' and 'development' of historic Ayers House, rather than simply its preservation. He had already won a victory over his Cabinet by vetoing the former Steele Hall Government's plan to demolish the long neglected former home of Sir Henry Ayers.²⁷ Significantly, Dunstan wanted 'the provision of a restaurant in the basement and open air eating facilities at the side.'²⁸ This may well be the first reference in the official record to outdoor eating, one of Dunstan's favourite concepts that I discuss in a later chapter. He went on to urge the removal of temporary structures built over an earlier garden and used to accommodate nurses from the nearby Royal Adelaide Hospital. Dunstan thought a restored garden could 'provide an adequate surround for outdoor eating facilities'.²⁹ With Rome as the model, 'historic' horse-drawn vehicles were to provide a cab service for tourists to run between city hotels and

²⁶SRSA, GRG 75/1/708, p 3.

²⁷Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981 p 181.

²⁸See Derek Whitelock, *Adelaide 1836-1976: A History of Difference*, St. Lucia, Queensland, 1977, p 180, fig. 123. See also Dunstan, 1981, pp 180-81

²⁹SRSA, GRG 75/1/708, p 4.

Ayers House. Government House and the Old Legislative Council building were included in the vision of incorporating historic buildings into this redevelopment, the latter earmarked to become a settlement museum in 1976. The Hayward family had offered to gift their Carrick Hill mansion to the State, and with immodest haste Dunstan had earmarked it for the governor's future residence.³⁰ The Old Mounted Police Barracks at the rear of the South Australian Museum were much in need of restoration, and the Dunstan vision included the incorporation of the small Art Gallery sculpture court into the Barrack's quadrangle as 'an ideal setting for a Gallery open air restaurant.'³¹ Listed for further study were the old Lion Brewery buildings at North Adelaide and the bluestone Malthouse on Dequetteville Terrace. Dunstan already envisaged the Malthouse with a courtyard and eating facilities along the lines of a tourism development in San Francisco. This potential model caught the Dunstan eye on his United States government-sponsored 'transportation development study tour' in 1969.³² However, other eyes were already focusing on the old Lion Brewery buildings. During the early 1970s a local syndicate spent approximately \$750,000 incorporating the historic buildings into a hotel and restaurant complex.³³

Dunstan continued to emphasise the food and drink aspect in his tourism briefing. He went on to say 'it will be necessary for us to ensure better eating and drinking facilities of the kind which will interest tourists in the city and the metropolitan area generally.' Harking back to the Licensing Act he wanted to see city hotels licensed as taverns and special 'tourist licences' granted to hotels dedicated to

³⁰SRSA, GRG 75/1/708, p 5.

³¹*Ibid.*, p 8.

³²*Ibid.*, p 6. See also Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, p 165.

³³George E Birch, *Where To Dine In South Australia*, Adelaide, 1976, p 63.

the needs of tourists, ‘which could keep their bars open during cabaret rather than ordinary bar hours.’ The Attorney General Len King was already on side and ‘the licensing court judge’ (Laurie Johnson) had been briefed, although his reaction was not stated. Tourist Bureau director Ted Pollnitz, in his evidence to the Sangster Royal Commission, had already suggested two classes of hotels: ‘overnight’ and ‘resort’ (or tourist).³⁴

Dunstan and Local Restaurants

Dunstan became quite scathing on the subject of existing restaurants, and it is worth quoting a good deal of this section because of the insight it provides into his views. Again he cites Rome as an example of what could be achieved, and refers once more to outdoor eating:

The restaurant facilities in Adelaide at the moment are quite inadequate for international tourist standards. The majority of our restaurants are run by Hungarians or Italian migrants. Sometimes their cuisine starts off at somewhere near adequate standards but as is the case with Deccas it can then markedly decline. The grave fault of most restaurants in Adelaide is an enormous menu of supposedly individually cooked dishes which it is not economic to cook individually and we do not get good food at low cost on which an adequate profit is made by having a simple menu and about five major dishes prepared...I believe that we should use the State Government’s facilities to prime the pump here and this can be done by the development of a restaurant at Ayers House and building of new restaurant facilities at Waterfall Gully and Morialta, and a first-class restaurant incorporating a number of facilities at Windy Point.³⁵

³⁴SRSA, GRG 75/1/708, p 6. GRG 96/A158, pp 6, 2.

³⁵SRSA, GRG 75/1/708, pp 6-7.

This was an extraordinary tirade from a premier, and one that confirms the paramount importance of the food and wine scene to Dunstan. The reference to ‘Hungarians or Italian migrants’ perhaps displays an uncharacteristic lack of sensitivity to ethnicity, but this and the use of the term ‘grave fault’ reveal the extent of Dunstan’s frustration with the local restaurant scene. In a later chapter I refer to Dunstan’s own debut as a restaurateur, which ironically was also marred by an excessively large menu selection.

The reference to ‘Deccas’ is interesting since Decca’s Restaurant, or Decca’s Place, as it was also known from its establishment in Melbourne Street, North Adelaide, by the late Derek Jolly in the early 1960s, was one of Dunstan’s favourite eating places. His contact with Decca’s Place continued for some time. In late 1969 a former chef wrote to advertise his own new restaurant. He claimed to have been ‘for the last year and a half at Decca’s Place restaurant, where as Head Chef, I tried to cater to your every taste’.³⁶ The correspondence does illustrate the difficulties faced by restaurateurs in maintaining standards, and hence customer satisfaction, when competent chefs move elsewhere. It also sheds some light on the difficult task of retaining Dunstan’s custom.³⁷ The other Melbourne Street restaurant much favoured by Dunstan in the 1960s and 1970s was the nearby Magic Flute.³⁸ The proprietor, Elemer Varga, wrote to Attorney-General Dunstan in 1966 asking for a letter of introduction to use on a trip to the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States where he proposed to study the ‘latest European developments in the restaurant and hotel trades’. Varga also proposed to promote South Australian wine on the ‘East

³⁶FUSA, Dunstan Collection, ‘C’ Miscellaneous Correspondence, Caballeros Restaurant, n.d., reply from Dunstan’s secretary, Doug. Claessen, 15 December 1969.

³⁷Interview with Michael Symons, former joint proprietor of the Aristologist restaurant, Wellington, New Zealand, 24 January 2002.

³⁷Interview with Mike Rann, Adelaide, 16 January 2001.

Continent' under the auspices of the South Australian Wine Service Guild. He continued, 'I have taken great liberty writing to you because [you] have dined at my restaurant on frequent occasions and I am accordingly known to you'. Dunstan merely passed the request on to the Premier's Department. Presumably he might have offered more support in 1971.³⁹ Writing about Dunstan and his restaurant habits early in the 1970s, S. T. Barnard commented:

Dunstan has many traits which set him aside as a politician. He is not the hail-fellow-well-met type. Come election time he can put himself into a front bar situation, drinking and chatting, albeit stiltedly at times, with 'the boys'. He doesn't fit easily into the front bar, but that's where the votes are. He does however, meld neatly into the bistro atmosphere of 'Charlie Browns' or the expensive aura of 'Decca's Place'. Lunch, a pie with sauce for you and me, is more often a steak and a bottle of wine at the 'Arkaba' or 'Chesser Cellar' for Dapper Don.⁴⁰

To round off his critique of the local restaurant scene Dunstan played an audio-tape in which television chef Graham Kerr criticised standards of food preparation and service in Adelaide. Dunstan thought Kerr's comments were 'almost entirely valid'.⁴¹ All of this helped to determine Dunstan's push for a new catering school as the following chapter reveals.

Proposed Tourist Restaurants

Dunstan's focus on restaurant facilities in his tourism brief included a trio of government-sponsored restaurants he wanted at Windy Point, Morialta Falls and

³⁹SRSA, GRG 1/115/254/66, Attorney General's Department, undocketed correspondence.

⁴⁰S. T. Barnard, 'South Australia', in *Sir Henry, Bjelke, Don baby and friends*, Max Harris, Geoffrey Dutton (eds.), Melbourne, 1971, p 56.

⁴¹SRSA, GRG 75/1/708, p 7.

Waterfall Gully. Rome again provided the inspiration for the proposed Windy Point facility, which was to include a ‘silver service’ restaurant, a large reception/cabaret area, smorgasbord and barbecue lunches, terraces for open air eaters, ‘and ideally there should also be a swimming pool and changing rooms.’⁴² Dunstan believed that the replication of a facility he had seen on ‘a site of similar beauty in Rome...could win renown throughout our region.’ He cautioned that this would only occur if levels of service and the standard of the facilities were up to his stated criteria.⁴³ In optimistic vein Dunstan claimed that his government ‘should be able to provide restaurants with an individual style at Waterfall Gully and Morialta...[which, in combination with the Windy Point project,]...could then have a significant influence on the standard of restaurant services...in Adelaide.’⁴⁴ All three locations were designated as national pleasure resorts and there were refreshment kiosks at Morialta and Waterfall Gully.⁴⁵ However, even Dunstan could not overcome the myriad problems associated with turning this particular concept into reality. His ‘trainee catering officer,’ John Ceruto, was instructed to inspect and report in detail on the viability of turning the rundown and primitive kiosk buildings into restaurants. Ceruto achieved a certain notoriety with the publication of an ‘expose’ of Dunstan, ‘*It’s Grossly Improper*’, written by two journalists, Des Ryan and Mike McEwen, and self-published in 1979. Dunstan had a close relationship with Ceruto over several years and used his influence to help Ceruto’s unsuccessful career as a restaurateur (see chapter six). Ceruto died of a drug overdose in 1991, aged 41.⁴⁶ Ceruto managed to produce a brief one-page report in

⁴²SRSA, GRG 75/1/708, p 5.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p 7.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, pp 7-8.

⁴⁵*South Australian Year Book*, No.4:1969, Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, South Australian Office, p 218.

⁴⁶*News*, 12 December 1991.

January 1972, which then required a follow-up inspection and more detailed report by Len Amadio, Project Officer Rod Hand and a building inspector. The trio found that the Morialta kiosk required demolition, while the cost of renovations to the other kiosk was estimated at \$27,500. A larger facility at a likely cost of \$250,000 was thought unlikely to be justified.⁴⁷ This latter comment was a realistic assessment of the limited potential for either site to attract tourists in sufficient numbers to obtain anything approaching viability, or to serve as exemplars to the industry. A notation on the file recorded that the premier had seen the reports and decided that Windy Point was to be the first priority, although both of the other facilities were later renovated and Waterfall Gully leased out as a restaurant.

Windy Point

Dunstan was not the first politician to call for the development of the Windy Point site. According to the *Adelaide Advertiser*, the Playford Government in a rare gesture suggested a tourism/restaurant facility in the early 1960s. Dunstan would have been aware that the Walsh Labor Government invited the submission of development plans in 1965. The *Advertiser* further reported that the Steele Hall Government in 1969 'had reached agreement with an Adelaide Company which planned to spend \$200,000 if a lessee could be found.'⁴⁸ A Hungarian migrant and former wine chemist then leasing the Mount Lofty kiosk submitted a proposal to Dunstan before the tourism briefing. He wanted to build a \$260,000 restaurant complex at his own expense subject to the granting of a thirty-year site lease. In spite of reaching in principle agreement the project did not proceed.⁴⁹ In the months following the Dunstan briefing

⁴⁷SRSA, GRG 75/1/182/1971.

⁴⁸*Advertiser*, 5 January 1973.

⁴⁸SRSA, GRG 75/ 1/153, 1973.

his project section set up a working party to expedite the project and asked the Public Buildings Department to prepare plans. The design estimates swiftly rose to \$375,000 – \$400,000. The working party engaged Sydney consultants Oliver C. Shaul and Associates to carry out an economic assessment. Oliver Shaul, a Swiss immigrant, became a highly successful Sydney chef, restaurateur, and catering consultant. His best-known venture was the revolving Summit Restaurant atop the Australia Square tower, which he opened in 1968.⁵⁰ The working party had already recommended various economies to the specifications, including a reduction in dining space from 120 diners down to 100 and deletion of the manager's flat. They also requested a 'firm' brief from the Tourist Bureau director. Dunstan instructed Ceruto, then in Sydney to organise the setting up of a wine bar in the basement of the Bureau's branch office building, to survey Shaul's work and report directly. During this period the shopping centre tycoon Jack Weinert apparently showed some interest in the project.⁵¹ Shaul subsequently flew to Adelaide, inspected the site and in a nineteen-page report to Dunstan estimated the total capital cost at \$340,000. He believed that the restaurant development would be 'a worthwhile addition to the tourist attractions of South Australia.'⁵²

A year later, the principal project officer, Bill Voyzey, wrote to the director of Policy and Development complaining of procrastination. This meant that the project was likely to miss the 1972/73 Estimates. 'We still seem to be vacillating,' remarked Voyzey, 'despite the advice of a skilled and expensive Consultant, supplemented by

⁵⁰Michael Symons, *One Continuous Picnic: A History of Eating in Australia*, Adelaide, 1982, p 230. See also Des Ryan and Mike McEwen, *It's Grossly Improper*, Adelaide, 1979, p 115. The title is a play on Dunstan's frequent use of similar phrases in parliament.

⁵¹SRSA, GRG 75/1/153/1973.

⁵²*Ibid.*.

that of a local group, not without expertise.’⁵³ The *Advertiser* of 4 August 1972 reported that on the previous day the premier had announced a number of important new projects. These included the Windy Point complex, hailed as a ‘major tourist attraction’ and expected to cost approximately \$300,000, together with the development of Ayer’s House at \$250,000. Next morning the *Sunday Mail* headed a report on Windy Point with the headline ‘High Life For Diners In Hills’ and included sketches supplied by the premier. Completion was expected early in 1974. The report revealed that apart from the Windy Point complex Dunstan aimed to attract more visitors from interstate and overseas by his tourist development plans. The plans included an international hotel, a renovated Ayers House and a performing arts centre. In spite of this flurry of announcements Cabinet did not approve the successful Windy Point tender of Emmett Constructions until March 1973.

Dunstan meanwhile was trying to obtain funding from the Federal government. His application was prompted by the Budget announcement of a funding allowance for tourism development by the newly elected Whitlam Labor Government, thereby reversing another policy of its Liberal predecessors. Dunstan wrote to Peter Howson, Minister assisting the Minister for Trade and Industry, late in 1972,⁵⁴ but it was August 1973 before Frank Stewart, Minister for Tourism and Recreation, replied to Dunstan’s initiative. Stewart said, ‘As you are aware, Australia’s numerous unique attractions...[including the] Flinders Ranges etc. are not being properly developed.’ His government would be prepared to join with private enterprise where warranted ‘in the development and management of tourist facilities for the greatest advantage of

⁵³GRG 75/1/153/1973.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, See also, GRG 75/1/627/1973.

Australia;’ even more importantly, finance would be made available through the Commonwealth Development Bank.⁵⁵

However, other factors also began to come into play and helped to stop further progress. The Windy Point site is in the Hills Face Zone and hence approval of the State Planning Authority, a body set up by Dunstan, was required before construction work could commence. Although approval was granted, protesting hills dwellers formed the Mt. Lofty Ranges Association and appealed the decision. Their appeal was subsequently dismissed, but approval was now subject to a number of additional provisos designed to protect the environment.⁵⁶ To add a further complication, the Plumbers and Gasfitters Union then announced a boycott of the site. Its members opposed what they saw as environmental degradation. Any construction on the site, they believed, would lead to ‘despoliation’ of the hills face.⁵⁷ Tentative suggestions to add a chairlift to the restaurant site were given short shrift by Dunstan, who replied to the proponents in a letter dated 5 March 1974, ‘I have concluded however, that the likely clientele of the restaurant would prefer to use more conventional means of transport.’⁵⁸ Escalating cost estimates and rising interest rates in a time of economic downturn signal caution to even the most optimistic. A handwritten note on a memo dated 3 April 1974 signalled the death knell to the project: ‘Premier says “HOLD” – problems in getting on Loan Estimates.’⁵⁹ Later that year the Economic Intelligence Unit advised the premier that the complex was unlikely to be viable. It was left to

⁵⁵SRSA, GRG 75/1/153/1973, Dunstan to Peter Howson, 23 November 1972.

⁵⁶SRSA, GRG 75/1/152/1973, Stewart to Dunstan, 22 August 1973. See also GRG 75/1/153/1973.

⁵⁷*Advertiser*, 12 October 1973.

⁵⁸SRSA, GRG 75/1/153/1973, Dunstan to Prof. Peter Schwerdtfeger, who had inspected the site with the Queensland franchise holder.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

private enterprise to succeed where a well-meaning government had failed, and a local consortium began operating a restaurant complex at Windy Point in November 1982, under a Liberal government. With the benefit of hindsight, it was probably unwise for Dunstan to have rejected the apparently firm interest in April/May 1971 of at least two developers who were prepared, it was said, to spend \$400,000 and \$500,000 respectively. The latter's agent wrote to Amadio noting that his client was 'extremely disappointed the Government in its wisdom has decided to proceed itself and not entrust such a scheme to private enterprise'.⁶⁰ But these were heady days for a premier leading a reformist government in the first flush of optimism.⁶¹

The International Hotel

In the tourism briefing Dunstan outlined his own vision for a centrally located 'conference standard' hotel. Some years earlier the Tourist Bureau director commented, 'there are only two first class hotels in Adelaide, namely the South Australian Hotel and the Hotel Australia.'⁶² 'The South', a much revered South Australian icon, was demolished in late 1971 and replaced by a multi-storied motel complex.⁶³ In his 1971 report to the Lord Mayor's committee on the development of Victoria square, New South Wales planning consultant Professor Denis Winston recommended the corner of Grote Street and Victoria Square as the site for a central 'conference, or international standard, hotel.'⁶⁴ Dunstan, who had already managed an extensive tour of Japan in 1970, emphasised the need to cater for Asian businessmen

⁶⁰SRSA, GRG 75/1/153/1973. Con Dobre to Amadio, 21 May 1971.

⁶¹Cox, 'Social Democracy; A Study of the Dunstan Labor Government,' 1979, pp 360-361.

⁶²SRSA, GRG 96/A158, p 4.

⁶³Whitelock, 1977, f 118.

⁶⁴SRSA, GRG 75/1/708/1973, pp 8-9.

and specifically Japanese businessmen and tourists. The latter, he suggested, should be provided with all the comforts of home, including secretarial services, Japanese 'hostess entertainment', saunas, massage, tea rooms and restaurants. He did not reveal whether the 'hostess entertainment' would include the importation of trained geishas, but much work was needed to provide 'Japanese and Chinese restaurants of adequate standard.'⁶⁵ There was as yet no Japanese restaurant in Adelaide, while the existing Chinese restaurants did not measure up to Dunstan's exacting criteria, as revealed in the following comment from his tourism brief:

None of the Chinese restaurants at the moment is of adequate standard in providing food for people who come here from any Chinese community, and in order to attract Asian tourists we must be able to provide that they can get food from time to time in their own cuisine and not only in ours.⁶⁶

There could be no argument that the menu offered by the ubiquitous Chinese restaurant in Australia bore only a passing resemblance to the various cuisines of mainland China, while the local staple of 'meat and three veg.' had even less appeal for Asian palates.⁶⁷ If Dunstan's specialised Japanese hotel service had passed beyond the drawing board stage it is not difficult to imagine union and other community reaction to the proposals. Winston's report to the Lord Mayor's committee was made public late in 1971. The *Sunday Mail* featured details and noted that 'the committee was set up in June 1969, following suggestions in 1967 from the Premier, Mr. Dunstan, who was then Attorney-General and Minister in Charge of Town Planning.'⁶⁸

⁶⁵SRSA, GRG75/1/708, p 9.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

⁶⁷Richard Beckett, *Convicted Tastes: Food in Australia*, Sydney, 1984, pp 164-165.

⁶⁸*Sunday Mail*, 4 December 1971. See also the *Advertiser*, 6-7 December 1971

Dunstan's tradition-shattering hotel concept for Victoria Square was simply too far ahead of what was possible or practicable in the early 1970s, but he was not alone in wanting an up-market hotel. New South Wales Premier Robert Askin wrote to Prime Minister John Gorton at about the time Dunstan was delivering his tourism manifesto. Askin wanted first-class hotel accommodation in Sydney 'to keep pace with the growth of tourism', and asked for Commonwealth financial assistance as a matter of urgency. He sent copies to all other state premiers. Dunstan followed suit with a letter to Gorton supporting Askin's plea, since 'with South Australia, and particularly in the City of Adelaide, the lack of first-class accommodation is a factor inhibiting our growth in tourism.'⁶⁹ While Gorton may have been sympathetic, he was shortly replaced as prime minister by William McMahon, who quashed the request with the advice that the Commonwealth Banking Corporation Board had decided it would not be appropriate for the Development Bank to provide finance for service industries.

Such was the climate of the times that it proved virtually impossible to interest local or overseas investors in a project of the magnitude that Dunstan was proposing. In a later report Bob Bakewell, Permanent Head of the Premier's Department, noted that for a number of reasons the government was not successful in attracting the interest of investors to the project. The reasons included government incentives that were not of sufficient appeal, lack of government expertise in negotiating with major developers, and the competition of other, more attractive investment opportunities.⁷⁰ The incentives offered might have lacked appeal, but they were certainly generous as Dunstan revealed in response to criticism from his parliamentary opponents. The prime site came at a peppercorn rental for 90 years, with a reduction in rates and taxes for the

⁶⁹SRSA, GRG 75/1/143/1971, Dunstan to Gorton, 3 February 1971.

⁷⁰FUSA, Dunstan Collection, International Hotel File.

whole of that period, and if necessary a government guarantee for two-thirds of the investment cost. In parliament Dunstan invited the Opposition to suggest what else his government could do to attract investors. There was no response.⁷¹

Amadio, with the help of architects, put together a feasibility study for Dunstan to tout to potential Asian investors on a tourism promotion trip to Hong Kong, Singapore, and Japan in September 1971. Among other officials, he met with the vice-president of Japan Airlines and told him that the proposed 'Conference Hotel in Victoria Square would have Japanese facilities, entertainment and staff.'⁷² Negotiations with Pak Poy and Associates on behalf of a private client, and also with a Perth hotel group, preceded a bid from a Hong Kong based company early in 1976. The latter was said to be working on a complete redesign, but the building would still be 275 feet (83.82 metres) tall with 408 rooms, all facing east, a dining capacity of 800 guests and a standard charge per suite of \$200 per day. The proponents were seemingly 'genuine', but their *bona fides* were being checked. The pencilled word 'Casino' at the top of the page may explain the real interest of the company and why the proposal came to nothing.⁷³ Dunstan met with representatives of the hotel, motel, and tourism industry on 23 August 1978 to reassure them that a proposed Hotels Commission 'would not create unfair competition with the private sector...but [would] complement and support [them].' In fact the Bill to set up the South Australian Hotels Commission was read for the first time on 15 March, had since lapsed, and was finally

⁷¹South Australian Parliamentary Debates: House of Assembly [SAPD:HA], 28 August 1975, p 539.

⁷²FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Overseas Visits File. Dunstan travelled in the Parliamentary Show Week recess, as he had done the previous year, he returned to Adelaide on 14 September and then went to Italy, London and Singapore on 25 September. He returned on 7 October and later reported to Cabinet that 'basically my visit to Italy was "informal", because of a gastric disorder.' In July-August 1971 Dunstan visited Singapore, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Djakarta as a 'follow up' to his previous trip.

⁷³*Ibid.*, International Hotel File. Notes of meeting, International Hotel Committee, 30 January 1976.

abandoned by Dunstan's successor.⁷⁴ Unbeknown to Dunstan's audience a local consortium had already come up with an investment proposal for a \$60 million, multi-use complex, which was to include at least some of the facilities mooted by him. But the controversial Japanese 'home away from home' concept Dunstan had envisaged was quietly forgotten.⁷⁵ Less than four years after Dunstan had left the political stage, the consortium's Hilton International Adelaide was opened to a fanfare of trumpets, by his Vice-Regal namesake Lt General Sir Donald Dunstan. The *Advertiser* next day seemed unsure of its stance in reporting the event, initially stating that 'the hotel was part of the premier quality for which the city of the arts had been recognised internationally.' Further on readers were told that 'a comment overheard from the small talk around the various floors – "Who would have thought this was Adelaide?" – seemed to sum up the occasion'. Just prior to the opening ceremony Bob Hammond, chair of the Superannuation Fund Investment Trust, handed over a cheque for \$44.7 million to purchase the hotel. The New York based Hilton International company was responsible for management of the enterprise, and the Trust anticipated a good return from its percentage of the profits.⁷⁶ Once again it was a case of Dunstan proposing and private enterprise disposing.

Other Tourism Projects

Some of the other proposals in the briefing paper were even more far-sighted, albeit controversial. These included a 'central resort hotel' at Goolwa to exploit the tourist potential of the Coorong, the South Coast and Kangaroo Island. The plan was to offer package holidays including flights from Goolwa, taking in Kangaroo Island, the

⁷⁴Announced by Premier Des Corcoran on 21 May 1979, *Advertiser*.

⁷⁵FUSA, Dunstan Collection, International Hotel File.

⁷⁶*Advertiser*, 5 November 1982.

Coorong and the wine industry at Langhorne Creek. This would provide, as Dunstan said, ‘all those things that particularly American [and Japanese] tourists like to do, that is snap themselves in a number of quaint unusual and beautiful places.’ There is a detectable note of underlying cynicism as he continued, ‘they will then be able to say that having travelled over this small distance in Australia they will really have seen all it has to offer.’⁷⁷ The hotel was to be combined with a casino, in part to make up for a looming shortfall in gambling taxes which might attract a reduction of \$3.5million from the Commonwealth Grants Commission.⁷⁸ It was made clear however, that poker machines were not on the agenda. The site suggested lay quite near the modest Dunstan family holiday home, which may have attracted some comment if the project had been brought to fruition. During the 1970s developers proposed casinos for various locations including Wallaroo, Blanchetown and Barmera but met with vehement opposition from church and other groups. A ‘casino’ Bill was introduced into State Parliament on 16 August 1973 but defeated on the floor of the House.⁷⁹

Dunstan proposed ‘an aborigines’ cultural centre’ for the Coorong on reserves owned by the Aboriginal Lands Trust. The concept had clearly been given considerable thought as the following extract illustrates:

The cultural centre should contain the Fife Angas collection held by the South Australian Museum, the Mountford collection now held by the South Australian Public Library, and copies of the tapes assembled by the Elder Conservatorium of Aboriginal music. It could be used further to assemble examples of aboriginal artefacts,

⁷⁷SRSA, GRG 75/1/708, pp 9-10.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, p 11.

⁷⁹SRSA, GRG 75/1/730/1973, see also GRG 75/1/657/1973, and GRG 75/1/523/1973.

crafts, paintings and a library of aboriginal history, and become a place which aborigines are proud to show off.⁸⁰

Dunstan referred to water sport and fishing ventures for tourists set up in Arizona by the White Mountain Apache people that he had photographed during his trip to the United States. He believed such facilities offered a model for the Coorong area. The tone of this section is heavily paternalistic in the manner of the period although, apart from the opportunity for 'development', Dunstan also saw it as a chance 'to do something of significance for the aborigines.' There is no suggestion of consultation with the Ngarrindjerri people. Dunstan thought that:

A group of aborigines could be established to work the tourist centre and who could also carry out such dances and corroborees as they were prepared to show to tourists, particularly to mixed groups of them.⁸¹

However, this Apache-based aquatic/Aboriginal/tourist retreat dream remained unfulfilled.

Dunstan suggested his long-time friend and West Lakes developer Max Liberman as a feasibility consultant in view of the 'very urgent' nature of the wide-ranging proposals. But Liberman, it seems, was occupied on his own projects.⁸² The unique Paralana hot springs near Arkaroola in the Flinders Ranges were on the project list, along with Mount Remarkable. Apparently the sculptor William Ricketts found attractive the idea of transforming the latter into his own 'holy mountain.' His

⁸⁰SRSA, GRG 75/1/1708, p 10.

⁸¹*Ibid.*

⁸²*Ibid.*, p 11. The West Lakes housing development on former suburban swampland was the subject of considerable controversy.

acceptance was said to be subject only to the provision of water, shelter, and a financial inducement 'slightly larger than the one which he now has from the Victorian Government and the right to develop the national pleasure resort section of Mount Remarkable.'⁸³ Perhaps it was just as well for all concerned that Ricketts stayed in Victoria.

The Cornish Revival

A project that did reach fruition was the Dunstan-instigated revival of the old Cornish mining towns of Wallaroo, Moonta and Kadina. Dunstan's paternal ancestors were Cornish and he wanted more to be made of South Australia's Cornish heritage. Dunstan's great-grandfather, Walter Allan Dunstan, reportedly came to Adelaide via California, 'but was born and brought up in Cornwall.'⁸⁴ Premier Dunstan particularly favoured Moonta as the centrepiece of a Cornish floral festival to be based on the historic copper triangle, and to feature brass bands along with traditional fare. Once again food largely dominated his picture of the event. He suggested 'the promotion of restaurants with the best of Cornish recipes' and continued:

One of the top restaurants in England is a Cornish one, and I am obtaining information about the details of their menu and cuisine, and the use of traditional Cornish recipes. It was the Cornish who gave the pasties to South Australian cuisine and, properly cooked, Cornish pasties can be magnificent, but we should develop eating places in the area which won't only produce pasties containing turnips, tates and meat, but veal, venison, rabbit and game pies, and the like.⁸⁵

⁸³SRSA, GRG 75/1/708, pp 13-14.

⁸⁴FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Miscellaneous Correspondence, Dunstan to John Creeper, Wilmington, 5 August 1975.

⁸⁵SRSA, GRG 75/1/708/1973, p 14.

According to Dunstan, local business groups were unimaginative but enthusiastic and needed ‘to be shown the way.’⁸⁶ Before long a marriage between the parties was arranged and cemented with a grant of \$1,000 from the Premier’s Department via the Tourist Bureau. Community scepticism was overcome with the outstanding success of the inaugural 1973 Festival. Some 20,000 visitors flocked to the area, 8,000 Cornish pasties were consumed and the Kernewek Lowender cultural festival became a popular biennial event.⁸⁷ At the 1973 Festival a bowler-hatted Dunstan was in his element and up to his elbows in flour, competing with other Members of Parliament wearing period bonnets to make pasties for the entertainment of their voting public.⁸⁸ Dunstan and his entourage were noticeably present throughout the four days of celebrations, which included a Civic Reception followed by dinner at Moonta Bay. Dunstan’s friend John Edmund staged a production of ‘The Collector’ with his Theatre 62 company and Dunstan used the opportunity to make several speeches.⁸⁹

Mediterranean Adelaide

Included in the list of potential areas for study were Adelaide’s beach ‘resorts’ and the long established seaside destinations of Glenelg and Henley Beach were specifically nominated for assistance. Apparently both Moseley Square and the Esplanade Square at Henley Beach had

proportions ...[of] a mediterranean scale...which, with proper architectural and high density residential development, could provide the nucleus of a high level of

⁸⁶SRSA, GRG 75/1/708/1973, p 14.

⁸⁷Ros Paterson, Kernewek Lowender, Website, (<http://www.kernewek.org/kl/history>). While the aid of the Premier’s Department is acknowledged in this brief history Dunstan’s role is not mentioned.

⁸⁸Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, photograph facing p 249.

⁸⁹FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Cornish Festival File.

beachside tourist activity in the form of open air cafes, dancing and accommodation.⁹⁰

Although he did not mention them in the briefing paper Dunstan also ‘envisaged street cafes in the five city squares, Festival Centre plaza and North Terrace between King William and Pulteney Streets... and [the] Esplanade garden at Semaphore.’⁹¹ In concluding, Dunstan homed in on one of his paramount aims, the exploitation of South Australia’s ‘Mediterranean’ climate, which he emphasised was shared only with Southern Europe and Southern California:

It is regarded as one of the most ideal climatic types in the world and has developed in the other regions a distinctive architectural style. ...[There was] the potentiality of developing in South Australia the kinds of easy-going open-air civilization Greeks, Italians and Spaniards have enjoyed for many centuries.⁹²

Some of the ideas contained in the brief had already been aired in a piece written by Dunstan aides Tony Baker and Peter Ward for an *Advertiser* supplement. Dated 24 September 1970 entitled ‘Some New Directions In Tourist Planning,’ and credited to Don Dunstan, Premier of South Australia. It referred to the positive benefits of ‘our climate which is exactly that of Southern California and Southern Europe.’ According to the authors the centuries old tourism industry of Southern Europe was no longer the prerogative of the rich, and the pleasures now enjoyed by thousands of sybaritic sun-lovers could easily be transferred to Adelaide.⁹³ There are

⁹⁰SRSA, GRG 75/1/708, p 16.

⁹¹Michael Symons, ‘Dining in South Australia: A Tribute to Don Dunstan’, *Mietta’s Eating And Drinking In Australia*, Melbourne, 2001, p 259.

⁹²SRSA,GRG 75/1/708, p 15.

⁹³FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Don Dunstan Articles, No. 24.

similarities of emphasis with the didactic writings of Dr Philip Muskett, the nineteenth-century Sydney-based medico turned author. Muskett called in vain for his fellow Australians to eat a good deal less meat but more vegetables especially salads, and to drink wine rather than tea. He urged all of his readers to adapt their diet and way of life to take advantage of a climate that he argued, predominantly related to that of southern Europe.⁹⁴

At the conclusion of Dunstan's hour-long presentation he took questions, but according to one participant the assembled politicians and public servants then mostly 'reeled out in astonishment, because they'd never seen [or heard] anything like this before, you can imagine.'⁹⁵ On a much later occasion a former Dunstan press secretary recalled 'when Don started talking about tourism he was assumed to be dotty. It has taken a quarter of this century to prove the extent of his sanity on the subject.'⁹⁶ A supremely confident Dunstan rounded on his deputy Des Corcoran, Minister of Roads and Transport Geoff Virgo and Railways Commissioner John Morphett, when the latter voiced what he saw as a problem arising over the acquisition of railway land required for the Festival Centre extension. Virgo dared to agree that there could well be protracted negotiations, but Dunstan silenced their cautiously bureaucratic response with a direct command, 'You're my Ministers, you fix it, I want it to happen.'⁹⁷ A seventeen item 'Action List For Work Arising From The Tourist Development Brief' added a considerable work load to the Industrial Development Branch and in particular the Public Buildings Department, the State Planning Authority, various Local Government authorities and Dunstan's own Development Branch. The items were not

⁹⁴Philip E. Muskett, *The Art of Living in Australia*, London, c1894, pp 115-117.

⁹⁵Len Amadio, interview, Sydney, 21 August 2002.

⁹⁶Tony Baker, *Sunday Mail*, 7 February 1999.

⁹⁷Len Amadio, interview, 21 August 2002.

prioritised, but three were singled out as being of ‘immediate importance’: completion of the Ayers House study, preparation of a proposal brief for the Victoria square hotel and two items of joint importance – the Aboriginal Cultural Centre and the resort hotel at Goolwa.⁹⁸

Tourism Publicity

The standard of previous Tourist Bureau publicity material may be gauged from a modest black and white publication of the Immigration Publicity and Tourist Bureau, which looked almost pre-war in its concept and execution but was first issued in June 1970. ‘Migrate To South Australia’, a booklet distributed through the Agent-General in London to prospective British immigrants, gave prominence to South Australia’s ‘long, sandy beaches’ and pleasant climate. The spiel continued with an emphasis on modest self-sufficiency:

Blocks or plots are usually larger than in Britain and allow ample ground for front and back gardens. Grape vines, apricots, peach, nectarine, almond, orange, lemon, apple and pear trees are grown in home gardens.

Dunstan would later achieve a similar model of self-sufficiency with his own lifestyle and garden at Norwood. There was also a passing reference to Adelaide having ‘gained fame from its bicentennial Festival of Arts.’⁹⁹ Only a scant four years later, the glossy front cover of a tourism booklet inviting holiday makers to South Australia spelled out ‘Adelaide The Festival City’ in full colour against a backdrop of the Festival Theatre, and signalled the advent of Dunstan’s own brand of tourism. The ‘Adelaide Festival

⁹⁸Amadio Tourist Document, pp 17-18.

⁹⁹SRSA, GRG 75/1/115/1974.

City' booklet illustrates how Dunstan's constant emphasis on food in the context of tourism had become official policy. The frontispiece displayed a youthful looking tousle-haired Dunstan, posed with arms outstretched against the stone wall at the base of Light's Vision on Montefiore Hill in North Adelaide. The premier, appearing tanned and fit, is wearing white slacks and a long-sleeved sports shirt opened to the fourth button. His welcome emphasises that South Australia is not 'the usual ratrace', but that on the contrary Adelaide 'has a quality of life that goes hand in hand with relaxation and good living.' There follows a photograph of a roadside fruit and vegetable stall, probably in Rundle Street before it became a pedestrian mall,¹⁰⁰ while a further full page is devoted to food, complete with illustrations of candle-lit diners at an up-market restaurant and their *al fresco* counterparts posed in leaf-dappled sunshine. According to the chief publicity officer, this new publication was 'written in a deliberately racy and light hearted style.'¹⁰¹ The copywriter certainly waxed lyrical over the food scene in Adelaide:

Gourmets love Adelaide. It's a mouth-watering city full of culinary delights, delicious experiences, and a variety of food. Chinese, Japanese, Dutch, Indian, Greek, Italian, Indonesian, English, Spanish, French, German, Hungarian, Lebanese, Mexican. Outdoor restaurants; restaurants with thick pile carpet, sparkling chandeliers; and posh, posh people; quiet, intimate restaurants; rowdy pizza parlours with twanging banjo music; drive-in restaurants; take-away food places; pioneer style eating houses in the Adelaide Hills. More restaurants per head of population than anywhere else in Australia. Mainly because our eating habits have been influenced by our gregarious and capable migrants. They've taught us to enjoy good food – we now use herbs and spices and less

¹⁰⁰Dunstan officiated at the commissioning of the Rundle Mall and champagne flowed briefly from a central fountain. *News*, 1 September 1976.

¹⁰¹SRSA, GRG 75/1/138/1974, Submission from chief publicity officer to the director of the Department of Tourism Recreation and Sport, n.d. The booklet was released for distribution on 4 September 1974.

tomato sauce. And another thing. Our prices are among the lowest in Australia – a really ‘light touch’.¹⁰²

In response to a question on notice in the House on 15 October Dunstan revealed that 100,000 of the booklets, regarded as ‘the first really prestigious publication of the Tourist Bureau,’ had been printed at a cost of \$27,000. Asked why his photograph had been used rather than that of a male model, Dunstan replied ‘to lend status,’ and added that his services ‘were gratis’. The Director of the Tourist Bureau later described the booklet as ‘a marked success.’¹⁰³ Given that the booklet was designed and written by the Publicity Branch of the Premier’s Department, obviously with Dunstan’s personal involvement and approval, it seems more than likely that he contributed to the text. The reference to the ‘use of herbs and spices and less tomato sauce’ is classic Dunstan. The statement about Adelaide having ‘more restaurants per head of population than anywhere else in Australia’, is poetic licence to say the least and probably the source of that particular myth. Michael Symons has commented:

For years I have read that Adelaide has the most restaurants for its population, in Australia, and recently...I came across the even more outrageous claim that ‘Adelaide has, per head of population, probably more restaurants than any other capital city on earth.’

¹⁰²SRSA, GRG 75/1/138/1974.

¹⁰³Ibid., The extract from Hansard is on file. Director SATB Pollnitz to director, Department of Tourism Recreation and Sport, 22 December 1975.

As a result of his research Symons decided the honour for the greatest number of licensed restaurants per head belonged to the Australian Capital Territory. South Australia came in fourth, behind New South Wales and Victoria.¹⁰⁴

Conclusions

Dunstan's ten year plan was certainly a complete break with tourist bureau tradition, and clearly designed to administer a long overdue shock to his public service audience. He presented a blueprint for 'cultural tourism', a decade or more before that description came into vogue.¹⁰⁵ As I have mentioned, a number of his far-reaching proposals came to pass, either in the time frame of the so-called 'Dunstan Decade' or subsequently.¹⁰⁶ In part Dunstan saw the role of his government as providing both ideas and seed capital in areas where private enterprise was either chary of entering or lacked the vision to see the golden promise he had in view. The overall objective was about 'sell[ing] the ideas to investors.'¹⁰⁷ Underpinning that view, which was often excessively optimistic, as for example with the proposed transformation of the two run-down kiosks into international class restaurants,¹⁰⁸ was his own almost obsessive interest in food as part of the dynamic for change. What is certain is that Dunstan had surrounded himself with an inner circle of courtiers who shared his passion for the food and wine lifestyle.¹⁰⁹ A report also suggested 'these are the only group he can

¹⁰⁴Michael Symons, *The Shared Table: Ideas for Australian Cuisine*, Canberra, 1993, pp 41-42. The research quoted is from Symons, *One Continuous Picnic: A history of eating in Australia*, Adelaide, 1982, pp 229-230.

¹⁰⁵Interview with Len Amadio, Sydney, 21 August 2002.

¹⁰⁶It seems curious that Dunstan was already thinking in terms of a decade, especially given the then frequency of elections and his abrupt exit from politics early in 1979.

¹⁰⁷SRSA, GRG 75/1/153/1973, pp 7, 12.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, p 12.

¹⁰⁹Interview with Steven Wright, Goolwa, 1 March 2001.

relax with and have a bit of light relief.’ Apparently a favourite diversion on such occasions was to perform a collective version of Monty Python’s ‘Ministry of Silly Walks’.¹¹⁰ Dunstan later revealed to an interviewer that his financial model for the tourism initiatives was the example of Singapore, under the leadership of his one-time close friend Lee Kuan Yew. Another important factor was his upgrading of the status of tourism for the first time, and putting this on a similar basis to primary and secondary industries in the pecking order for loan assistance.

In 1996 Dunstan remained adamant that his focus on tourism initiatives, particularly as a source of employment in times of economic downturn, was not misplaced.¹¹¹ His view has clearly been vindicated, given that in recent years service industries have been the major growth areas in most first-world economies. While Dunstan was still chairman of the Victorian Tourism Commission in 1985 he confidently stated, ‘Tourism is now forecast to be the largest employer in the world by the year 2000.’¹¹² According to some industry commentators, this was already the case in the early 1990s.¹¹³ During a parliamentary debate in 1975 Dunstan claimed his state had achieved

the highest proportion of domestic tourism of any State,...exceeding a \$15,000,000 surplus and a tourist expenditure...of \$12-20 a head, whereas the figure in Queensland is only \$9 a head...indeed, I recall the member for Mitcham [Robin Millhouse] saying it was

¹¹⁰Andrew Clark, *National Times*, 12-17 May 1975.

¹¹¹*Weekend Australian*, 20-21 January 1996.

¹¹²Donald Dunstan, “Packaging the Arts for an Increase in Tourist Trade”, *Occasional Papers: Tourism and the Arts*, Speeches delivered at the Seminar held 25 November 1985, Adelaide, Australia Council, Canberra, 1986, p 18.

¹¹³Priscilla Boniface and Peter J. Fowler, *Heritage and Tourism in ‘the global village,’* London, 1993, p 2.

fanciful for the Government to be interested in tourism because we did not have anything to see in this State.¹¹⁴

Dunstan's foresight in focusing on tourism as the basis of a much-needed alternative industry in a state boasting few natural resources is borne out by the following, more recent summary:

Tourism activity in South Australia has increased significantly over the last decade. Between 1990 and 2000 international visitors grew from 235,000 to 350,000 (48.5 per cent). In 1999, 1.8 million interstate visitors came to South Australia compared with 973,000 in 1990 (up 85 per cent). However, intrastate tourism generates most tourism activity in South Australia, with the number of trips taken increasing from 2.75 million in 1990/91 to 3.65 million in 1999 (a 25 per cent growth).¹¹⁵

George Negus, who reportedly rejected Dunstan's offer of a job as his press secretary in the early 1970s, has referred to what he called the premier's 'claret-driven plan for the city of churches.'¹¹⁶ Claret driven or not, Dunstan's tourism brief, the projects that flowed from it, and his own part in selling the state as a tourism destination, far eclipsed anything that had gone before. Above all, Dunstan's emphasis on food – on wining and dining, bore no relationship to what had previously passed for tourism development. The contrast between Dunstan's hesitant handling of liquor licensing reform in 1966-1967 and his new found dominance as premier marks a profound change. The catalyst for that change was Dunstan's 1969 stop over in Rome, where he delighted in the food, the wine, and the people. What he resolved upon from

¹¹⁴SAPD: HA, 18 March 1975, p 2948.

¹¹⁵Lyn Leader Elliot, "Tourism", *The Wakefield Companion To South Australian History*, Wilfred Prest, Kerrie Round, Carol Fort (eds.), Kent Town, 2001, p 546.

¹¹⁶ George Negus, *By George! Twenty Years Behind The Typewriter*, Sydney, 1994, p 7.

this taste of the hedonistic lifestyle was to set about transforming Adelaide into a happy replica. Despite his official workload as premier, treasurer and minister for development, his personal interest in food had undoubtedly assumed significant importance following his overseas trips in 1969 and again in 1970. In the next chapter I examine the most important food-related initiative to come out of the tourism brief, the new School of Food and Catering.

Chapter Four

THE SCHOOL OF FOOD AND CATERING: REGENCY HOTEL SCHOOL

One of the major concerns that Dunstan expressed in his tourism briefing paper was the inadequacy of food and food service standards in Adelaide's hotels and restaurants, as compared to tourist expectations. In his view local standards were well below what was expected overseas and also the Sydney and Melbourne norms. Not long after delivering the briefing Dunstan wrote a memo setting out his views on the deficiencies in the training of professional cooks in South Australia. He particularly deplored the use of 'tinned ingredients' and 'pre-prepared' convenience foods from supermarket shelves by apprentices completing so-called *haute cuisine* dishes at cooking school competitions.¹ Dunstan contended that this kind of practice invariably led to unacceptable standards in most of the state's hotel kitchens. It was a theme he would repeat on subsequent occasions. He believed that the answer was 'to take immediate steps to upgrade training facilities and, frankly, to do it with the least possible expense to Government but with the maximum cooperation of the industry.'²

Such was Dunstan's enthusiasm for this course of action that a committee was immediately set up and met the very next day, 10 June 1971. The rather long-winded title of this body was 'The Committee to Investigate Training Facilities for Catering Staff', which soon became abbreviated to the Catering Committee. It was required to make recommendations directly to the premier in his role as Minister for Development. The twelve members present at the first meeting were a representative

¹Flinders University of South Australia, [FUSA], Dunstan Collection, Catering File. Copy of memo to the secretary, Premier's Department and Development Officer, from the Premier, 9 June 1971.

²*Ibid.*

collection from Dunstan's staff, including its convenor/chair, John Holland, and delegates from the Liquor Trades Union, South Australian Brewery, Australian Hotels Association, Motels Association, Australian National Tourist Association, Hospitals Department, restaurant and catering industry, two delegates from the Education Department (one of whom was the only female member) and Dunstan's catering confidant, John Ceruto.

One of the major ideas to be explored by the committee was the viability of the Catering Institute acquiring a licensed hotel in the city for use as an apprentice training school. Associated questions included the method of administration, the likely level of industry support including financial, course requirements, and the availability of appropriate staff.³ The Education Department had its own long-range plans to incorporate a new cooking school in a proposed Kilburn Technical College, and this presented a likely conflict of interest.⁴ Dunstan wanted answers to the questions 'as soon as possible', which effectively meant he would brook no unnecessary delay. He was impatient for his tourism initiatives to reach fruition and for Ceruto to succeed in the catering role created for him. Before examining the results of the Catering Committee's deliberations I outline a history of food industry training in South Australia, along with the situation applying in other states.

Early Food Industry Training

According to one authoritative account the first cooking classes for apprentices began at the Glenelg Migrant Hostel in 1964, under the tutelage of the head chef from the South Australian Hotel, Reginald Rudge. In that same year volunteer tradesmen

³FUSA, Dunstan Collection. Copy of memo from Dunstan to the Secretary, Premier's Department and Development Officer, Premier's Department, 9 June 1971.

⁴*Ibid.*

from Balfour Wauchope Ltd. were teaching cake and pastry apprentices their craft. Training contact hours were limited to only four hours per fortnight and continued for the first three years of the four-year apprenticeship.⁵ The Meat and Allied Trades Federation commenced classes for apprentice butchers in 1963, and it was not until 1966 that the Education Department assumed this responsibility, using facilities provided by the Master Butchers Association at the Wayville Showgrounds. In that same year the Department also commenced classes for commercial and pastry cooking apprentices at the Glenelg Migrant Hostel, a Commonwealth facility.⁶ A year later the catering school appointed Pieter Castel, a Dutch chef, as the first full-time cookery lecturer.⁷ The primitive venue at Glenelg was hardly suited to its new educational function, but conditions barely improved when operations transferred to the Commonwealth Migrant Hostel at Pennington late in 1971. Increasing apprenticeship enrolments and a rising demand from adults for evening classes, especially through the Workers Educational Association of South Australia, could only be met by limiting numbers.⁸ A part-time, privately run, twelve-week class for bartenders and food waiters was available in the city, but participants and hoteliers were not impressed either by the fees charged or teaching standards.⁹

⁵Regency Institute Learning Resource Services, "Food for Thought", paper by Derrick Casey, senior lecturer, cookery, c December 1982, p 1. In its submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee On Public Works, the architects for the Kilburn Technical College, Cheesman Doley Neighbour & Raffin Pty. Ltd., give 1966 as the first year for classes at Glenelg. Copy of submission provided by architect, Gui Maron. The Standing Committee report repeats all of the submission *verbatim*, South Australian Parliamentary Paper [SAPP], 122, 19 February 1974.

⁶Submission to Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, p 4., SAPP 122, p 4.

⁷Casey, 1982, p 1.

⁸Submission, SAPP 122, p 4. Enrolment figures for 1968 were: butchers, 212 [includes previous intake]; pastry cooks, 30; commercial cooks, 13. The corresponding figures for 1973 are 209, 45 and 106.

⁹State Records South Australia [SRSA], GRG 75/1/449/1971, Premier's Correspondence, Report of the Committee to enquire into Training Facilities for Catering Staff in South Australia, p 2.

During 1972 the Department of Further Education began classes at the Panorama Technical College, with some token support from the industry. To add further to the widely separated branches of the variously described School of Food Technology, the School of Food, or the Food School, classes in catering management were on offer at the Marlestone Technical College.¹⁰ There were no pre-requisites for the classes at Panorama, with the age of students apparently ranging from 18 to 80 years, and including one or two publicans.¹¹ The Commonwealth Department of Labour and National Service provided limited 'in-service' training for cooks, female receptionists, and housekeepers, plus supervisors and managers employed by Federal departments. There were no courses provided locally in either hotel or restaurant management.¹² However, commercial cooking apprentices were expected to master more than mundane dishes. The grade three practical course at the Adelaide Technical College School of Food Technology included, with scant regard for spelling, such exotica as 'lobster thermador', 'chicken chasseur', 'steak tartare', and 'chicken chaudfroid', while sweets ranged from 'bavaroise' to 'gateux and honore.'¹³ Dunstan's concern was with the use of inappropriate ingredients in the composition and embellishment of such dishes. The yawning cultural divide between the background of most apprentices, their likely customers, and the rarefied world of *haute cuisine* compounded the situation. In a probable reflection on its status in the educational hierarchy, until 1973 administrative control of the Food School lay with the School of Plumbing, but much needed changes were in the offing.

¹⁰Casey, 'Food for Thought,' 1982, p 1.

¹¹Interview with John O'Neil, former lecturer, Adelaide, 6 October 2000.

¹²SRSA, GRG 75/1/449/1971, p 2.

¹³SRSA, GRG 75/ 108, The 'Programme of Work' was tabled at the first committee meeting on 10 June 1971.

Interstate Training

In New South Wales the East Sydney Technical College ran trade courses on 'commercial cookery' for apprentices and 'cookery' for the non-indentured. Courses were also available in the related trades of bread and pastry cooking and butchery/smallgoods making. Hotel and catering management certificate courses were offered, either on a full or part-time basis. There were also 'short courses in Bar Service, Wine Service, [and] Waiting.'¹⁴ Trade courses in Victoria at the William Angliss School catered for commercial cookery apprentices and full-time cooks, with the latter enjoying one hour of 'science' in their 30 hours of instruction over thirteen weeks. A two-year full-time course of catering studies was being considered, along with post-apprenticeship training. Waiters, pastry-cooks, bakers, and butchers were already accommodated, with six contact hours spread over three years.¹⁵ Queensland provided trade courses for cooks, pastry cooks, butchers, and bakers, as well as a certificate course in hotel and catering management. Tasmania and Western Australia offered the most comprehensive training syllabuses, with the Hobart Technical College listing the following offerings:

- a) Cookery, 3 years, 1 day/week, (Apprentices).
- b) Butchery, 3 years, 1 day/week, (Apprentices).
- c) Hotel Management, 2 years, 4 hours/week.
- d) Food and Beverage Service, 12 weeks, 3 hours/week.
- e) Bar and Cocktail Service, 12 weeks, 2 hours/week.

The part-time hotel management course was about to be extended by another year, while additions to the already 'comprehensively equipped' facilities, including a

¹⁴SRSA, GRG 75/ 1/449/1971, p 3.

¹⁵Ibid., p 4.

‘charcoal grill’, were also in train.¹⁶ Quite clearly, by comparison with interstate norms, the standard of training available in South Australia left much to be desired. Bob Bakewell of the Premier’s own department thought that ‘under the present system, quantity not quality is being turned out.’ The local Hotels Association secretary, Bill Connelly, decided ‘training facilities in the Hotel Industry were worse than any other State.’¹⁷ Connelly’s statement reflects as much on his association and its members as it does on the Education Department.

The Catering Committee

After a series of meetings the Catering Committee convenor, John Holland, pre-empted its report in a memo to Dunstan on 27 October 1971. He advised that the committee had been unable to come up with a suitable hotel for use as a training school, even though the South Australian Brewery had offered the financially unviable Highbury Hotel at a peppercorn rental.¹⁸ Consequently, the committee was of the opinion that ‘the kitchen and restaurant section of the Food School should be built immediately, in advance of the rest of the Kilburn Technical College.’¹⁹ The thirty-acre site chosen by the Education Department for the projected college included part of the now derelict and disused Islington Sewage Farm. While student custom would generate some income, Holland believed the location must lessen the appeal of a restaurant aiming to attract additional business from members of the public. It was unlikely that any significant number of customers could be expected from the adjacent working-class suburbs. The Parliamentary Standing Committee confined its site report

¹⁶SRSA, GRG 75/1/449/1971, pp 4-5.

¹⁷SRSA, GRG 75/108, Minutes of meeting 16 July 1971.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, several references.

¹⁹SRSA, GRG 75/1/449/1971, Holland to the Premier, 27 October 1971.

to just one line, ‘the committee inspected the site which is level and suitable for the erection of a community college.’²⁰ Holland was all for following a Singaporean model, where the ‘Food School [was] located behind a 30 room hotel,’ but felt that the urban wasteland earmarked by the Education Department was hardly a suitable location. In his view a better alternative could be provided by utilising part of the Glenside Hospital grounds on Fullarton Road, the former Parkside Mental Asylum. Dunstan appears to have refrained from comment on this suggestion.²¹ He was however,

determined that in the tourist area we must steadily build the infrastructure for tourism over a period. Because of this not only did we have to improve entertainment facilities, accommodation facilities, and the quality of life in Adelaide, but the catering and restaurant facilities and services had to be developed, upgraded and diversified.²²

Dunstan’s reference to ‘the quality of life’ is another example of his constant concern with that part of his reform agenda. Nonetheless, in the margin of the committee’s report Dunstan pencilled, ‘File for the present.’²³

At a committee meeting in early August Holland reported that he had spoken to the Public Buildings Department and learned that the new cooking school was scheduled for completion in December 1974. This was to prove an unduly optimistic time frame. Holland went on to say that the premier had told Ceruto ‘he would perhaps be interested in using a hotel for a stop-gap for a short time and then abandon that for the cooking school later on.’ Dunstan had apparently expressed willingness to

²⁰SAPP 122, 1974, p 3.

²¹SRSA, GRG 75/1/449/1971, Holland to the Premier, 27 October 1971.

²²Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, p 205.

²³SRSA, GRG 75/1/449/1971.

subsidise the salaries of 'key men', but this would have to be negotiated and, more importantly, his government had no funds to provide capital.²⁴ Peter Whallin, the Hotels Association president, reported on his own conversation with Dunstan just the previous night. 'The most important thing he said was he never imagined there could be a hotel without a school and the Singapore Hotel...trains people that come from the school.'²⁵ Television chef, Graham Kerr, was adviser to the Singapore School, and Dunstan suggested Kerr's assistant, Barbara Small, as a suitable person to involve in a training program. Discussion turned to the standard of 'catering' to be expected from the proposed school. The National Tourist Association representative, Group-Captain J. O'Sullivan, plumped for what he described as 'native Australian cuisine', citing The Barn restaurant at McLaren Vale as the prime example of providing 'plain food and a good standard to aim for.'²⁶ Whallin reminded the meeting of Dunstan's rooted aversion to frozen and pre-packaged food and his much-emphasised desire to raise skill levels in the industry. He went on to say, 'I think the Premier envisages such things as a fish restaurant where nothing but fish is served with fine accompaniments.'²⁷ No doubt Dunstan had the celebrated example of Swain's seafood restaurant on Glen Osmond Road in mind. The ready access to Dunstan's ear that Whallin enjoyed during the Sangster Royal Commission was clearly ongoing. In the main, the Hotels Association clients were one of the stumbling blocks to lifting industry catering standards.

²⁴SRSA, GRG 75/108, Premier's Department Correspondence Files, Committee to Investigate Training Facilities for Catering Staff, Minutes of Meeting, 11 August 1971. Copies of the committee's report and minutes are on this file and also on GRG75/1/449/1971. Some minutes are also on GRG 75/229/1971.

²⁵SRSA, GRG 75/108.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*

Restaurateur Giocondo Caon had commented at the inaugural committee meeting that he believed the hotel industry was the most powerful organisation in the State, but that its standards were falling. In his view, since most of the waiters in the industry were ‘moonlighting’, people would only go to classes for personal enjoyment, while ‘practical experience is the best [training] you can offer.’²⁸ Les Mills, representing the SA Brewery’s interests, expressed the view that money spent on educating chefs, barmen and the like was largely wasted, because they then went elsewhere in Adelaide or interstate. He was, however, ‘most interested in the Premier’s suggestions’, while disagreeing with Dunstan’s comment that catering standards in Sydney and Melbourne were far better than in Adelaide. John White, secretary to the Premier’s Department, sprang to Dunstan’s defence, avowing that the premier was not implying everything in Adelaide was terrible, and everything in Sydney and Melbourne was good. The attitudes revealed in the comments and exchanges between the various committee members, each with their own agenda, illustrate the difficult if not unrealistic nature of the exercise. The fact that a consensus was achieved and recommendations made, while not providing short-term answers to the training problem, confirmed the pressing need for a new School of Food and Catering.

Although the committee had already completed its prime task of reporting to Dunstan, Holland called a further meeting in March 1972 to discuss suggestions from O’Sullivan on widening the scope of tourism-related training.²⁹ The latter had written to Holland and also to Max Bone, director of the newly created Department of Further Education, urging the need to train other participants in the tourism industry, not just

²⁸SRSA, GRG 75/108, Minutes of meeting, 10 June 1971.

²⁹O’Sullivan was now plain ‘Mr.’, no longer ‘Group Captain.’

cooks and bartenders.³⁰ He had already received in principal agreement from Bone and Joan Tucker, a fellow committee member who was also involved in curriculum development, since the Department was working along similar lines and looking for industry advice. The ubiquitous Tucker, who later taught at Regency Park, was also a member of the Department's steering committee, already set up by Bone, to coordinate design development of the Food School. Committee member Bill Connelly, representing the Australian Hotels Association, expressed confusion and frustration at the proliferation of committees, saying 'we just want to get down to the practical and get something moving.' He reported that his association was already advising the department on basic food and bar service training. Former motor cycle manufacturer-turned-restaurateur Rex Tilbrook, for the Restaurateurs Association, had apparently not heard the old adage about the camel being a horse designed by a committee. He believed that 'a Committee must arrive at a better result than an individual can arrive at.' However, he did see 'big problems in building up tourism in the food industry,' and went on:

In the country at present it is almost impossible. We should look into the tourism side as well as the food side. A lot of Americans come to us and say 'You are not running first class tours, they are second or third class. You take us to second and third class places to eat.' It is no good having good food at Victor Harbour waiting if you are going to steer them to the cheapest place in Victor Harbour.³¹

Tilbrook owned and managed the Whalers Inn restaurant, which was probably too far upmarket for cut-price tour operators. He was also president of the Restaurateurs Association.

³⁰GRG 75/1/229/1971, Catering Committee minutes, 15 March 1972. P 1.

³¹*Ibid.*, minutes of meeting 15 March 1972, p 6. The spelling of Victor Harbor is a historical aberration.

The New School of Food and Catering

All in all, the members of the committee were agreed on the need for ‘an advisory committee responsible to the Director of Further Education on all matters coming within the ambit of tourism.’ This committee would in turn liaise with the department’s various steering committees, whether in the areas of design, curriculum development or training.³² Holland showed the members a preliminary sketch of the new Kilburn College complex, supplied by Tucker, but cautioned that it was already out of date because of certain changes. In stage one, the School of Food and Catering was to share the site with central administration and services, the School of Mechanical Engineering, and parts of a cafeteria, resource centre, and the School of General Studies. Stage two would see the completion of the various parts and the addition of the Schools of Refrigeration and Air Conditioning, Plumbing, and Performing Arts, including a 600-seat auditorium. Along the way the various operational trade schools were lumped together under the banner of the Croydon Park Technical College. As work progressed on the Kilburn site an inspirational name change was made to Regency Park, thus removing something of the stigma attached to the old title.³³

Bob Bakewell had already let Holland know that ‘probably the Premier would ask that the training restaurant be a little separate from the main building.’³⁴ On this point Dunstan was to be disappointed, since the restaurant remained in the main building. After the restaurant opened the school ran ‘a series of functions (probably about 20 each year)’, and there were a few initial complaints from certain disgruntled

³²SRSA, GRG 75/1/229/1971, p 7.

³³Submission to Parliamentary Standing Committee, p 20, also SAPP 122, p 10.

³⁴SRSA, GRG 75/1/229/1971, minutes of meeting 15 March 1972.

restaurateurs.³⁵ From Dunstan's perspective, at least the Catering School now had priority in the Department's scheme of things, and he was determined that a restaurant would be a vital component in the exercise. He had clearly accepted that the combination of new Catering School, together with boosted, if interim, training measures at Panorama and Pennington, was the most practical way forward. On more than one occasion, Dunstan would later claim that gaining the support of his cabinet colleagues for the Catering School project had been a hard battle.³⁶ Des Corcoran, Dunstan's former deputy, could not recall cabinet being opposed to the project. On the contrary, 'it was Don's baby and he usually got what he wanted.' John Holland thought he would have heard if Dunstan had met any 'real trouble' with cabinet. Architect Keith Neighbour also concurred: 'When he had a project he had sufficient authority in his position in cabinet and so on that he just did it.'³⁷ Apart from making his views known via Bob Bakewell, Dunstan was in frequent and close contact with the architects. The then principal of Cheesman Doley Neighbour and Raffin, Keith Neighbour, is still in no doubt as to Dunstan's role. In Neighbour's opinion Dunstan became the driving force that provided the necessary impetus to bring the new School of Food and Catering to fruition. He saw Dunstan as overcoming the inherent inertia of the committee system and the inevitable reactionaries, whether in his cabinet or on the committee, always opposed to the threat of the new.

Keith Neighbour was captured by the Japanese in World War II and survived the infamous Burma Railroad. Post-war he studied architecture at the University of

³⁵Email from Derrick Casey, 24 February 2003.

³⁶ See for example, *Proceedings: First Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, Barbara Santich (ed.), Adelaide, 12-13 March 1984, p 48.

³⁷Telephone conversation with John Holland, 3 November 2000. Telephone conversation with Des Corcoran, 31 January 2001. Interview with Keith Neighbour, Glen Osmond, 28 February 2001.

Adelaide, where he met the future premier and, like Dunstan, contributed articles to *On Dit*, the student newspaper. They maintained casual contact after university, more so following Neighbour's return from the United States with a Master's degree on hospital design, thanks to a Fulbright Scholarship. Dunstan was now a member of the Labor Opposition in State Parliament and often sought Neighbour's advice on matters relating to planning issues and upgrading hospitals. By the time Dunstan was in government Neighbour's architectural practice had grown considerably. Although not interested in politics, he thought that Dunstan 'was a very innovative thinker and I admired him in many ways, therefore I was quite happy to help him.'³⁸ It was a case of mutual help in those less regulated, pre-tender process days, and Dunstan went to see his architect friend armed with 'a vision' of the Food School he wanted. Neighbour helped to translate Dunstan's vision into a concept that Dunstan could sell to his colleagues, and from that developed the Regency Park project. In Neighbour's words:

He had this vision for a School of Food that he wanted to make fairly unique in the world. He wanted it to be the number one school in Australia, in fact in the world. He was very passionate about it, as he was about most things, and he certainly excited my interest...he had a very clear idea in terms of principle what he wanted to do and how he wanted the school to operate. He even had quite definite ideas about it physically in terms of what it would contain and the planning of it in many ways. Ahh, I don't think he had much opposition to it, but it didn't go through all the bullshit and stuff that people go through today. You know it takes years to put a project together. Tenders are called and it goes on for years and keeps getting changed. He structured the whole thing, provided the funding for it and it went off like clockwork. It was a very successful project in that it provided what was required in the brief, it was done within the budget and it was done within time.³⁹

³⁸Interview with Keith Neighbour, Glen Osmond, 28 February 2001.

³⁹*Ibid.*

Enter Grahame Latham

At one of its meetings the Catering Committee had discussed the all-important question of staff and the desirability of appointing a ‘strong’ manager. Caon reported his understanding that Barbara Small, Dunstan’s suggested candidate and formerly Graham Kerr’s research chef, had severed her connection and returned to Sydney, but that she was not an effective manager. The committee had agreed that there were only two or three potential nominees in South Australia who would meet the required combination of cooking skills, management, and teaching expertise, but they were already in well-paid positions. It was clear that a suitable appointee would have to be found elsewhere.⁴⁰ In 1972 the advent of the Whitlam Labor government in Canberra signified the availability of loan funds, and the position of head of the School of Food and Catering was duly advertised. The successful candidate, Grahame Latham, was a former boilermaker with a passion for food, who learned his cooking skills at various Sydney restaurants before becoming chef at Pan American Airways. He then taught cooking and catering management at the East Sydney Technical College and also became a food consultant.⁴¹ Latham’s immense passion for food and natural abilities outweighed his lack of formal qualifications. In the hierarchy of Australian chefs there are a number ‘that have come up through informal channels...[and] are leading lights in the food industry’; two prominent examples are Cheong Liew and Maggie Beer.⁴² Latham proved an exception to the rule that good teachers make bad managers. At a time when nominations for appointment to the public service were generally made by departmental heads (or premiers) with little in the way of interference from the Public

⁴⁰SRSA, GRG 75/1/108, Minutes of Catering Committee meeting, 16 July 1971

⁴¹Interviews with Grahame Latham, Adelaide, 17 April 2000, Fullarton, 14 March 2001. Interview with Derrick Casey, Regency Park, 19 March 2004.

⁴²Interview with Derrick Casey, 19 March 2004.

Service Board, Latham says he faced an interview panel of fifteen. The carefully chosen members included representatives from industry, unions, education, tourism and the bureaucracy. Not surprisingly, Bill Connelly represented the hotel industry and no doubt reported privately to Dunstan.⁴³ Bolstered by Dunstan's support, Latham had little difficulty convincing the formidable panel that he was the person best qualified to head the new school, and he took up his appointment at Pennington in 1973. Dunstan later wrote:

I was the Minister directly responsible for Cabinet's accepting the necessity for establishing Regency College Food School, and was insistent that we obtain the best qualified person in Australia to head the school. I therefore personally took part in the selection of the head of the school and personally recommended Mr. Latham.⁴⁴

Once Latham was installed, and with work on Regency proceeding apace, Dunstan adopted a hands-off approach to the re-organisation of the Food School. As Latham recalls:

He [Dunstan] didn't come along and say, "Grahame you must do that," he would simply have an idea or a concept and it was the job of myself in the case of the...[Food] School, and others in other things, to pick up that idea and run with it.⁴⁵

Not only did Latham run with Dunstan's ideas, he also ran with plenty of his own, including designing the kitchens for the new school from the proverbial blank sheet of

⁴³Interviews with Grahame Latham, Adelaide, 17 April 2000, Fullarton, 14 March 2001.

⁴⁴FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Dunstan to Liz Daniels, Regency College Hotel School, 12 April 1990. Government, Business, Public Correspondence. Dunstan agreed to be a referee for Latham's Order of Australia nomination.

⁴⁵Interview with Grahame Latham, 14 March 2001. See also Stephen Downes, *Advanced Australian Fare*, Crows Nest, New South Wales, 2002, pp 337-339. Downes writes, 'A veteran of half a century in hospitality, Grahame Latham is a big knockabout Coffs Harbour bloke who has trouble pronouncing the word "cuisine" '. p 337.

paper. He also began recruiting a team of like-minded, dedicated teaching staff from among his former colleagues in the eastern states and from overseas. A former lecturer described conditions in the Nissen huts at Pennington, with their galvanised iron cladding and bare concrete floors, at the height of summer or in the middle of winter as ‘dreadful.’⁴⁶ In spite of the limitations at Pennington, including only one teaching kitchen, Dutch chef Pieter Castel managed to help Latham woo Dunstan’s cabinet over a lunch which began with ‘quail egg and fresh jasmine soup.’⁴⁷ The reaction of the more conservative stalwarts of Dunstan’s entourage can only be guessed at. At about this time Regency architect Gui Maron recalls another meal at Pennington, where he had arranged to meet Latham for a design briefing:

They’d prepared a lunch for us which we had at his desk, because there was no dining room. I think it was the migrant hostel kitchen, and he prepared one of the most memorable lunches of jugged hare and pheasant and a beautiful bottle of red. That was our early briefing, and we worked very well with him right through the briefing [process]. It was a very difficult job, a lot of equipment.⁴⁸

Dunstan’s Restaurant Patrols

It was during this period that Dunstan began his lunch-time restaurant patrol, accompanied by his faithful *major domo*, Steven Wright. Whenever possible the pair would leave the premier’s office and descend on their selected target for that day. Wright carried a wire basket of files under his arm for the premier to attend to over the meal. At the conclusion of the meal, Dunstan invariably favoured the chef with his assessment. He would grade the food, the service, the menu, the wine, and offer his

⁴⁶Telephone conversation with Michael Hogenbirk, former lecturer at Pennington, 31 October 2000.

⁴⁷ Interview with Grahame Latham, Adelaide, 17 April 2000. See also Downes, 2002, p 338. In this version the soup is served by Latham at a special dinner.

⁴⁸Interview with Gui Maron, Adelaide, 21 February 2001.

advice on any desirable improvements.⁴⁹ Dunstan writes about this technique in his cookbook. He preferred to simmer young beans in chicken stock and sounds rather like the school bully in proselytising his message: ‘I had to stand over a couple of chaps in Adelaide restaurants to get them to do this. They now happily claim credit for the praises of food writers of their restaurants for this dish.’⁵⁰ Dunstan’s lunch time restaurant forays were in addition to his long-standing practise of sampling the dining at as many of Adelaide’s restaurants as he could manage, especially new-comers on the scene. He followed a similar routine when travelling interstate and overseas. Dunstan and Latham clearly shared similar tastes in food and in their expectations of the highest standards of service at all levels of restaurant service.

From Pennington to Regency

In 1974 Latham head-hunted one of his former students, Derrick Casey, who had moved on to QANTAS catering in Sydney, as his lecturer in cooking. A second kitchen was quickly set up at Pennington. Training hours were doubled, with Casey the only lecturer for six lessons straight. A new curriculum was somehow written ‘on the run’, but classes were initially limited to apprentice cooking, bakery, pastry, and meat. A food and bar service lecturer was appointed in 1975 and a bar erected in one of the Nissen huts, thus enabling the commencement of one of the first certificate courses.⁵¹ Following completion of phase one of the building program, the School of Food and Catering began operations in the new Regency Park complex at the beginning of the 1977 school year, without fanfare or notable celebration. Latham had enlisted specialist aid from industry to help design key facilities. David Wauchope of the

⁴⁹Interview with Steven Wright, Goolwa, 1 March 2001.

⁵⁰Don Dunstan, *Don Dunstan’s Cookbook*, Adelaide, 1976, p 94.

⁵¹Interviews with Derrick Casey, Regency Park, 7 July 2000, 19 March 2004.

Balfour Wauchope bakery firm was responsible for the bakeries and also played a central role overall, later becoming chair of the first college council. Martin Bailey, who ran the Meat and Allied Trades Federation, assisted in the design of the butcheries. Input from the hotel and restaurant industry was also incorporated in the appropriate areas.⁵² The end result was the largest and most modern cooking school in Australia, and training hours were soon increased to 800. There were only two other comparable schools in Australia at that time, the East Sydney Technical College and the William Angliss School in Melbourne.⁵³ In this first year at Regency Park, enrolments of apprentices for commercial cooking increased from 162 to 190, cake and pastry cooks from 51 to 70, and butchers from 223 to 235.⁵⁴ Given Latham's own background, it is interesting to note that he introduced 'the first commercial cooking program in Australia [that] allowed people from the industry to come in and gain qualifications without having to go through an apprenticeship.'⁵⁵ During 1978 the school offered several new courses, 'including a specialist study for students of the Flinders University Dietician's Diploma.' The school also 'hosted several seminars, one of which ran for three days and attracted over 750 people.' New certificate courses were made available in hotel and restaurant supervision, hotel management, and restaurant management. Basic trade courses now included patisserie, smallgoods, and a certificate course for *sommeliers*, while food appreciation and service, fundamentals of

⁵²Interview with Grahame Latham, Fullarton, 14 March 2001.

⁵³Interview with Derrick Casey, Regency Park, 7 July 2000.

⁵⁴SAPP 103, 1977-78, Annual Report of the Director General of Further Education, South Australia, p 28.

⁵⁵Interview with Derrick Casey, 19 March 2004.

fast food marketing, and hygiene for food handlers were tailored to meet the needs of workers in relevant vocations.⁵⁶

Questions in the House

The parliamentary Opposition had maintained quite a low profile in relation to the Food School and found little of significance with which to mount an attack on the government. The shadow education minister, Harold Allison, seized on criticism by the auditor-general of the 'unjustified' expenditure of \$28,000

from Consolidated Revenue...for the purchase of cutlery, \$15,000, bone china, \$3,700, silverware, \$2,700 and crystalware, \$7,000, to be used for training purposes in the dining room of the School of Food and catering.⁵⁷

In the House on 19 October 1977 Allison called on the Minister for Education, Don Hopgood, to justify the expenditure in relation to the number of current or future trainees who were likely to 'benefit considerably...from using this type of expensive equipment.' Hopgood had recently eaten at the school, but without heeding the standard of the 'equipment' provided. Perhaps more importantly, he was able to recall that

I accept the information that I was given there that all of the people who have gone through a course there have got employment without any trouble. It is proving to be a worthwhile course from the people being able to enter the work force immediately.

He then suggested that the auditor-general's investigators may not have realised that the items were purchased at substantial discounts, and not the list prices quoted in his

⁵⁶SAPP 103, 1979-80, p 25.

⁵⁷SAPP 4, 1977-78, Auditor-General's Report, p 103. According to Grahame Latham the school has the largest collection of Christofle china in Australia, Interview, 17 April 2000.

report.⁵⁸ Allison returned to the attack on the premise that the school had acquired an inordinately large and expensive stock of wine for its cellar. A self-proclaimed ‘wowsler’,⁵⁹ Hopgood responded in some detail on 15 November, explaining that the school stored its wine in a compactus, not a cellar. Further, it had not bought a rumoured 5,000 bottles but it had

purchased 1,884 bottles of red, white and fortified wine over the past three or four years at prices lower than 1977 costs. The estimated cost of all purchased stock is \$3,500, thus making an average price of around \$2 a bottle. All the vintage wines have been donated to the school.⁶⁰

The minister went on to explain the obvious to members of the Opposition, that wine is a frequently required cooking ingredient, hence the school also had a stock of Madeira and other bulk wine, some of ‘questionable’ quality both for cooking and for ‘wine appreciation and wine chemistry classes.’ In any event, as the teetotal Hopgood sagely observed, ‘the educational objectives cannot be met by a simulated product.’ In an earlier session Allison had questioned the justification for the expenditure of \$4.5 million on the whole Regency Park project, since this represented ‘more than 40 per cent of the total expenditure for further education this year.’ He wanted to know ‘whether it has long-term forward planning built in to include considerable retraining that seems necessary with apprentices. Will it incorporate much in that line?’ Hopgood no doubt enjoyed his own succinct reply, ‘Yes and yes.’⁶¹

⁵⁸SAPD:HA, H. Allison, D. Hopgood, 19 October 1977, p 318.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, D. Hopgood, 19 October 1977, p 319.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, Hopgood, 15 November 1977, p 735. For the record, 1985 bottles of vintage wine were donated, of which Wynn’s donated 840 bottles. David Wynn and his wife were good friends of Dunstan. Included in the total were 29 bottles of vintage ports from Hardy’s and D’Arenberg.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 7 September 1976, p 855.

Innovative Training

By the time Dunstan unexpectedly quit politics early in 1979 the School of Food and Catering was well on its way towards fulfilling his high expectations. That year saw the reinforcement of the school's close association with the hospitality industry, including the successful completion of new student assessment projects. Over the various study areas, students were assigned an appropriate establishment and required to draw up an operator's manual of a professional standard to suit the business, for example, a motel housekeeping manual or a hotel receptionist's manual. Marketing course students had to produce a comprehensive operation 'rationale.' Industry reacted so enthusiastically to the idea, which clearly represented a considerable cost saving to the business concerned, that a waiting list became necessary.⁶² Other innovations included a course in food microbiology requested by the South Australian Health Commission for health inspectors and surveyors. New restaurants had been helped by 'on the job' training, while refresher courses had been provided for a number of country hotels and restaurants. Another Australian first followed the introduction of short-length courses in Asian cooking. Lecturer Mary Battersby was born in Penang and learned Nonyah cooking from her maternal grandmother. In 1980 she began teaching the first full-time Asian cooking certificate program in Australia. The cuisines taught included 'Thai, Indonesian, Malaysian, Nonya [and] Chinese from all the different regions.'⁶³ The majority of Battersby's students in those early years were Vietmanese, many of whom could not speak English. She was soon joined by a second Asian lecturer Ming Chu Ping, who was brought over from Hong Kong, and like many of their students he could not speak

⁶²Department of Further Education: South Australia [DFE:SA], Regency Park Community College, 'S.A. School and Industry in Joint Projects', n d [circa June 1979], p 1.

⁶³Interview with Mary Battersby, Regency Park, 2 May 2001.

English. This was surely a rare instance of an interview panel requiring the services of an interpreter.⁶⁴

The burgeoning fast food industry was not beneath notice for the school, and existing courses were being expanded to incorporate 'Plant and Property Maintenance, Food Hygiene and Safety and Staff Control.' Even the South Australian Hyperactive Association had been catered for with a course derived from the Finegold diet as adapted by cookery lecturer Pieter Castel. Staff and course numbers continued to increase, as evidenced by the following paragraph:

The recent recruitment of Messrs. Weiner Hettich, Bernd Warmer, Brian Lawes and Peter Jarmer, all Chefs with international standing, added to the already very strong team of Messrs. Pieter Castel, Bernie Errington, Manfred Mayreggar, Ingo Schwarze (Master Patisseir) [sic], David Jarvis and Hans Vahldieck, led by Derrick Casey will see the introduction of the first Chefs Certificate Course in Australia. Over 70 Students are enrolled and staff control, living nutrition, patisserie, Australian & International Cheese and Oral Communications units are currently being taught.⁶⁵

Latham and later Casey were continually in touch with their industry contacts, both in Australia and overseas, and ever on the lookout for new talent. Some of the new lecturers were recruited locally, some were imported, all were leaders in their fields.⁶⁶ Because of the impossibility of attracting top quality chefs at base grade rates, Latham chose to ignore departmental 'rules' and paid commensurate senior salaries.⁶⁷ In a further boost to the school's international standing, Casey joined the Australian team for the 1980 Culinary Olympics in Munich, thanks to industry recognition of his status

⁶⁴Interview with Derrick Casey, Regency Park, 19 March 2004.

⁶⁵DFE:SA, Regency Park Community College, 'Joint Projects', 1979, p 2.

⁶⁶Interview with Derrick Casey, 19 March 2004.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

as a ‘leading educator in commercial cookery.’⁶⁸ On the local scene the school consistently placed all but three percent of its hospitality students in employment, while maintaining a drop-out rate of barely five per cent.⁶⁹ During the second half of 1979 an additional 13 new day courses, ranging from financial control to the planning of functions and banquets, became available. Hotel industry and union recognition of the waiter’s certificate at least in theory meant that the holder qualified for more money than his or her unqualified counterpart.⁷⁰

Government Fruit and Vegetable Working Party

Another important Dunstan innovation derived from the needs of the new school and his own interests. According to Derrick Casey, when he arrived at Pennington in 1973 and took up his appointment as lecturer in cooking, the only tomatoes available were the grosse lisse variety; there were for example no cherry tomatoes. He often found it necessary to buy and sort through a half case to select six of uniform size and quality. Carrots and parsley were giant sized, with chives about the only ‘exotic’ herb available commercially.⁷¹ Dunstan believed that novices could achieve creative cuisine and catering provided only the best and freshest ingredients were used. Latham has said that at this time no suitable local produce was to be found, and the South Australian fruit fly blockade on major highways effectively stopped

⁶⁸DFE:SA, Regency Park Community College, ‘Joint Projects’, 1979, p 2.

⁶⁹Interview with Derrick Casey, Regency Park, 19 March 2004.

⁷⁰DFE:SA, Regency Park Community College, ‘Joint Projects’, 1979, p 3.

⁷¹Interview with Derrick Casey, 7 July 2000.

interstate shipments.⁷² In another interview, Stephen Downes provides the following version:

Don told Grahame to develop creative cooks. Grahame replied that he didn't have the fresh produce to allow that to happen. 'The only fresh ingredient was parsley,' says Grahame. So Don organised a group of horticulturists to start broadening their crops, to cultivate specific herbs and vegetables.⁷³

Clearly, appropriate produce was not available to the school at the time. However, the real story is more complex than the Downe's version as quoted.

Late in 1973 Dunstan advised his Ministers of Education, Tourism, Recreation and Sport and Agriculture that he intended to establish a working party to look at the feasibility of growing new types of vegetables and fruit not currently available here, using government land for the purpose. In Dunstan's view this was necessary because

with the New Food School in operation for the training of chefs it is essential that the restaurants owned and leased out by the Government, have access to food of the kind that the chefs will demand.⁷⁴

He asked the education minister to second Grahame Latham to the committee as chairman. Dunstan also nominated his executive assistant, Peter Ward, together with representatives from his Policy Division, Tourism and the Department of Agriculture. The garden-loving premier could not resist adding the following homily to his memo, 'In many instances it is a matter of picking fruit and vegetables at a time much earlier

⁷²Telephone conversation with Grahame Latham, 12 April 2000.

⁷³Stephen Downes, 2002, p 338.

⁷⁴SRSA, GRG 75/1/846/1973, Dunstan memo to Ministers, 19 November 1973. The 'Government restaurants' will be discussed in the next chapter. In 1973 Dunstan was referring to Ayers House, Festival Theatre, Water Fall Gully, and the School of Food and Catering. Dunstan's selection of Peter Ward to the committee is an indication of his strong interest in the project.

than they are normally harvested for marketing.’ Apart from the reasons advanced to his ministers, Dunstan had determined to overcome a marked resistance by staid agriculture advisers towards trialing anything new or exotic in the plant world. The advisers had been conditioned by Playford who during his premiership had frowned upon the Department daring to trial fruit ‘for which he believed there was no demand.’⁷⁵ As former Womens’ Adviser to Dunstan, Deborah McCulloch, later recalled:

I remember having dinner with him...in about ’71 and him complaining that public servants could not understand the value of grapefruit. He said, “Australians don’t like grapefruit it’s true, but it’s perfectly obvious with planes being the way they are that we will be able to grow it in Australia and ship it by plane to the northern hemisphere where people do like grapefruit. And this is a perfectly possible local industry, but will the public servants accept it? No. They will go to any lengths to avoid talking about grapefruit, helping people to plant grapefruit, discovering information about grapefruit.” He got quite angry. It was very funny.⁷⁶

While he was premier Dunstan periodically complained about the non-availability of certain foodstuffs; one of these was limes. In response to Dunstan’s assertion on television ‘that fresh limes were not available in the [Adelaide] Central Market,’ the proprietor of The Providore food stall wrote to say that he had ‘very limited supplies of fresh limes (both Tahitian and Kusie).’ He went on to acknowledge the ‘considerable and valuable assistance from Mr. Graham [sic] Latham of the Food and Catering School and from the Fruit and Vegetable Committee, which has asked us to handle the

⁷⁵Peter Howell, ‘Playford, politics and parliament,’ *Playford’s South Australia, Essays on the history of South Australia 1933-1968*, Bernie O’Neil, Judith Raftery and Kerrie Round (eds.), Adelaide, 1996, p 60.

⁷⁶Don Dunstan Retrospective, FEAST, Gay and Lesbian Festival, 8 November 1999. Transcript by writer from audio tape loaned by the Dunstan Foundation.

initial release of its new products.⁷⁷ A year or so later the lime shortage looked like becoming a thing of the past when Latham reported to Dunstan that the first fruit had been picked from the survivors of 370 trees planted at the Cadell Training Centre in the early days of the project.⁷⁸

Food from Prisons

The most controversial proposal made by the committee came when it reported to Dunstan in September of the following year, 1974. The suggestion was to plant selected vegetables, fruits, herbs and nuts on land available at government penal institutions by using inmates employed under supervision. Production of vegetables and herbs commenced at the Yatala Labour Prison, with some trials at the Mount Gambier and Port Augusta prisons. The Cadell Training Centre, near Morgan on the River Murray, produced fruits and nuts and planted a range of exotic trees. The Department of Agriculture, in conjunction with the CSIRO, conducted other trials at its Northfield Research Station.⁷⁹ The Committee suggested that the State Supply Department handle the distribution of produce to the 'government' restaurants and the Catering School. In the longer term the private restaurants might be persuaded to purchase any surplus production. To gauge likely support from the industry the committee sent out some 200 questionnaires to a selection of Adelaide restaurants and hotels, asking about their possible seasonal requirements. Among the items listed by the committee were lychees, Chinese gooseberries (Kiwi fruit), Romaine lettuce (cos), snow peas, graded mushrooms, eschalots, celeriac, and radicchio. There were 21 types

⁷⁷FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Correspondence, "P" Miscellaneous (2), 26 October 1976. According to Catherine Murphy in her book, *The Market: Stories, history and recipes from the Adelaide Central Market*, Kent Town, 2003, p 123, Fitzpatrick invited Dunstan to visit the stall when he could 'spare a few moments'. The Providore opened in October 1976.

⁷⁸SRSA, GRG 75/1/ 846/1973, 24 May 1977.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

of vegetables, and 28 herbs, including capers, coriander, basil, sage, lovage, lemongrass, and cumin. The 13 kinds of fruit and nuts ranged from jackfruit and raspberries to chestnuts, pine nuts, and macadamias. Only 57 managed to respond, two anonymously, in greater or lesser detail.⁸⁰ There was no attempt to follow up this inconclusive result, although a few respondents had added – perhaps tongue-in-cheek – three other types of potatoes, 11 vegetables, 10 herbs, and 15 fruits or nuts.⁸¹ The committee attempted to enlist growers' support by inviting the executive of the South Australian Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association to a meeting earlier that year. In return for growers showing a willingness to experiment with small crops, the Department of Agriculture was prepared to provide help with research and demonstrations. In the view of the executive, apart from one or two exceptional individuals, their members were not interested in such experiments. So much for stories of Dunstan organising a 'group of horticulturists.'

Initially, as might be expected, Agriculture Department and Department of Correctional Services staff were less than enthusiastic at this unwanted intrusion into their domains, but as time went on at least some of the agriculture advisers came on side. Help was also to hand from the CSIRO's Dr John Possingham, who recalls Dunstan's 'enthusiasm for anything exotic – lychees, mangoes, avocados, and especially miniature sweet corn, but the Department of Agriculture was not interested in trying to grow them here.'⁸² But others were, including the Botanic Garden's director Noel Lothian, who drew on his own vast experience to aid the project as it

⁸⁰SRSA, GRG 75/1/846/1973, Government Fruit and Vegetable Working Party Report to the Premier, 18 September 1974, pp 10, 9, 12, 18. Dunstan's new research assistant, (later his wife) Adele Koh, replaced Peter Ward on the committee in May 1974.

⁸¹SAPD:HA, S. Evans, D.A. Dunstan, 15 October 1974, pp 1443-1445.

⁸²Telephone conversation with John Possingham, 20 June 2002.

moved into the various stages of selection, planting, and production. Horticultural adviser at the Botanic Gardens, Bruce Farquar, who also had his own gardening advice program on ABC television was 'responsible for advising the Committee and co-ordinating the implementation of its program.'⁸³ In a memo to Dunstan not long after this positive report, Policy Division head Bruce Guerin submitted that 'considerable progress had been made' in the little over two years since cabinet had given the go ahead. He then went on to say that

a wide range of materials had been obtained and planted and some produce provided to the Government and private restaurants, the School of Food and Catering and to the public through a Central Market stall.

However, he suggested that the Policy Division carry out an 'exhaustive review...to ensure the Government's objectives are being pursued in the most effective way.'⁸⁴

The report eventually went to the premier more than one year later and among other things called for Latham's replacement as chairman with a skilled 'marketing and promotions' person in order to popularise the 'new' products. It did acknowledge that 'the present chairman, whose skills and knowledge lie in the culinary sphere, has succeeded in pushing the program along to achieve levels of production of a range of products.'⁸⁵ It also recognised that the committee had 'stimulated an interest in non-traditional produce.' Several commercial growers had been persuaded to grow okra, baby carrots, and cherry tomatoes for the Central Market. A promotion of cherry tomatoes by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, 'marketed through one of

⁸³SRSA, GRG 75/1/846/1973, Policy Division report, 11 August 1978, p 3. Cabinet gave approval for the committee's submission on 21 April 1975.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 11 July 1977. In Dunstan's absence Deputy Premier Des Corcoran agreed to Guerin's Submission.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, Policy Division report to Premier, 11 August 1978, p 7, 8. 'Fisheries' had been added to the Department of Agriculture as a consequence of the perennial shuffling of portfolios.

the large chain stores', fell victim to cheaper, standard tomatoes.⁸⁶ There were problems with overseers at Cadell taking umbrage because Farquar mainly visited on a weekly basis and was hence seen as an 'outsider.' The answer, it was suggested, lay in transferring the horticultural adviser from the Botanic Gardens to Correctional Services. There was merit in the claim that the committee had adopted something of a 'shotgun' approach to its selection of specimens. In the words of the Policy Division, 'the plantings seem to be the result of a "try everything" policy with no selection based on which may be more suitable for the promotion of culinary standards.'⁸⁷

Much of the review and its recommendations repeated what Latham had already suggested to Dunstan some five months earlier in a report on the 'Achievements, Objectives and Future Aims of the South Australian Government Fruit and Vegetable Committee'. The transfer of Farquar to Correctional Services had been requested by Latham as far back as February 1976 but was not approved by the Public Service Board until 28 February 1979. The public service wheels turned 'exceeding slow.' Latham had clearly recognised his own and the committee's limitations and had requested the appointment of 'people with applied marketing expertise and [for demonstrations] a commercial cook with merchandising experience on a temporary basis.'⁸⁸ He also repeated previous pleas for a financial allocation in order to fund this professional help and the ongoing promotional challenge. In spite of Latham's personal best efforts in demonstrating a variety of dishes utilising the 'new products', a number of Adelaide restaurateurs were still reluctant to experiment with anything

⁸⁶SRSA, GRG 75/1/846/1973, 11 August 1978, p 7.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, p 6.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, Report to Premier, 10 March 1978, p 9, see also pp 12-13.

‘exotic’.⁸⁹ An attachment to the report lists the following vegetables grown by Correctional Services from 1976: baby carrots, celeriac, Chinese cabbage, Chinese mustard, cos lettuce, Florence fennel, ginger, okra, salsify, shallots, sugar or snow peas, cherry tomatoes, tumeric, witloof and russet burbank potato. But the situation was beginning to change for the better, at least in respect of support from Agriculture and Fisheries, and the sale of herbs. In a second 1978 report to Dunstan, Latham noted a ‘tremendous upsurge in Department of Agriculture and Fisheries interest.’ Herbs were cut, bunched, and chilled at Yatala and he reported that, ‘interest in using culinary herbs, both fresh and dried, is increasing at an appreciable pace.’ However, this was not the case with other items, ‘lack of interest by restaurateurs [sic] and hoteliers in the products available at various times unfortunately continues.’⁹⁰ Not long after Latham’s 1978 report, and in spite of the increasing demand for herbs, the Yatala Prison authorities turned the herb garden into a carpark.⁹¹ Six months after Dunstan’s departure from the political scene Noel Lothian sent his resignation to Premier Des Corcoran, and the committee’s efforts became largely directed at questions of packaging and marketing.⁹²

Epilogue

Before returning to finalise the School of Food and Catering account, I offer some concluding observations about the Fruit and Vegetable Committee. As I have outlined, by 1980 the committee had largely achieved the objectives first set down by Dunstan

⁸⁹SRSA, GRG 75/1/846/1973, 11 August 1978, p 5. See also SAPD:HA, S. Evans, D.A. Dunstan, 15 October 1974, pp 1443-1445.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, Report to Premier, 21 June 1978, pp 4-5.

⁹¹Telephone conversation with Jill Stone 15 February 2004. Following the closure Latham persuaded Stone to begin growing herbs commercially.

⁹²SRSA, GRG 75/1/846/1973, 7 August 1979.

in 1973. Without the funding and other changes called for by Grahame Latham it is difficult to see how the committee could reasonably have been expected to achieve more than it did. In any event the fresh fruit and vegetable scene had already begun to change, as consumer demand for fresh herbs and a wider variety of fruits and vegetables increased pressure on growers. While the committee had achieved only limited success with its promotions, handouts, and demonstrations, in a comparatively small population word of mouth can spread new ideas with surprising speed. Allied with other factors, including the arrival of Vietnamese refugees, the influence of the already proliferating television cooking shows, the long established South Australian Gas Company cooking demonstrations in particular of Margaret Kirkwood, and the ever-increasing publication of recipes in cookbooks, newspapers and womens magazines, the demand for the new and the different kept on rising. Con Savvas, a long-time purveyor of continental foodstuffs in the Adelaide Central Market, recalled that ‘from 1975 onwards Australians started to bite into European food and we started to write our signs in Greek and English or in Italian and English.’⁹³ The changing scene was reinforced by the arrival of Asian refugees in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Master Chef Cheong Liew told Catherine Murphy that when he ‘first visited [the] Adelaide Central Market in the 1970s...fruit and vegetables...were limited in variety...When the Vietnamese boat people first arrived in the 1980s we started getting Asian vegetables and herbs.’⁹⁴ Dunstan’s vision and enthusiasm in setting up his Food and Vegetable Committee, together with his selection of its members especially Latham with his culinary and organisational skills, meant that the School of Food and Catering got its fresh and varied ingredients. Supplies also went to the Festival Theatre

⁹³Catherine Murphy, *The Market: Stories, history and recipes from the Adelaide Central Market*, Kent Town, South Australia, 2003, p 83.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, p 121.

Restaurant, The Providore stall, and the Eagle Hotel.⁹⁵ While it is impossible to quantify the work of the committee, if nothing else graduates from the School of Food and Catering added to the demand for ‘new’ ingredients, and the market duly responded. According to Casey:

We were turning people out of here preparing dishes with ingredients that were not commonly available in the market, and those people were then starting to demand those ingredients.⁹⁶

School of Food and Catering: Conclusions

I share the view of Casey and other industry figures already cited, that without Dunstan’s initiative, the Regency Hotel School would not be the world leader it is today.⁹⁷ Dunstan’s initial concept of a new world-class school, his drive to see it established, and his extensive but often behind the scenes involvement are confirmation of his ever-evolving and always passionate engagement with the subject of food and drink. While the slow-moving Education Department had decided to incorporate a food school in the proposed Kilburn Community College, without Dunstan’s intervention it would almost inevitably have joined the ranks of the also-rans. His intervention was also aligned to his own enthusiasm for passing on the many delights of food preparation and cooking to any that would listen. The Hotel School has evolved into an extraordinary success story, and its graduates may be found in leading hotels and restaurants in Australia and around the world. One of the secrets of this achievement has been the ongoing strengths and dedication of the teaching staff, beginning with Latham and his choice of Derrick Casey. Another has resulted from maintaining a close relationship with the restaurant and hotel industries and responding

⁹⁵SRSA, GRG 75/1/846/1973, 11 August 1978, p 4.

⁹⁶Interview with Derrick Casey, Regency Park, 19 March 2004.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*

quickly to their changing needs. One final but telling point about Regency is the way in which its operation is attuned to Dunstan's precepts of social justice; there are no class, colour, nationality, or sex barriers. In the next chapter the focus changes from training to restaurants, with an examination of 'government' restaurants and Dunstan's attempts to introduce a Mediterranean lifestyle to a reluctant Adelaide.

Epilogue

The undoubted success of the School of Food and Catering is a continuing testimony to Dunstan's foresight and determination to set Adelaide in the forefront of culinary achievement by first raising teaching standards. Having selected the best available person for the job of heading his new school, he then left it to Latham to get on with the job. The famed Cheong Liew was head-hunted by Derrick Casey and taught at Regency for seven years from 1988, when he was suffering from restaurant 'burn-out' at his justly famous Neddy's, to 1995, when he returned to the fray at the Adelaide Hilton's Grange restaurant.⁹⁸ Cheong told me how ex-Regency students who have gone on to become chefs are much sought after in London and New York because of the breadth of basic training they received. Derrick Casey later confirmed this was the case. Casey wanted Cheong to bring to Regency the key elements he had evolved at Neddy's. Cheong's 'first...thought was to have [students] really understand...local ingredients and the freshness of the ingredients and teach the students about the freshness of the ingredients.' Here Cheong is echoing Dunstan's own precepts to the letter. Somewhat surprisingly, Dunstan fails to mention the School of Food and Catering in his political memoir, *Felicia*. Latham decided a change of name for the school was necessary in the early 1980s, and it swiftly became the Regency Hotel

⁹⁸Interview with Cheong Liew, Adelaide, 14 March 2001. See also Stephen Downes, *Advanced Australian Fare*, 2002, pp 71-88, 331-332.

School.⁹⁹ The name change reflected an expansion of emphasis towards the training of cooks, since the bar and waiting courses were well established and recognised by the industry. Latham reveals that in the early days at Regency Dunstan's view was that

the school was in fact creating cooks, and I guess...he was a bit disappointed that it didn't actually do that. Simply because it wasn't until the late 70s and probably early 80s that there was a view that it was a reasonable occupation to be a cook. I don't mean a chef, I mean a cook, and it wasn't until the mid-80s that it started to become a modest to reasonable thing to do.¹⁰⁰

In other words what this meant was that only the 'also rans' were attracted, a situation which then began to change dramatically towards the end of the decade. Latham commented on Regency's contribution to the upsurge in the Adelaide restaurant later in the decade:

The late 80's saw enormous changes in the level of management and level of service and quality of the food. Not only was it being generated by the graduates of the school, but it was also being affected by people changing their views about dining out...it was a social revolution in a way.¹⁰¹

Dunstan had little direct contact with Regency again until his later years. In 1997 he enjoyed a two-day stint there as a food judge during the first *Tasting Australia* festival,¹⁰² and he was a member of the curriculum panel for the new Cordon Bleu courses in 1998.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Much to Latham's surprise it only took a two paragraph letter to Department of Further Education director Max Bone. Interview with Grahame Latham, Fullarton, 14 March 2001.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*

¹⁰²Dunstan, *Adelaide Review*, November 1997.

¹⁰³Don Dunstan, 'Background,' c 1998, courtesy of John Spoehr.

Chapter Five

THE GOVERNMENT RESTAURANTS: AL FRESCO AND ASIAN TO FOLLOW

As preceding chapters have shown, regardless of his other official duties Dunstan devoted an inordinate amount of time, energy, and attention to food-related matters. In his tourist development paper Dunstan singled out Ayers House for particular attention, and Henry Ayers restaurant became the centrepiece of his government restaurant scheme. Public awareness of his personal involvement in the venture soon led to the label ‘Dunstan’s (or ‘Donnie’s’). restaurant.’ His push to encourage restaurateurs towards setting up eating facilities on the footpaths outside their establishments and to serve Mediterranean style food with wine was a decade or more ahead of its time. Here again Dunstan the politician used his position and enthusiasm to try and generate support for the concept. Surprisingly, Adelaide had already shown a liking for Asian food before Dunstan’s reign. However, early in that reign he established a link with Malaysia, and his marriage to Adele Koh stimulated his own pre-existing interest. These several examples show that food related projects dominated much of Dunstan’s thought and actions in the early 1970s.

The Ayers House Restaurants

When he became premier in 1970 Dunstan wanted the ‘development rather than [simply] restoration’ of Ayers House, the former mansion opposite the Royal Adelaide Hospital on North Terrace.¹ He proposed the incorporation of a formal restaurant plus a more casual outdoor eatery in the space left over from providing a home for the National Trust. In his vision of a rejuvenated Ayers House Dunstan planned to save the old mansion from suffering the fate of other Australian historic

¹ State Records South Australia [SRSA], GRG 75/1/708/1973, p 4.

houses that had their fabric restored but invariably remained lifeless. Dunstan wrote in his political memoir that he wanted the restaurants to become ‘an essential part of the life of the city.’² He was often on hand providing advice during the restoration, when he was not searching for suitable, period furniture in the basement, or in government stores.³ The ground floor on the eastern side of the restored Ayers House became the Henry Ayers restaurant, providing ‘an imposing ambience [for 65-100 guests] with deep red décor set off by specially designed stained glass windows, the work of a talented local artist’ Cedar Prest.⁴ The former library, and the ballroom, added additional space for smaller, more intimate occasions or for large receptions. The young wives of the project architects designed the opulent interior, chosen for the haute cuisine restaurant to complement a colonial museum operated by the National Trust.⁵ A centrally located modern kitchen was added to service both Henry Ayers, and the transformed coach house with its stables on the western flank, which became Paxtons bistro. The latter was named after William Paxton, a city chemist who became wealthy from Burra copper and owned the original Town Acre on which Ayers House was later built.⁶

During 1972 with the Ayers House renovations underway, Dunstan decided he wanted Adelaide restaurateur Phil Cramey to lease and run the two restaurants. The project architect Ian Hannaford was sent to see Cramey at his Golden Grove restaurant and to convey Dunstan’s wishes. Cramey’s response was blunt and to the point, ‘No,

²Don Dunstan, *Felicia, the political memoirs of Don Dunstan*, South Melbourne, 1981, p 181.

³*Ibid.*, pp 181-182. Also interview with Steven Wright, Goolwa, 1 March 2001.

⁴Sol Simeon, *A&R’s 1979: Eating Out In Adelaide*, Adelaide, 1979, p X.

⁵Elizabeth Griffin, *Sunday Mail*, 17 January 1973.

⁶Derek Whitelock, *Adelaide 1836-1976, A History of Difference*, St Lucia, Queensland, 1977, pp 66, 213.

no I'm not interested in bloody North Terrace'. As he later explained, 'you know I was doing too good in Gouger street.'⁷ Dunstan had dismissed the architects' feasibility report as 'thoroughly unsatisfactory' and to be ignored.⁸ He then set up a committee to oversee the Ayers House operation, with Auditor-General Des Byrne as the chairman. This was an astute appointment, clearly designed to short-circuit any Opposition complaints about a profligate government wasting taxpayers' money on another Dunstan folly. Byrne was duly despatched to the Golden Grove and succeeded in persuading Cramey to take on the formidable but ultimately lucrative task of setting up and running the two restaurants.⁹

Cramey of Ayers House

The first lessee, Phil Cramey, an Australian of Lebanese extraction, came to Adelaide in the 1960s from Broken Hill, then the bastion of unionism, with impeccable Labor Party credentials. Just as importantly, his contacts included Australian Labor Party 'fixer' Mick Young. Cramey ran a taxi for a time, then set up his Golden Grove restaurant in what had been an old shop in Gouger Street near the Central Market on the southern side of the city. He soon attracted a useful circle of Labor patrons, including Dunstan and Young. Dunstan and the bluntly spoken Cramey were both self-taught cooks and the otherwise unlikely pair soon established a rapport. Cramey recalls the premier arriving at the restaurant one afternoon, carrying his evening clothes for a 'black tie' ALP function that evening. Later, when Dunstan was changing, his black socks were missing, Cramey immediately whipped off his own shoes, took off his socks and gave them to the premier. *Circa* 1968 Dunstan 'cut the ribbon' and declared

⁷Interview with Phil Cramey, Longwood, 21 March 2001.

⁸Flinders University of South Australia [FUSA], Dunstan Collection, 'A' miscellaneous correspondence, transcript of taped comments by Don Dunstan re Ayers House, n d.

open a small outdoor garden area Cramey had added to extend his restaurant, ‘one of the first in Adelaide.’¹⁰

Cramey made his application for the lease on a torn sheet of note pad in December 1972.¹¹ Barrister Michael Abbott, a top-flight Adelaide criminal lawyer, negotiated the final terms of the lease with Des Byrne and his committee. The committee expressed the hope that the Tourist Bureau as administrators of the complex ‘in relation with the restaurateur...will steer a middle course between maximum financial return to Government and operations to serve the tourist industry.’¹² The government required the lessee to supply linen, cutlery, glassware, crockery, pots, pans and other ‘loose’ kitchen items. In keeping with Dunstan’s ambition to establish a top quality restaurant, Cramey bought Stuart crystal and silver cutlery. He also selected and trained waiters at the Gouger street restaurant in anticipation of the move to North Terrace.¹³ He added microwave ovens, a deep freezer, dishwasher and refrigerators to the government’s own supply list, boosting the prime cost estimate from \$22,000 to \$37,000. Furniture and fittings in keeping with the ‘colonial’ design concepts were to be designed and ordered by the government. The rental was calculated at seven per cent of the estimated gross sales of \$21,021 per annum.¹⁴ By 1976 Cramey was paying

⁹Interview with Phil Cramey, Longwood, 21 March 2001.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹SRSA, GRG 75/1/561/1972.

¹²SRSA, GRG 75/1/16/1973.

¹³Interview with Phil Cramey, 21 March 2001.

¹⁴SRSA, GRG 75/1/16/ 1973.

\$31,000 a year for the lease, he was not subsidised by the government, and his payments were up to date.¹⁵

Before the five-year lease was signed in February 1973, Cramey began visiting Ayers House on a daily basis to check progress and confer with the architects and/or Dunstan. Adelaide restaurant owners were slow to pick up on a missed opportunity. Rex Tilbrook, president of the South Australian Association of Restaurateurs, wrote to Dunstan in May complaining that ‘Ayers House’ and ‘Festival Hall’ had both been let without going to public tender. He expressed further concern that the association, ‘a body that you helped to establish, was not extended the courtesy of any consideration whatsoever.’ Tilbrook went on to demand financial details of the lease and sent a similar letter to attorney-general Len King.¹⁶ Fortunately for Dunstan, his department had at least given the appearance of following correct procedure and provided Tilbrook with details of various advertisements in newspapers and trade journals. Standard procedure ensured that ‘for reasons of confidentiality’ details of the lease could not be disclosed.¹⁷ The restaurateurs’ expectations of special consideration had clearly not been part of Dunstan’s agenda and remained unfulfilled.

Henry Ayers and Paxtons

The end of the 1972-1973 financial year also heralded the opening of the Henry Ayers restaurant, the ‘silver service’ centrepiece of Dunstan’s strategy for government-sponsored restaurants. The official opening of Henry Ayers on 30 June 1973 was

¹⁵South Australian Parliamentary Debates: House of Assembly [SAPD:HA], Dunstan, answering a question on notice from Heine Becker, 27 July 1976, p 173.

¹⁶SRSA, GRG 75/1/561/1972.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, R.D. Bakewell to R.P. Tilbrook, 21 May 1973.

something of a grand occasion with 800 guests expected to fill the marquees.¹⁸ However, an estimate on the day placed the actual figure at nearer 600, not the 900 claimed by the caterer, Phil Cramey. A degree of haggling took place behind the scenes between John Holland from the Premier's Department and Cramey over what was to be served and at what price. In a minute to his departmental head Holland had earlier expressed doubts that Cramey could handle a function of this size.¹⁹ Cost estimates increased because Dunstan insisted on 'proper' crockery and cutlery rather than paper plates and plastic spoons. Cramey later submitted his account for \$4526.94 but agreed to accept a reduction of \$584. Holland pointed out that while Cramey had had his approval to delete cabbage rolls, he deleted mousses and trifles without approval. Not only that, he had outrageously 'served bubbly drinks thought by some to be champagne.'²⁰ Dunstan had issued instructions to all government departments at the time of Paxtons opening early in May 1973 to use it 'whenever official entertaining is to be undertaken by Public servants.' They were also to note that Henry Ayers would be opening in June.²¹ The *Sunday Mail* reported that Paxtons was cleverly done and blended in with the refurbished mansion, 'as though it were always there.'²² Dunstan's secretary Steven Wright had this to say about Ayers House, 'we used the library for a place for State dinners and functions. We're talking about the State, the history, good food, good wine, in a very sort of private setting.'²³

¹⁸SRSA, GRG 75/1/16/1973.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, J. Holland to R. Bakewell, 19 April 1973.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹SRSA, GRG 75/1/313/1973.

²²*Sunday Mail*, 20 May 1973.

²³Interview with Steven Wright, Goolwa, 1 March 2001.

Former Dunstan press secretary Tony Baker, writing as restaurant critic 'Sol Simeon' five years after the 1973 opening, described Paxtons as 'the less sybaritic and cheaper of the two Government sponsored and independently operated restaurants in Ayers House.' Henry Ayers' poor relation had already undergone a major change of décor and layout, with an increase in seating capacity from 100 to 120. He classed the cuisine as 'International Cooking' and said a meal for two including wine cost 'about \$30', which was around \$10 above average.²⁴ Main courses in most Adelaide restaurants two years after the opening remained generally between three dollars or less to five dollars, while a dozen oysters could be enjoyed for two or three dollars. A reasonable bottle of South Australian wine cost three or four dollars.²⁵ The advantages of the two establishments sharing a common kitchen, including complementary dishes, were evident, but this also provided scope for staff and logistical conflict. Unsatisfied patrons of either venue could easily compare the quality of the food, the service, and the value. Tony Baker emphasised the importance of Henry Ayers as the 'first top-class restaurant in Adelaide,' but believed the two restaurant concept was flawed; 'it was not clever-it was too easy to contrast and complain either way.'²⁶

Cramey nominated Paxtons as 'the hardest one to run. When we first started off Paxton's it was a \$1.95 [for a main course]...it was lunch and night time, I had both going.' The sheer size of the kitchen, made necessary by the joint facility configuration, presented its own problems for Cramey, who was very much a 'hands-on' operator. In his words:

²⁴Sol Simeon, *A&R's 1979 Eating Out In Adelaide*, Adelaide, 1979, p 59.

²⁵*The Air New Zealand Guide To Dining In Adelaide*, Wayville, 1975.

²⁶Interview with Tony Baker, Adelaide, 12 September 2000.

Because being such a large concept, having Paxtons on one side and a long kitchen, it would be a good 80 feet long, I used to go from there through to the Henry Ayers and the Ballroom continuously to keep an eye on both sections.²⁷

During the early years of operation Cramey also had problems with a lack of trained chefs in Australia, the very situation Dunstan aimed to change with the new School of Food and Catering. In 1974 Cramey advertised in the United Kingdom and selected two of the applicants, who at least had some professional qualifications. One had worked at the Zurich Zoo restaurant, the other trained at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital, and both arrived courtesy of the South Australian Agent-General in London as assisted immigrants.²⁸ Neither proved up to the standard required, and Cramey says he largely managed to fill the role himself by cooking suitable dishes at table and training successive waves of apprentices.²⁹

However, it was the Henry Ayers restaurant that resonated with Adelaide's wealthier citizens and visiting celebrities, whether they were rock stars, film stars, or prime ministers. Of the last, Malcolm Fraser was not amused when informed that the restaurant was Dunstan's creation. 'What the hell are we doing here then?' Fraser demanded of his Liberal Party hosts but deigned to stay on at the function.³⁰ Some years later, media magnate Rupert Murdoch entertained his guests at a private dinner party in 'Dunstan's restaurant'. They included former Liberal premier Sir Thomas Playford, current state premier David Tonkin, and Sir Norman Young, but none of this

²⁷Interview with Phil Cramey, Longwood, 21 March 2001.

²⁸SRSA, GRG 75/1/16/1973, 20 February 1974.

²⁹Interview with Phil Cramey.

³⁰*Ibid.*

august company appeared to share Fraser's sentiments.³¹ The predictable association between Henry Ayers and Dunstan in the public mind soon became apparent. In August 1973 Dunstan wrote to Warren Bonython, president of the National Trust, complaining that the Trust's guides were 'constantly refer[ring] to the private dining room as "Dunstan's room" or "Dunstan's dining room".' He asked Bonython to correct 'this misrepresentation. In view of public attacks now made on the Government by an officer of the Trust and complaints to Members of Parliament.'³²

Not everyone was impressed, and as Baker noted in 1975, 'there is still, it appears, a local backlash, a strong suspicion that the place is too rich on all counts.'³³ The view was shared by one of Dunstan's more vocal parliamentary critics, Robin Millhouse. Millhouse had said on an earlier occasion:

I understand (although I have not had the pleasure of dining there) that even in the restaurant, although it has been well restored to make it, in the Premier's euphemism, "a living thing", the prices are so high as to be almost prohibitive for most Adelaide people to use.³⁴

The austere Millhouse, who was not noted for entertaining, went on to remark that he 'could not afford \$35 to stand two people to dinner.' Baker for his part had found that Henry Ayers was one of only four South Australian establishments 'known' in Sydney food circles and that 'Henry Ayers, much more than the other three seems to exist on imported patronage.' He continued, 'there is nowhere, but nowhere in Australia offering a more glorious setting in which to enjoy a plate of food, and take a glass or

³¹Stewart Cockburn, assisted by John Playford, *Playford: Benevolent Despot*, Adelaide, 1981, caption to photograph, p 229.

³²FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Ayers House file, 2 August 1973.

³³Sol Simeon, *Sunday Mail*, 3 August 1975.

³⁴SAPD: HA, 1 August 1973, p 128.

three.’ Not only that, but ‘he could take baked beans at one of the tables and feel impressed.’³⁵

Standards of Service

Although Baker was impressed with ‘a well-balanced, uncomplicated array of dishes...[following] a few [earlier] false starts,’³⁶ other patrons did not share his view. There were complaints from a previously satisfied local company, entertaining overseas principals, that both the food and the service had ‘slipped badly.’³⁷ The deputy director of the Tourist Bureau took Cramey to task for allowing his young son to ‘mingle’ with dinner guests. He found this to be ‘inappropriate’, as was the music from an electronic organ and ‘unsuitable stringed instruments.’³⁸ On another occasion the Lord Mayor of London and his entourage had to leave hurriedly to keep to their afternoon schedule, thanks to poor service from too few staff, who had also let the fire die out on a cold day.³⁹ Other patrons complained of poor service, long waits for food, inedible soup that tasted like Bonox, inedible, over-cooked, and tasteless lobster, in short, ‘disgraceful food and service.’⁴⁰ Michael Abbott, Cramey’s solicitor, interviewed his client and the staff then wrote to the Ayers House Management Committee to say he had found ‘no substance in the allegations.’ Two of the guests had ordered pheasant, a dish that required 50 minutes to prepare as the menu attempted to make clear, while the guests seemed not to realise that the lobster was of the green

³⁵Sol Simeon, *Sunday Mail*, 3 August 1975.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷SRSA, GRG 75/1/572/1975, Lawton Agencies to Premier’s Department, 6 August 1974.

³⁸*Ibid.*, Deputy Director Tourist Bureau, F G Correll to Cramey, 3 March 1975.

³⁹*Ibid.*, R D Bakewell, Premier’s Department to Cramey, 8 August 1975.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, M S Luke to R D Bakewell, Premier’s Department, 15 August 1975.

variety not red. Dunstan's departmental head, Bob Bakewell, sent a copy of the letter to the complainants who were not mollified. They wrote back to say that 'the tone of the letter reveals much about the restaurateur.'⁴¹ Another member of the unhappy group wrote directly to the premier and repeated much the same litany of complaints. The head waiter had insulted his wife and her friend by 'asking haughtily if they were familiar with green lobster, an appalling ill-served mess.' The wine waiter, he added, 'was excellent'.⁴²

Not long after the affair of the green lobster Dunstan himself was a complainant. He wrote to his friend Cramey to describe what could have been a serious case of food poisoning. Following a Monday luncheon for the French ambassador, the ambassador's wife and eight other guests, including the Minister of Education, Don Hopgood, Mrs. Hopgood and Dunstan's press secretary, 'were violently ill in the early hours.' The French Consul, Rex Lipman, and John Holland and his wife were affected to a lesser degree. Only Dunstan and Mrs. Lipman were not taken ill, although the fate of the ambassador and his wife had not been ascertained, since Dunstan was 'too embarrassed' to make enquiries. A waiter managed to add further to the occasion by spilling coffee over Lipman's suit. Members of a separate party in the next room had also complained of 'abdominal discomfort'. Dunstan suspected the soup was to blame. All of this was 'not good enough,' and guests were entitled to 'expect fresh food presented in an exemplary manner.'⁴³ On Dunstan's instructions Holland followed up the letter with a telephone call to Cramey, who responded un-diplomatically by sending the premier's letter on to his solicitor.

⁴¹SRSA, GRG 75/1/572/1975, Michael Abbott to Ayers House Management Committee, 5 September 1973, M S Luke to R D Bakewell, 21 October 1973.

⁴²*Ibid.*, N D Lovett to Dunstan, 27 August 1973.

⁴³*Ibid.*, Dunstan to Cramey, 2 October 1975.

Ironically, the offending soup was Dunstan's favourite, 'avgolemono' or egg and lemon, prepared personally by Cramey, according to Abbott's reply on behalf of his 'gravely concerned' client. His client suggested that perhaps the soup was 'too highly flavoured...[for the] untrained stomach.' This was clearly an absurd defence and regarded as such by those involved.⁴⁴ The Metropolitan County Board agreed, and sought an opinion from the experts at the Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science. The latter suggested *Clostridium Welchii* was a possibility, but it was now too late to carry out tests. Cramey and his staff were given a lesson in hygienic food handling from the County Board's health inspector, and Cramey also received a warning. Dunstan later sent a cheque to Abbott in payment for the disastrous meal, less the 25 per cent discount offered in settlement, and commented that the problem with the soup was not its 'flavour' as Cramey had so disingenuously claimed.⁴⁵ While Cramey was regarded as an astute businessman, he was also something of a 'rough diamond' and not a likely choice for his Henry Ayer's role, unless Dunstan was once again cocking a snoot at the Establishment.

On a more positive note, Cramey successfully catered for Queen Elizabeth II during her visit in March 1977. The luncheon at the Kaiser Stuhl Winery in the Barossa Valley was a logistical nightmare, which Cramey conducted like a military exercise. A health inspector co-opted from the Adelaide City Corporation to act as a consultant later recalled advising Cramey 'to take rice off the menu, because rice is notorious, sometimes, for causing food poisoning.'⁴⁶ Cramey and his manager at the time, Silvio De Angelis, drilled batches of selected waiters on the Ayers House lawns,

⁴⁴SRSA, GRG 75/1/572/1975, Michael Abbott to Dunstan, 24 October 1975.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, Dunstan to Abbott, 30 October 1975

⁴⁶Adelaide City Council Archives [ACCA], Oral History Collection, OH 80, transcript of interview with Peter Griffin, 10 June 1994.

ferried them to the winery on Sundays and ‘put them through [their paces] and pass[ed] them. I put a hundred in, which was one for six people.’ Cramey realised ‘this was a very important job for Don, because if this was a failure Ayers House would be [also] and...a set of [Adelaide] people we won’t mention...would have loved it to be a failure.’⁴⁷ Refrigerated butchers’ vans, loaned by the South Australian Meat Corporation, transported the food, cutlery, linen and glassware from North Terrace to the Barossa Valley. The Queen, according to Cramey, enjoyed her lunch immensely and commanded him to assemble all of his staff for a royal thank you.⁴⁸ In that same eventful year the Art Gallery of South Australia hosted the first Chinese Archaeological Exhibition to reach Adelaide. Ayers House catered for the customary reception with a far from customary menu:

River Murray yabbies, fresh avocado pears and two sauces. Arafura curry, fillet of pork, chicken and prawns in coconut milk. Lamb Ayers House, boned whole lamb stuffed with boned pheasant and quail, three summer vegetables. Summer sweet ship, water melon, rock melon, Adelaide Hills strawberries. Fruit and nuts of season, glazed cherries. Chinese tea.⁴⁹

Given the content of the menu and its location in Peter Ward’s papers, one can safely assume Dunstan’s direct involvement in the selection, with likely input from Ward.

‘Sausagegate’

The breath of scandal briefly touched Ayers House when long-running allegations of food ‘wastage’ and pilfering from the Hospitals Department included suggestions of a link with ‘a friendly Lebanese man at the Ayers House kitchen, where

⁴⁷Interview with Phil Cramey, Longwood, 21 March 2001.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹State Library South Australia, [SLSA], PRG 1078, Peter Ward Papers, 9 June 1977.

the Premier regularly ate.’⁵⁰ The State Opposition pursued the allegations in relation to the Hospitals Department for all they were worth and focused on what became known as ‘Sausagegate’ in their 1977 election campaign, to little avail. However, Dunstan had not helped his own case by ‘storm[ing] out of a press conference he had called to discuss the Auditor-General’s 1977 report.’⁵¹ The resignation of Auditor-General Des Byrne in February 1978 again stirred the pot. Byrne, who was aged only 61, could have renewed his appointment for another three-year term. The Opposition alleged government pressure, which Dunstan denied. The *Advertiser* editorialised support for the Opposition, pointing out that Byrne’s annual report the previous October had criticised the government for allowing ‘food wastage’ to continue.⁵² In June 1980 columnist Max Newton suggested the proprietors of the Ayers House restaurants ‘were knowingly receiving food stolen from the Glenside Hospital.’ Following a swift response from Michael Abbott on Cramey’s behalf, a retraction and apology soon appeared in the *Australian*.⁵³

The uphill battle faced by Dunstan in his attempts to lift the standards of Adelaide restaurant cuisine away from traditional Anglo fare is aptly illustrated by the luncheon menu offered to a local company late in 1978 at Henry Ayers:

French onion soup
Roast beef and Yorkshire pudding
Cheese, greens, biscuits
Coffee

⁵⁰SLSA, PRG 1078, Peter Ward Papers, undated and unsigned memo to Dunstan, c June 1974.

⁵¹*Advertiser*, 13 October 1977.

⁵²*Advertiser*, 16 January 1978.

⁵³*Australian*, 11 August 1980.

Wines as selected.⁵⁴

After the imaginative menu offered at the 1977 reception, with its emphasis on freshness and originality, this later effort represents a return to the uninspiring traditional fare of the past. In sum, the following quote from a restaurant guide by Tony Baker/Sol Simeon is apposite, although, as noted above, his 'truly memorable experience' was not of the kind shared by some unfortunate diners:

Inevitably, a restaurant which sets out with the promise and ambition of a Henry Ayers must have its offdays. But it can undoubtedly produce a truly memorable experience.⁵⁵

Given the nature of the restaurant industry, the occasional and inevitable complaint over food, service, or price needs to be balanced against the more positive aspects. Naturally, Dunstan later claimed that 'the whole thing has worked splendidly.'⁵⁶ From Dunstan's perspective this might well have been the case, but in reality, as I have attempted to show, the restaurant concept was more like the curate's egg, good in parts. The Public Building Department outlaid at least \$298,200 on the restoration of Ayers House as a 'historical tourist complex.'⁵⁷ This expenditure not only saved an important link with Adelaide's past but also provided a home for the National Trust and a colonial museum. Tom Playford had promised to consider the establishment of

⁵⁴FUSA, Dunstan Collection, 'A' Miscellaneous, Ayers House, luncheon for ATCO Ltd and others, 13 November 1978.

⁵⁵Sol Simeon, *Eating Out in Adelaide*, 1979, p 38.

⁵⁶Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, p 181.

⁵⁷SRSA, GRG 75/1/373/1972, Public Building Department minute to Premier, 8 June 1973.

such a museum at this location as far back as 1951.⁵⁸ However, the unlikely proposal to make Ayers House a prime attraction for everyday tourists in horse-drawn carriages failed to have sufficient appeal. Perhaps in part this was because Adelaide's functional gridiron street layout lacked the romance of Rome, or more than likely there were simply not enough tourists to make such an operation viable. Dunstan defended 'what some left-wing critics [called] "restaurant socialism"' by stating, 'I don't see anything particularly wrong in people being able to go out and eat in a restaurant. I know a lot of working-class people who do.'⁵⁹ But the working class did not eat at Henry Ayers. His interviewer noted that it 'is so *haute cuisine* its prices must rate with the most expensive in Australia.' Unfortunately, he did not go on to ask Dunstan the obvious question. One commentator suggested that 'to the man in the street the Athens of the South, the Design State, cottage industries and many other favourite Dunstanisms had little relevance.'⁶⁰ Henry Ayers restaurant in particular was one such 'Dunstanism,' since it catered exclusively for those at the top end of town.

The Festival Theatre Restaurants

Thus far I have not mentioned the other government-sponsored restaurants at the Adelaide Festival Theatre. The Festival Theatre restaurant and the Playhouse bistro have only superficial parallels with Henry Ayers and Paxtons; they function as part of the theatre complex and do not 'stand alone'. Although Dunstan as premier had a good deal to do with bringing the Festival Theatre complex to fruition, he appears not to have had any particular involvement with the eateries. In the first year or two after the

⁵⁸Kerrie Round, 'Preserving and celebrating South Australia's past', *Playford's South Australia: Essays on the History of South Australia 1933-1968*, Bernie O'Neill, Judith Raftery, Kerrie Round (eds.), 1996, p 324.

⁵⁹Andrew Clark, *National Times*, 12-17 May 1975.

⁶⁰S T Barnard, "South Australia," in *Sir Henry, Bjelke, Don baby and friends*, Max Harris, Geoffrey Dutton, (eds.), Melbourne, 1971, p 55.

centre was opened the Hotel Australia at North Adelaide did the catering and its crest figured on the wine lists.⁶¹ The hotel was the occasional venue for State Banquets after South Australian Hotel fell to the wreckers and before Henry Ayers opened. Dunstan's focus in 1973, a month after the opening, was the potential of the Festival Theatre as a convention centre rather than on its restaurant.⁶² Tony Baker found the restaurant prices only 'just scrap[ed] home under...[the] definition...“for the people”.' This was Dunstan's much touted justification of the complex.⁶³ Baker thought the prices were 'aimed at businessmen and housewives with a healthy surplus from the housekeeping...[the décor was] utterly functional...[and] the food very nearly lives up to the surroundings.' He and his wife completed their meal with 'insipid hotel coffee' but were put off even more by the faces of tourists and their children pressed against the plate glass windows of the dining area. Notwithstanding Baker's experience, the venues in various guises have at least managed to maintain a service to theatre patrons and thus fulfilled their major function.

The Premier's Dining Room

While Ayers House was the favoured venue for state occasions, for more mundane events such as luncheons for visiting diplomats, or literary lunches the venue was usually the cabinet room, handy to the premier's office in the State Administration building. Catering was provided either by private contractors or staff from the State Railways Catering Service. Peter Ward was highly critical of a lunch served by Nationwide Caterers to the World President of the National Council for Women late in

⁶¹Sol Simeon, *Sunday Mail*, 10 June 1973.

⁶²*News*, 3 July 1973.

⁶³Sol Simeon, *Sunday Mail*, 10 June 1973.

1973. In a memo to departmental head Bob Bakewell he described the food in unflattering detail and declared it as reaching

a new and fascinating low in our official food...one of the unsung administrative achievements of the past three years is the constantly spectacular fall in the quality of food service in the Cabinet room.⁶⁴

Bakewell waited six months before suggesting that Ward might care to reconsider his minute, since Dunstan had proposed a new 'executive' dining room. The premier's expensive new facility eventually became operational in 1977 and reflected Dunstan's considerable input into the design and specifications. It was located on the second floor of the Education Building in Flinders Street as part of the 'convention centre', and Ayers House might have initially provided food and service.⁶⁵ According to one caterer although the dining room seated a maximum of 40, the 'fabulous commercial style kitchen was equipped to serve 400' from fan-forced ovens, to work benches, to refrigerators and freezers, stainless steel predominated, even to the cutlery set.⁶⁶

Former Liberal premier Dean Brown described the facility as:

The first state dining room...it had a cocktail room, a separate room and bar and then this large dining room...with the most lavish kitchen you would find...it was the sort of thing you'd find in a big modern hotel.⁶⁷

Brown also mentioned that Dunstan personally set up the wine cellar, and he recalled enjoying some of Dunstan's remaining selection as a member of the Tonkin Government in 1980.

⁶⁴SLSA, PRG 1078, Peter Ward Papers, minute from Peter Ward to Bob Bakewell, 8 November 1973.

⁶⁵Email from Debi Chenoweth, Department of Treasury and Finance, to the writer, 7 May 2003.

⁶⁶Telephone conversation with Tony Saunders, Old South Caterers, 2 June 2003.

⁶⁷Interview with Dean Brown, Victor Harbor, 18 March 2001.

Open Air Eating

Dunstan returned from an official visit to London and Western Europe in early June 1971 and subsequently provided his cabinet colleagues with a lengthy report. Among the items in that report was an outline of open-air 'catering' facilities for tourists in Rome and Athens, a scene which Dunstan was keen to reproduce in Adelaide. The 1971 visit helped to further consolidate the impressions and information from a similar trip in 1970 and his 1969 excursion to Rome. Dunstan and his research assistant Peter Ward broke their 1971 homeward flight in Athens to 'rest' and to have an 'informal' look at 'tourist facilities.' They had broken their outward-bound flight in Rome for similar reasons. Back in Adelaide, Dunstan wrote to the Australian embassies in each city requesting their help. In Rome he wanted photographs

of the sidewalk cafes on the Via Veneto...[including] the kind of semi-permanent structures...used to...reduce traffic noise levels and disturbance to clients and to provide some measure of climatic protection.⁶⁸

The embassy councillor in Athens was asked to provide photographs of 'Syntagma Square, the Plaka, and the Piraeus-Castella [sic] areas.' Dunstan also wanted 'several examples of the menus used in such places,' and both embassies duly obliged. Dunstan soon advised cabinet that his tourist development officer was preparing briefs for the Henley Beach and Glenelg Councils 'to encourage...the development of quality resort facilities' in Esplanade and Moseley Squares. Another brief was to be presented to the Adelaide City Council 'in an effort to encourage their participation in the development of such facilities on the northern side of North Terrace between King William Street

⁶⁸SRSA, GRG 75/1/1A/1971, 9 June 1971.

and Pulteney Street.’ In addition the necessary amendments to the Licensing Act were also in train.⁶⁹

Dunstan later wrote to Adelaide Lord Mayor Bill Hayes on the same subject and enclosed an extract from his report to cabinet, together with some of the photographs sent by the embassies. In his effort to get Hayes on side Dunstan launched into considerable detail taken from his tourist development paper.⁷⁰ Among a host of ideas, he and his staff were planning a restaurant and sculpture court between the old armoury building, more recently home to the State’s archives, and the Art Gallery. They envisaged a café-restaurant sited on the front part of the service road between the Museum and the Art Gallery on North Terrace. Using the Athenian model, this ‘casual’ facility would be serviced from the larger and more formal sculpture court restaurant. Their concept also encompassed a rash of other ‘restaurant-cafes’ on both sides of North Terrace extending from Pulteney Street to King William Road, as many as a dozen in all ‘in terms of overseas site usage.’ ‘For the purposes of conceptual planning only,’ Dunstan suggested three such establishments could be located in front of the Institute Building, the Public Library, and the Museum. Displaying breathtaking optimism or naivety, he believed that the considerable problem, not to say cost, of providing service areas and toilets

could, if negotiations were successful, be housed in the basement of any of the three buildings concerned, or in underground areas. A public washroom serving the whole area could be sited below ground.⁷¹

⁶⁹SRSA, GRG 75/1/307/1971, extract from report to cabinet, nd, c June 1971.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 21 October 1971.

⁷¹*Ibid.*

Professor Denis Winston's development plan for Victoria Square already included 'a large open-air restaurant'. Dunstan saw similar possibilities for Light and Hindmarsh Squares, 'especially the latter where they could be served from existing hotels [the Greek model again] and where there is already a base population capable of using such facilities.' Dunstan was keen 'to have co-ordinated thinking on these matters...[and undertook to] circulate a printed general suggested brief to all concerned.'⁷²

The idea of transforming Adelaide into a replica of Southern Europe for the benefit of tourists and locals alike was not entirely new to Dunstan and his acolytes. I have already referred briefly to the article 'by the Premier' for an *Advertiser* supplement in the previous year. 'Some New Directions in Tourist Planning', written by Tony Baker and Peter Ward, noted the similarities between Adelaide's climate and those of Southern California and Southern Europe. The duo eulogised the hedonistic delights enjoyed by tourists in Southern France and told how the centuries-old attraction of *la dolce vita* was no longer the sole province of the wealthy:

Now many thousands of sun-hungry tourists stay at rambling hotels, eat at roadside cafes and sit during the evenings in wide piazzas, talking, relaxing, and listening to music and dancing.⁷³

This, they suggested, was exactly the 'style' needed to develop Adelaide's tourist potential. In particular North Terrace and the city's parks and squares plus the seaside squares were nominated as the perfect locations for a homegrown version of the romanticised Southern European ideal. A Dunstan concept, not circulated at the time, clearly owed something to comments of Keith Sangster in his Royal Commission report. Sangster thought that not all restaurants needed to be 'upmarket'

⁷²SRSA, GRG 75/1/307/1971, 21 October 1971.

⁷³FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Don Dunstan articles, no 24, 24 September 1970.

establishments. He noted that certain restaurants provided a simple ‘fish or a grill or a meal in some national character with wine and at low prices.’ He had no wish to see this changed under a licensing system.⁷⁴ Dunstan wanted to take the idea of encouraging low-price ethnic restaurants a step further. According to his one time attorney-general Peter Duncan, ‘he had a vision of different ethnic areas in Adelaide largely defined by food.’⁷⁵ Dunstan aimed to do this by a process of encouragement and persuasion, not by prescription:

He saw Hindley Street as a place where Greek influence might have been greater. He saw Rundle Street-east as a place where Italian influence might have been greater. He saw the Central market area where Asian influence might have been greater. He saw down in the southwestern corner of the city as an area where Arab and Muslim cultures generally might have been predominant near the small mosque.

Duncan thought that Dunstan’s personal interest and government support for restaurants and the industry probably evolved to the extent of offering financial help as an added incentive to those ethnic restaurateurs wishing to take part.

Opposition to Eating *Al Fresco*

Not everyone shared the Dunstan ideal of wining and dining in the streets. The Temperance Alliance wrote to Attorney-General Len King and sent a copy to the premier, expressing ‘deep regret’ at the announcement in November 1971 ‘that licensed boulevard cafes would be permitted in Adelaide next year.’ While Dunstan wanted the local scene to emulate the south of France, the Alliance warned of the dire consequences now attending the French:

⁷⁴Sangster Report , p 12.

⁷⁵Interview with Peter Duncan, North Adelaide, 27 June 2001.

Our latest report on the alarming position in France due to out-of-hand drinking is worthy of serious thought, lest Australia sinks to the same level. Over 22,000 people died in one year in France from cirrhosis of the liver, a complaint closely allied with alcohol intake. The most prevalent grounds for divorce brought by women-folk was drinking by their husbands. On average each French adult consumes 29 gallons of wine per year compared with Australia's two gallons per year. One out of every three psychiatric beds in France is filled by an alcoholic. France is noted for its street cafes!⁷⁶

The last sentence had been added on another typewriter for good measure. Neither King nor Dunstan responded to general secretary Albert Jenkinson's request for them to meet a small deputation. Another belated objection came from the Restaurateurs Association, which complained that if hotels were given 'sidewalk restaurant licences' this would extend their trading hours until 1.00 am, thus further eroding the already limited trade available to members.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, in the wake of the announcement, Judge Laurie Johnson at the Licensing Court was considering how best to provide for the necessary changes to the act. This would now have to allow for the legal sale and consumption of alcohol on Adelaide streets, a question that could only have arisen in the wake of Dunstan's earlier reforms. Johnson urged caution in introducing Adelaideans to the sudden availability of food and wine in their open spaces, 'that is, until the public becomes accustomed to what is in this State, a new approach.'⁷⁸ Not only was this concept new to Adelaide but it 'would, of course, make it unique among the cities of Australia.' This comment came from a licence applicant, Giuliano de Francesco, who was already proprietor of the Golden Door restaurant at the Royal Admiral hotel and claimed to be

⁷⁶SRSA, GRG 75/1/307/1971, 3 December 1971.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, Rex Tilbrook to Dunstan, 8 March 1972.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, Johnson to Dunstan, 10 December 1971.

‘quite familiar...[with] the open-air refreshment facilities of Europe.’⁷⁹ Dunstan was well aware of the need to educate the public before introducing ‘radical’ new concepts too rapidly. Unfortunately for Dunstan, the same precept also applied to most of his fellow politicians, other public servants, and many restaurateurs. Writing at the end of the ‘Dunstan Decade’ in the guise of restaurant critic Sol Simeon, his former press secretary Tony Baker still found it necessary to note:

Our restaurateurs are an unadventurous lot. But then they have cause. Our customers are an even more unadventurous lot. They not only accept overcrowded plates, unnecessary garnishes and heavy, thickened dishes, they positively flock to places which provide them. If people seem to enjoy muck is it any wonder that they are provided with, well shall we say, food that is less than ideal?⁸⁰

Johnson carefully weighed up the most appropriate name of the permit and for various reasons rejected ‘sidewalk’, ‘footpath’, and ‘boulevard’ before settling on ‘outdoor refreshment permit.’ Among other considerations he suggested the Licensing Court be empowered to issue permits to those already licensed as publicans, restaurateurs, or wine sellers, because they could be expected to at least have ‘experience in the serving of food and liquor.’ The permit area would have to be delineated, and he readily agreed with Dunstan that ‘in some areas some form of shelter would need to be available for the washing of dishes and glasses and the storage of bottles and food.’⁸¹

A further point of significance was the necessity in most circumstances to obtain local government approval. Over the years this would prove to be a consistent sticking point. The experience of Asio Cognetti is one example of the prevarication

⁷⁹FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Open Air Restaurants file, 15 June 1972.

⁸⁰Sol Simeon, 1979, p viii.

⁸¹SRSA, GRG 75/1/307/1971, Johnson to Dunstan, 19 November 1971.

practised by local government. Cognetti, then proprietor of Asio's restaurant at that time on King William street, wrote to Adelaide's town clerk asking permission to set up 'a side-walk café on the outer few feet of the footpath' outside his premises. Cognetti wanted the council to plant 'street trees...in front of my premises similar to adjoining areas...[and proposed to use] removable tables and chairs and colourful umbrellas' in exactly the European style Dunstan wanted to establish here. Cognetti offered to explain his plan to council, but according to Peter Ward's note on a copy of the letter, his request went unanswered.⁸²

Ten years later the move to the 'sidewalks' was still being resisted by local government bodies. Aaron Penley and his partner set up 'Lunch Plus' on a corner of Unley Road in 1981. Although the premises, 'a recycled Mobil service station,' were private property, the partners still had to get council permission 'to put tables and chairs out on our own verandah.'⁸³ They decided against applying for a liquor licence, because the existing staff toilets were not regarded as adequate for customers if alcohol was served, although satisfactory for coffee drinkers. As Penley recalls:

All those silly issues...we...[had] to literally force the council to change and accept...that we wanted people to sit outside at tables and chairs...and it wasn't a public footpath so there was no risk of tripping up old bodies.

The partners found that their customers, like their European counterparts, enjoyed dining outside whatever the weather. Dunstan's vision was vindicated by one patron who could not be accommodated inside on a dreadful winter's day but was perfectly content to sit outside in 'a howling gale.' According to Penley, the patron said

⁸²FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Open Air Restaurants file, nd, c 1972. See also Elizabeth Sexton, 'Out of the Cellars and Into the Sun: A history of restaurants in the City of Adelaide 1940-80', MA (Applied Historical Studies), Department of History, University of Adelaide, 2000, p 83, for a reproduction of the letter.

look, if I was in Paris I'd be sitting on the edge of a street corner, run over by a Renault and a mad Frenchman, having a \$10 cup of coffee and saying, "I'm having a fabulous time"...so why can't I do it here in South Australia?

In this same interview Penley commented, 'you can change a law but it doesn't change people's thinking.' This kind of difficulty was not confined to South Australia. In 1994 some North Sydney residents and their council were still opposed to cafes or restaurants wanting to set chairs and tables on footpaths.⁸⁴ Given the responsibility of local government to provide safe passage for pedestrians and access for delivery people this response is understandable. The possibility of injury to a member of the public due to negligence on the part of a council could well result in a liability claim.

Commenting on the recent proliferation of tables, chairs, and umbrellas on footpaths in Australian cities and tourist towns, Grahame Latham made the point that 'Dunstan always thought within the context of an establishment,' in other words, a fairly conventional or traditional restaurant design. Whereas more recently, as Latham continued:

Restaurants in most of the major city, streets...now actually [front] on [to] the footpath... I don't think Dunstan would have really foreseen going to that extent of where they were just placed everywhere.⁸⁵

Adelaide's Lord Mayor Bill Hayes was asked in 1984 whether it was a 'difficult decision' to allow the 'first kerbside café [The Coalyard] in Hindmarsh Square.' Hayes was 'not sure he [Dunstan] was Premier at that time, but he certainly encouraged it at a later date.' Hayes recalled, 'no, there was nothing difficult about it. It was just a matter

⁸³Interview with Aaron Penley, Goolwa, 13 January 2002.

⁸⁴John Newton, *Wogfood: An Oral History with Recipes*, Milson's Point, New South Wales, 1996, p 43.

⁸⁵Interview with Grahame Latham, Fullarton, 14 March 2001.

of overcoming any conservatism that existed.’ He went on to remark on how he found it strange that the concept had not ‘taken on very much. [Although] one sees much of it in Europe, particularly in Paris.’⁸⁶ While Adelaide was a ‘windy city’ and ‘a hot city in the summer-time’, the weather was ‘much more conducive than the European climate to sidewalk cafes, so I don’t know why they haven’t really taken on here.’ One factor apart from innate conservatism was the inertia of many of the restaurateurs and the hoteliers, who were also inhibited by the extra expense involved and an understandable desire not to have any more dealings with officialdom than were absolutely necessary. The next move from the Dunstan camp was directed at this group.

Government Publicity Campaign

Dunstan’s cabinet notes from the Rome and Athens sojourns, with one of the photographs supplied by his embassy contacts, were incorporated into a smart, designer-executed brochure entitled, ‘OPEN AIR RESTAURANTS AND CAFES IN ADELAIDE’.⁸⁷ The cover page featured a porthole-view of the Café de Paris on the Via Veneto in Rome, surmounted by a stylised, smiling sun. Variations on the sun motif decorated other pages, interspersed with sketches of suggested local alternatives on the theme of outdoor dining in the European fashion, with ‘seasonal restaurants and cafes.’ The sales pitch was based on the way of life enjoyed in Europe, from Rome and Athens in the south to Copenhagen in the north. Once again, Adelaide’s abundance of suitable open-air sites, as drawn up by Dunstan, were listed, with the inclusion this time of North Adelaide’s Melbourne and O’Connell streets. Larger sites had also been identified ‘in the North Adelaide Golf Links or adjacent to the olive groves near Mann

⁸⁶ACCA, Oral History Collection, OH 20, Interview, 27 December 1984. The Coalyard restaurant approval was dated 19 July 1973.

⁸⁷SRSA, GRG 75/1/307/1971. The brochure was released on 28 July 1973. See also Sexton, 2000, p 82 for a reproduction of the front cover page.

Terrace'. The suburbs rated a general mention, but no sites were identified, although the Semaphore Esplanade had been added to the familiar beach-side squares. The headings from a 'typical' Athenian restaurant's menu, one of a trio servicing a square comparable in area with Hindmarsh Square, was set out in the following detail.

HORS D'OEUVRES

These consist of plates of sea foods, or selection of meat, salads, and olives. In South Australia, oysters, yabbies, shrimps and crayfish could be included to give a regional flavour.'

SALADS

Either as a meal in themselves or to accompany a larger course, these range from a plain french salad through to tomato, onion and cucumber salads with capers and black olives, or platters or courgettes, artichokes, or dressed beans.

FISH

Fish dishes are available in a variety of styles. They range from heavy soups like *bouillabaisse* through to platters of fried shrimps eaten with the fingers.

GRILLS

Steaks, veal escalopes and lamb cutlets, carefully cut and prepared as preferred, are available within ten minutes of ordering.

VARIETIES

A large range of these small dishes are served to accompany drinks. They may be small fried fish, platters of prepared small meats, or even prepared vegetables, pickled, boiled or steamed.

CHEESES

A wide variety of cheeses are available to accompany drinks together with black olives and pickled vegetables.

FRUITS

Seasonal fresh fruits are always available, always well washed and cool.

SWEETS

These range from smooth Italian water or cream ices through to elaborate cakes and fruit compotes.

BEVERAGES

A full liquor range is always available, together with fresh fruit juices, coffees, teas, bottled or glassed mineral

waters and milk drinks.⁸⁸

This was an array of food and drink designed to stimulate the gastric juices and to demonstrate what Dunstan considered should be available on the streets of Adelaide. The notes on necessary facilities extended to describe details of weather-protective awnings and perspex panels as used in Rome.

The assumption that toilet facilities need only be available ‘within the general area’ or could magically be ‘established near the serving or bistro outlet’ reappeared. The Adelaide City Council would not have enjoyed reading how ‘many’ of their European counterparts ‘upgrade[d] public facilities to suit the requirements of the total area.’ The issue of toilet standards had long been a matter of contention between hoteliers, restaurateurs, and the Licensing Court. Indeed, one extremely zealous inspector of licensed premises was nicknamed ‘stainless steel’ Pope because of his insistence on top-grade fittings.⁸⁹ One of the reasons later advanced for the limited popularity of ‘bring your own wine’ or BYO restaurants in Adelaide was the requirement for both classes of licensed restaurants to have toilet facilities of the same standard.⁹⁰ Practical considerations of this nature would not become part of Dunstan’s experience until much later in his life.

Further Difficulties

Two other such assumptions need mentioning. The first is the idea that waiters would happily thread their way through the traffic on major Adelaide streets, conveying trays of food and drink from a base servery to patrons waiting patiently at

⁸⁸SRSA, GRG 75/1/307/1971. Details from brochure on file.

⁸⁹Telephone conversation with Doug Claessen, 16 November 2000.

⁹⁰ACC Archives, Oral History Collection, OH 80, interview with Peter Griffin, 1 June 1994.

some distance away on the other side of the road. Apart from the obvious safety issues, transferring such a system to highly regulated and unionised Adelaide was effectively pie in the sky. The second assumption related to demographics: Dunstan talked of hundreds of potential restaurant sites in Adelaide and thousands of people enjoying the facilities in Athens and Rome, but neither was transferable. Overly optimistic projections of population growth in South Australia helped to spell the end of Dunstan's dream of a satellite city at Monarto,⁹¹ and equally there were not the thousands of enthusiastic diners needed to make his outdoor eating dream a reality. In the brochure all of the positive delights, cleverly pitched for food lovers to savour and entrepreneurs to consider, were countered by the reality of the last page. 'HOW TO APPLY' set out the lengthy procedure for holders of the three eligible classes of liquor licences to follow if they wanted to obtain the outdoor permit. The applicant had to first obtain the approval of the relevant local council, after submitting plans and an 'operational outline.' Both the council and the Court had to be convinced that the proposed 'development' would be appropriate to the locality, properly designed, provided where necessary with adequate food and drink preparation areas, provided with toilet facilities. The Court would decide the hours of opening, the 'standards' of operation, and collect the 'nominal' annual fee. Only four types of permits could be considered by the Court, (1) 'large scale open air restaurant areas...to be serviced from established licensed premises,'(2) 'large scale...to be serviced from new licensed premises,'(3) 'small footpath or open air table areas adjacent to established licensed premises,' and (4) 'small...adjacent to new licensed premises.' Several hundred of the

⁹¹Andrew Parkin and Cedric Pugh, "Urban Policy and Metropolitan Adelaide", in *The Dunstan Decade: Social Democracy at the State Level*, Andrew Parkin and Allan Patience (eds.), Melbourne, 1981, p 105.

brochures were sent out to hotels, restaurants, councils and anyone thought likely to be interested. The response was less than overwhelming.⁹²

Lord Mayor Hayes had written to Dunstan before the brochure was released, advising him that council approval of The Coalyard restaurant application for the Hindmarsh Square location was certain. However, a similar request from Con Bambacas for his Iliad restaurant in Whitmore Square was only partly approved.⁹³ A fortnight later Peter Ward passed on to Dunstan a suggestion from two Hindley Street restaurateurs who wanted the street closed from Bank to Morphett Streets from 12 noon on Saturday to midnight Sunday to allow outdoor licensed eating and drinking areas, whenever the weather was suitable.⁹⁴ Bill Hayes had finished his mayoral term and the suggestion was not taken further. One hotelier of the few who bothered to respond to the brochure said he had read it ‘with great interest’, particularly since his earlier application to the Licensing Court for approval to set up a ‘small footpath restaurant’ had been met only with silence.⁹⁵ Apart from coping with an often unresponsive bureaucracy, entrepreneurial restaurateurs with financial constraints or cash-flow problems also faced the unwillingness of a conservative banking sector. One of the joint proprietors of a Rundle street restaurant/wine bar wrote to Dunstan in desperation when their attempt ‘to develop a sophisticated establishment that would not become a den for teenagers like many other similar establishments’ ran into a banking brickwall. He added, ‘we are not getting any joy from the banks who somehow believe there is no future for restaurants in Adelaide’. He and his partner

⁹²SRSA, GRG 75/1/307/1971. Details from brochure on file.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 3 July 1973.

⁹⁴SRSA, GRG 75/1/307/1971, Ward to Dunstan, 18 July 1973.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, Kevin Tilden, Tatts Hotel, to Dunstan, 14 August 1973.

were hoping for a government guarantee of ‘an overdraft facility,’ and Dunstan steered them towards the Industry Assistance Corporation.⁹⁶

In spite of Dunstan’s best efforts, culminating in the luke-warm reception afforded the brochure, the only outdoor facility along the lines suggested for North Terrace had already made its brief appearance. The experienced restaurateurs Primo Caon and his brother Giocondo, nicknamed ‘Secundo’, gained approval to operate The North Terrace Boulevard Café for the duration of the 1972 Adelaide Festival of Arts. The temporary facility was set up on the lawns in front of the South Australian Museum.⁹⁷ Elizabeth Sexton notes that ‘the menu was presented on a souvenir placemat, welcoming “Festival lovers for Brunch, Smoko, Luncheon, and Evening and after Theatre.”’⁹⁸ Architect John Chappel wrote to Peter Ward later that year on behalf of a client who ran a pizza bar in Hindley Street. His client was interested in taking up where the Caons left off with a more permanent operation, and according to Chappel the City Council had ‘no objection.’ He asked Ward for advice, foreseeing problems over toilets and the ‘erection of structures.’⁹⁹ Presumably the Council had no objection in principal, that is, until they saw the detailed plans and specifications. Chappel’s project did not come to fruition, nor did another architect’s concept for a client who had ideas for an open air bistro in Victoria Square. While based on the Caon brothers’ Festival operation, this was rather more ambitious, with a ‘fibreglass dome and demountable Polystyrene panels, covered by ribbed aluminium.’ The plans were sent to the City Council and copies to Dunstan on the same day asking for his support,

⁹⁶SRSA, GRG 75/1/307/1971, P. E. Taylor to Dunstan, 18 October 1974.

⁹⁷Sexton, 2000, p 82.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, p 78.

⁹⁹GRG 75/1/307/1971, 8 August 1972.

since ‘we understand that you visited various Establishments of this nature during your recent Trips Overseas.’ Len Amadio was detailed to investigate and report to the departmental head, Bob Bakewell. He found the project to be well conceived, except for the cost-benefit analysis which assumed an all year round operation. Amadio thought it was likely that it would operate only four months of the year and then ‘only effectively on cool summer days and evenings.’ The proposed location in the north-eastern sector of the square was not within the area recommended by the Lord Mayor’s Planning Committee; moreover, Amadio was not impressed with the proponent’s present establishment, because ‘it was not of the highest quality.’ No action was to be taken.¹⁰⁰

Rex Tilbrook, in his tardy complaint to Dunstan on behalf of the Restaurateurs Association, claimed that his members would be disadvantaged if hotels were granted outdoor permits, thus lengthening their potential trading hours from 10 pm until 1 am. Tilbrook explained that the current trading hours advantage enjoyed by restaurants was all that was left, especially in the city, ‘to negotiate a little bit of business to keep...solvent and operable.’¹⁰¹ He was also extremely concerned at ‘current deplorable attendances in all restaurants.’ Tilbrook had already complained of the difficulties often faced by newcomers to the restaurant industry in their dealings with the Licensing Court. On a number of occasions an inspector allegedly approved newly purchased premises and the applicant was granted a licence. Shortly afterwards a second inspector appeared with a list of building alterations to be done. In another case a business was purchased and the licence duly transferred by the Court, and later an inspector called demanding alterations to the premises. The new licensee was then in

¹⁰⁰SRSA, GRG 75/1/259/1972, Jury Burden Pty. Ltd. to Dunstan, 13 June 1972, also Amadio to Director, Premier and Development, 24 August 1972.

¹⁰¹SRSA, GRG 75/1/307/1971, Tilbrook to Dunstan, 8 March 1972.

an invidious position, with no money left over from the purchase and unable to trade until the alterations were completed to the inspector's satisfaction. The superintendent of the Licensing Court, L. J. 'stainless steel' Pope, responding to a 'please explain' from Dunstan, acknowledged there were delays and objections to some licence renewals, but could not comment further because they were *sub judice*. In any event he countered that it was the Licensing Court not the inspector that held sway.

The early failure of The Coalyard restaurant,¹⁰² the concerns expressed by Tilbrook and his other industry contacts, together with press comment gradually combined to persuade Dunstan of the need to look at industry problems. He eventually set up a working party early in 1974, but it was January 1976 before his press secretary John Templeton gave Dunstan a preview of its findings. Templeton advised that:

In general, the working party accepts many of the industry's reasons for financial problems, in particular aspects relating to labour costs, licensing laws, training costs, competition with other low cost sectors of the food industry, and lack of professional expertise.¹⁰³

The working party had added a *caveat* warning newcomers to check existing problems before entering the industry. Management training was a prominent emphasis among the eight recommendations, including moves to involve the Restaurateurs Association in their execution. Fortunately, the new School of Food and Catering would respond to industry training needs over the next few years. Echoing Dunstan's 1971 precepts, the working party belatedly saw the need to make the financial advisory service of the Premier's Development Division available to restaurateurs.

¹⁰²The Coalyard restaurant debacle is set out in the next chapter.

¹⁰³FUSA, Dunstan Collection, "R" Miscellaneous file, 21 January 1976.

Asian Festivals

Another area of Dunstan's involvement in food-related matters while he was premier of South Australia was his attempt to establish a Malaysian connection. Dunstan's personal interest in Asian food, heightened by his relationship and then marriage to Penang-born Adele Koh,¹⁰⁴ fitted perfectly into an otherwise unlikely exercise. International relations are the prerogative of the Commonwealth, not individual states, and federal agencies are not impressed with any potential threat to 'their' domains, nor were they at Dunstan's intrusion. The 'twinning' of Adelaide with Georgetown, Penang, in December 1973 was a Dunstan initiative aimed at forging trade links between South Australia and pre-federation Malaya. This Malaysian connection followed a meeting in Adelaide between Dunstan and Lim Chong Eu, Penang's chief minister, and agreement for various economic, trade and cultural exchanges. The happenstance of Adelaide's founder, Colonel William Light, being the son of Georgetown's Captain Francis Light helped to cement the linkage. Dunstan later flew to Penang at Lim's invitation, and Penang Week in Adelaide, a Malaysian festival, followed in February 1975.¹⁰⁵ A large contingent of workers was flown in from Penang to set up food stalls and displays in Victoria Square and the nearby Adelaide Town Hall. The public queued up for the four-dollar 'buffet' lunch of Malaysian style food and, there was a 'semi-formal' dinner two nights later. The Malaysian workers were given a taste of South Australia, with bus tours of Adelaide's parks, gardens, and other tourist destinations from Victor Harbor to the Moonta Mines.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Articles and interviews about Don Dunstan, 1973.

¹⁰⁵ Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, pp 242-243. See also Articles and interviews about Don Dunstan, FUSA, Dunstan Collection, 1973.

¹⁰⁶ FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Itineraries, 18-28 February 1975.

A reciprocal festival followed the successful Adelaide event later that year when Dunstan mounted 'Adelaide Week in Penang'. According to Chris Winzar, a friend of Dunstan and a participant, Dunstan held a number of planning sessions at his Norwood home and typically cooked meals for those involved.¹⁰⁷ Dunstan's Government chartered an airliner from Qantas, and a large contingent led by the premier, with his wife-to-be in attendance, flew to Penang. Dunstan included various elements of ethnic, immigrant culture in the event, along with representations of Australian culture, including the great Aussie barbecue. The 140 or so government supported presenters were accompanied by another self-funded group of 265, keen to take advantage of this one-off, discount trip to Penang.¹⁰⁸

Responding to a series of Parliamentary questions from Robin Millhouse early in 1976, Dunstan tabled a detailed cost analysis of Adelaide Week in Penang, showing a net cost to the South Australian Government of \$193,863. He reported positive responses to the industrial exhibition and the art and craft exhibition, with both on-the-spot sales and subsequent orders. The performing arts production, 'Why is Adelaide the Capital of the World Show', played to capacity audiences and extra sessions were added, ticket sales exceeding \$5,000. The outdoor program of ethnic dancing, log chopping, sheep shearing, boomerang throwing and pottery firing attracted 'large crowds of people...twice each day.' Similar crowds watched the South Australian Film Corporation's continuous screenings of *A Motion and a Spirit* 'in the nine-screen module assembled in Georgetown.' As to food, Dunstan reported:

Catering: Entertainment and typical Australian meals were provided at the evening barbecues to which a wide

¹⁰⁷Interview with Chris Winzar, Goolwa, 14 March 2002.

¹⁰⁸SAPD: HA, 'Penang Visit', Dunstan replying to Mr. Evans (September 16), 9 October 1975, pp 1230-1231.

cross section of the Malaysian people were invited. Wine and cheese tasting sessions were also included to increase local understanding and appreciation of these commodities. This has stimulated demand for South Australian wines (particularly non-alcoholic) and cheeses.¹⁰⁹

The popular and predictable interest in non-alcoholic wines coincided with those of the teetotal Millhouse, but the irony no doubt registered with those promoting the more usual South Australian wines. Displays of South Australian produce effectively highlighted food and wine, while a succession of barbecues proved so popular that tickets were traded on the black market.¹¹⁰ No details of the typical Australian meal are provided, nor any account of the reaction to such gourmet delights by the local population. Brian Chatterton, a former Dunstan minister, wrote recently that the event

was intended...in modern management slang [to] 'raise awareness' of South Australia in the Malaysian market...Don Dunstan got an extra accolade in the press when he delivered a five minute speech in Chinese to the assembled Penang business leaders.

As a promotion, Chatterton believes the weeklong event was a resounding success; in the longer term however, little benefit to trade accrued. He blames Adelaide business interests for being 'much too timid to launch out into Malaysia.'¹¹¹

The last production in the series, North Malaysian Week, returned to Adelaide in 1977, happily timed to coincide with a visit from Queen Elizabeth II. The venue on this occasion was Elder Park, where a large, Malaysian style kampong, or village, was set up with huts for vendors, designed by Chris Winzar's friend Axel Bartz in

¹⁰⁹SAPD: HA, 17 February 1976, pp 2412-2415.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*.

¹¹¹Brian Chatterton, *Roosters and Feather Dusters*, Renwick, New Zealand, 2003, pp 142-143.

association with Penang University staff and built here by the Public Buildings Department. Winzar was one of the organisers and recalled:

We brought in about 60 [food] hawkers from Penang...and housed them in the [Army] barracks opposite Elder Park, all the men were housed there, the women were farmed out.¹¹²

The kitchens at the recently opened School of Food and Catering at Regency Park were used to prepare 'Penang Hawkers Food'. A specially printed handout supplied by the Penang Government introduced South Australians to this exotica. The hawkers brought their own specialised food preparation equipment with them:

Even things like noodles were unavailable here, so we had to bring them from Penang, and just about all the spices and ingredients had to come through Customs. It was an absolute nightmare.¹¹³

Another part of the nightmare involved the use of untreated, traditional building materials for the huts, including *atap* roof matting and timber. The problems were resolved at a joint conference between Dunstan, Bob Bakewell, Winzar, and Customs officials, with an agreement to declare the Elder Park site a temporary Commonwealth Bond Store. The perimeter was fenced but allowed for public access, and no goods or material could be removed without Customs approval.

The premier lent his presence to pre-North Malaysian week publicity, on one occasion pedalling a trishaw, which carried his wife and two handy children, for the photographer. He announced that the event would run from 15-21 March at Elder

¹¹²Interview with Chris Winzar, Goolwa, 14 March 2002.

¹¹³*Ibid.* According to Winzar, the Malaysians donated their equipment to the School of Food and Catering.

Park.¹¹⁴ A few days later, with Dunstan wearing one of his trademark linen safari suits, he and Koh were photographed flanked by half-a-dozen young women wearing promotional t-shirts. Dunstan commented:

This exchange started on a city to city basis, Adelaide and Georgetown. Then it became State to State, Penang and South Australia. Now it is regional co-operation, with four States of North Malaysia...[this is] breaking new ground in international relations.¹¹⁵

For the people of Adelaide it was Malaysian food, rather than international relations, which attracted thousands to Elder Park. Individual serves of the succulent dishes available cost a mere 50 cents. The selection included:

Nasi lemak, gado-gado, roti jala, curry puffs, char koay teow, pancakes, chicken rice, loh-bak, martabak, yark fan and barbecue meats, poh peah, pie tee, satay, teh, paeo dim sim and nonya cake.¹¹⁶

A traditional Adelaide procession from Victoria Square to Elder Park heralded the opening of festivities, complete with ‘a cacophony of drums, gongs, trumpets and song’. A crowd estimated at 20,000, not including children, lined the way for ‘a procession almost as spectacular as the Christmas Pageant.’ The Dunstons were reported to have eaten ‘lace pancake, chicken curry, satay and curry puffs.’ The assembled VIPs consumed ‘hundreds of Malaysian dishes – cooked like Malaysian mums used to make – washed down with wine.’ Already public appetite for the hawkers food was such that extra cooking time had to be organised before evening sessions.¹¹⁷ Once again Robin Millhouse put a series of Questions on Notice to the

¹¹⁴*Advertiser*, 8 March 1977.

¹¹⁵*News*, 14 March 1977.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, 14 March 1977.

premier, including the how, why and whether of the event, the cost to the state, with details, and most importantly, ‘Why was North Malaysia Week held during a Royal visit?’ Perhaps Millhouse saw this as an affront to the Queen. Dunstan’s response to this question was suitably statesmanlike:

The Royal visit and North Malaysia week overlapped by one day which provided an opportunity for this State to demonstrate to Her Majesty the friendship that has developed between the two Commonwealth Nations.¹¹⁸

According to Dunstan, the total net cost was estimated at \$166,717.70, although \$61,000 went to ‘capital items that will be used for a wide range of future events.’ The figures did not include salaries for police cadets and other public servants, estimated at \$20,000 and to be debited to departmental budgets.

Earlier Asian Food in Adelaide

Winzar traces ‘the beginnings of Adelaide’s sudden interest in market hawkers’ food to these beginnings, because people took to it like fish to water.’ Winzar’s case is supported by Catherine Murphy, who notes that ‘the two small cafes, Asian Gourmet and Malacca Corner, selling home-style Asian cooking, opened in the [Central] Market in the late 1970s, and word quickly spread.’¹¹⁹ However, Asian food including Malay had been presented to the people of Adelaide in festival form well before Dunstan’s Decade. An Asian Festival, under the auspices of the Australian-Asian Association of South Australia, ran for two days in June 1958.¹²⁰ The trustees for this one-off event

¹¹⁸SAPD: HA, 5 April 1977, P 3119.

¹¹⁹Catherine Murphy, *The Market*, Kent Town, South Australia, 2003, p 128.

¹²⁰SLSA, SRG 343/2, Helen Brookes, Convenor, Report on Food Fair at the Asian Festival, 25 July 1958.

were largely male staff members or academics from the University of Adelaide.¹²¹ Billed as an exhibition of 'Art, Culture and Industry...[with] stage presentations...[plus an] Eastern Food Fair', Premier Tom Playford opened the program. Asian students acted as chefs, and they along with two ex-patriate Japanese housewives prepared the food. The organisers aimed to sell 1,000 meals, mainly in the form of 'snacks', on each of the two days. In the event, the food fair completely sold out in half-an-hour on the first morning. Two thousand snack size meals disappeared on the second day in about an hour. The *Advertiser* commented that 40,000 people had crammed into the Town Hall in two days, and the Asian Festival had achieved 'success on an undreamed of scale...[and this] has left its organisers and its helpers rather flabbergasted'.¹²²

Asian students at the University of Adelaide, who were here under the Colombo Plan, organised a second Asian Festival in May 1962. The venue for this Oriental Food Fair was again the Adelaide Town Hall, where the state governor Sir Edric Bastyan performed the opening ceremony. On offer was a choice of dishes from India, Ceylon, Vietnam, Malaya, Indonesia, Japan, Pakistan, and China. Cooking demonstrations included Poories (India), feather light biscuits, Curry Puffs (India/Ceylon), and Sartees (Malay). The three Malay dishes on offer were listed as Malay/Chinese, kwai teow (fried noodles), Malay/Indian, nasi kruma (meat curry, rice, very hot, tomato chutney), and a popular Johore dish, nasi dan dalcha (tomato, rice, gravy). The program also included a review at Union Hall and an Asian feature film at the Piccadilly Theatre, with films of Asian life on show at the Liberal Club Hall.¹²³

¹²¹SLSA, SRG 343/4, Trustees' Indenture, June 1958.

¹²²*Advertiser*, 25 June 1958.

¹²³SLSA, SRG 343/5, Program, Second Asian Festival, 28-30 May 1962.

The evidence of community support for these two early Asian festivals in Adelaide indicates a surprising degree of interest in exotic foods. One possible reason is the paradoxical Australia-wide propensity to give it a go, but, according to Cherry Ripe, it also parallels a growing domestic interest in Chinese recipes. 'In the 1960s [Sydney-based] Margaret Fulton began offering Chinese recipes in *Woman's Day*.'¹²⁴ Fulton herself writes that the magazine 'detected a growing interest in Chinese cooking, I was sent to Hong Kong several times to go to Chinese cooking schools.'¹²⁵ Neither Ripe nor Fulton offers an explanation for this upsurge of interest.¹²⁶ However, Chinese cooking is not Malaysian, and Cherry Ripe points to overseas travel by the post-war baby-boomer generation, who took the hippie trail to Europe via Asia, as another likely source.¹²⁷ As air travel became cheaper in the 1970s the parent generation also discovered Asian cuisine for themselves:

QANTAS alone is said to have carried 25,000 Australians to Kuala Lumpur in the year to April 1974...Such travel exposed Australians to Asian foods other than Chinese, and developed a culinary literacy which was not discarded on the return home.¹²⁸

Early in the 1970s, Dunstan and Koh exchanged ideas and techniques with Chris Winzar and his partner Winston Ooi at weekend lunches, when little in the way of authentic Asian or Malaysian ingredients could be found in Adelaide. One of their experiments involved attempts to make tofu from soya beans, but the various mixtures refused to set until they eventually tried adding plaster of Paris. Spices that were not to

¹²⁴Cherry Ripe, *Goodbye Culinary Cringe*, St Leonards, New South Wales, 1993, p 7.

¹²⁵Margaret Fulton, *I Sang For My Supper: Memories of a Food Writer*, Sydney, 1999, p 140.

¹²⁶Richard Beckett, *Convicted Tastes: Food in Australia*, North Sydney, 1984, p 163.

¹²⁷Ripe, 1993, p 12. See also, Laurel Evelyn Dyson, *How To Cook A Galah: Celebrating Australia's Culinary Heritage*, South Melbourne, 2002, p 24.

¹²⁸Ripe, 1993, p 13.

be found in Adelaide, ‘even at the Star Grocery,’ were brought back from Melbourne on visits. In Winzar’s words:

We built up a relationship...where Don and Adele would come over for lunch on a Sunday and we’d sit out in the garden and we’d eat what we could muster up for Malaysian food. In those days we had to use spaghetti instead of noodles and we couldn’t get lemon grass and all that sort of thing. We coped.¹²⁹

By the time Dunstan brought out his cookbook in 1976, the Clara Street garden contained lemon grass and a range of exotic herbs, including daun kesum, the misnamed Asian or Vietnamese mint. In 1998 Dunstan entertained Malaysian guests at Clara Street; one of his guests cooked dinner and was duly impressed when Dunstan’s garden provided all of the herbs necessary for his culinary creation: lime leaves, lemon grass, galangal, coriander and daun kesum.¹³⁰

Conclusions

As an unlikely Labor premier for his era, no one but Dunstan, with his privileged background and personal love of *la dolce vita*, could have conceived of a ‘silver service’ restaurant as a necessary part of his reform agenda and sold the concept to his more traditionalist cabinet colleagues. The Ayers House complex was also another of the symbols of change Dunstan wrought to Adelaide’s cultural and social landscape. It exemplifies the personal element that was so much a part of Dunstan’s reform agenda in these food-related areas. The Premier’s Dining Room is another example of ‘Dunstanism’, the setting up of a facility that was well in excess of what was actually required, but one which pandered to Dunstan’s own interests and predilections.

¹²⁹Interview with Chris Winzar, 14 March 2002. The Star Grocery in Hindley Street stocked ‘foreign’ ingredients. Phillip Satchell, Interview with Steven Cheng and Chris Winzar, ABC Radio 891, 25 October 2002.

¹³⁰Dunstan, *Adelaide Review*, December 1998.

Outdoor cafes and restaurants were another Dunstan vision that Adelaide was not yet ready for, a vision that only became an every-day reality with a new generation of consumers and restaurateurs. In today's Australian cities and tourist centres street-side dining is a highly visible fact of life, more often than not with Asian food dominating the menu. In the early 1970s Adelaide was a city whose staid provincialism had long been recognised, a city that had only just begun the first steps towards accepting at least some of the changes already sweeping the rest of the Western World. While its citizens like other Australians were easily persuaded to taste Asian food, their resistance to outdoor dining in the Mediterranean manner remained strong. Asian food became a necessary part of Dunstan's eclectic recipe selection well before its near universal acceptance. Dunstan's own appetite for all aspects of Malaysian food grew noticeably from the beginning of his involvement with Adele Koh. Her friendship with fellow Asian cookery exponent, Mary Battersby, brought Dunstan in touch with another source of information and expertise, which later helped form the cuisine for his own restaurant venture. The difficulty Dunstan faced in his endeavours to upgrade Adelaide's food scene lay not only with the more 'unadventurous' of the restaurateurs and their many, equally 'unadventurous' clientele but also with his own often unreasonable expectations.

PART II

POLITICAL AND PRIVATE:

TRANSITION

PART II Political and Private: Transition

Chapter Six

DUNSTAN and JOHN CERUTO'S RESTAURANTS

This short chapter provides an insight into the overlap between Dunstan's political and private life during his early years as premier. It also sheds more light on how Dunstan expanded his knowledge of the restaurant industry by becoming personally involved. The chapter presages his transition towards establishing a reputation as a notable gastronome and gourmand, gastromome in the sense of one who 'attempt[s] to understand and comprehend food and foodways within the total context of life and culture,'¹ with gourmand meaning one who enjoys 'the intelligent cultivation, education and refinement of the palate, sense of taste and the pleasures of healthy and happy eating.'² Dunstan's renowned and often misplaced loyalty to his friends is nowhere more evident than in his dealings with John Ceruto. Dunstan's close association with Ceruto began when they met at a city gymnasium in the late 1960s³ and continued for some years after his trainee catering officer officially resigned from the public service in June 1972.⁴ Ceruto's short-lived public service career began when Dunstan appointed him as a clerical assistant to the Hospital Department on 18 January 1971.⁵

¹Flinders University of South Australia, [FUSA], Dunstan Collection, Symposium of Australian Gastronomy folder, Discussion Paper on Aims and Objectives, by Anthony Coronos and Graham Pont to Dunstan, 21 December 1990.

²*Ibid.*

³Des Ryan and Mike McEwen, *'It's Grossly Improper,'* Adelaide, 1979, p 87.

⁴State Records South Australia, [SRSA], Premier's Correspondence, GRG 75/1/62/1971

⁵*Ibid.*, Dunstan transferred Ceruto to his own staff on 28 April 1971.

A smiling, casually dressed Dunstan performed the opening ceremony at Ceruto's first restaurant early in 1973. The restaurant, located across the road from Theatre 62 at Hilton close to the city's western fringe and on the main route to the Adelaide airport, was known first as P'nuts, or Peanut's, and then briefly as The Chophouse. Dunstan and Ceruto soon settled on The Red Garter restaurant, as a name more in keeping with the Theatre 62 connection. He posed for a photograph on opening night with Ceruto's parents, his arm around Mrs. Ceruto, her husband resplendent in bow tie and dinner suit.⁶ According to Dunstan, Ceruto had resigned from the public service to put into practice his goal of providing fresh, wholesome food to patrons at reasonable prices, an ideal that Dunstan happened to share.⁷ Commenting on Ceruto's duties in the Premier's Department, former Dunstan personal assistant Steven Wright has confirmed that 'part of his role was to try and engender some companies and restaurants – to eat outside, [with] low cost food, fresh, make use of our Mediterranean climate.'⁸ Ryan and McEwen assert that Dunstan

believed fervently that Adelaide was ripe for a restaurant that reflected the Mediterranean tradition of casual, natural décor combined with simple but excellent food. He envisaged a restaurant that provided both indoor and outdoor eating facilities... A side benefit of using John Ceruto as the willing vehicle to implement his ideas was that Ceruto could be shifted tactfully out of the Premier's Department... The arrangement suited both of them admirably.⁹

⁶Ryan and McEwen, 1979. The photograph appears between pp 98-99, see also the *Sunday Mail*, 27 October 1991.

⁷State Records South Australia, [SRSA], GRG 75/1/62/1971. Draft reply from Dunstan to a question on notice from Graham Gunn in the House on 10 September 1974.

⁸Interview with Steven Wright, Goolwa, 1 March 2001.

⁹Ryan and McEwen, p 154.

To that end, Ceruto began searching in the city for suitable restaurant premises and found them on the northwestern side of Hindmarsh Square within the Central Business District of Adelaide. However, apart from Ceruto lacking the capital to set up the project, the premises (owned by the Commissioners of Charitable Funds) already had tenants.¹⁰ The undaunted Ceruto engaged an architect to draw up plans for the necessary remodeling and made various approaches to the tenants, initially stating that he was from the Premier's Department although he had resigned several months before.¹¹ He soon managed to secure promises of financial backing through contacts of Dunstan. According to Ceruto's account, however, there was a pre-requisite condition before Dunstan would provide any financial guarantees from government sources. Ceruto was to first 'find a small, not-too-successful restaurant and see if he could turn it into a profitable operation.'¹² A year before he arranged Ceruto's entry to the public service Dunstan had organised a 'training program' for him through various interstate hotel and restaurant contacts.¹³ With Ceruto already back in Adelaide by mid-1970, he persuaded the Caon brothers to employ his protégé at Charlie Brown's, their very successful eatery on the Port Road at Hindmarsh.

The Caon Brothers

Primo Caon and his brother Giocondo established their Hindley Street coffee lounge-cum-restaurant, La Cantina, in 1960, and Primo remembers meeting Dunstan there for the first time in 1961.¹⁴ Dunstan soon became a regular patron, frequently

¹⁰South Australian Parliamentary Debates: House of Assembly [SAPD: HA], 10 September 1974, p 802,

¹¹*Ibid.*, p 803

¹²Ryan and McEwen, 1979, p 157.

¹³FUSA, Dunstan collection, Catering File, letter of introduction for Ceruto, 2 March 1971.

¹⁴Interview with Primo Caon, Adelaide, 7 March 2001.

accompanied by his first wife, Gretel. The success of La Cantina encouraged the brothers to buy an old grocery shop on a corner of Wellington Square, North Adelaide, and convert it into a retail bottleshop. According to Primo this venture was only the second of its kind in Adelaide, and he soon began supplying wine to Dunstan, who had become premier. Dunstan helped the Caons secure the liquor franchise for the Adelaide Airport and the licence for their bottle shop.¹⁵ He also provided Primo with letters of introduction to his contacts in Indonesia when the brothers looked at the prospects for exporting South Australian wines.¹⁶ A former school friend of Giocondo persuaded the at first reluctant brothers to set up Charlie Brown's in premises he owned on the Port Road opposite the Hindmarsh Police Station. The new venture was a-run-away success when it opened in 1969. From the first week, with good, low cost food and wine at five cents a glass, business customers made up the bulk of the weekday trade. Simplicity and friendly service were part of the recipe, and neat, casual dress the key to a new eating out experience for Adelaide. Saturday afternoon soon became 'intellectuals' afternoon', and a prominent regular was Don Dunstan, leading by example. Another regular was Laurie Johnson, the much-feared Licensing Court judge, however, at Charlie Brown's he deferred to his wife. Because the Caons operated under a Wine Saloon licence, all drink had to be off the table at 9.00 pm, at which time Johnson would leave the premises and await his wife's pleasure on the footpath. When that lady decided she had drunk enough she would rejoin her husband.¹⁷ Dunstan had obviously called in a favour from the Caons and Ceruto duly presented for work. Giocondo was not impressed by the 'flamboyant bullshit artist'

¹⁵Interview with Primo Caon, Adelaide, 7 March 2001. Also telephone conversation with Giocondo Caon, 8 December 2003.

¹⁶Flinders University of South Australia, [FUSA], Dunstan Collection, 'C' Miscellaneous correspondence. Dunstan was Opposition Leader when he wrote to Caon, whom he addressed as the feminine 'Prima', 14 January 1970.

and still regrets not telling Dunstan what he thought. Ceruto scarcely lasted two months at Charlie Brown's and left still lacking management experience.¹⁸

The Red Garter Restaurant

With the Hindmarsh Square project on partial hold Ceruto began a second property search, and according to the Ryan and McEwen account following a suggestion from Dunstan inspected the premises at Hilton. Dunstan would later deny telling Ceruto about the place.¹⁹ John Paul-Jones, the sub-lessee, was in financial trouble and had closed his business there some months previously.²⁰ Most fortuitously for Ceruto the property had been owned by the Highways Department since its compulsory and contentious acquisition in July 1970 for 'road widening' purposes. In that instance agents for the owners were advised by telephone of the government's intention to acquire the property only an hour or so before it was to be auctioned.²¹ Early in 1973 Ceruto managed to out-manoeuvre the previous occupier Paul-Jones (who had spent some thousands of dollars on the premises), and negotiated a new lease directly from the Department. The Parliamentary Opposition pursued these matters at length in 1974, following an enquiry by the Ombudsman. He found in a contentious decision that 'the acquisition was "rather unorthodox" but not improper'.²² The

¹⁷Telephone conversation with Giocondo Caon, 8 December 2003.

¹⁸Interview with Primo Caon, Adelaide, 7 March 2001. According to Ryan and McEwen Ceruto lasted six months, p 107.

¹⁹*Melbourne Truth*, 23 February 1980.

²⁰Ryan and McEwen, 1979, p 157. See also SAPD:HA, 30 October 1974, p 1785..

²¹SAPD: HA, 30 October 1974, p 1784.

²²*Advertiser*, 29 August 1974.

Opposition did not succeed in achieving their aim of a full, public inquiry.²³ Dunstan denied any wrong doing on his part, or on the part of his Government. He was rather more forthcoming on a later occasion:

The restaurant opposite Theatre 62 was of importance to the Government as Theatre 62 was then a company subsidised by the State. It had been strongly put to us that audience attendance was much influenced by the availability of meals, refreshments and supper adjacent to the theatre. The Government acquired the restaurant property (which had been scheduled for roads acquisition) to ensure the interim maintenance of restaurant facilities. That was long before Ceruto's involvement with it.²⁴

In 1970 John Edmund (Shuttleworth), proprietor of Theatre 62 and well-known to Dunstan, faced eviction from the Hilton premises which he leased from the owners. Edmund used the property as a residence and as a convenient coffee shop for his theatre patrons.²⁵ Between 1972 and 1975 the Dunstan Government provided grants totalling \$154,000 to John Edmund for Theatre 62.²⁶ Dunstan's denial that he told Ceruto about the Hilton property in 1973 is not credible, given his prior knowledge of the premises, the circumstances of their acquisition, their importance to John Edmund, and the task he had apparently set Ceruto. It is obvious that he played a major role in helping Ceruto set up The Red Garter and in ensuring its success. A long-time friend of Dunstan's commented more recently:

I got involved...with Don's notorious restaurant opposite Theatre 62 which was the Red Garter...Don had a great love of Italian food because of his relationship with John

²³See SAPD: HA, pp 1783-1790. Ryan and McEwen, 1979, devote many pages to these matters. pp 153-172. Also the *Melbourne Truth*, 23 February 1980.

²⁴*Melbourne Truth*, 23 February 1980.

²⁵Ryan and McEwen, 1979, pp 165-166. Edmund sub-leased the premises to John Paul-Jones.

²⁶SAPD: HA, 30 October 1974, p 1783.

Ceruto, [his mother] Mrs. Ceruto, was a wonderful cook...I was there when the house opposite Theatre 62 was handed in and bought over by the State at the auction, the infamous auction. It was Don and John Ceruto that designed this idea of what the Red Garter would be like and how it would interact with the theatre.²⁷

It may have been coincidental that Steven Wright, later to become Dunstan's loyal personal secretary and close friend, was reported to have contacted the previous lessee regarding a possible partnership in December 1971.²⁸ Ceruto first registered The Red Garter as a business name on 30 July 1971 and not in 1973 as might be expected. The registered address was 59 Rowland Road, Hilton. He did not begin operating as the Chop-House at that address until 15 February 1973.²⁹ Ryan and McEwen note that:

Ceruto eventually made a success of **The Red Garter**, due in no small way to Dunstan's money and influence. The Premier designed the menu, made a regular habit of eating at the restaurant, and frequently advised Ceruto on additions or improvements to his service. **The Red Garter** became the **in** place to eat in Adelaide and regular patrons included the then Governor, Sir Mark Oliphant, prominent members of the judiciary, businessmen and leading public servants.³⁰

The *Advertiser* food writer Trevor Fennell was impressed with both the service and the meal when he dined at the Red Garter in July 1974. The service was courteous and prompt, while providing 'quality and quantity in these days of rising prices and diminishing portions.' His only complaint was that the greengrocer was not in the

²⁷Interview with Chris Winzar, Goolwa, 14 March 2002.

²⁸SAPD: HA, p 1952. The importance of Steven Wright to Dunstan is confirmed by the following dedication in Dunstan's *Felicia*. 'To Steven without whom I would not have survived.'

²⁹FUSA, Dunstan Collection, The Coalyard file, C.T.C. Reporting Pty. Ltd., credit report on J. J. L. Ceruto, 20 March 1974. A recent check with the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs confirms the details of registration, Corporate Affairs and Compliance, Business names extract, 22 April 2003.

³⁰Ryan and McEwen, 1979, pp 159-160.

same class as the butcher or the fishmonger.³¹ The bill for two adults and two children represented good value at \$18.50, which included a bottle of Kaiser Stuhl Bin W20 at \$3.50. The meal began with the almost obligatory prawn cocktail and garlic prawns, continued with tournedos Rossini and pepper steak, then apple pie, and ended with coffee and liqueurs. If Fennell had wanted to repeat his experience he was probably disappointed. Ceruto moved on the following month to take over management of The Coalyard restaurant in Hindmarsh Square. He is variously reported as having sold The Red Garter business for \$15,000, \$20,000, or \$30,000, in the process failing to notify the Highways Department as required under the terms of his lease.³²

The Coalyard Restaurant

Late in 1971 Premier Dunstan had advised his cabinet that as a result of his ‘policy of tourist promotion...a need is arising for the establishing of additional restaurants – especially in particular locations.’³³ In his view this was a matter that could not be left to the restaurant industry. As he had made clear in his tourist development brief earlier that year, if private enterprise was lagging behind in the provision of services, his government would step in and ‘prime the pump’ with financial assistance for suitable proposals. Accordingly, Dunstan now sought approval for himself, as treasurer, to be given the authority to accept applications for Industries Assistance Corporation loans in special cases, when it was in line with government policy. In the normal course of events Treasury would still handle draft proposals, which had to be approved by the joint-Parliamentary Industries Development

³¹*Advertiser*, 4 July 1974.

³²FUSA, Dunstan Collection, The Coalyard file.

³³SRSA, GRG 75/1/482/1971.

Committee.³⁴ It may be that Dunstan felt the need to do so because of his over-riding personal interest in restaurants and a desire to see that opportunities were not lost through mishandling of applications by unknowledgeable bureaucrats or other politicians. In addition, even from the available evidence it appears that he was prepared to go to extraordinary lengths to support Ceruto. He may have wanted to bypass the Development Committee but on this occasion his cabinet colleagues prevailed to maintain the *status quo*. Ultimately however, in the case of The Coalyard restaurant the treasurer still had his way.

Behind the scenes Dunstan continued to pave the way for Ceruto to move on to the second phase of their jointly desired restaurant scheme. Towards the end of 1972 in a memo to other executives the managing director of Investment & Merchant Finance Corporation, Rex Lipman, revealed details of a telephone call he had received from Premier Dunstan and subsequent developments. Dunstan had expressed disappointment that the newly available ‘curbside licence...[enabling licensed restaurants] to serve drinks in the street outside...[their] premises, was not being utilised.’ Dunstan went on to talk about Ceruto as:

A competent, aggressive restauranter...[and] provided some capital of \$20-25,000 was [made] available [to him], the Industries Assistance Corporation would grant or lend his company some \$60,000 to open a licensed restaurant in Hindmarsh Square, near Pulteney and Rundle Streets.³⁵

The premier had also intimated that Kaiser Stuhl Wines and Travelodge would each be prepared to contribute \$5,000 to the project. Lipman assured Dunstan of Investment and Merchant Finance Corporation’s support, subject to a thorough examination of the

³⁴SRSA, GRG 75/1/482/ 1971.

³⁵FUSA, Dunstan Collection, The Coalyard file, Rex J. Lipman, memo, 27 October 1972.

proposal, to the tune of at least another \$5,000. He agreed to contact Ceruto for a discussion and to then report back to Dunstan. However, Lipman was pre-empted by a telephone call from Ceruto, who, with uncharacteristic efficiency, produced plans and a feasibility study early that very afternoon. While Dunstan was clearly anxious to see the Hindmarsh Square restaurant operating without delay other public servants were not convinced of the need for another city restaurant, especially one guaranteed by the government. It was already early in 1974 before the secretary of the Industries Assistance Corporation called for a report from the director of the Tourist Bureau 'on the desirability for yet another restaurant to be established in the city...so that the public interest in the application may be assessed.'³⁶ Acting Director Ted Correll reported that there were '44 licensed restaurants and 4 restaurants with wine licences only' (BYO's), and in addition some 65 hotels provided meals of varying standard, although only about a third of these 'might be classified as high quality restaurants.'³⁷ The majority still reflected Sangster's Royal Commission finding in 'show[ing] little tendency to evolve in sympathy with changing attitudes of the community towards dining out.' Correll went on to extol the absolute necessity for 'good management' as the key to commercial success. He believed that, provided such expertise was available, 'further development of restaurant facilities in the city is desirable in the interests of visitors and the local community alike.' Without naming The Coalyard he managed to nominate a single restaurant, 'perhaps partly open-air' and closely resembling The Coalyard's specifications in other details, as 'a desirable addition to the range of choices currently available.' This was further reinforced when he stressed:

³⁶FUSA, Dunstan Collection, The Coalyard file, Undated memo from the Secretary, IAC, to the Director, Tourist Bureau. The secretary wanted the report by 1 April 1974.

³⁷*Ibid*, 26 March 1974. See also GRG 75/1/153/1973

It is evident that the outdoor 'boulevard' style restaurant, as yet under-developed in the city, is a particular aspect of dining finding ready acceptance by the community.³⁸

In other words, Correll was clearly pushing the Dunstan line in relation to both The Coalyard and 'outdoor', or his use of the more up-market sounding, 'boulevard' dining. However, the outdoor dining concept was a long way from finding 'ready acceptance by the community,' primarily because the industry was loath to provide appropriate facilities and for reasons discussed in the previous chapter.³⁹ What Sangster had noted in his Royal Commission report of 1967 was that 'the public is very largely indifferent to the question whether what it wants is provided by a hotel or by a restaurant.'⁴⁰ However, he also found that South Australians were 'dining and wining' more and in increasing numbers

The Tourist Bureau report was followed by a request from Treasury for the director to comment on The Coalyard feasibility study. Treasury was also looking for 'any information relating to the profitability of the "Red Garter" restaurant...mentioned on page 3 of this submission.'⁴¹ The study and the requested report were sent off to Treasury early in May 1974. The report disagreed with some of the cost assumptions and suggested an estimated profit before tax of \$46,500, rather than the figure of \$82,644 conjured up by the proponents. The Bureau had found no information as to the profitability of The Red Garter, presumably because Ceruto kept

³⁸SRSA, GRG 75/1/153/1973, Correll to Secretary, Industries Assistance Corporation, 26 March 1974.

³⁹SRSA GRG 75/109, Premiers Department, South Australian Restaurant Industry Survey Report, June 1976, p 7.

⁴⁰Sangster Report, p 9.

⁴¹FUSA, Dunstan Collection, The Coalyard file, 10 April 1974.

no detailed financial records.⁴² The under treasurer wrote to Treasurer Dunstan on 23 May 1974 advising details of the guarantee application, together with the checks and reports made by his officers and by the Tourist Bureau. Treasury officers had agreed with the Tourist Bureau finding that ‘the operation is unlikely to be as profitable as the company predicts [however], it appears that the company could cover its commitments with a small but increasing margin of safety.’ The under treasurer considered that the applicants could probably manage adequately with a loan of \$60,000 to \$65,000. In any event he could see no reason why the shareholders could not obtain finance on the basis of their own personal guarantees. He therefore concluded:

Although the company has established prima facie that it has reasonable prospects and that it could service the loan requested it has not established that it needs a Government guarantee. I recommend that you reject the application without reference to the Industries Development Committee.⁴³

In normal circumstances the under treasurer’s advice would no doubt have prevailed, but these were far from normal circumstances. There is a handwritten note at the foot of the under treasurer’s minute to Dunstan: ‘To the Chairman Industries Development Committee for consideration. Note. Treasurer.’⁴⁴ The Industries Development Committee unanimously approved the government guarantee but recommended certain conditions, the principal one being that the directors personally guarantee the bank loan. The decision whether to insist on the conditions lay with the treasurer. The committee, quite rightly, expressed concern that Ceruto, the linchpin of the project,

⁴²FUSA, Dunstan Collection, The Coalyard file, 12 June 1974.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 23 May 1974.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

was clearly lacking in 'financial management skills.'⁴⁵ A credit report on Ceruto suggested that he 'should be approached with caution in any contemplated business dealings,' but the warning was not sufficient to change Dunstan's support for his associate.⁴⁶

The Coalyard concept accorded with Dunstan's Mediterranean dining aims. It incorporated an outdoor café section, advertised as a 'boulevard café'. The menu was planned to be simple but interesting while offering good value for money; and a similar concept was applied to the wine list. One of the directors, Myer Solomon, boasted:

In little Adelaide there is almost no-one I do not know and no-one in Australia will buy better than this restaurant whether it is grog, meat or sea-food. One of my company's solicitors is David Simmons...Not only does he look after the Raptus [sic] account: he is friendly with the Raptus brothers, and I know they will be going out of their way to help with all seafoods.⁴⁷

In addition its central location was expected to ensure a high volume of patronage from tourists and locals both for lunch and dinner, the better to support and promulgate Dunstan's concepts to as wide an audience as possible. Another of the Coalyard directors, David Saunders, expressed strong support for Dunstan's tourism policy:

It was 18 months ago that we examined the fitness of starting a venture of this nature knowing that the Government's avowed policy...was to encourage tourism. It seemed to us and to I.M.F.C. (a company involved in a fair diversification of interests) that this

⁴⁵FUSA, Dunstan Collection, The Coalyard file, 12 June 1974.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 21 February 1974.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, Myer Solomon, minutes of evidence to the Industrial Development Committee, 4 June 1974, p 11. The Raptis Brothers (now Raptis and Son), was a well-known Adelaide firm of fish suppliers.

venture would be one way of assisting the government in its espousment of tourism.⁴⁸

Premier Dunstan officially opened The Coalyard in August 1974, and according to the Ryan and McEwen account, it ‘was an immediate success with its informal style and good, keenly priced food.’⁴⁹ Ceruto’s contribution to this reported success was extremely short lived however. He resigned – or was fired – in October, in spite of ‘counselling’ by both Dunstan and Solomon. Dunstan later said of Ceruto’s exit, ‘the whole project appeared to go to his head.’ He also denied that ‘the restaurant was an instant success. It was not. Ceruto did not work hard, did not exercise proper management skill, and within a short time the place was a disaster.’⁵⁰

At about this time the original lessees received an out of court settlement of \$3,000 instead of the \$6,500 promised by Ceruto when they had first agreed to vacate the premises, while the amount claimed before the court was \$10,060. Dunstan resigned from his legal partnership when this matter went before the Supreme Court. The Coalyard principals, including Ceruto, were represented by Dunstan’s fellow partner, Kevin Lynch.⁵¹ Dunstan’s parliamentary *bête noire*, Robin Millhouse, could not resist commenting on Ceruto’s departure:

I understand that the Premier’s friend, Mr. Ceruto, has left The Coalyard restaurant, where he was working. The restaurant was opened with a clash of cymbals, and so

⁴⁸FUSA, Dunstan Collection, The Coalyard file, David Saunders , Minutes of evidence to the Industrial Development Committee, 4 June 1974, p 6.

⁴⁹Ryan and McEwen, 1979, p 176.

⁵⁰*Melbourne Truth*, 23 February 1980.

⁵¹Ryan and McEwen, pp 164-165.

on, a few weeks ago, but he left soon after the opening and has gone to live in another State.⁵²

Tony Baker reported as Sol Simeon on his initial reconnaissance of the newly opened restaurant late in August. He described it as ‘that curious black building in Hindmarsh Square’, but said it had ‘opened quietly...offering jaded Adelaide diners a few innovations.’ One of the innovations was wholemeal bread baked on the premises. Sadly, this measure soon fell foul of health regulations, which confined bread making to bakeries. The décor included bagged off, white walls to contrast with the obligatory red carpet and to relieve the sombre exterior. Baker thought the restaurant was ‘a bright, promising light,’ unlike its exterior. He returned in January 1975 to find the light much diminished, commenting that ‘what was a short collection of relatively fascinating dishes...is now mostly a rather gloomy recital of every-pub standards.’ Better things were promised, but ‘the pâté looked as if somebody had fallen in it.’⁵³ This is perhaps an appropriate metaphor for the final, direct involvement of Dunstan in a restaurant venture with Ceruto.

Conclusions

Dunstan used his position and influence in 1970 to have the Hilton property compulsorily acquired to help his theatrical friend John Edmund, but admitted this only later. At first it was politically expedient to claim otherwise, to counter opposition claims of the government wasting public funds to prop up the ailing Theatre 62. Dunstan’s great passion for the restaurant scene and all of its theatrical overtones, were heightened by his relationship with Ceruto and exemplified in The Red Garter saga. The Coalyard restaurant met with Dunstan’s unqualified approval, in part because the

⁵²SAPD: HA, 13 November 1974, p 1953.

⁵³Sol Simeon, *Sunday Mail*, 25 August 1974, 26 January 1975.

concept was fully in line with his tourism policy, and perhaps just as importantly, because of his special friend Ceruto's involvement. Dunstan's extra-curricular participation in the Ceruto ventures helps to reinforce the evolving picture of Dunstan as a devotee of the gastronomic lifestyle. At the political level Dunstan was trying to broaden the appeal of the culture of food and drink and to make it more inclusive. He was both an innovator and a facilitator who attempted to push the pace of change in this area because of his own passion for food. The next chapter examines the many influences that had a bearing on Dunstan's life-long passion for food and resulted in the publication of his best-selling cookbook.

Chapter Seven

DUNSTAN'S LOVE AFFAIR WITH FOOD: THE COOKBOOK AND OTHER FOOD WRITING

Dunstan's swift exit from the political stage lay only three years away from the launch of his cookbook in 1976. The book brought to the forefront the premier's overriding interest and passion in all things culinary. It publicly exposed the private inner Dunstan by revealing a good deal of his food-based philosophy. The book also confirmed his interest in and enthusiasm for the pleasures of the table including good food, good wine, good company, and good conversation. The book also revealed Dunstan to be a capable cook in his own right. For the private Dunstan his Clara Street home was his refuge, with cooking and all of the associated domesticity, including his prized vegetable garden, a means of escape from the outer political world. Uninvited visitors were not permitted access to the kitchen or dining area.¹ In this kitchen he practised his culinary skills, experimented and refined recipes, noted the results, and tried them out on his friends. The culmination of this domestic activity found further expression in the cookbook. An examination of Dunstan's long history on the subject of food contained in his essay 'My One True Love' conveys a sense of inevitability about the cookbook and his path in life.²

Today the production of a cookbook would hardly evoke much surprise, even in the unlikely event that the author happened to be a state premier. In 1976, with Dunstan still very much South Australia's premier, the publication of *Don Dunstan's*

¹Interview with Chris Winzar, Goolwa, 14 March 2002.

²Flinders University of South Australia, [FUSA], Dunstan Collection, Don Dunstan, Food and Wine Articles, 'My one True Love', n d, c 1998, p 1. A version of this article was published in *My One True Love*, Caro Llewellyn (ed.), NSW, 1999, after Dunstan's death. An abridged version from the Llewellyn book appeared in the *Adelaide Review* in September 1999. All the references quoted above are from Dunstan's original article, unless otherwise noted.

Cookbook by Adelaide firm Rigby Limited created something of a furore. Australia's best-known state premier had already reinforced his 'with it' image by poetry readings, one from the back of an elephant, a song and dance routine at the Festival Theatre with former Adelaide thespian Keith Michell, and a series of fashion displays. However, a cookbook was something else again. There had been no warning of this impending publication earlier in the year, when Dunstan launched his own commercial recording of *Desiderata* and other poems, sipping a glass of wine in the Ayers House ballroom.³ Inevitably critics on both sides of the political divide claimed that Dunstan had once again overstepped the bounds of propriety of his office. For his part Dunstan later revealed that Labor's public relations agency and party officials were aghast at his decision to publish. The end result was nevertheless not only a financial success but also attracted considerable support from previously undecided women voters who applauded the revelation of the Labor premier's domesticity.⁴

As to why he wrote the book, Dunstan said in a post-production interview, 'I've been having fun with cooking for a very long time now...and so many people have asked me for tips and recipes that I decided to write this book.'⁵ Another factor may well have been Dunstan's inclusion in a Rigby publication of 1975, *Favourite Recipes of Famous Men*. The book contained brief biographical notes, a small photograph of the contributor, and a recipe. Dunstan's rather odd choice was a terrine of forcemeat, layered with tongue and fat bacon strips. As might be expected, it was the most complex contribution. Among the 108 contributors were Gough Whitlam, Rock Hudson, Harry Secombe, Bob Hope, Dave Brubeck, and Robert Carrier, who

³*Advertiser*, 14 April 1976.

⁴*Don Dunstan: Politics and Passion, Selected Essays from the Adelaide Review* John Spoehr (ed.), Unley, 2000, p 236. See also Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, p 240.

⁵*Australian*, 26 October 1976.

provided a recipe for chocolate icecream, created for the book.⁶ According to one close friend, pressure and encouragement from his second wife and former research assistant, Adele Koh, were also major factors. Koh taught Asian cooking for a time after her arrival in Adelaide from Singapore, via Canberra, and helped reinforce Dunstan's interest in the cuisines of South East Asia.⁷ In the early 1970s, prior to Koh's arrival, Dunstan was friendly with Singapore's Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, who introduced him to *nonya* food. Lee's mother taught 'baba-style *Nonya* cooking' to help pay for his education.⁸ His friendship with Dr Lim Ching Yew, Chief Minister of Penang, provided another important Asian food connection:

While I had experienced the Malaysian cuisine before, my introduction to the techniques of cooking used in that very 'fused' cuisine with elements of native Malay, Arab, Indian, Chinese, with some influences from English Dutch and Portugese came with this association...I started experimenting when I got home – and oh the joys of all those new experiences of tastes and textures.⁹

Lim, who was also a keen gardener, introduced Dunstan to the wide range of local food resources and his own circle of food enthusiasts. On his numerous trips to Penang over the years Dunstan also sampled the rich variety of food available from the roadside vendors. Dunstan subsequently referred to the 'fused' nature of the Malaysian cuisine in his cookbook and proposed a further fusion: between the techniques of Asia and those of the more 'familiar' European school, leading to a recognisable Australian

⁶Binny Lum, *Favourite Recipes of Famous Men*, Adelaide, 1975.

⁷Interview with Mary Battersby, Regency Park, 2 May 2001.

⁸Michael D. Barr, *Lee Kuan Yew: The Beliefs Behind the Man*, Richmond, Surrey, 2000, p 100.

⁹Dunstan, "My One True Love", p 6.

cuisine.¹⁰ In this call for an Australian cuisine Dunstan was well ahead of his gastronomic contemporaries.¹¹

Dunstan was always happy in the role of educator and generous with his knowledge. Mike Rann compares his passion for teaching about food with that of maestro Leonard Bernstein taking master classes for young musicians:

He was a passionate teacher...Dunstan, on TV and radio and in his own home he was basically passionate about educating South Australians and Australians about what they were missing out on and what they could enjoy.¹²

At the same time the cook book provided its author with a convenient vehicle to air pet grievances, to attack some foibles of the greater Australian society, and to reveal something of his own philosophy of living. The book is also a logical extension of Dunstan's love of his home and hearth and an opportunity for the private man, the gardener, the cook, and the host, to express the basis of his beliefs to a wider audience. There is no foreword to the original version, instead the opening paragraph of chapter one reveals something of the Dunstan philosophy of food and life and declares his rationale for writing the cookbook:

This is not meant to be the kitchen equivalent of *The Joy of Sex*, deservedly a best seller. It is not even a sequel to a book which had a brief vogue some years ago called *A Seducer's Cook Book*, and will not contain even that now frequent chapter in books about food giving historical information on reputed aphrodisiacs and love-philtres. But I do believe that if you can't take your love to bed at least you can be close by providing the sensuous pleasure of the sharing of good food; and if you can

¹⁰Don Dunstan, *Don Dunstan's Cookbook*, Adelaide, 1976, p 28.

¹¹Stephen Downes, *Advanced Australian Fare: How Australian Cooking Became the World's Best*, Crows Nest, New South Wales, 2002, p 54.

¹²Interview with Mike Rann, Adelaide, 16 January 2001.

(take your love to bed that is), then good food is an added delight.¹³

Despite Dunstan's denial (or even because of it), the words are titillating and tend to provoke the reader to make the sexual connection. After mentioning 'aphrodisiacs and love philtres' he ends the paragraph in a clumsy sentence linking food and sex as pleasurable companions. Before continuing with an examination of the cookbook this seems an appropriate point to trace the origins of Dunstan's passionate interest in food and cooking.

Dunstan: The Early Years

Donald Allan Dunstan was born in Fiji on 21 September 1926 to South Australian parents, and since his father, Francis Vivian Dunstan, was the local manager for the Morris Hedstrom company, he began life in the comfortable confines enjoyed by middle-class colonial ex-patriates.¹⁴ As a baby he was fed boiled dalo (taro) 'in gooey lumps' by his Fijian nursery girls. This early acquaintance with the local staple enabled the small boy to continue eating, as a matter of course, what he later decided tasted 'like soap.'¹⁵ Fortunately there were other better-flavoured foods to help develop the young Dunstan's taste buds, such as his favourite, bananas 'mashed with sugar'. Breakfast always included 'papaya with lime juice...I grew to feast on pineapples, mangoes, tropical mandarines, passionfruit and grenadillas, and I grew to love the fresh river fish, and the wonderful taste of mudcrabs caught in the estuaries.' Like his son at a later time, Dunstan senior kept poultry for the table and Sunday lunch

¹³Dunstan, *Don Dunstan's Cookbook*, 1976, p 7.

¹⁴FUSA, Dunstan Collection, *Who's Who* entry proof, corrected by Dunstan, Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1992.

¹⁵Dunstan, 'My One True Love', p 1.

‘usually...[featured] a roast duck or fowl stuffed with sage and onion...my little saliva glands started into action when that was brought to the table.’ The six-year-old Dunstan had, he said, already encountered and ‘rejected some of the horrors of food served up by Australians and New Zealanders living in Fiji,’ but worse fare quickly followed at his Suva boarding school. This Spartan-like establishment featured the Dickensian Miss Grayburn, and Dunstan soon fell into disgrace when he refused to eat her foul-smelling, reconstituted rissoles with their accompanying boiled vegetables. Even the breadfruit was boiled. According to Dunstan, this incident reinforced a precocious determination ‘to exercise [his own] judgment about food.’¹⁶

Some weeks later Dunstan, never a robust child, became seriously ill with a streptococcal infection, probably from soiled bed sheets. He was slowly nursed back to health by his mother over many months and then shipped back to South Australia and his aunts and grandmother at Murray Bridge. A completely different food experience helped to consolidate Dunstan’s recovery and added considerably to his enjoyment of eating. Fruit salad now became his favourite food, thanks to the bounty from his grandmother’s home garden:

The garden of my grandmother’s house had fruit trees – two apricots, two peaches, a navel and a Seville orange, a luscious nectarine and a fig, grape vines of sultana and muscatel. All of these were new to me and in the season I sat in the trees and gorged myself – the wonderful flavours of the developed fruits of Europe filled me with delight.¹⁷

This positive childhood experience, coming after a life-threatening illness, no doubt contributed to the adult Dunstan’s love of his own home garden and fruit trees,

¹⁶Dunstan, ‘My One True Love,’ p 1.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p 1.

whether exotic or European. The memory of eating fruit salad as a child at Murray Bridge was sufficiently strong in 1990 for the 64-year-old Dunstan to use it in answer to a ‘waste-not, want-not’ question, at a Gastronomy Symposium.¹⁸

The mature Dunstan remembered a good deal more about food from his prolonged stay at Murray Bridge. The next door neighbours grew three kinds of plums and a nearby great aunt dried her own currants, raisins, and sultanas. Dunstan helped harvest her almonds and learned ‘to shell and blanch...[them] ready for her cakes.’¹⁹ Local German bakeries provided fragrant aromas of cinnamon, nutmeg, and yeast on school days. But because the aunts managed the family newsagency and bookshop, a resident maid did most of the cooking at his elderly grandmother’s house. Not surprisingly, plain fare was the order of the day. Dunstan’s aunt Beth ‘always proudly proclaimed “We had nothing but the best – nothing but roasts and grills.”’ As Dunstan recalled, even to his fledgling palate ‘they were always overdone, and she might have added boiled and baked vegetables, and occasionally so called salad, which was shredded lettuce with sliced tomato and pickled beetroot.’²⁰ His daughter confirms from her own childhood that ‘the aunt just couldn’t cook. I mean the vegetables boiled to extinction and these sort of grey-looking stews.’²¹ Dunstan helped prepare the fruit and pack the jars when his grandmother preserved fruit but balked then and always after at ‘boiled Brussels sprouts’. Ever the well-mannered child, he politely refused the maid’s version of Queen pudding:

¹⁸*Proceedings, Fifth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, “The Pleasures of the Table”, Barbara Santich, Michael Symons (eds.), Adelaide, 10-13 March 1990, p 12.

¹⁹Dunstan, ‘My One True Love’, p 2.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹Interview with Bronwen Dohnt (nee Dunstan), Goolwa, 9 June 2001.

This was a confection of stale sponge cake cut in pieces, covered with an egg custard (which the maid always managed to curdle), then covered with a layer of jam and spread with beaten egg white and browned but leaving the egg white uncooked.²²

His experiences at this time stiffened a resolve to be his own arbiter of taste. In his own words, he was already ‘a lover of good things to eat.’²³

In 1936 the ten-year-old Dunstan was taken back to Fiji and commuted daily from his parent’s home to school in Suva. Although his mother dominated both father and son, he now had sufficient freedom to wander alone through the local market, absorbing a whole new range of sights and smells.²⁴ He savoured

the smells of Indian and Chinese cooking. Clove, coriander, cumin, turmeric, cardamom and mustard all combined with the smell of sandalwood incense to make a heady mix of aromas.²⁵

The sojourn in the dry climate of Murray Bridge had apparently helped to alleviate Dunstan’s incipient asthma. According to Allan Patience, Dunstan’s mother ‘rather disliked little boys,’ and he infers that the asthma may have been a useful excuse to be rid of her sickly son for a time.²⁶ He was now allowed to eat food flavoured with pepper or chillies for the first time. This new taste experience soon developed into a lifelong addiction for capsaicin, the heating element in chillies, thanks to the ‘fiery

²²Dunstan, ‘My One True Love’, p 2.

²³*Ibid.*, p 3.

²⁴Interview with Dunstan by Craig McGregor, *Good Weekend*, 6 March 1987. Dunstan had an older sister, Beth, whom he seldom acknowledged.

²⁵Dunstan, ‘My One True Love’, p 3.

²⁶Allan Patience, “Public courage, private anguish: Contemplating the life of Don Dunstan,” *Adelaide Review*, March 1999.

goat curry’ often served by a Sikh business associate of Dunstan senior. The Dunstan’s ‘cookboy’ also played a part with a range of Indian dishes, including ‘devilled mudcrab meat.’ A second serious illness, this time dysentery, soon marred the young Dunstan’s pleasure in food. Already quite thin, he wasted away even more, and again his recovery was slow. The doctor prescribed quantities of milk and bananas to help the process, and as a result Dunstan acquired another addiction, ‘a devotion to dairy products which has meant I feel seriously deprived without them’. A similar liking for avocados began soon afterwards. The Dunstan’s ‘garden boy’ grew vegetables for the household, but like most ten-year-old boys Dunstan had little interest in gardening, although he liked eating the produce. The garden provided the kitchen with

snake beans, yams, eggplant, bindhi (okra), and...[the] cookboy baked dalo and kumala (sweet potato) in the oven in their jackets, or sliced the dalo and deep-fried it, and cooked the aubergine in a variety of ways.²⁷

Dunstan’s return to health was accompanied by a marked increase in appetite and he ‘learnt to be adventurous about food.’ Writing towards the end of his life, Dunstan maintained he had decided at the age of eleven:

That eating was not merely about satisfying an appetite – that taste and smell sensations were sensual delights which could provide an ever-widening enjoyment. So far from rejecting what one didn’t know – the richness of eating and drinking experiences, as in the rest of life, lay also in variety. But that I found didn’t mean that one simply gorged on anything that came along. In testing the variety one also sharpened one’s discernment of quality.²⁸

²⁷Dunstan, ‘My One True Love’, pp 3-4.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p 3.

This sophisticated philosophy was soon to be tested with Dunstan's repatriation to South Australia in 1939 on the eve of World War II. He was billeted at Glenelg with a great aunt who was the daughter of Sir Jonathan Cain, a former Lord Mayor of Adelaide, and enrolled at St Peter's College for his secondary education. At this time the 'unremarkable' cooking was done by two maids, the only culinary delight in Dunstan's memory being high tea on Sundays, the maids' day off. In their absence his aunt

would produce a traymobile of foods for us to put together before the open wood fire – little meat pies, little hot cocktail sausages, crumpets to be toasted over the coals and drenched in butter and honey, fresh scones with jam and cream.²⁹

Japan's entry into the war led to food shortages and the introduction of rationing, the exit of most domestic servants and the disappearance into the war machine of many teachers. On occasion Dunstan was required to help his aunt in the kitchen, and she demonstrated her own lack of skill by showing him how not to cook scrambled eggs, 'invariably curdling them and producing hard curds swimming in whey.' With most of the masters in the armed services, Dunstan began cooking at school scout camps and bought the first of the many cookbooks he would acquire over his lifetime. He claims not to have lost any of the 'young monsters', but concedes 'I don't think they were entranced by my efforts.'³⁰ It is to this point that Dunstan traces the beginnings of his new awareness of food: 'cooking was fun – and fascinating.' He was vastly attracted to the concept that 'you could concentrate and work out the process and produce something that was satisfying – if you gave it care and attention.' After World War II, the Sunday drive had become the norm for Adelaideans with

²⁹Dunstan, 'My One True Love', p 4.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p 4.

motor cars. Dunstan was often with his aunt and uncle when they stopped for lunch at one of the roadhouses already a feature of main country roads. Unlike Dunstan, his uncle shared the views of many others of his generation, who wanted nothing to do with 'New Australians'. 'If those serving appeared to be migrants my uncle would say to my aunt, "Have ham and eggs love – that's safe."'³¹

Dunstan's One True Love

In 'My One True Love', probably written in 1998 Dunstan provides a minor history lesson, deriving from the interest generated by his university studies. His strong and continuing interest in the history and cultures of the countries around the shores of the Mediterranean, especially Greece and Italy, came from this background. He points to the neglect of food and foodways by traditional and Marxist historians, where the one concentrated largely on history from above, while the other saw only economics and the class struggle. Both schools overlooked food as the key 'driving force in trade and movements of population.' 'Foodways' has been defined as 'the beliefs and behaviour surrounding the production, distribution, and consumption of food'³², and it is that broad context which Dunstan found so fascinating. He cites food and the means of flavouring food as a motivation for wars in the days of ancient Greece and Rome, with the search for spices dominating 'the European discovery of the Americas.' Dunstan's own discovery of the debt European cuisine owes to the foods of the West Indies, brought back by Columbus, set him off on a lifelong study 'of the history of

³¹Dunstan, 'Table Talk', *Adelaide Review*, January, 1996.

³²Carole M. Counihan, *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning, and Power*, New York and London, 1999, p 3. See also p 6.

food origins and uses and their effects on the daily lives and enjoyments of people in history as well as on patterns of trade and movements of peoples and governments.’³³

Dunstan also dwells on the scarcity of food and cooking books in pre-World War II Australia and mentions only those of the Queenslander Mrs. Schauer and Lady Hackett as among the ‘few classic books about the then state of the Australian cuisine.’ Even so, he is critical of the preoccupation of both writers, surely not surprising in the context of their times, ‘with cakes and afternoon tea delicacies, jams and preserves [rather] than with meats and vegetables’.³⁴ He then describes ‘some of their recipes for these latter...[as] very poor.’³⁵ The only other works he refers to in passing are new editions of cookery books by English food-writer Ambrose Heath, which Dunstan bought before returning to Fiji in 1949 with his bride, this time as a newly-qualified lawyer. These cookery books formed the nucleus of Dunstan’s ultimately large collection, as he added more and more volumes over his lifetime, especially on his many overseas trips while premier of South Australia.³⁶ According to Steven Wright it was Dunstan’s usual practice to scour bookshops and return to their hotel with his arms full of books about food. Another friend, Chris Winzar, reports that Don loved to explore food. He had volumes and volumes of cookbooks, some of them in Latin, some of them in French, and obviously lots of them in English. Don used to cook a particular dish and make a particular theme of a lunch or dinner.³⁷ During the next two

³³Dunstan, ‘My One True Love’, p 5.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p 5. M. Schauer, *The Schauer Cookery Book*, Brisbane, 1909 (many editions). See Michael Symons, *One Continuous Picnic*, Adelaide, 1982, p 265. *The Australian Household Guide*, Lady Hackett (ed.), 1916. Reprinted in 1940 to aid the Red Cross. See also, Pont, Santich, and Wilkins, *Landmarks of Australian Gastronomy*, Sydney, 1988, p 83.

³⁵Dunstan, ‘My One True Love’, p 5.

³⁶Interview with Steven Wright, Goolwa, March 2001.

³⁷Chris Winzar, ‘Kitchen Wisdom,’ FEAST, video tape courtesy of Steven Cheng, 20 November 2002.

years in Fiji Dunstan began cooking in earnest and by trial and error ‘started to learn the techniques of refined cooking – of concentrating flavours and ensuring tenderness of meats combined with contrasting textures.’³⁸ He became friendly with an enthusiastic government horticulturalist and through him discovered the delights of growing his own fruit and vegetables, then incorporating the fresh produce of his garden in meals for his family and friends. The small house-block limited his selection to herbs, taro, cassava and grenadillas, but much more was cheaply available at local markets. During this period Dunstan discovered he could relieve the stress from his daily work in the courts by cooking the evening meal.³⁹ This method of relaxation became particularly significant when he later entered political life.

Cooking at Norwood

Dunstan came back to Adelaide to live with his wife and baby daughter early in 1951. He began to practice law, and soon after entered politics. The couple restored an old house in George Street Norwood, ‘an inner city suburb...often referred to as Adelaide’s “Little Italy.”’⁴⁰ They next moved to another property in the same street and repeated the process. The second house had once been surrounded by vineyards and the ‘100 year-old house vines’ had fortuitously survived, as had its fruit trees, ‘two plums, a nectarine and a fig.’ Dunstan planted more fruit trees. Then, as the Member of Parliament for Norwood, with a working wife and three children, he usually cooked breakfast and ‘most of the weekend meals.’ The newly re-published Escoffier was his source for finally learning the secret of cooking scrambled eggs correctly, after the

³⁸FUSA, Dunstan Collection, ‘My One True Love,’ p 5.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p 5.

⁴⁰Diana Chessell, *The Italian Influence on The Parade*, Norwood, 1999, p 1.

disastrous tuition of his aunt.⁴¹ Dunstan insisted upon maintaining the middle-class formalities of the table he had learned as a child, even at breakfast. As his daughter recalls:

[We] had to be there, had to sit down and the table was formally set, even for breakfast and there would be omelettes and poached eggs and, you know, whatever. There was nearly always some kind of eggs. Occasionally a special treat would be crumpets with honey. But they would be served in a chafing dish, just to keep them warm, so it was really quite grand and English in a way.⁴²

The other side of the Dunstan cooking coin was his love of experimenting with new or exotic dishes, often with disastrous consequences. There was a jugged hare that only the family dog would eat and an attempt at glazing pork or a ham with marmalade that left the kitchen looking like ‘a bomb-site’ and the oven covered in ‘black goo’. In his daughter’s opinion, ‘the food was fantastic, but cleaning up afterwards wasn’t much fun...He was what I call a quite messy cook.’⁴³ Dunstan had a farmer friend who sent up a crated Christmas goose for the family well before the end of each year. When it arrived he

would build a pen in the backyard with chicken wire and stakes and this goose would be fattened up using bran and pollard and goodness knows what else. Then there would always have to be the ceremonial beheading of the goose. A couple of times he missed and the goose went running around the yard with blood spewing everywhere. And then it would have to be plucked and there would be this almighty mess of feathers and blood

⁴¹Dunstan, ‘My One True Love’, p 5.

⁴²Interview with Bronwen Dohnt, Goolwa, 9 June 2001.

⁴³*Ibid.*

and goose and then that would be our Christmas dinner.⁴⁴

The Dunstan evening meal was almost invariably formal when prepared by the head of the house. The rare exceptions were sometimes Friday night fish and chips, a common Adelaide tradition, from a shop on the Norwood Parade or an informal Sunday evening meal, perhaps ‘cauliflower cheese in a ramekin.’ Family lunches on weekends were usually casual affairs and early on reflected something of Gretel Dunstan’s German antecedents, with homemade cottage cheese, liverwurst, and rye bread. Otherwise, the norm included ‘cheese, cold meats and good bread,’ or perhaps a curry. In ‘My One True Love’ Dunstan fails to mention that his wife also enjoyed cooking, and brought the flavours of German cuisine to the marriage.⁴⁵ Dunstan’s daughter remembers the ‘ghastly smell’ when he once managed to burn rather than toast coconut for one of these curries.⁴⁶ Dunstan later wrote that as a politician, he found his end of the day relaxation in ‘studying the origins and history of foods and their treatment...before falling gratefully into exhausted sleep.’⁴⁷

Dunstan and the Mediterranean

Dunstan makes little reference in ‘My One True Love’ to his long engagement with Mediterranean cuisine or of his participatory enjoyment of the food and lifestyle enjoyed by his Greek and Italian friends and constituents in the Norwood electorate. Perhaps this is the result of space constraints or less charitably of a reluctance to

⁴⁴Interview with Bronwen Dohnt, Goolwa, 9 June 2001.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁷Dunstan, ‘My One True Love’, p 5.

acknowledge the help of others in an earlier time. Door knocking the electorate was very much part of the Dunstan political ethos, and he became a familiar participant in fund raising and social events organised by the local ethnic communities. As a mark of appreciation for his help, whether as a politician or as a lawyer, gifts of garden and other produce were frequently left on the door mat at George Street in the days before Dunstan aspired to an electoral office.⁴⁸ His obvious interest in the food, which invariably featured prominently at such events, is well remembered by a Greek friend John Kiosoglous:

He would head for where the cooking was being done and want to participate in the basting, whatever was on the spit or the barbecue and provide...his own mixture of herbs or spices to add flavour...whenever he visited people's homes, just [as] when he visited...my home to have dinner with us, he would get up and leave those of us drinking a liqueur or whatever, go out into the kitchen and look at what was being cooked, open up the lids of the pots and pans and assist in the preparation of the food...So he either took over in the cooking, or assisted in the layout of the food on the plates as to presentation.⁴⁹

Dunstan's refusal to be bound by the traditional gender roles of his ethnic friends was not always appreciated. According to Dunstan, another of his Greek friends was unequivocal:

Now I know that in your house you cook and share the household chores. But I am Greek and my wife in the home does everything for me. She serves me at the table as the master of my house. Don't you bloody well spoil it.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Interview with Greg Crafter, Adelaide, 6 June 2001.

⁴⁹Interview with John Kiosoglous, Adelaide, 25 June 2003.

⁵⁰Dunstan, *Don Dunstan's Cookbook*, 1976, p 29.

In 1957 Dunstan had a glimpse of Mediterranean Europe with a brief trip to Cyprus to report on and publicise the bloody struggle for self-determination which was then raging. Accompanied by University of Sydney academic Ken Buckley, Dunstan was equipped with a letter of accreditation as a correspondent for the now defunct *Adelaide News*.⁵¹ The pair stayed on the island for a week, then went on to Athens and London. Dunstan's description of the memories evoked by his first sight of the Cypriot landscape confirms the basis of his passionate interest in things Mediterranean:

As we flew in over Cyprus early one morning, I felt a sudden shock of recognition. Here was the landscape of the Greek countryside – the stoniness, the terraced hillsides, cedars and cypresses, olives, figs and grapevines which I had known visually from faded photographs illustrating my schoolboy copies of Thucydides, or Xenophon or Homer, but which had come alive so vividly in the ancient Greek over which I had poured [sic] as a youth.⁵²

Dunstan's life and death have been compared to a Greek tragedy⁵³, and there is an air of epic inevitability about Dunstan's connection with the lands and the people of Greece and Italy. Dunstan's Mediterranean link grew from his student days and climaxed with his 'Village Norwood' concept in the 1970s, a celebration of ethnic cultures and diverse life-styles linked by food.⁵⁴ However, Dunstan's Norwood concept undoubtedly flowed from his experience of the Roman lifestyle during his 1969 study tour.⁵⁵ Once back in power he was able to make frequent overseas trips to

⁵¹FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Israel Trip 1957, the letter was signed by Rohan Rivett, Editor-in Chief, 30 January 1957.

⁵²*Ibid.*, *Felicia* manuscript. This section was edited out in its entirety from the published work.

⁵³Allan Patience, "Public courage, private anguish: Contemplating the life of Don Dunstan", *Adelaide Review*, March 1999.

⁵⁴Interview with Mike Rann, Adelaide, 16 January 2001.

⁵⁵Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, p 166.

Europe and Asia, usually managing to include Rome or Athens on his itinerary. His passion for learning about food and foodways at every opportunity was evident even at the height of the 1970 election campaign. Dunstan was flying from Millicent, where he had been electioneering the previous day, to the Riverland and the Chowilla Dam site. A member of the press contingent on board noted, ‘airborne again next morning, Don Dunstan was absorbed in a book on the provincial cookery of France.’⁵⁶

Dunstan and Wine

Dunstan was introduced to wine at his university college, when previously his experience had been limited to sipping a pre-dinner sherry with his aunt and her husband. He now discovered an appreciation of the way in which wine and food complement each other and how meals are ‘enhanced by marrying the wine and food tastes.’⁵⁷ While travelling around the South Australian countryside in his political role, he was directed to the late A. P. (Roly) Birks of the Wendouree winery (Dunstan spells it as Wendauree) near Clare for a good bulk red to bottle at home. Dunstan was so impressed by a tasting that a deal was struck on the spot, and Birks sent down a 5-gallon keg each vintage for a number of years. After Birks died, Dunstan’s friend Max Liberman bought the property, hence ensuring a continuing supply of Dunstan’s favourite wine.⁵⁸ The premier and some of his friends formed a bottling club at George Street, which still continues today. A notable McLaren Vale red bottled from one vintage jokingly became labelled as the ‘Premier Cruz’.⁵⁹ Dunstan’s personal

⁵⁶ *Advertiser*, 27 May 1970.

⁵⁷ Dunstan, ‘My One True Love,’ p 6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p 6. See also James Halliday, *Clare Valley: the history, the vignerons and the wines*, South Yarra, Victoria, 1985, pp 58-68.

⁵⁹ Conversation with founding wine club member Greg Stevens, Goolwa, 19 January 2003.

experience with wine paralleled that of many other Australians, especially those who lived near wine-producing areas. He concludes his reminiscences about wine in 'My One True Love' with the perhaps mundane observation that:

Australians have steadily come to understand and appreciate wine with their food so that now one expects usually to have it at lunch and dinner and on social occasions.⁶⁰

However, the consumption of wine with food was far from being the norm in the 1960s and early 1970s. Today it is easy to overlook the comparative magnitude of such changes in their earlier context.

The Single Life

By 1972 Dunstan's marriage was in crisis, and in April he moved out of the marital home into a small flat. The trauma and loneliness inevitably associated with the break-up of his marriage of some 23 years was ameliorated by preparing meals for his friends and two sons.⁶¹ In the months that followed Dunstan found a new sense of freedom in his private life, which found noticeable expression in food and cooking. John Kiosoglous, a long-time friend and colleague of Dunstan and a prominent member of the Greek Community, believes, 'he did become a more open person, a more creative person than he had been...There was a perceptible change.'⁶² Dunstan's aide at the time, Steven Wright, states, 'I think it was when he separated from Gretel that in a sense he got a lot of love and passion out of food and wine and good

⁶⁰Dunstan, 'My One True Love', p 6.

⁶¹Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, pp 205-206.

⁶²Interview with John Kiosoglous, Adelaide, 17 June 2003.

company.’⁶³ On one occasion a lucky school friend of his younger son shared in a weekend ‘feast...[of] pheasant in Calvados.’⁶⁴ Michael Angelakis, another Greek friend of Dunstan was invited to the Fullarton Road flat for dinner and contributed a variety of fresh seafood for a brilliant *bouillabaisse*. In understandable awe he and a girlfriend dressed appropriately for what they thought would be a formal meal, only to be met by the premier in shorts and Nehru shirt. The formalities were soon dispensed with:

By the time we finished that night [we] taught everyone to Greek dance, off came the jacket, off came the vest, off came the tie, rolled up the sleeves and had a bloody good night.⁶⁵

Not everyone was impressed by Dunstan’s new lifestyle. Following the Dunstan Government’s re-election in 1973, Peter Ward chronicled a list of complaints about Dunstan gleaned from the usually reluctant party faithful at Trades Hall. Prominent among the comments came, ‘since your split-up with Gretel you have appeared to be “out of control”.’⁶⁶ Undoubtedly Dunstan used his new freedom to further explore his ambivalent sexuality and displayed a clear connection between his passion for food and his passion for friendship. In his own ‘Athens of the South’ Dunstan used food as a metaphor for love and thus echoed the insights of the ancient Greeks, who also enjoyed both food and sex ‘in much the same terms.’⁶⁷

⁶³Interview with Steven Wright, Goolwa, 1 March 2001.

⁶⁴Dunstan, ‘My One True Love’, p 6.

⁶⁵Interview with Michael Angelakis, 6 February 2001.

⁶⁶SLSA, PRG 1078, Peter Ward Papers, Ward to Dunstan, 12 March 1972. The two page typewritten letter is dated 3-12-72, in the American style. However, the election was held on 10 March 1972.

⁶⁷John Coveney, *Food, Morals and meaning: The pleasure and anxiety of eating*, London, 2000, p vii.

Dunstan's Clara Street Retreat

In 1973 Dunstan found a vacant building block in Clara Street, Norwood, and fortuitously, his elderly neighbours offered to sell him a piece of their land at the rear, thus providing additional space for a vegetable garden.⁶⁸ Much to the consternation of his architect, Dunstan designed his house around the kitchen so he could talk to his guests while cooking for them. In his words, 'We'll create an audience area on the other side of the island bench and they can sit there and talk to me while I am cooking.'⁶⁹ Dunstan's use of the theatrical term 'audience' confirms the connection with his love of theatre, of theatrical performance, and a perception of himself as the actor at centre stage. In the Clara Street kitchen Dunstan demonstrated his flair with food and transformed food into performance. Effectively he substituted parliament, the ultimate theatre of the absurd, or as one of his former ministers describes it, the 'chook house',⁷⁰ for the theatre of his own kitchen. There he was the focal point, the centre of attention, and could entertain a selection of his friends by regaling them with both delectable food and stimulating conversation. Dunstan set about establishing a garden and planting fruit trees while waiting for his house to be built. Various friends were co-opted to this cause, including Steven Wright, who recalls:

The first thing he did was start to plant the fruit trees out the back of this vacant block in Clara Street and then to have the chooks...there doing a sort of Greek and Italian bit, but what he really wanted to do, he continued working in that garden and had the herb garden, in fact the house was all set around the enjoyment of eating in terms of his kitchen, open so you could watch him cook. The number of times – I've spent years I think, sitting on the bench while he's talking about all sorts of matters of

⁶⁸Dunstan, *Felicia*, 1981, p 240.

⁶⁹Dunstan, 'My One True Love', p 7.

⁷⁰Brian Chatterton, *Roosters and Featherdusters*, Renwick, New Zealand, 2003, p 65.

state, but then getting into the preparing the food which he loved until the day he died.⁷¹

Another close friend provides a further insight:

Don wanted to establish a garden. So the deal used to be that I used to go and help Don. I'd bring some food, whether it was duck – anything we had in our industry. Things we would catch. I used to do a lot of scuba diving in those days. So we'd work all morning and help Don – another friend or two were around. Then Don would cook this fantastic lunch.⁷²

Dunstan moved into his 'loved haven' in 1974, and by the time he wrote 'My One True Love' over two decades later, apart from flourishing herb and vegetable gardens, he could boast the following cornucopia of produce:

I have fruit trees-pomegranate, mulberry, two olives, loquat, macadamia, cumquat, tahitian lime, makrut [kaffir] lime, navel orange, meyer and lisbon lemon, grapefruit, granny smith apple, two avocados, wiggins peach, two figs, apricot, and vines-sultanas, muscatels and concorde grapes, passionfruit, and choko.

By the time Dunstan's cookbook appeared he was already reaping the benefits of the planning and execution lavished on his garden and 'orchard'. Dunstan believed in the freedom of the individual to choose a particular lifestyle, but the classic Australian dream of the suburban quarter-acre block also happened to best suit his own special needs and interests. However, unlike the suburban norm, he could enjoy the added luxury of an extra piece of land, together with a swimming pool. Beyond the swimming pool lay the herb and vegetable gardens, manured by courtesy of his fowl yard. It may be significant that his father had also kept poultry in Suva.

⁷¹Interview with Steven Wright, Goolwa, 1 March 2001.

Dunstan's enjoyment of his Norwood house and garden echoed that of the nineteenth-century Adelaide gardener George McEwin, who believed that 'next to a comfortable dwelling, nothing can add more to the comforts and pleasures of the occupants than a good garden.' In 1871 McEwin catalogued 40 different vegetables from his own garden and like Dunstan extolled the virtues of the soil and the climate.⁷³ The depression years of the 1930s meant that of necessity many working and middle-class families relied on the produce from their backyard garden and fruit trees to supplement the family diet. Ian Halkett in his 1976 study of suburban garden usage around Adelaide confirmed the continuance of this practice in the more affluent post-war years. Halkett reported that 'forty-four per cent of the respondents to the questionnaire said their households grew vegetables and 80 per cent obtained fruit and/or vegetables from their gardens.'⁷⁴ Both pre-and post-war immigrants from southern Europe shared a similar focus with their Anglo neighbours but also added wild olives and edible roadside weeds for soups and salads along with home-made wine to their Mediterranean diet. Rosa Matto writes

I think, all the original immigrants had fantastic vegetable gardens with a vast array of the vegetables they needed – eggplant, zucchini, capsicum, tomatoes, beans, raddichio, oregano, all the bitter greens and so on.⁷⁵

⁷²Interview with Michael Angelakis, Adelaide, 6 February 2001.

⁷³George McEwin, *The South Australian Vigneron and Gardeners' Manual*, Adelaide, 1871, pp 32, 93-108.

⁷⁴Ian P.B. Halkett, *The Quarter-Acre Block: The Use of Suburban Gardens*, Canberra, 1976, p 99.

⁷⁵Rosa Matto, 'Women as Custodians of Tradition,' *Sustaining Gastronomy: Proceedings of the Eighth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, Barbara Santich, Jennifer Hillier and Catherine Kerry (eds.), Adelaide, 1996, p 103.

Dunstan's range of produce was even more extensive and exotic and reflected his wide-ranging culinary interests and preoccupations.

The Cookbook

Fellow author Geoffrey Dutton launched *Don Dunstan's Cookbook* on 25 October 1976 at an Ayers House luncheon for the local *literati*. Also present were establishment dignitaries, including the principals of the three major department stores. The launch had been preceded by a flurry of radio and television interviews with Dunstan, which were backed by the combined resources of the publisher Rigby's publicity people and the premier's own press secretaries to ensure a follow-up of press releases in every state. In a television segment Dunstan was shown demonstrating his stir-fry technique with a wok to a group of Pitjantjatjara people. Among the viewing audience was Adelaide chef Cheong Liew.⁷⁶ Along with many other Australians, Dunstan's editor had never heard of a wok or stir-frying.⁷⁷ Later in the day the *Adelaide News* featured a full-page spread written by Dunstan's former press secretary, Tony Baker. Baker described his ex-boss as 'South Australia's best known gourmet' and went on, 'Don Dunstan's Cookbook – published today – is a revelation, about the politician gourmet and his lifestyle. It is also a very good cookbook.'⁷⁸ The following day saw the smiling and immaculately suited Dunstan in Sydney, where he posed, tossing a salad for the cameras, at the Boulevard Hotel. Labor mate Neville Wran presided over the chicken and champagne launch, and among the local 'glitterati' were fellow comrades Gough Whitlam and Bob Hawke. The press reported

⁷⁶Stephen Downes, *Advanced Australian Fare; How Australian Cooking Became the World's Best*, Crows Nest, New South Wales, 2002, p 53.

⁷⁷Don Dunstan, *Adelaide Review*, December 1998. See also *Politics and Passion: Selected Essays from the Adelaide Review*, John Spoehr (ed.), Unley, South Australia, 2000, p 236.

⁷⁸*News*, 25 October 1976.

next morning that the first print run of 20,000 at \$5.95 a copy had already sold out, and the publishers were quick to order another printing of the same quantity for distribution in November.⁷⁹ The extremely useful publicity included a four-page feature in the *Australian Magazine* by another former Dunstan aide, Peter Ward. This was titled 'The Premier Gourmet', and in it Dunstan hastened to assure voters and critics that 'it took me two Christmas breaks to write and one Easter break to revise it.' He went on, 'and I'm led to believe that my bank manager hopes that it will be a commercial success.'⁸⁰ Dunstan later revealed that the cookbook was the most financially successful of his several published works.⁸¹

Dunstan contrived to encompass 18 chapters in only 96 pages. Chapter headings range from garden and kitchen, through cooking the breakfast eggs, to salads, soups, fish and chicken, and on to meats, Indian cooking, Malaysian cooking, cold cuts, rounding off with a favourite Dunstan dissertation on how to cook vegetables correctly. But this is not simply a traditional cookery book, a mere collection of recipes, estimable as such publications may be. It is also an erudite distillation of the author's passion for good food, for using the fresh produce from his own garden and sharing the end result with his friends. His book is a far cry from another Rigby publication, dating from 1924 but still to be found in many an Adelaide kitchen in 1976 and even later, the *Green and Gold Cookery Book*. This kitchen companion contained 'tried and tested recipes, contributed by experienced housewives and cookery experts.'⁸² While the *Green and Gold* as it was affectionately known was

⁷⁹*Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 October 1976.

⁸⁰*Australian Magazine*, 26 October 1976.

⁸¹Dunstan, 'My One True Love', p 8. See also Dunstan, *Adelaide Review*, December 1998.

⁸²*Green and Gold Cookery Book*, Editor, Annie L. Sharman, Adelaide, 1924. The book has recently been republished.

often handed down from mother to daughter, thus ensuring the transmission of the same unimaginative Anglo-Saxon stodge from generation to generation, Dunstan's work was aimed at a younger and different, predominantly middle-class audience. It contained no chapters on puddings, cakes, biscuits, scones, cold sweets, or in fact desserts of any kind. He explained, 'I don't bake cakes and biscuits because my friends like savoury dishes more than sweet ones and so do I.'⁸³ Dunstan's exclusion of desserts may also relate to his childhood experiences, as well as a surfeit of afternoon teas as a politician. In any case the publishers insisted on their absence, and also deleted Peking Duck 'for reasons of size and price.'⁸⁴ Although he avoided potatoes, Dunstan's attention to weight watching did not extend to a ban on butter or cream. A number of his recipes call for liberal quantities of both. While coconut milk and the now frowned upon monosodium glutamate frequently appear.

Although chapter two is headed 'The Garden', Dunstan opened with a detailed description of how to set up and maintain the 'foundation' of his garden, the fowl pen, its all important occupants and their entirely useful manure, which obviated the need for chemical fertilizers. On an earlier occasion Dunstan disclosed to an interviewer that his 'secretary collects the manure for me,' that is, Steven Wright brought cow manure from his Inglewood property to combine with the fowl droppings the premier scraped up at Norwood. This 1974 interview is noteworthy, because it revealed for the first time a new and surprising side of a premier hitherto known as 'the fashion trend setter "Dapper Don"' to many South Australians. He was pictured 'clad in mattress ticking swim trunks and bikie boots standing in a clump of manure at the bottom of his garden.' A 'community leader' had tipped off the paper that over the lunch table the

⁸³Dunstan, *Don Dunstan's Cookbook*, 1976, p 19.

⁸⁴Don Dunstan, *Don Dunstan's Cookbook*, New, or second edition, Adelaide, 1998, Foreword, p 4.

‘Premier was discussing the state of the zucchini [in his garden] rather than the state of the nation.’⁸⁵

Before detailing the formidable list of vegetables fighting for a place with the ‘chook’ yard in the Dunstan plot, the green-fingered premier devoted a page to some of his favourite hobby horses. To some extent the guidelines guarding his selection of vegetables were their suitability for ‘weightwatchers and...a temperate climate.’ He was, however, a self-confessed experimenter.⁸⁶ He attacked the innate conservatism of Australians in general, encapsulated in the fear of the new, whether it be food or ideas, that might shock our ‘cosy assumptions’. Dunstan lamented, not for the first or the last time, that limes were not grown commercially in this citrus-growing state and upon the absence of ‘grenadilla or makesa’. The reader was also made privy to his frustration with ‘Government agencies’ for resisting his desire to cultivate miniature corn.⁸⁷ The polemic was not confined to attacks on stodgy conservatives. Given Dunstan’s love of the exotic it comes as little surprise to read his swipes at conservationists, whom he tagged as ‘greenies’, the same pejorative label favoured by their more usual critics. He took issue with those who regard all native Australian plants as sacrosanct and all exotica as fit only for the quarantine bin. ‘What a nonsense!’ He declaimed, ‘I don’t intend to offer my guests feasts of the native peach and quandong.’ And yet he had long expressed an interest in Aboriginal food and ‘bush tucker.’⁸⁸ Having noticed that ‘conservationists relish tomatoes,’ Dunstan resumed his attack by reminding both ‘greenies’ and the reader that the ‘fruit of love’ was introduced from the New World to

⁸⁵*Sunday Mail*, 17 February 1974.

⁸⁶Dunstan, *Don Dunstan’s Cookbook*, 1976, p 12.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, p 12.

⁸⁸Interview with Doug Claessen, Hindmarsh, 23 January 2001.

Europe only within comparatively recent times, as were the avocado and sweet corn.⁸⁹ Moving on to the specific, Dunstan listed the A to Z of his vegetable garden, commencing with the globe and Jerusalem varieties of artichoke and predictably ending with zucchini. He provided useful hints on how, why, and what to grow, but left his all-important advice on cooking vegetables until the very end of the book. His herb garden contained 22 different kinds, plus three kinds of ginger and large and small hot chillies. At this stage he was still trying to produce olives from his own trees and extolled the joys of shady grapevines in South Australia's Mediterranean climate. Dunstan claimed that he managed 'the plot' by spending only two hours per week plus 'one full day's effort a month' on the job. However, at least one of his helpful friends recalls many happy hours spent kneeling on a mat at his side, weeding away, sometimes in silence, sometimes in animated conversation.⁹⁰

Dunstan's Kitchen

It is refreshing to find that 15 Clara Street Norwood, unlike the suburban norm, was largely designed around the kitchen. Dunstan had learned lessons from his previous houses and was able to marry his experiences and ideas in an effective synthesis. He felt it necessary to describe the kitchen, since it was also central to the book. The Dunstan kitchen was a simple galley style at one end of a large open living area, divided off by a combined workbench and gas cooker top, the latter hidden behind a low timber screen. Against the opposite wall was another bench top which housed Dunstan's secret weapon, the drive from an under-bench electric motor. The required attachment, blender, mixer, or whatever was simply placed in position and the

⁸⁹Dunstan, *Don Dunstan's Cookbook*, 1976, p 12.

⁹⁰Telephone conversation with Andy Thorpe, 2 May 2001.

drive switched on. Above the bench were narrow wooden shelves for rows of glass containers, with larger canisters below. Impressive lines of copper pans were hung from the brick wall behind the bench. An outer door provided ready access to the nearby herb garden or to the vegetable plot hidden behind the swimming pool. The kitchen was dominated by a large brick column which housed the electric wall oven and reduced to a chimney stack. Attached to this structure was an enormous copper hood positioned over the gas cooker. This was clearly a serious kitchen for serious culinary endeavours. One of the factors which helped to make it work, however, was the adjoining preparation/storage room, with the workbenches and stainless steel sinks of a professional kitchen.⁹¹ As well as describing his kitchen in some detail, Dunstan listed the contents of the apothecary jars on his shelves and the variety of items in his pantry cum storeroom.

The vast range of ingredients described by Dunstan indicate that he was indeed a dedicated experimenter. Nevertheless, part of the attraction for the novice venturing into Dunstan's cookbook was the 'user-friendly' explanation of essentials, whether it be chicken stock, pâté or mayonnaise. Although his text was full of useful hints it abounded with examples of Dunstan in full pedantic mode:

I don't know why Australians have not taken more cookery from the Lebanese in our population than they have done so far. The humble chick pea...is generally absent from [our] kitchens. The Roman legions introduced such Mediterranean pleasures as chick peas and coriander into Britain, but even the Cornish and Welsh, who retain some Roman strains in their predominantly Celtic blood, have forgotten most of their knowledge of Roman cookery.⁹²

⁹¹Description of Dunstan's kitchen by the writer, following visits to Clara street in 2001-2002. Courtesy of Steven Cheng.

⁹²Dunstan, *Don Dunstan's Cookbook*, 1976, p 22.

This is Dunstan the history lover and pedagogue in full flight, unable to resist the opportunity to share the fruits of his ongoing research with the reader and in the process demonstrating his superior knowledge. Apart from snippets gleaned from his research, the practical man of the kitchen revealed much else, including details of his unpatented device for dripping olive oil into the Dunstan mayonnaise.⁹³

The eclectic Dunstan ranged far and wide, from mini-essays on the reasons for the lack of a ‘distinctive Australian cuisine’, to suggesting a synthesis or fusion of the more usual cooking methods of Anglo-European traditions with those of Asia. Dunstan discussed the place of rice in Asian and Indian cuisines, together with the various cooking methods including his own ‘surefire’ technique. He explained the use of the wok, then largely unknown to most Australians, and, importantly, continued on with a treatise on the art of stir-frying. He compared European and Chinese thickening agents, and argued a case for trying banana puree to take advantage of the high cost to the community of protecting that industry.

In his introduction to the recipes Dunstan explains

I have not included recipes of the standard British cuisine, or written of the standard techniques of European cookery. A myriad of cookbooks supply this information. In this book I want to deal with additions which are not common, which you may not know of, and which I think could well be added to the Australian kitchen. Recipes, in fact, which I myself enjoy cooking and serving and eating.⁹⁴

Dunstan rarely acknowledged the source of his recipes, save for Zucchini Soup, which he modestly noted as ‘My own invention’. There were no less than fifteen chicken

⁹³Dunstan, *Don Dunstan's Cookbook*, 1976, p 22.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, p 30.

dishes alone in the chapter devoted to ‘Chickens & Other Feathered Friends’, and Dunstan noted that only two are likely to be familiar to Australian diners.⁹⁵ The breadth of sources, while largely of unnamed origin, was one of the strengths of this slight volume and included Malaysian, Middle-Eastern, Turkish, Italian, Greek, Indian, Japanese, Lebanese, North and South America, French, Indonesian, Slovakian, Chinese, Fijian, Hungarian, Swiss, Spanish and German, a veritable smorgasbord of culinary variations.

Dunstan heaped scorn on the Australian version of curry, which he described as ‘a weak stew of meat, sometimes with vegetables and even fruit added to it, and flavoured with two teaspoons of a commercial curry powder...insults to a great cuisine.’⁹⁶ Later he described the methods for preparing curries in the Indian or Asian manner. He was also not afraid to tackle that great Australian icon the backyard barbecue, which he suggested could be made into ‘something a bit better than transferring charcoal to the outside of chops and sausages, and [instead] to make the family barbecue occasion a gastronomic pleasure.’ The last three pages were devoted to the best ways of cooking vegetables and a plea for the abandonment of prolonged stewing in the manner inherited from the mother country.

Critics and Cooks

‘Passionate Gourmet’ and critic Leo Schofield decided at the time he was ‘nit-picking’ with his criticisms but ‘suspect[ed] that the Premier’s cookbook is going to be a runaway success.’⁹⁷ Schofield thought that Dunstan’s recipe for ‘Painted Lobster, a

⁹⁵Dunstan, *Don Dunstan’s Cookbook*, 1976, p 53.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, p 28.

⁹⁷*Australian*, 30 October 1976.

melange of lobster, fresh pineapple, sliced kiwi fruit, mashed bananas and sliced strawberries should have been reserved for the Telesnack page of the TV Times.’ He also found that ‘some of the methods are sketchy to say the least. Cooking times are often omitted.’ However, Schofield looked forward to a sequel. The cookbook buying public seemed to find little to complain about, since the second printing also disappeared from retailers’ shelves. Culinary icon and author Maggie Beer came to South Australia with her husband to share in the Dunstan ‘Renaissance.’ She vividly recalls buying her copy of the Dunstan cookbook and says unequivocally that it helped to change her life.⁹⁸ David Hay is the joint-owner of Thorn Park Country House, a favourite Dunstan retreat, and was in his early twenties in 1976, living in a share house with a group of friends who gave him a copy of Dunstan’s cookbook for Christmas. He describes it as ‘mind blowing. I hadn’t even heard of half the ingredients.’⁹⁹ Their Christmas lunch was a joint effort and all the courses came from the cookbook:

There were Malaysian dishes and satays – it was all done on a barbecue...and it still goes back as an incredibly memorable Christmas...it was just a complete break from the turkey and all that carry-on. I mean half my friends got Don’s cookbook for Christmas.

Hay recalls that Charmaine Solomon’s *Complete Asian Cookbook* also influenced him at the time but points out that Dunstan urged the use of fresh herbs rather than the dry spices favoured by Solomon. A colleague of food historian and author Barbara Santich reported the following:

Recently I was in Ballarat with a friend, and we had dinner with his family who live there. During tea I think I mentioned something about Don Dunstan, and my friend’s mother whipped out her copy of...[his] first

⁹⁸Interview with Maggie Beer, Adelaide, 24 April 2001.

⁹⁹Interview with David Hay and Michael Speers, Adelaide, 4 March 2002.

cookbook. It was well-thumbed. And she went through it, occasionally saying things to the rest of her family like: 'Here's the recipe for pate I used to make' and the family would go: 'Oh yeah, I remember that.' Then she'd tell me: 'I used this recipe the first time I tried to make stir-fry,' or whatever...Beyond his political achievements, his cookbooks [sic] had obviously affected her life and the life of her family in a quite profound way.¹⁰⁰

Howard Douglass, a recently-arrived migrant from the United States, wrote to congratulate Dunstan on the book and like Oliver Twist asked for more, commenting that although he had given copies to some of his friends 'who regularly impale their Donny Dunstan voodoo dolls, [nevertheless]...the praise has been unanimous.'¹⁰¹ He gathered from the text that Dunstan was unfamiliar with 'Irma Rombauer's monumental "The Joy of Cooking" which is the recognized standard in the field in the United States. Indeed, it is the authority and universality of this work that Dr Comfort seeks to evoke in naming his (in its own way, quite excellent) work, "The Joy of Sex".' Paul Lloyd, an Adelaide reviewer of Dunstan's cookbook, decided that 'the latest sparkle from that brilliant man...was a good cookbook, a good read, and a vision of a good Australia to live in'. He continued in similar vein about the recipes:

Over the years he has matured them like a fine wine and here he uncorks more than a 100 recipes that you won't find in Margaret Fulton. They are exciting and exotic because Mr Dunstan believes that is the life for SA.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰Email from Chris Gregory to Barbara Santich, 14 March 2001.

¹⁰¹FUSA, Dunstan Collection, "D" Miscellaneous Correspondence, H. Douglass to Dunstan, 6 February 1977.

¹⁰²Paul Lloyd, *Advertiser*, 28 October 1976.

Opposition leader David Tonkin, who had roundly condemned Dunstan's cookbook venture, attempted a counter-attack with his own short-lived and pedestrian cooking column in the *Sunday Mail*. He self-righteously proclaimed, 'there should be no elitism attached to cooking', and demonstrated this by providing unimaginative recipes using various mundane ingredients, including sausages and mince with cabbage.¹⁰³ A much later comment by Dunstan himself summarised his own view of the cookbook's importance:

It was... the first book to be published here about using the ingredients and techniques of our region and of not confining ourselves to the limited flavours and forms of cooking and ingredients then in common use here.¹⁰⁴

Dunstan conveniently overlooked Margaret Fulton's first cookbook, published in 1968. While lacking his diversity of cuisines, Fulton included a chapter on Chinese cooking in her massive tome, with emphasis on using the wok and fresh ingredients.¹⁰⁵

Dunstan's Philosophical Foundations

In the opening chapter of his cookbook Dunstan mentioned the pleasure he has gained from 'books about housebuilding and garden-making.'¹⁰⁶ He nominated Horace, Pliny, Bacon, and Axel Munthe in particular as among 'diverse authors' whose works he has 'read and reread' to inform his own 'constructive domesticity.' On the face of it, this seems a bizarre and 'diverse' quartet to influence a gardener, homebuilder, and cookbook writer in 1970s Adelaide suburbia, but Dunstan the

¹⁰³Craig McGregor, *National Times*, 27 June-2 July 1977.

¹⁰⁴Dunstan, *Politics and Passion*, 2000, p 236.

¹⁰⁵Margaret Fulton, *Margaret Fulton's Cookbook*, Dee Why West, New South Wales, 1968. By 1977 the book was in its 14th impression with more than 500,000 copies sold.

¹⁰⁶Dunstan, 1976, pp 7-8.

classical scholar and romantic was always determinedly different. One of his friends has suggested that Dunstan became attracted to cooking because it was not the male norm, but the attraction outgrew any such consideration as he became more and more involved with food.¹⁰⁷ Axel Munthe is remembered for his best-selling, fictionalised memoir *The Story of San Michele*, first published in 1929. The unconventional Dr Munthe lived in ‘a crumbling castle on the crest of Capri’ for many years.¹⁰⁸ Munthe described building his edifice with the help of the local villagers, to whom he was both occasional physician and financial benefactor. The site was a former garden, and contained the remains of Roman buildings, with a profusion of fallen arches and stone columns.¹⁰⁹ His description of a work-day lunch sets a scene of great appeal to a lover of Mediterranean culture like Dunstan:

When the macaroni in the parroco Don Antonio’s kitchen were ready the bells in the church rang mezzogiorno, we all sat down for a hearty meal round an enormous plate of insalata di pomodoro, minestrone or macaroni, soon to be at work again until sunset.¹¹⁰

Despite a large dowry, Francis Bacon seems not to have enjoyed either his marriage in middle age to a fourteen-year-old bride or home building, since he spent many years in bachelor accommodation at Gray’s Inn.¹¹¹ Unlike Dunstan, Bacon appears to have preferred to be entertained at table rather than to play the host. Bacon,

¹⁰⁷Interview with Adam Wynn, Carrickalinga, 19 April 2002

¹⁰⁸Gustav Munthe and Gudrun Uexkull. *The Story of Axel Munthe*, London, 1953, Introduction by Malcolm Munthe, p v.

¹⁰⁹Gustav Munthe, *The Story of San Michele*, London, 1936, pp 226-229.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, p 226.

¹¹¹Ian Box, *The Social Thought of Francis Bacon, Studies In the History of Philosophy*, Volume 10. Lewiston, New York, 1989, p 142.

like Dunstan, ‘was genuinely committed to the amelioration of mankind’s lot’,¹¹² and they shared a ‘taste for beautiful gardens and fine living’.¹¹³ Although Dunstan’s enjoyment of gardens leaned more to fruit and vegetables than flowers, he might yet have found Bacon’s essay ‘Of Gardens’ pleasant enough.¹¹⁴ Dunstan too was a seeker after knowledge, and they had other interests in common, the study of ‘cookery’ for example and its history, which both saw as one of the arts.¹¹⁵ Numbered among Bacon’s many projects was one for ‘making peas, cherries, and strawberries come early, and another for preserving throughout the summer oranges, lemons, citrons, and pomegranates.’¹¹⁶

Presumably Dunstan was referring to Pliny the Elder and the Roman’s encyclopaedic writing on natural history as another source of inspiration. Pliny was known as a stoic rather than a gourmet, as evidenced by his scathing attack on seafood, which he blamed for ‘the decay of morality’ he saw everywhere.¹¹⁷ He continued:

Shellfish are the prime cause of the decline of morals [in Rome] and the adoption of an extravagant lifestyle...Indeed of the whole realm of Nature, the sea is in many ways the most harmful to the stomach, with its great variety of dishes and tasty fish.¹¹⁸

Much of Pliny’s only surviving work is devoted to plants, agriculture and horticulture, especially the olive industry and viticulture, while Dunstan would also have been

¹¹²Box, 1989, p 20.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, p 11.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, p 65.

¹¹⁵Benjamin Farrington, *Francis Bacon: Philosopher of Industrial Science*, London, 1951, p 119.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, p 137.

¹¹⁷John F. Healy (ed.), *Pliny The Elder, Natural History: A Selection*, London, 1991, p xiii.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, p 134

interested in the sections on architecture and art. Pliny, unlike Dunstan, clearly preferred water over wine, but few could argue with his observation ‘on the physiological effects of wine [that]...“nothing else is more harmful to our pleasures when taken without moderation”.’¹¹⁹ And in his declining years Dunstan might have recalled Pliny writing about the mythic Hyperboreans:

Death does not come until they have had their fill of life.
Setting a banquet, they greet their old age with luxury,
and then leap into the sea from a certain rock. This
method of burial is the most serene.¹²⁰

Horace’s Sabine Farm was two millennia and half a world away from Dunstan’s Norwood home, but the poet’s verse must have resonated:

These were my day-dreams, then, a plot of land
– Not very large – an ever-bubbling spring.
Hard by the house, a garden, and around
A bit of forest. The propitious gods
Have blest me yet more richly. It is well.¹²¹

Peter Levi has noted that the Sabine Farm was clearly a retreat from the hurly-burly of Rome for Horace.¹²² Clara Street with its kitchen, its garden, and the selected company of his friends was Dunstan’s own retreat from the outer, public world.¹²³ While Dunstan was bi-sexual, he might not have made the transition from ‘heterosexual to homosexual at the drop of a hat’, as Levi reports Horace to have done. But again there

¹¹⁹Healy, 1991, p 188.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, pp 51-52.

¹²¹E.K. Rand, *A Walk to Horaces Farm*, Oxford, 1930, p 3. From sixth satire, Book II.

¹²²Peter Levi, *Horace: A Life*, London, 1997, p 116.

¹²³Dunstan, 1976, p 8.

is another resonance in the rest of this quotation: ‘in this he follows the tradition of Greek songs, and no doubt of life.’¹²⁴ Dunstan would have enjoyed joining Horace, his friend and benefactor Maecenas, with Virgil on their trip ‘to Beneventum, where the kitchen went on fire as thrushes were being roasted for their dinner.’¹²⁵ There are more than enough references to food and dining in the poetry of Horace to have engaged Dunstan’s attention, as this final example from Peter Levi’s account demonstrates:

Porcius swallowed tarts in one mouthful
While Nomentanus pointed what crumbs fall,
The rest of us ate birds and shells and fish
Concealing whatsoever taste you wish,
Revealing all at once, I ate a sparrow
That tasted of a turbot’s belly-marrow.
Then honey-apples picked in a dying moon.¹²⁶

Apart from being a runaway financial success, the cookbook helped to establish Dunstan’s credentials as a notable Australian gastronomer. This was confirmed by the cookbook’s inclusion in the Landmarks of Australian Gastronomy exhibition and catalogue at the University of New South Wales in 1988. Organised and presented by Graham Pont, Barbara Santich, and Paul Wilkins, the exhibition was heralded as a groundbreaking survey of ‘Australian gastronomic literature.’¹²⁷ In a section of the catalogue devoted to ‘The Art of Living in Australia’, Dunstan follows the path first marked by Phillip Muskett in the nineteenth century. He is joined by the redoubtable Lady Hackett and bracketed by Ted Maloney (*Oh, for a French wife!*) and Michael

¹²⁴Levi, 1997, p 46.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, p 105.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, p 249. The quotation is from the Eighth Satire of Horace.

¹²⁷Graham Pont, Barbara Santich, Paul Wilkins, *Landmarks of Australian Gastronomy*, Kensington, New South Wales, 1988, p iii.

Symons (*One Continuous Picnic*). Leo Schofield and Stephanie Alexander also feature among the post-World War II gastronomers. The catalogue has this to say about Dunstan:

Don Dunstan carries his learning lightly into the domestic sphere, where new principles of home management are enunciated with a confidence and authority drawn from the royal art of politics.¹²⁸

The writer, probably Graham Pont, then points to the classical background of Dunstan's systemised domesticity:

Dunstan's personal philosophy of 'constructive domesticity' is no other than the classical art of economics refashioned for the suburban house and garden, in the spirit of Xenophon and Columella. Thus Dunstan brings a revolution to the ordinary Australian household, by harmonising the best methods of growing, preparing, serving and eating food into a coherent and intelligible system, informed by a reading of diverse authorities from Pliny, Horace and Bacon, to Axel Munthe.

The catalogue recognises that Dunstan was in the vanguard of those who saw 'the culinary potential of a multicultural society long before a similar awareness became general in Australia'.¹²⁹

Other Food Writing

During the late 1980s and early 1990s Dunstan wrote occasional food related articles for publication, before embarking on his regular feature with the *Adelaide Review*, 'Don's Table Talk'. An example that appeared in the Melbourne *Herald* on 7

¹²⁸Pont, Santich, Wilkins, 1988, p 89.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, p 89.

September 1988, complete with a photograph of the author making pasta in his kitchen, was well received.¹³⁰ Dunstan took his readers back to 1947 to recount the story of dining his ‘first lady’ at Allegros, a newly opened Italian restaurant in ‘the capital of wowsersdom’, Adelaide. The impecunious university student naturally ordered for them both and first chose ‘a wonderful minestrone swimming with vegetables and borlotti beans, redolent with pesto sprinkled with parmesan.’ Like most Adelaideans of that era, his girlfriend had only ever eaten tinned spaghetti, and Dunstan made the mistake of ordering spaghetti bolognese for their main course. When this arrived she was too genteel to cope with *al dente* pasta, in spite of Dunstan’s urging her ‘to eat with abandon...and [throw] inhibition to the winds.’ Undaunted, Dunstan continued to search out cheaper Italian eateries and learned valuable lessons. ‘That simple family fare can be delicious and that socialising in a restaurant where...[there] is a scene of constant theatre is good fun.’¹³¹

The Italian theme continues years later with Gough Whitlam taking him to an expensive restaurant in Sydney, and then the well travelled Dunstan by chance meeting the proprietor Beppi, in Hawaii. Dunstan told of his disappointment at discovering the general predictability of restaurant fare when he lived in Italy and exhaustively listed the menus in Italian. He found that ‘originality in cooking is rare. Italian cooking stopped innovation with the arrival in Italy of the tomato.’ In his view the dramatic changes experienced by the western food industry after World War II by-passed Italy, which also failed to preserve a good deal of its inheritance of medieval cookery. He complained that herbs and spices known to the Romans were not generally used in modern Italian kitchens and found instead only seven common herbs. Dunstan then

¹³⁰FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Food and Wine Articles, William D. Fraser to Dunstan, 14 September 1988.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, Dunstan’s Italian food article, p 1.

asked rhetorically, why Italian cuisine was held in such esteem? He answered his own question using an argument similar to that first advanced by Michael Symons in 1982 to explain the lack of an Australian cuisine.¹³² Unlike Australia, which could not lay claim to a cuisine of its own because it was a society *sans* peasants, Dunstan decided that ‘Italian cuisine in the last three hundred years has been based on a peasantry which grew the food it ate,’ predominantly vegetables. Rather oddly, given his enthusiasm for Roman sauces and recipes, he praised the simplicity of this peasant cooking and criticised the complexities evolved by the Romans. The trap for the unwary traveller, he advised, was to avoid the misleading advertising of *storico* or *molto caratteristico* and to eat instead where the locals ate. He gave details of memorable meals enjoyed elsewhere during his sojourn in Italy and included a conversation in Italian with the waiter at his customary restaurant in Rome.¹³³

A short travel article for the *Bulletin* in 1988 netted Dunstan \$400. He described a recent holiday in Penang, ‘the Pearl of the Orient’, but first roundly criticised Singapore for losing its ‘history, charm, colour, [and] variety.’¹³⁴ Dunstan’s disenchantment followed the lifestyle restrictions and other policies put in place by his former friend Lee Kuan Yew but were exacerbated following Adele Koh’s deportation from the island and her move into Dunstan’s life. Lim Chong Keat, brother of Penang’s chief minister, met Dunstan at the airport and gave him VIP treatment. Dunstan ‘stayed in solitary state’ at the chief minister’s guest-house, breakfasting with the resident housekeeper at nearby hawkers’ stalls, where he praised ‘the “Sisters” whose koay teow (rice noodles with prawns and other seafood, eggs and spices) is

¹³²Michael Symons, *One Continuous Picnic*, Adelaide, 1988, in particular pp 5-12, 254-262.

¹³³FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Food and Wine Articles, Italian food article, pp 2-3.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, ‘My Holiday,’ 1988, p 1.

justly famous.’ A highlight for Dunstan was Lim Chong’s Balik Pulau property, where he grew ‘a wide range of tropical food plants,’ as Dunstan tried to do over the years with varying success at his Queensland property near Cardwell and at Clara Street. The excursion to Balik Pulau culminated in a meal of nonya food delivered ‘in tin cans [from a handy] food house.’ In old Georgetown on another day, eating ‘delicately spiced’ Muslim curries, Dunstan was left ‘marvelling at the artistry of the cook – cardamom and kunyit, fresh coriander and yoghurt, cumin and clove so carefully blended as to be musical.’ In this same quarter Dunstan applied his standard taste test for Asian food to the yum cha and rated it as ‘superb’. The unpretentious eatery, set up in a narrow street, also fulfilled Dunstan’s other delight, continuous restaurant theatre.¹³⁵

Conclusions

Dunstan’s lifetime interest and involvement in food and drink manifestly stemmed from his childhood experiences in Fiji and South Australia. The extent of the youthful culinary enthusiasm that he recalled later in life far exceeded what one would expect for male children of his generation, whether in Australia or Fiji. His Fijian years not only provided a culinary education that was distinctly outside the norm but also formed the basis of his strong views on social justice. Dunstan’s adolescent venture as cook for his peers in the St Peter’s scout troop was also far outside the usual parameters of behaviour. The sons of the Adelaide establishment would not have dreamed of showing an interest in cooking; this was the realm of their mothers and sisters or female household staff. Little wonder that Dunstan felt like ‘a refugee’ in

¹³⁵FUSA, Dunstan Collection, ‘My Holiday,’ pp 1-2.

terms of relating to his fellow collegians.¹³⁶ His perpetual status as the outsider was thus set firmly into place. The cookbook (that is not just a cookbook) exploited Dunstan's celebrity status and fed the need for fame and recognition in his personality. Dunstan's cookbook signified a watershed in his life, his coming of age as an authority on good food and good living. There can be only one answer to the obvious question as to how Dunstan found the time to hone his culinary skills, let alone collect, modify and document a sufficient number of recipes for the cookbook. The answer lay in Dunstan's deep and abiding passion for the subject of food, a passion that enabled him to set aside the duties and responsibilities of his political office. In stressing the appeal of thorough and productive housekeeping he epitomised the 'wise virgin,' planning ahead, running his own garden and fowlyard, enjoying and sharing the fruits of his own systemised labour. The food articles, his 'One True Love' essay, and the cookbook all share Dunstan's penchant for displaying his undoubted knowledge on the subject of food, its history, its preparation, or its enjoyment. He had begun to share his knowledge and enthusiasm with a wider audience. Metaphorically, he had invited the members of that audience to join him at table. The next chapter examines Dunstan's life and career changes after his dramatic exit from the political stage, while continuing to concentrate on food and drink.

¹³⁶Dunstan to George Negus, 'Don Dunstan: The State's Man', (the final interview), ABC TV, 5 February 1999.

PART III

FUSION

Part III FUSION: FOOD AND LIFE

Chapter Eight

DUNSTAN AND GASTRONOMY: THE ONGOING SEARCH

The success of his cookbook confirmed Dunstan on the path towards recognising food as central to his life at a time when the attractions of political life had perhaps already begun to pall.¹ The painful transition from the part political, part private life of a celebrity required a period of wandering in the employment wilderness after his political career ended. He would try to further his career as a writer and editor, as a television presenter of poetry and classical music, as a television chef, and as a public servant once more, but success and satisfaction evaded him. However, Dunstan's involvement in the early symposia of Australian Gastronomy not only set him further along his personal foodway but also helped to confirm his 'foodie' credentials. The 'fusion' of Asian and European cuisines he had called for in the cookbook becomes a metaphor for his own life, as he journeyed towards the ultimate discovery of himself.

Into the Wilderness

Apparently still grieving over the death of his wife Adele Koh in October 1978, and following a demanding and controversial uranium fact-finding mission to Europe,² while suffering from a severe viral infection, Dunstan collapsed in Parliament on 8 February 1979. A week later the media were summoned to Calvary Hospital and he announced his resignation from public office. More recently, another version of events has revealed how Dunstan found in Koh's diaries evidence of her true feelings for him,

¹Andrew Parkin, 'The Dunstan Governments: A Political Synopsis,' *The Dunstan Decade: Social Democracy at the State Level*, Andrew Parkin and Allan Patience (eds.), Melbourne, 1981, p 12. Parkin sees 1975 as marking a reformist government 'on the wane.'

²Sir Norman Young, *Figuratively Speaking: The Reminiscences, Experiences and Observations of Sir Norman Young*, Adelaide, 1991, p 301. Young says that he 'tempted Dunstan to undertake the fateful overseas visit...he has generously never reproached me on this score.' p 301.

and that to her their marriage had been a mockery.³ This shattering discovery helped to trigger his collapse and withdrawal from politics. Before leaving Adelaide for Perugia and a stint at the University for Foreigners ‘on doctor’s orders,’ Dunstan somehow recovered sufficiently to help his party in the March by-election that became necessary with his resignation.⁴ In Perugia he completed a three-month intermediate course in Italian thanks to a scholarship courtesy of the Italian consul.⁵ Helped by his early grounding in Latin, he then continued for a further period with private tutors.⁶ Apart from his study of the language Dunstan also took the opportunity to expand his knowledge of Italian cuisine in as many of the surrounding regions as possible. An earlier aim, to spend a year in France learning the language and the cuisine, was not realised.⁷

Dunstan returned to Adelaide towards the end of the year and could not refrain from becoming involved in several matters of public concern.⁸ For the moment his interest in food became peripheral to other employment commitments. However, Michael Symons, on meeting the post-politics Dunstan during interval at the opera, found him to be fixated on food, especially recipes, to the exclusion of any desire to discuss the music or the performance.⁹ He became editor of *Pol* magazine for a brief

³Allan Patience, *Adelaide Review*, March 1999, p 9. See also Bob Ellis, *Goodbye Babylon: Further journeys in time and politics*, Camberwell, Victoria, 2002, p 518.

⁴Stewart Cockburn, *The Salisbury Affair*, Melbourne, 1979, p 112.

⁵*Northern Herald*, 11 October 1990.

⁶*Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 July 1979.

⁷Interview with Mike Rann, Adelaide, 16 January 2001.

⁸*News*, 15 February 1980.

⁹Interview with Michael Symons, Wellington, New Zealand, 24 January 2002.

period¹⁰ and undertook a series of music-based interviews for the Australian Broadcasting Commission, which were soon followed by the ‘Dunstan Documentaries,’ ‘a personal view’ of Australia. The expanded content of the documentaries mainly followed along the lines Dunstan had written for a little-known ‘glossy’ Rigby publication of 1978, *Don Dunstan’s Australia*, with photographs by Julia Featherstone, a ‘book on the changing mood of modern Australia.’¹¹ In the book he devoted several pages to discussing Aboriginal food and suggested one of the reasons white Australians largely chose to ignore indigenous food was an inherent fear of dirt, of contamination from contact with the soil. He wrote, ‘White Australians joke about Aborigine’s food and sneer at witchetty grubs, snake and goanna. They shouldn’t.’¹² Dunstan went on to describe in detail an ‘imma’, or ‘feast with entertainment’, he had recently enjoyed at Amata on the North West Aboriginal Reserve. The meal included damper made from ‘wild grain’ and cooked in the coals, a portion of kangaroo tail, native tomatoes and a bowl of live honey ants for dessert.¹³ He contrasted the more rapid acceptance by American settlers of exotic, indigenous foods on that continent, including catfish, squirrel, possum, buffalo, terrapin, and bear, with the Australian experience:

A few early eccentrics told of the joys of eating echidna and some settlers relished ‘Pom Jam’ (roast kangaroo tail) and ‘Slippery Bob’ (kangaroo brains cooked in corn oil) but most people regarded Australian fauna and flora as alien and undesirable food sources.¹⁴

¹⁰Flinders University of South Australia [FUSA], Dunstan Collection, ‘POL’ Magazine file. Dunstan resigned on 14 January 1981.

¹¹Don Dunstan, *Don Dunstan’s Australia*, Adelaide, 1978, p 75.

¹²*Ibid.*, p 23.

¹³*Ibid.*, p 24.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p 26.

He was undoubtedly delighted with the variety of flavours on offer and impressed with the various methods of cooking encountered, all of which is in marked contrast to his summary dismissal of Aboriginal foods in his cookbook of 1976.

The book contains brief references to Australians' love of their gardens and the Dunstan home garden, complete with a full-page, colour study of the gardening premier clad in athletic singlet and brief shorts. He mourned the loss of the traditional corner store and the opportunity for socialising it represented, now that 'the economics of scale in selling food and household requirements have brought the ubiquitous supermarkets, temples to the anonymous and impersonal.'¹⁵ A chapter on "Whingeing Poms" and others' mentioned German food in South Australia as essential to 'social jollity and *gemutlichkeit*.' Dunstan further on contended that:

The most easily-perceived migrant influence has taken place in Australian food. Italians and Hungarians to the greatest extent, but all migrant groups in their own way, have influenced Australian food habits for the better. No longer is the dripping pot a feature of every Australian housewife's kitchen.¹⁶

Dunstan first spoke about 'migrant influence' in his tourism brief of 1971, when he was especially critical of Greek and Hungarian restaurateurs. The final food touch is provided by a photograph of his wife, Adele Koh, teaching Chinese cooking to a group of adult students.¹⁷

The 'Dunstan Documentaries' television series was completed in eighteen months after filming on location in England, Europe, Singapore, Fiji and Australia and

¹⁵*Dunstan's Australia*, 1978, p 42.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p 88.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p 93.

shown on local television from August 1981.¹⁸ Dunstan later sent copies of the video tapes to Channel 4 in London who decided against screening them.¹⁹ His ‘political memoir,’ *Felicia*, was hurriedly published in October 1981. ‘The Book of the TV Series’, *Don Dunstan, Australia: a personal view*, was also published in 1981 but in paperback format and without the Featherstone photographs. The content is an expanded version of *Don Dunstan’s Australia* and shares the same introductory lines, along with the sentiment Dunstan later professed for food in his ‘My One True Love’ essay:

This is in many ways a love story – but some readers may be surprised to find that in it I tell of a love which came to fruition despite a critical examination of the faults of our society. I love Australia – warts and all. The greatest loves are not uncritical, not blind.²⁰

He also loved Fiji as the home of his childhood – this was even a ‘great’ love – and he was ‘taught by the Fijians to love the environment’. He commented that the Fijians ‘cultivated and ate local foods from which they had a rich and varied diet. Yams and tapioca root, sweet potatoes, coconuts, bread fruits, tropical fruit in profusion,’ and built their traditional houses to suit the environment from available resources. Later, Dunstan wrote of the inappropriateness of Australian housing and ‘the Australian dream of a house, a car and a “Big Mac.”’ He made no secret of his distaste for the popularising of fast foods and takeaways, which he labelled as ‘one more production line added to the many which removed [meaningful] social contact from the average citizen.’²¹ This was a far cry from an engagement while premier, when he was

¹⁸FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Curriculum Vitae, Don Dunstan file, ‘As at 1982’.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, Dunstan Documentaries file, 18 June 1982.

²⁰Dunstan, *Australia: a personal view*, 1981, p 7.

²¹*Ibid.*, p 37.

photographed in 1977 with a 'Big Mac' hamburger between his fingers after opening the first McDonald's outlet in South Australia. He was reported to have enjoyed devouring the hamburger, the 'French fries and a strawberry shake' and confessed his neglect at not including a hamburger recipe in his cookbook, 'but now I've tried a Big Mac and I can recommend it.'²² In 1981, and no longer a politician, he could express his true opinion of Australia's suburban wastelands. 'And as to food – heartland suburbia created a cuisine which can only be described as incredibly boring...We built ourselves into a nation of suburban conformists.'²³

Fun in the Kitchen?

Early in 1982 Dunstan attempted to embark on a new career with his own cooking program on commercial television, 'Fun in the Kitchen', featuring tropical foods. The producer had previously sold used cars for a living. Channel 9 in Brisbane taped the early five-minute segments in lots of five per morning. Since Dunstan refused to 'compromise his principles' by personally advertising products, the show was forced to rely solely on sponsorship. The operation was later moved to Melbourne, but without the backing of the full advertising dollar it did not long survive.²⁴ Curiously, Dunstan was not so principled in 1978, when he appeared solemn faced, while still premier, in advertisements for American Express. The full-page ad was headed, 'Some of my favourite restaurants, by Don Dunstan', and began:

Cardmember Don Dunstan, Premier of South Australia,
is the author of a very successful cookbook, "Don

²²*Advertiser*, 18 December 1977.

²³Dunstan, *Australia: a personal view*, 1981, p 49.

²⁴Dunstan, 'Don's table talk', *Adelaide Review*, August 1998.

Dunstan's Cookbook". So American Express World invited him to tell us about his favourite restaurants.²⁵

He chose Henry Ayers and then Swains seafood restaurant as his nominations for Adelaide, claiming that the former 'offers an approach to cuisine and comfort which ranks it as one of the great restaurants in Australia.' This was hardly a surprising endorsement given his vested interest in the enterprise. The Dunstan appearing in the studio kitchen is not the suave political animal who used television electioneering to such good effect that, as with Gough Whitlam in the Federal scene, he changed the expectations of the South Australian electorate and ensured the demise of 'old-time' campaigning.²⁶ He did not compare favourably, for example, with the 'Galloping Gourmet', Graham Kerr, 'the original TV chef'²⁷, who breezed across the black and white screens some two decades earlier. Dunstan clearly had the cooking expertise and the technical knowledge, but he was too much the unsmiling authority figure, lecturing to a class of college students. When he tried to lighten up proceedings the result was anything but amusing. In 'Episode 5', Dunstan made a cheesecake, and said, 'I can hear a few of you groaning', but then launched into 'if Dame Edna was to eat it, [and in falsetto] she wouldn't feel the same person at all.' Presenting the finished product to the camera he concluded patronisingly that his cheesecake is 'something that will go at any Country Women's Association Christmas party.' He then abruptly looked away from the camera to his right and smiled broadly, presumably at the director, as if to say, 'Well, if they didn't like that, bad luck!'²⁸ In another episode he commented on how 'Southerners' accuse 'Queenslanders' of spending their time

²⁵'American Express World', Vol. 3 No. 1, February 1978.

²⁶Humphrey McQueen, *Gone Tomorrow: Australia in the 80s*, Sydney, 1982, p 10.

²⁷Stephen Downes, *Weekend Australian*, 13-14 September 2003.

²⁸'Fun in the Kitchen with Don Dunstan', Episode 5, video tape, writer's collection, 5 May 1982.

'banana bending', lectured on the difference between plantains and Cavendish or other eating bananas, then carved the skin from a plantain, wielding the knife towards his other hand in a dangerous and unprofessional manner. Dunstan was credited with writing the script, which was clearly not his forte, and had difficulty filling in the occasional on camera gaps, in spite of obviously reading from cue sheets and hence not making sufficient eye contact with the all-seeing camera lens.²⁹

Dunstan in Victoria

With the switch to Melbourne Dunstan did some script consultancy for commercial television. He was also elected National President of the Australian Freedom from Hunger Campaign.³⁰ Labor mate John Cain persuaded Dunstan to accept the position of Director of Tourism for Victoria in October 1982, and with the establishment of the Victorian Tourism Commission he was appointed chairman of the re-constituted organisation from May 1983 until May 1988. Dunstan seems to have had little regard for the predictable furore his move created on both sides of the border. His abrupt transition from long-term high-profile salesman for the tourism benefits of South Australia to the leading tourism role in Victoria upset many of his supporters. Although no job offers had come from his former Labor colleagues in Adelaide, they, like their Liberal predecessors, regarded Dunstan as *persona non grata*.³¹ Dunstan tended to follow along familiar lines by an involvement with food and wine-related festivals. In Victoria his Asian connection was with China, not Malaysia. Melbourne's Chinatown and the development of the Chinatown Museum were also among his

²⁹'Fun in the Kitchen with Don Dunstan', Episode 4, video tape, writer's collection, 5 May 1982.

³⁰FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Curriculum Vitae Don Dunstan file, 1982.

³¹Peter Ward, *Weekend Australian*, 23-24 August 1986, *Australian*, 24 December 1986. See also Brian Chatterton, *Roosters and Feather Dusters*, Renwick, New Zealand, 2003, pp 260-261.

priorities, and this latter project created a typical Dunstan-centred controversy. As chairman of the Commission he set up a special projects unit, and a festivals unit. According to Dunstan this latter body

upgraded the Echuca Festival, the Ballarat Begonia Festival, created the Victoria Comedy Festival and the Greek Festival of the Antipodes for which...[Dunstan] obtained Greek Government financial support.³²³³

Through the Festival Unit Dunstan breathed new life into Victoria's largely moribund festival program, including the best known, Melbourne's Moomba. Peter Tregilgas, one of the consultants Dunstan appointed to the unit, recalls that 'Don in the same way as he had done in Adelaide was trying to bring life, always to bring life into the precincts.'³⁴ He did so once again by selling his vision of what could be achieved to his staff, to the bureaucrats in state and local government, to the community, and to the entrepreneurs. In St Kilda Dunstan saw the possibilities of worthwhile re-development early on and enlisted fish restaurateur Jean Jacques to include an upmarket establishment in the old beachside changing rooms. A clever touch was the incorporation of a fish and chip outlet at one side. As Tregilgas fondly recalled, 'you could still sit there on the beach, watch the sun go down, throw a few excess chips to the seagulls, [and] have some...delicious beer-battered fish.'³⁵ Tregilgas pointed out, that it was Dunstan's widely known reputation both as the author of a best-selling cookbook, his media 'personality' status, and his many contacts in the restaurant

³²FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Libel Action file. Dunstan provided his own career outline in a statement relating to his libel action against Martin Cameron and the *Sunday Mail*. 25 July 1990, p 2.

³³Dunstan allowed himself to be photographed with a gay rights activist who appeared dressed as a Catholic cleric, the self-styled Monsignor Porcamadonna, *Sun*, 11 December 1986, *Australian*, 24 December 1986.

³⁴Interview with Peter Tregilgas, McLaren Vale, 5 July 2001.

³⁵*Ibid.*

industry that helped acceptance of his ideas by Jacques and other professionals. In addition, because of his long experience as a legislator, Dunstan was ideally equipped to draw up legislative proposals for the Cain Government to consider in relation to important community and tourism redevelopments, such as St Kilda and Chinatown.³⁶

Food-related events to receive the Dunstan imprimatur via a committee chaired by Peter Russell-Clarke included 'Tastes of Australia', Stephanie Alexander's ideas for a garden festival, a seafood fair, and 'a branding markets project across a number of restaurants.'³⁷ A series of strip maps for tourists was developed by the Commission, and a wine and food guide promoted by television advertisements featured Dunstan at the behest of the advertising agency.³⁸ One of the important aims was to avoid any repetition of the disaster that had earlier befallen the Rutherglen Wine Festival, when over-drinking ended in tragedy and with it the festival. A gastronome participant remembers what it was like:

I went to the first ones at Rutherglen and people were drinking Rutherglen wine all day and there were 70 people in hospital with stomach pumps. You just can't drink that quantity – stomach pumps, murder, it's too strong, so that's the whole problem there. The whole problem involved with wine is management.³⁹

In contrast to this disaster, brought about by the consumption of too much wine of excessively high alcohol content, Dunstan and his team introduced an alternative concept. They placed the emphasis on combining cultural events with food and wine for fewer numbers of people, utilising groups of the smaller wineries based again on

³⁶Interview with Peter Tregilgas, McLaren Vale, 5 July 2001.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Libel Action file, 25 July 1990, p 6.

³⁹Interview with Graham Pont, Sydney, 22 August 2002.

the South Australian experience.⁴⁰ Another transposition from that source was the tramcar restaurant, which met with more success in Melbourne because of the myriad alternate routes on offer. According to Tregilgas, 'its food and style was a bit like Ansett or Qantas really, slightly pre-packaged and came out of a trolley, but the food was pretty good...it became really...a tourism icon.'⁴¹ In the view of a former Dunstan protégé Peter Duncan,

it was the same formula that he'd sought to apply to South Australia, which he was seeking to apply to Victoria – quality restaurants, good food, good wine, interesting built environment – a lifestyle with a lousy climate in that case!⁴²

In a 1990 statement, which is predominantly a review of the Victorian period of his career, Dunstan does not mention his part in developing a local version of Italy's Spoleto Festival, which evolved into the Melbourne International Festival.⁴³ Perhaps the memory of his premature resignation in December 1986, following the much publicised 'Monsignor Porcamadonna' Gay book launch incident, caused him to put aside any reminder of his previously amicable relationship with Melbourne's Italian community. In particular, this Festival built on the 'strength of the food and wine and the style that the Italian community was offering.'⁴⁴ These were strengths that Dunstan was more than familiar with from his earlier experience with the Italian community of Norwood.

⁴⁰Interview with Peter Tregilgas, McLaren Vale, 5 July 2001.

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²Interview with Peter Duncan, North Adelaide, 27 June 2001.

⁴³FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Libel Action file, 25 July 1990.

⁴⁴Interview with Peter Tregilgas, 5 July 2001.

During his period in Melbourne Dunstan continued to wine and dine selected friends, colleagues, and acquaintances at his temporary home, much as he had done at Clara Street. The advantage Melbourne provided was a greater degree of anonymity, which enabled the privacy-loving, private man to enjoy a more relaxed social life and to move more easily in gay circles. But his spare moments still focused on food, as TV chef and cookbook author Gabriel Gaté recalls. Gaté first met Dunstan in Adelaide during 1977 and subsequently taught Asian cooking to leisure classes at Regency Park. He saw something of Dunstan in Melbourne and remembers a meal where Dunstan cooked large meat pies for a multitude of friends. He rated Dunstan as ‘a good home-made food cook.’⁴⁵

Dunstan’s Tropical Hideaway

A year or so before Dunstan quit politics he had asked friends in Queensland to ‘scout around’ for a suitable piece of land he could purchase as a ‘hideaway’ and where he could indulge his passion for cultivating exotic fruits, vegetables and spices.⁴⁶ In January 1979 just prior to his resignation Dunstan agreed to buy a small property near Cardwell south of Cairns, comprising almost three hectares for \$7000. Settlement was deferred until 31 August 1979, following Dunstan’s return from his six-month recuperative sojourn in Italy.⁴⁷ In an interview exactly one year after his resignation Dunstan announced he was travelling to Sydney and then “to my tiny lot of beautiful rain forest” to plant fruit trees, Australian natives and young plants imported from Asia and South America.⁴⁸ Over the next few years Dunstan took

⁴⁵Interview with Gabriel Gaté, Adelaide, 28 April 2002.

⁴⁶FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Queensland Property file, Bill D’arcy to Dunstan, 22 February 1978.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, Dunstan to H. H. Hansen, 22 March 1979. Settlement details from file.

⁴⁸*News*, 15 February 1980.

every opportunity to spend as much time as possible at his property, planting and cultivating a range of local and exotic varieties. Accommodation was quite basic, with a caravan and a small shed the only ‘improvements’, while a Mini Moke doubled as transport and tractor. Dunstan claimed in 1985 to ‘have 300 tropical fruit trees’ and added:

When I’m there I live in a dilapidated caravan, though I now have council approval to build a small house. When I’m not there a friend and neighbour waters the trees. The first batch of cumquats are in brandy. That’s the result of a fortnight I just spent there.⁴⁹

In 1985 Dunstan completed a cookbook devoted to tropical cuisine. He began the research during his time at Cardwell but did not find a publisher.⁵⁰ According to Mike Rann (who provided some Polynesian recipes at short notice by telephoning friends in New Zealand), Paul Hamlyn commissioned the book.⁵¹ Early in 1987, not long after his dramatic resignation as head of the Victorian Tourism Commission, Dunstan headed for Cardwell once again, but this time it was to sell his small property. Even though his tropical fruit plantings were only then beginning to bear fruit, he was unemployed and financial constraints dictated the need to sell. He had also decided on a permanent return to his Norwood home base, and Cardwell was simply too far away to maintain on any regular basis. Later, in answer to an enquiry from the president of the local Rare Fruit Society, Dunstan confirmed that he had disposed of the property to renowned Danish chef, then based in Sydney, Mogens Bay Esbensen.⁵² Dunstan wrote that he had established ‘some 200 fruit trees [not the 300 of 1985] including quite a

⁴⁹*Sunday Mail*, 6 October 1985.

⁵⁰Tony Baker, *Sunday Mail*, 6 October 1985.

⁵¹Interview with Mike Rann, Adelaide, 16 January 2001.

⁵²FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Dunstan to Des Freeman, Miscellaneous Correspondence. n d, c May 1991.

wide range of exotics'. He added, 'I get a bigger crop of macadamias in Norwood than I ever managed from six trees in Queensland!'

Dunstan and the Australian Gastronomy Symposia

A major landmark for many food and wine devotees was the First Symposium of Australian Gastronomy, held at historic Carclew in North Adelaide on 12-13 March 1984. This was only three years after Alan Davidson had inaugurated the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery.⁵³ Among those present were Davidson and the chairman of the Victorian Tourism Commission, Don Dunstan. The symposium's thematic title, 'The Upstart Cuisine', was provided by Gay Bilson of Berowra Waters restaurant fame, who also cooked the lunch-time lobster on the opening day. Her fellow convenors, Graham Pont, Michael Symons, and Barbara Santich, were joined by more than forty enthusiasts, whose ranks included author Marion Halligan, Dunstan's former Minister for Agriculture Brian Chatterton and his wife Lynne, wine and food writer Philip White, academic Anthony Coronos, and a quartet from The Regency School of Food and Catering. According to Santich and other participants, the final banquet by master chefs 'Phillip Searle and Cheong Liew has since become gastronomic legend.'⁵⁴ Dunstan chaired a long seminar session that unanimously voted for the inaugural committee to organise a second symposium along similar lines. The participants went on to discuss the question: 'What can we do about the Australian cuisine?' Eight years earlier in his cookbook Dunstan had nominated domestic chicken as providing the most suitable basis for an Australian cuisine. In airing his ideas then on developing a local cuisine, he led the way for his fellow gastronomes. He now led

⁵³Barbara Santich, "Remembrances of Symposia Past", *Proceedings of the Ninth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, Jane Adams (ed.), Sydney, 2003 p 5.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p 5.

his fellow participants in considering what could be done, given the consensus view ‘that something needs to happen for it to change or for it to improve.’⁵⁵

What the participants seem not to have realised is that change and improvement had already begun, at least in Adelaide, thanks in no small measure to their chairperson. Dunstan had cleared the way by liberalising the political and social climate, by establishing the new School of Food and Catering, by his government sponsorship of restaurants, by his own involvement in the restaurant scene, and by his cookbook. Cheong Liew says he found the courage to establish Neddy’s restaurant in 1975 because Dunstan had established the appropriate ‘political’ climate.⁵⁶ Stephen Downes writes that ‘Cheong married East and West in the kitchen’;⁵⁷ he also sought out and used only fresh ingredients, the same concepts that Dunstan had consistently preached.

Ginger Groups

At the first symposium Dunstan returned to an earlier question: ‘Is good food destined to remain elitist?’ Dunstan claimed to share Karl Mannheim’s view that elites or, in Dunstan’s preferred term, ‘ginger groups’ were the most effective means of achieving change in society. He did not subscribe to the Marcusean or pejorative use of ‘elitist’, although it is evident that some of the others present did. Not surprisingly, he went on to provide examples from his own experience while premier. He began by citing changes to the Licensing Act that were necessary before ‘we could finance

⁵⁵ *Proceedings, First Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, Barbara Santich (ed.), Adelaide, 1984, p 47. For other references to the first and some later symposia, see Stephen Downes, *Advanced Australian Fare: How Australian cooking became the world’s best*, Crows Nest, New South Wales, 2002, pp 115-125.

⁵⁶ Interview with Cheong Liew, Adelaide, 14 March 2001.

⁵⁷ Downes, 2002, pp 79, 78.

restaurants and motels in the Barossa Valley, and we financed a number of them.’⁵⁸ This is at variance with historical fact, since Dunstan was attorney-general, not premier, when the Licensing Act was first amended, and the only government ‘financed’ Barossa restaurant seems to have been Die Gallerie at Tanunda. Dunstan’s second example was his oft-repeated claim to have had a ‘tremendous fight with my colleagues in the government to induce them to spend the money on establishing the Regency Park Food School’. Unlike this doubtful claim, the following is a fair summary of Regency’s impact:

There can be no doubt that, with its establishment, the standard of work within our restaurants has very markedly improved. While it is true that a number of people in the industrial and mass cooking areas are still serving swill, as Michael [Symons] says, there has been marginal improvement in some areas because some of those people have actually come from the food school.⁵⁹

Rather than providing examples of ‘ginger groups’ in action, Dunstan was harking back to his own interventionist tactics as leader in government. He, not his cabinet, was the initiator of such policies.⁶⁰ His support group was the hand-picked members of his personal staff who no doubt contributed ideas, but Dunstan was effectively a one-man ‘ginger group’. One observant Adelaide restaurateur, Giocondo Caon, commented that he thought ‘Dunstan’s problem was he had these great ideas, but he was surrounded by lesser people.’⁶¹ As one of his former ministers Brian Chatterton says, ‘he wanted private enterprise to jump on the bandwagons he started.’⁶² For her part,

⁵⁸*Proceedings, First Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, 1984, p 48.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p 48.

⁶⁰Craig McGregor, *Good Weekend*, 6 March 1987.

⁶¹Telephone conversation with Giocondo Caon, 8 December 2003.

⁶²Chatterton, 2003, p 148.

Barbara Santich was unequivocal that ‘there has to be an elite that is going to lead the way.’⁶³ Some years earlier Dunstan had talked about the role of ‘active’ elites rather than ‘ginger groups’ as the means of achieving change in society. This was in relation to the ‘social democratic movement’, and he saw this ‘elite’ as open ended. In Dunstan’s somewhat confusing words, ‘it is rather a contradiction in terms, but we must strive for an egalitarian elite, self-critical and accessible to people who share our commitments.’⁶⁴

Further support for Dunstan’s notion of ginger groups came from Lynne Chatterton who urged her fellow participants to ‘think seriously about what Don said, that a ginger group can do a hell of a lot.’ She suggested such a group could look at and discuss ingredients from growth to kitchen or table and then make ‘intelligent representations when necessary’ to appropriate instrumentalities.⁶⁵ Derrick Casey, from the Regency Park contingent, suggested that one aspect for participants or a ginger group to pursue in relation to the idea of a distinct Australian cuisine would be to start with regional food, a subject already included in the chef’s certificate course at the Food School. He offered to help with research and hoped the subject could be included for discussion at the next seminar. Casey was supported by Brian Chatterton who saw ‘Australian cuisine as a sort of sum of the regional cuisines.’ Chatterton, in his role as minister for agriculture, had already convinced at least one federal politician of the merits of regional cuisine before most Australians had even heard of the term and had ‘tried to promote a concept of regional excellence,’ but with little or no

⁶³*Proceedings, First Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, 1984, p 49.

⁶⁴Dunstan, ‘The 1976 Chifley Memorial Lecture’, Melbourne, 1976, p 23.

⁶⁵*Proceedings, First Symposium*, 1984, p 50.

support from producers.⁶⁶ Dunstan needed no such convincing; he and Chatterton were of the same mind.

Switching from his initial emphasis on ‘ginger groups,’ Dunstan stressed the importance of individuals taking the initiative

[since] it is possible for us in a number of ways, either through action as restaurateurs, writing, talking and making representations, to do something about the standards of Australian cuisine.⁶⁷

He then talked about ‘the explosion of interest in food and wine’ and the ever-growing market for writing on those subjects since the 1950s, whether it be in women’s magazines or cookbooks. This was an area for individual contribution, and he singled out the iconic Margaret Fulton, who ‘has managed to sell more books than most authors in Australia’, but could not resist adding, ‘although I wrote several books, my best seller was my cookbook.’ All of this activity had served to improve and heighten culinary awareness and hence general community expectations of better food. However, both Dunstan and Michael Symons were critical of continuing mediocre ‘average standards’ in school and factory canteens and laid some of the blame for this situation on ‘food educators’. Dunstan confessed to being a Fellow of the Catering Institute of Australia and cautioned that any reading of the institute’s journals would convince doubters of the need for action, because of the ‘constant promotion of the worst kind of convenience foods’. Presumably Dunstan, who was made a life fellow because of his services to catering while premier, saw his own role as trying to subvert the institute’s propaganda from within.

⁶⁶Chatterton, 2003, pp 134, 233-234.

Dunstan the *Rotisseur*

Dunstan had a penchant for accepting membership of food-related organisations no matter how obscure. Early in 1977 he became a ‘grand knight of the Dynasty,’ of the *Confrérie De La Chaîne Des Rotisseurs*, an international body of gastronomes.⁶⁸ The ‘Senior Knight’ that nominated Dunstan was a Hong Kong-based friend, Cassam Gooljarry, who also arranged Dunstan’s acceptance as a member of the *Pairie des Vins d’Arbois*, a fraternity of French wine makers. Dunstan’s letter of appointment hoped that the premier would be ‘our most distinguished Ambassador in the wonderful country of South Australia.’⁶⁹ Presumably Dunstan did not inform his friends in the local wine industry of his preferment. It did, however, serve to confirm his long-standing interest in quality wines. Soon afterwards his professed choice as ‘Don Dunstan, cookbook writer’ was not French but rather Penfolds Grange Hermitage. He was quoted as saying that this famous South Australian red ‘exudes a sense of cultivated wellbeing; it is as civilised as SA itself.’⁷⁰ A decade or so earlier Dunstan had often expressed an ambition to own and operate a small winery.⁷¹

Harking back to another example of his own actions when premier, Dunstan wanted his fellow symposium participants to question restaurateurs about the sources of their ingredients, and to share their own specialised knowledge with restaurateurs where appropriate in a continuing effort to promote the advancement of ever higher standards. In Dunstan’s view ‘people...[were] too polite in restaurants;’ the time had

⁶⁷*Proceedings, First Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, 1984, p 48.

⁶⁸FUSA, Dunstan Collection, “G” Miscellaneous correspondence (4), 6 January 1977.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 4 June 1976.

⁷⁰Adele Koh, writing in *Nation Review*, 5-11 May 1977, p 689.

⁷¹Interview with Bronwen Dohnt, Goolwa, 9 June 2001.

come to speak up if the food, or the service, were not up to expectations.⁷² Dunstan was clearly accepted as eminently qualified to join this group of Australia's gastronomes. In the opinion of at least one of the convenors of that first symposium he brought *gravitas* to the proceedings, and further:

Dunstan played a key figure [sic] in the emergence to world status of Australian gastronomy, which happened in the '80s and '90s. And people who think it's just the star chefs who were doing that, of course, have a very limited view of the subject...In as far as we had patrons they were Don Dunstan and Max Lake, they were the only two 'heavies'.⁷³

The Second Symposium of Australian Gastronomy was also held in Adelaide from 29 September to 1 October 1985 under the banner 'Foodism – Philosophy or Fad?' with Carclew again the venue. There were slightly more participants than attended the first symposium, but Don Dunstan was not present. However, he would have agreed with the sentiments expressed by Michael Symons:

Inhabiting an 'upstart culinary country', lacking the security of tradition and dominated by global food corporations, we need to intellectualise. How else can we decide our next meal!⁷⁴

The consensus of participants at the first symposium had enshrined the almost mythological status of Brillat-Savarin, with his *Physiology of Taste*, as the oracle of gastronomy.⁷⁵ More recently Brian Chatterton confirmed that 'Don was of course

⁷²*Proceedings, First Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, 1984, p 52.

⁷³Interview with Graham Pont, Sydney, 22 August 2002.

⁷⁴*Proceedings, Second Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, Barbara Santich, Michael Symons, Colin Turner (eds.), Adelaide, 1986, p 2.

⁷⁵Barbara Santich, 'Remembrances of Symposia Past', *Proceedings of the Ninth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, Jane Adams (ed.), Sydney, 2003 p 5. Santich was of course referring to Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *La Physiologie du goût* (The Physiology of Taste), 1825.

aware of Brillat-Savarin, but rather like his politics he was more interested in translating the philosophy into practical working policy than further development of the theory.⁷⁶ When seated next to Chatterton and his wife Lynne, Dunstan often remarked, apropos a particular point, that there was little he had not already tried or introduced in his own sphere of influence. In the terms espoused by the nineteenth-century guru of gastronomy Dunstan became a true practitioner of gastronomy. According to one definition ‘gastronomy is the intelligent knowledge of whatever concerns man’s nourishment.’⁷⁷ In another variation ‘gastronomy is the scientific knowledge of all that relates to man as an eater. Its aim is, by means of the best possible food, to watch over the preservation of mankind.’⁷⁸ Brillat-Savarin related this aim to the collective labours of all those involved in the hunting, growing, or gathering of food, ‘and especially cooks of every degree.’ His broad net gathered in everything to the science of gastronomy, from natural history to physics and chemistry, even ‘the after-dinner chat.’⁷⁹ Dunstan was well qualified on most counts as an exponent of Brillat-Savarin’s ‘fine art,’ down to a self-taught knowledge of the chemical properties of culinary ingredients.⁸⁰ Barbara Santich has argued that ‘food is the democratising influence par excellence,’⁸¹ and this was clearly part of its appeal to Dunstan. Santich further argues: ‘Gastronomy, it seems to me, is at the confluence of the streams of sensuality and intellect. It implies the meeting of mind and body which is the ideal of

⁷⁶Email from Brian Chatterton, 7 September 2003.

⁷⁷Brillat-Savarin, MFK Fisher translation of ‘Meditation III:18,’ quoted by Michael Symons in *Proceedings, First Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, Barbara Santich (ed.), Adelaide, 1984, p 66.

⁷⁸Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie Du Gout*, translation by R.E. Anderson, *Gastronomy As a Fine Art or, The Science of Good Living*, London, 1877, p 31.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, p 33.

⁸⁰Interview with Mary Battersby, Regency Park, 2 May 2001.

⁸¹Barbara Santich, *Looking For Flavour*, Kent Town, South Australia, 1996, p 192.

many religions.’⁸² Dunstan was both a sensualist and an intellectual with a passionate interest even love of food in all of its aspects. His *raison d’être* came from the opportunity to grow, prepare, and to share food with his friends. Restaurateur Cath Kerry says of Dunstan:

He had read Brillat-Savarin, he had read you know, the lives of the great – of the old chefs, he read about food. He read about the philosophy, the sociology behind these things, so he was a great *amateur* in the kitchen. He was a great promoter of the good life and he was a great promoter of Adelaide representing the good life.⁸³

More than a decade after the first symposium Barbara Santich highlighted her version of what had been achieved with her fellow participants by their intellectualising on the historical basis of gastronomy. ‘A more precise understanding of gastronomy began to evolve: neither an art nor a science, rather gastronomy is an ethic, a guide to an art of living.’⁸⁴ His own ‘art of living’ is precisely what Dunstan wanted to achieve when he set up Clara Street in 1974. ‘Quality of life’ is another interchangeable aphorism used by Dunstan to describe both his own aspirations and his vision for all South Australians to share in the enjoyment of the Mediterranean lifestyle he was determined to set in place during his political life.

Tradition and Renewal

By the time a third symposium arrived in March 1987, Dunstan had very publicly quit his job with the Victorian Tourism Commission and returned to his Norwood home permanently. Ironically, this symposium was located in Melbourne,

⁸²Santich, *Looking For Flavour*, 1996, p 173.

⁸³Interview with Cath Kerry, Adelaide, 27 May 2002.

⁸⁴Santich, ‘Remembrances of Symposia Past,’ *Proceedings, Ninth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, 2003, p 5.

but Dunstan, who gave his occupation as ‘Old Food Buff and sometime writer’, was not deterred from attending. He chaired two sessions and contributed ‘cold duck’ to the welcoming tea at Stephanie’s Restaurant for the symposium. He was, however, a more notable presence in Sydney at the fourth symposium, ‘Food in Festivity’, from 16-18 October 1988. He was the keynote speaker and called his paper ‘Tradition and Renewal in Australian Gastronomy.’ In this he first re-visited his earlier exposition on ginger groups or creative elites and stated unequivocally:

There is no creativity of the masses...Social change and improvement are inevitably brought about by ginger groups whose enthusiasms and creativity work like a yeast upon the masses.⁸⁵

The example he gave on this occasion was drawn from his experience while premier with arts expenditure and promotion, specifically how elite support for the Adelaide Festival centre had a flow-on or ‘leavening’ effect by informing wider community attitudes to the arts. Accordingly, he believed, ‘the establishment of standards of excellence is a part of the function of elites and any one claiming to be a gastronome in this country is a part of such an elite.’⁸⁶ He found an ally in Graham Pont, who had already responded to a draft of Dunstan’s paper in no uncertain terms:

I am also delighted with your general defence of the elite: I have always been regarded as an eccentric for insisting on the obvious facts you draw attention to...We need to build up the tradition of excellence, in the way you have done in Adelaide; and the only way to do that is to discover, encourage and protect the talented.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ *Proceedings, Fourth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, Anthony Coronos, Graham Pont and Barbara Santich (eds.), Sydney, 1990, p 30.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p 30.

⁸⁷ FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Symposium of Australian Gastronomy folder, Pont to Dunstan, 28 September 1988.

Dunstan went on to recapitulate his own part in changing South Australian licensing laws, ‘state supported restaurants’ and his ‘creation’ of the School of Food and Catering at Regency Park but added the admission that, ‘I was bitterly accused of “restaurant socialism” by the radical students of the day.’ On other occasions in his public life Dunstan revealed his acute sensitivity to criticism. In this instance he responded by adopting the labelling used by his long-time political opponents. ‘Today those students are enthusiastic chardonnay socialists, happily munching away in the enormously increased number of restaurants of quality.’ In a 1975 interview Dunstan had argued his case in justification of ‘restaurant socialism’:

I don’t see anything particularly wrong in people being able to go out and eat in a restaurant. I know a lot of working-class people who in fact do. The restaurant that we underwrote in Adelaide [The Coalyard] was aimed at providing cheap low-cost meals in good settings for just the sort of working-class people we are providing for in Adelaide.⁸⁸

I have already referred above to the urban myth about Adelaide having more restaurants per head of population than elsewhere. Dunstan now added the weight of his own words to the myth:

These [restaurants] are now a feature of Adelaide which boasts a higher proportion of licensed restaurants to population even than Melbourne, itself now rightly hailed as one of the food capitals of the world.⁸⁹

Further on in his address Dunstan drew a parallel between his setting up of the Jam Factory in Adelaide and the ‘temples of newly creative cooking’ established by the

⁸⁸Dunstan, Interview with Andrew Clark, *National Times*, 12-17 May 1975, p 9.

⁸⁹*Proceedings, Fourth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, 1990, p 31.

likes of Gay Bilson, Stephanie Alexander, Philip Searle, and Maggie Beer, with their flow-on effect on the standards of other restaurateurs.⁹⁰ He had found it necessary to bring world-class practitioners from overseas to boost local craft standards. Once again Dunstan referred to his selection of the three best-known cookbooks of the immediate post-World War II period, ‘the *Green & Gold*, the *Commonsense*, and the *Schauer*.’ He then added *Lady Hackett’s Home Guide* and digressed to describe her career and multiple marriages (rather in the style to be found in *Women’s Weekly*), but returned to his theme, using her recipe for steak rolls, to illustrate that ‘the culinary sins committed in that little exercise are legion...but I can confidently aver that in numbers of Australian small town pubs the old tradition is alive and well.’⁹¹ The plight of vegetables and meat in ‘traditional’ Australian kitchens was next on his list, much as they had been discussed in his cookbook a dozen years earlier. Dunstan then expounded on the vanished culture of the afternoon tea, the cakes and the recipes that dominated his quartet of cookbooks.⁹²

Dunstan once more claimed that Australian cuisine had changed for the better with the demise of the dripping pot and the acceptance of calamari. He thought it ‘impossible...to exaggerate the influence of the post-war [European] migration’, as opposed to the British arrivals, who, he said, ‘did little to change existing Australian cooking.’⁹³ He had dwelt on these themes in his TV documentaries, and the 1981 book. Other influences that captured his attention were the ever-growing range of kitchen appliances, culminating in the microwave, which he regarded as providing him

⁹⁰*Proceedings, Fourth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, 1990, p 35.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, p 32.

⁹²*Ibid.*, p 33.

⁹³*Ibid.*, pp 33-34.

with access to a ‘treasure trove that I could mine’. He had been made privy to this esoteric knowledge by Claire Kearney’s *Microwave Gourmet*, which would ‘eventually...reach the community to replace the often sorry results of present domestic (and public) microwave cooking.’⁹⁴ The popularity of Asia as a destination for Australian travellers and the influence of Asian immigrants and Vietnamese refugees had brought more variety in foods, flavours and methods, including the popularity of stir-fries. Needless to say, he reminded his audience that the wok was largely unknown here in 1976, when he first pronounced on the subject, although electric woks had been on sale in Adelaide at that time.⁹⁵ Dunstan also pointed to the wide acceptance of the once exotic: ‘today in my village of Norwood, three of the butchers’ shops always have in their windows meat prepared for stir-fry.’⁹⁶ One of Dunstan’s obsessions was with ancient Roman cooking techniques, and he complained that only Maggie Beer and he seemed to use the cooking liquor the Romans called *defrutum*, something that he suggested could well be of value to grape growers and restaurateurs. He also urged the incorporation ‘of the *rumpah* of Malaysian and Nyonya cooking’ into the local cooking scene.⁹⁷ Another familiar plea first aired in his cookbook was for more use of traditional Indian spices rather than the teaspoon of packaged curry powder favoured still by most Australian cooks. Dunstan finished his paper on a positive note:

The restrictive and poor standards of the old Australian tradition in some areas of cookery have been replaced with a tradition providing not only better standards, but infinitely greater variety, and much more creativity. We

⁹⁴*Proceedings, Fourth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, 1990, p 34.

⁹⁵*Advertiser*, 4 March 1976, p 22, ‘Look Wok’s Cooking Now’.

⁹⁶*Proceedings, Fourth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, 1990, p 34.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, p 36.

are only at the beginning of creating a new tradition of excellence in Australian cooking, spiced by that variety which enriches life.⁹⁸

Santich later summed up Dunstan's address in these terms:

His interpretation of 'gastronomy' stressed the culinary side, but his then-and-now comparisons relating culinary modes to lifestyles revealed an enormous shift in Australian values and customs.⁹⁹

Enormous changes had clearly taken place, including the restaurant revolution that Dunstan had helped to prime in Adelaide. This had spread to Melbourne and Sydney and would dominate the cuisine of the continent by the end of the century.¹⁰⁰ Master chefs Cheong Liew at Neddy's and Philip Searle at Possums have been jointly credited with creating the 'East – West cuisine' at their Adelaide restaurants.¹⁰¹ This marriage of eastern and western flavours, ingredients, and methods was the fusion Dunstan had preached about in his cookbook. In most of Australia's suburban kitchens the convenience creations of the food processors, usually bought on a weekly basis from the neighbourhood super market shelves, were transferred from the domestic refrigerator to the microwave oven, when the occupants were not dining on the products of their favourite take-away chain. Those stalwarts still practising home cooking increasingly learned the how and why from professional television chefs or

⁹⁸*Proceedings, Fourth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy, 1990, p 36.*

⁹⁹Santich, 'Remembrances of Symposia Past,' *Proceedings, Ninth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy, 2003, p 6.*

¹⁰⁰Gilly Smith, *Australia: New Food From The New World*, London, 1998, p 18. See also Cherry Ripe, *Goodbye Culinary Cringe*, St. Leonards, New South Wales, 1993, p 13. Ripe ignores Dunstan's part in the marriage of East and West cuisines.

¹⁰¹Smith, 1998, p 13

from the ever-proliferating numbers of specialist magazines and cookbooks, churned out by professional food writers.¹⁰²

The Pleasures of the Table

Dunstan joined with his fellow gastronomes when they returned to Adelaide for the fifth symposium, 'The Pleasures of the Table', based at the Rostrevor Seminary from 10-13 March 1990, to coincide with the biennial Adelaide Festival of Arts. First, however, they joined in a public food festival centred on Gouger Street and the Central Market, an idea conceived by Michael Symons that came to pass in spite of prohibitive city ordinances. Jane Adams reported that

More than 10,000 people gnawed on smoked pheasant and kangaroo, zucchini flowers, stir-fried spicy concoctions, curries and confit of duck lubricated by South Australian wines.¹⁰³

The program for one day of the symposium was centred on an open forum, 'Table Talk', as part of Writer's Week, with Dunstan following academic Anthony Coronos on the subject of 'Greed'. Each recalled illogical childhood strictures to eat all of the food on their plates 'because of the starving millions in India'.¹⁰⁴ Dunstan later answered a question by repeating his tale from 'My One True Love' of being bribed with the promise of fruit salad to come, provided he first cleared his plate. Dunstan drew on his own experience with Community Aid Abroad to confirm 'greed' as a major world problem, despite 'the world ...[having] the capacity to feed itself and

¹⁰²Alan Saunders, *Australian food: a celebration of the new cuisine*, Sydney, 1999, p 40. See also pp 36-42, for an informed discourse on Australia's 'new cuisine'.

¹⁰³*Bulletin*, 27 March 1990, p 17.

¹⁰⁴*Proceedings, Fifth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy: The Pleasures of the Table*, Barbara Santich and Michael Symons (eds.), Adelaide, 1991, p 7.

well.’ This was compounded by ‘problems of maldistribution, [and] exploitation, exploitation leading to unbalanced development.’ He quoted from the findings and recommendations a decade earlier of Willy Brandt’s ‘North-South’ dialogue report, which laid the blame with governments who chose to spend billions on armaments rather than aid. He rounded off his paper with an appeal to individual Australians:

It is possible to do something, not by depriving oneself of food, but by acting as effective citizens in this country to reverse the world’s greed, and that is what we should be doing.¹⁰⁵

The theme of this session was based on the Biblical parable of the loaves and the fishes, and Dunstan, no longer a believer in his former Anglican faith,¹⁰⁶ was required to produce appropriate symbols and invite all present to share their own contributions.¹⁰⁷ An *al fresco* lunch at the symposium was Dunstan’s responsibility with help from various other quarters, including chef Ming Chu Ping from Regency Park. Dunstan complained that its preparation had coincided with those for the evening’s banquet and had therefore suffered the loss of certain ingredients. However, he and his helpers had adapted to the circumstances, and since ‘after all, what are cooks for,’ he asked participants to do the same. This wrap-it-yourself lunch featured Chinese pancakes, rice paper, lettuce cups, and roti with a variety of fillings. Dunstan had produced a familiar dish from his Fijian childhood, Punjabi goat curry, supplemented by a red chicken curry, ‘because ...once we had removed the gristle from the goat meat...instead of having six kilos I had three.’¹⁰⁸ Dunstan’s inspiration

¹⁰⁵*Proceedings, Fifth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy, 1991*, p 9.

¹⁰⁶Stewart Cockburn, *The Salisbury Affair*, 1979, pp 105-106.

¹⁰⁷*Proceedings*, 1991, p 13.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, p 140.

for the wrapped lunch appears to have come from a magazine article by Arabella Boxer, and was to have included tortillas.¹⁰⁹ No less an authority than Cheong Liew thought that Dunstan's 'wrapping lunch' was 'one of the best things...[he] has ever done.'¹¹⁰ Not surprisingly, Dunstan often received letters asking for recipes or information about food, especially after the publication of his cookbook, and always seems to have found time to reply. In response to a request from Sheridan Rogers of *Mode* magazine he faxed recipes for two of the fillings used in his 'wrapped lunch.' One of the lengthy recipes was for his much-used goat curry. He typically added advice from his own experience for those not accustomed to using this meat:

And continue cooking until the meat is done and the sauce reduced to make a fairly dry curry. This should take about thirty minutes but maybe more depending on the age and activity of the goat.¹¹¹

Dunstan's attention to detail is apparent in his pigeon filling recipe, where he cautions against using a food processor to mince the pigeon meat, and duck liver sausages, 'because they will mash the meat rather than leave it in tiny pieces which are important in the texture of the dish.' A further tip follows: 'the Chinese do it with two cleavers but I found a French or Japanese large kitchen knife easier for the purpose.'¹¹²

At the 1990 symposium Dunstan supported the idea of establishing an institute of Australian gastronomy. In a discussion on the laws of defamation, he observed that restaurant critic Leo Schofield would not have lost a recent action brought against him

¹⁰⁹FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Food and Wine Articles, 'Hidden Tastes: Arabella Boxer takes the wraps off parcel food', source not identified, n d.,

¹¹⁰Interview with Cheong Liew, Adelaide, 14 March 2001.

¹¹¹FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Food and Wine Articles, Dunstan fax to Sheridan Rogers, 19 March 1990.

¹¹²*Ibid.*

by a restaurateur if he had confined his review remarks to the bald statement that, ‘to his taste the lobster was overcooked’.¹¹³ The possibility of the symposia organisers, convenors, or participants being sued collectively or individually for defamation was remote. In an increasingly litigious society however, both Pont and Dunstan were concerned with the potential for liability arising from food poisoning or ‘someone...[choking] on an oyster’ and hence argued the case for a body corporate.¹¹⁴ By the time the sixth symposium came around at Geelong in September 1991, a New South Wales group led by Corones and Pont had already circulated a ‘Discussion Paper On Aims & Objectives’ for a state chapter, based among other things on definitions of gastronomy and gourmandism, the both to be ‘complementary enterprises’. Gastronomy was to ‘be broadly conceived as the attempt to understand and comprehend food and foodways within the total context of life and culture,’ and gourmandism, ‘as the intelligent cultivation, education and refinement of the palate, sense of taste and the pleasures of healthy and happy living.’¹¹⁵ Pont wrote to Dunstan midway through 1991 to report progress:

By now you will have seen the draft aims of the NSW ‘chapter’ of the proposed Society of Australian Gastronomy. It was a long and occasionally acrimonious debate which finally produced this compromise document. Politically it achieves most of what I was aiming for; but, as you no doubt perceived, it is mainly the work of the opposing clique (the foodie-journalists) and clearly shows their intellectual limitations...their conception of gastronomy is entirely sociological or descriptive: they have not yet grasped the meaning of ‘gourmandise’ (even though some of them practice it

¹¹³*Proceedings, Fifth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, 1991, p 39.

¹¹⁴Interview with Graham Pont, Sydney, 22 August 2002.

¹¹⁵FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Symposium of Australian Gastronomy Folder, Anthony Corones and Graham Pont, 21 December 1990.

well). They have learnt very little so far from Brillat-Savarin.¹¹⁶

The reference to ‘foodie-journalists’ was aimed primarily at Michael Symons, who the Dionysian Pont believed regarded wine as ‘a kind of side issue.’¹¹⁷ Pont boasted that ‘the Melbourne people [were] on side too...all that remains ...is a neat act of incorporation at the next Symposium.’ Dunstan agreed to draft a constitution for participants to consider at that gathering, providing his services as a lawyer, *gratis*. The proposed constitution was favourably received at a plenary session of the symposium, and ‘Pont spoke passionately and persuasively to the motion’. It was all to no avail however, as most participants were content to settle for the recipe as before.¹¹⁸ Pont took umbrage and withdrew from the scene, while Michael Symons had chosen not to attend the symposium.¹¹⁹ Don Dunstan was also absent, and the time spent on drawing up a proposed constitution was his last contribution to the gastronomy symposia.

Dunstan’s Final Partner

During 1986 while Dunstan was still living in Melbourne he met Hong Kong-born Steven Cheng (Cheng Man Sin) at a Toorak friend’s dinner party. Cheng was studying science at Melbourne University, but with Dunstan’s encouragement became passionately interested in food, and the pair soon entered into a permanent relationship. Cheng finished his degree course and after Dunstan’s premature departure from

¹¹⁶ FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Symposium of Australian Gastronomy Folder, Pont to Dunstan, 21 June 1991.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Graham Pont, Sydney, 22 August 2002.

¹¹⁸ *Proceedings, Sixth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy, Much Depends on Dinner*, Marieke Brugman and Lois Butt (eds.), 1992, p 200.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p 3.

Victoria moved in with his mentor at Clara Street late in 1988. Dunstan began passing on some of his cooking skills and experience to the younger man, who now had access to Dunstan's large collection of cookery books. As they dined out frequently, he also shared Dunstan's perhaps unsurpassed knowledge of Adelaide's restaurant scene. Cheng completed an Honours degree at Flinders University in 1990, but food had already replaced microbiology as his dominant interest, following 'two wonderful meals at Nediz Tu on Hutt Street.'¹²⁰ In a portent of things to come, Dunstan was found to have throat cancer in December 1991. Surgery and radiotherapy appeared to be successful, and he became 'more aware that we're all here for a limited time and you shouldn't waste any of it.'¹²¹ Even his most vehement critics could rarely have accused Dunstan of wasting his time and energy. He was voluntary national chair of the merged Freedom From Hunger and Community Aid Abroad Organisation. On the day of an interview with a womens' magazine 'he was cooking up an exotic curry for a special dinner for organisation members.'¹²² Dunstan and Cheng travelled to England, India, and Malaysia in 1989 with food as the main focus of the trip. In London the *Time Out Eating Guide* supplied the basis for their stay, with emphasis on sampling modern European and French cuisine at as many restaurants as possible, plus introducing Cheng to Dunstan's old friends, who included actors Derek Nimmo and Miriam Karlin.¹²³ The following year Dunstan as national president of the Mandela Foundation, world president of the Movement for Democracy in Fiji, and chair of Australian Freedom from Hunger was in Sydney to welcome Nelson Mandela at the Opera House. He was also working with the North Sydney Leisure Centre to organise

¹²⁰Interview with Steven Cheng, Norwood, 1 December 2001.

¹²¹Liz Johnswood, *Woman's Day*, 24 August 1992.

¹²²*Ibid.*

¹²³FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Trip to England, India, Malaysia, 1989.

a travel tour to Italy for 1991, labelled 'Don's Party'. Combining his love of Italian social history with food, the party was promised meals at Dunstan's favourite restaurants in Umbria and Toscana.¹²⁴ In a memo to members of the tour Dunstan wrote, 'Umbria is the "green heart of Italy", and the essential virtue of the Italian Cuisine lies in people's growing to eat rather than merely to sell.'¹²⁵

Conclusions

Dunstan's sojourn in Italy ensured his recovery from the trauma associated with the death of Adele Koh, machinations against him by erstwhile colleagues, and ill health. He attempted to fill the void these events created in his life by a variety of means, none of which succeeded. Although warned against re-entering public life by his doctors, Dunstan accepted an executive position with the Victorian public service and paid the predictable price. He remained at the centre of controversy during his four years with the Victorian Tourism Commission. During his time in Victoria it was very much the Dunstan recipe as before – food and festival. More significantly, he met his final partner, Steven Cheng. Through Cheng his love of food and drink became a full-blown passion and proved to be the combination that triumphed in the end. The increasing intellectualisation of food studies among a growing number of professionals including Dunstan paralleled a burgeoning interest in food by the wider community. Dunstan's contribution to the early Australian Gastronomy Symposia was noteworthy, and he more than held his own with his peers, whether in debating the finer points of gastronomy, demonstrating his prowess as a cook, or in delivering a key-note address. Part of Dunstan's strength lay in his ongoing devotion to researching the origins of different foods and recipes. His particular enthusiasm for Roman cuisine and

¹²⁴*Northern Herald*, 11 October 1990.

¹²⁵FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Trip to Italy 1990, May 1991.

ingredients confirms the extent of his food-linked scholarship. Once settled back in his Norwood refuge with Steven Cheng, he could begin to relax and spend even more time indulging his passion for good food, good wine, and entertaining his friends. When Cheng increasingly began to share his mentor's passion, their re-creation as restaurateurs probably became inevitable. The next chapter is concerned with Dunstan's foray into the restaurant business, his death, and the importance he placed on food and wine in celebration.

Chapter Nine

DON'S TABLES, BIRTHDAYS, AND OTHER CELEBRATIONS

Dunstan became a restaurateur in the final years of his life. This confirms beyond any reasonable doubt that food and drink were at the very core of his being. The questions as to whether he made a significant contribution to the almost Australia-wide acceptance of outdoor dining and the type of food now predominantly served are also considered in this chapter. Dunstan never tired of sharing and enjoying food in conversation with his friends as a recurring celebration of life and love, and his use of food as a metaphor for love provides another important aspect of the private man. His own restaurant represented the coming together or fusion of Dunstan's long love affair with food and the restaurant scene he had shared with John Ceruto in the early 1970s. Dunstan moulded the malleable Steven Cheng into his own extended image as a manikin in tails or outfitted as the chef he might well have been himself, given different circumstances.¹

Dunstan's relationship with Steven Cheng was clearly the catalyst he needed to take the plunge into his own restaurant venture. At first glance Dunstan's decision was an illogical move for a man nearing retirement age and not in robust health. But in the context of his food-related history the decision becomes understandable and makes perfect sense from Dunstan's own perspective, not the least of which lay in fulfilling a long-held personal ambition. Former Adelaide school teacher turned restaurateur Cath Kerry understood Dunstan's need and shared the urge to own her own restaurant. She believes that 'everybody would love a restaurant,' everybody with a flair for cooking

¹See trio of uncaptioned photographs of Dunstan, Cheng, and Sir Mark Oliphant, *Don Dunstan: Politics and Passion, Selected Essays from the Adelaide Review*, John Spoehr (ed.), Unley, South Australia, 2000, p 106.

that is.² American chef turned author Anthony Bourdain presents his own more worldly view of the restaurant urge:

To want to own a restaurant can be a strange and terrible affliction. What causes such a destructive urge in so many otherwise sensible people? Why would anyone who has worked hard, saved money, often been successful in other fields, want to pump their hard-earned cash down a hole that statistically, at least, will almost surely prove dry?...What insidious spongi-form bacteria so riddles the brains of men and women that they stand there on the tracks, watching the lights of the oncoming locomotive, knowing full well it will eventually run them over? After all these years in the business, I still don't know.³

Dunstan said he had taken on the restaurant venture because he believed in Steven Cheng. His earlier response to the restaurant suggestion was 'you have to be joking! Being a restaurateur is one up from being a dairy farmer – you have no life left.'⁴

Heeding his partner's advice, Steven Cheng enrolled at the Regency Hotel School and obtained the Chef's and Asian Cookery certificates in 1992, followed by the Cake and Confectionary Cooking certificate a year later. By 1994 the duo had begun looking seriously at the idea of opening a restaurant. One of Dunstan's former secretaries, Doug Claessen, found a business that was on the market. According to Cheng, 'Don thought it was a good place for me to have my own restaurant. It would give me not only employment but future job security.'⁵ The first offering proved to be over their financial limit. However, smaller, more affordable premises became

²Interview with Cath Kerry, Adelaide, 27 May 2002.

³Anthony Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential: Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly*, London, 2001, p 84.

⁴*SA Dining*, August/September 1998, p 4.

⁵Interview with Steven Cheng, Norwood, 1 December 2001.

available on the opposite side of the Norwood Parade, and Don's Table restaurant opened in July 1994.⁶

Dunstan's Restaurant

Cheng's comment above that Dunstan opened Don's Table restaurant to provide both employment and job security for his younger partner was repeated in early publicity handouts. Cheng 'has decided with Don's help to open his own little restaurant to follow much of what Don advocated all those years ago [in his cookbook].'⁷ The restaurant publicity contained familiar references to the cookbook and Dunstan's 'Malaysian Synthesis', his liquor law reforms, the Regency Food School, the use of fresh ingredients from the Clara Street garden, and even made public 'Don's Grove' of fruit trees at Steven and Margit Wright's Inglewood property. When Dunstan was recovering from his throat cancer operation in 1992, he talked to Wright about buying a piece of land on which to plant fruit trees. Instead, Wright offered his friend the use of a section of his Inglewood property, which became Don's Grove. He recalls helping a frail but determined Dunstan, who lacked the physical strength to dig the holes unaided.⁸ Photographs in the publicity fliers featured Cheng in chef's 'whites' and tall hat, incongruously seated at lunch with his partner, glasses of wine poised over one of their terrazzo table tops, designed by Sydney artist David Humphries. Readers learned that:

The dishes in the restaurant do not derive from one particular developed cuisine – Don and Steven take

⁶Steven Cheng, Don Dunstan Retrospective, FEAST festival, Dunstan Foundation audio-tape, transcript of proceedings by the writer, 8 November 1999.

⁷Flinders University of South Australia, [FUSA], Dunstan Collection, Don's Table Folder, c July 1994.

⁸Interview with Steven Wright, Goolwa, 1 March 2001.

proven tastes textures and techniques from the world and use them innovatively with the best of local produce.

Elsewhere and inevitably, Don's Table was clearly regarded as Don Dunstan's restaurant. A long-time friend Mary Battersby is unequivocal:

He's always wanted to open a restaurant. He's always wanted to, I mean I say to him it's not easy to run a restaurant...it's not easy but if you have the passion, because he prepares some of the sauces at home...and he put an effort into it and meets with the customers coming to eat the food and he develops it day after day. So he had the passion of setting this place up with Steven and the optimism was that Steven also wanted to be a chef in charge of it. But it was Don who actually created the sauces, the menus, and that create Don's Table and he always wanted to start up an outlet. I say he's mad.⁹

Renovation of the run-down and dilapidated premises, previously a Lebanese 'eatery', began in April 1994.¹⁰ The *Advertiser's* Peter Hackett reported that Dunstan expected to limit his involvement to preparing menus and wine lists, 'working with his chef and friend Steven Cheng, [and] mix[ing]with his customers'. He planned to be 'a regular diner' with his own special table.¹¹ Cheng was accorded only one brief sentence in the article. The heading summed up the media focus: 'Tables turn tastier for the king of political change.' Hackett recorded that Dunstan had 'formally' left public life in January, and had won his battle with throat cancer the previous year. Don's Table restaurant at 136 The Parade Norwood opened for business on 8 July 1994. The *Advertiser* reported, 'Don's party begins.' Dunstan was 67 years of age. His 'foodie' friend Maggie Beer launched the undertaking, and Dunstan admitted to 'a few anxious moments in the lead-up to the opening...we had 66 people at the rehearsal and

⁹Interview with Mary Battersby, Regency Park, 2 May 2001.

¹⁰Interview with Bob Battersby, Adelaide, 2 August 2001.

¹¹Peter Hackett, *Advertiser*, 19 April 1994.

not everybody got their food on time.¹² The ‘few anxious moments’ were not confined to Dunstan and Cheng. The day and Dunstan’s reputation were saved by a handful of his friends, who responded to his SOS when chef Cheng buckled under the unaccustomed pressure. Dunstan had fallen into the same trap for which he had castigated other restaurateurs in the early 1970s – a menu that was far too long and complex. For all Dunstan’s knowledge and cooking expertise and Cheng’s training, effectively the partners were amateurs trying to operate as professionals in a complex and highly competitive area of business. Fortunately Dunstan had the right connections and the right friends, who either admired his achievements and/or loved him for his own, always-generous friendship. Maggie Beer, Cath Kerry, Mary Battersby, Chris Winzar and Jimmy Chen variously shortened the menu to manageable proportions and cooked as required. Maggie Beer recalls:

I went to help him several – I don’t know how many times I did it – might have only been two or three times several weeks in a row. Colin came down too, they were so at sea. They didn’t have a clue...So I tried to organise...and shorten the menu and Colin tried to give guidance out front – and. Oh – I remember...[thinking] would this night never end, because it was a success from the first moment because of Don. But it was craziness, absolute craziness, Steven wasn’t able to interpret what Don wanted and yet sometimes it would really work just because of Don.¹³

Steven Cheng acknowledges the support Don’s friends provided:

I remember when we first had the restaurant, we’re very new to it and we didn’t know how to run it. We didn’t know how much to charge and what’s the correct price. And...[Maggie] came to the restaurant and worked for us I think for a week and come and give us a lot of good advice on how to run it and how to charge

¹²John Kerin, *Weekend Australian*, 9-10 July 1994.

¹³Interview with Maggie Beer, Adelaide, 24 April 2001.

people...[Mary Battersby was also there to help wasn't she?] Yes Mary, she a very dear friend of us for a very long time and she come to me and give us advice.¹⁴

Cath Kerry also recalls her own involvement:

A whole heap of people rallied around. I think Don called us up and we rallied around. Maggie Beer, people like that, and you know we just said, 'This is impossible.'...I think the first couple of nights there was something like 80 dishes on the menu and it was...this over-enthusiasm and perhaps not really understanding the process of how you get food out from the kitchen, out to the front.¹⁵

Menus and Other Matters

A printed and presumably truncated, two-page menu from about this period, lists 40 items. There was a choice of five 'Kickshaws' or entrees, although the Macquarie Dictionary defines the singular 'kickshaw' as 'any fancy dish in cooking,'¹⁶ led by 'Carpaccio of Blackened Kangaroo Fillet – Sesame Dipping Sauce.' They were followed by two soups, five pasta, four stir-fries, one offal, two birds – the chicken was Dunstan's *à la Roman*, poached in garum and mustum, served on spiced chickpeas. Then came the fish of the day, which could be had with either 'Chef Cheng Cajun Spices or pan-fried with turmeric and Ginger Sauce', two choices of 'Flesh', and 'The Pie' which was 'B'steeya Australian style'. Dunstan demonstrated this complex Moroccan dish to Chris Winzar, who trained as a chef in France as a young man, at one of the many trial menu sessions conducted at Clara Street in the months before the opening. Winzar says, 'I ended up being better than he was and my job was

¹⁴Interview with Steven Cheng, Norwood, 1 December 2001.

¹⁵Interview with Cath Kerry, Adelaide, 27 May 2002.

¹⁶*The Macquarie Dictionary*, Macquarie University, New South Wales, 2001, p 1175.

to make the B'steeya for the restaurant.'¹⁷ 'The Dish for a Whole Meal' was 'Curnonsky's Garbure Peasant Style' priced at \$9.50, followed by two choices of salads, five of vegetables, two kinds of rice, and five desserts. Mary Battersby recalls that before long Dunstan's tea-smoked duck, to her recipe, was always a 'sell-out, but he prepares it, yeah!'¹⁸ The menu revealed Dunstan's always eclectic hand in a sometimes uneasy mix of flavours, ingredients, and cuisines, in other words, a fusion of Asian and European styles along the lines Dunstan had first advocated in his cookbook of 1976.¹⁹ Winzar revealed that Dunstan 'was quite sick during the opening of the restaurant. He was running out of steam. He was visibly sick.' However, the restaurant had become 'his cause',²⁰ and with the support of his friends, the Dunstan name and reputation ensured more than a little success for the venture. Over the months the menu became less precious, 'entrees' returned, and most prices increased, while Don Dunstan headed the menu as 'Your host', a role seemingly tailor-made for him. Nevertheless, one old friend noted that 'even in his restaurant (goat on toast, fine wines) where most nights he was waiter he was stiff and timid with customers who loved him.'²¹ Dunstan's performance obviously varied from night to night, and no doubt related to his state of health or the identity of the patrons. Nonetheless, performance was always a key part of his psyche. Writing after Dunstan's death, Tony Baker said, 'Restaurants are not entirely about food. They are also theatre, a branch of show business.' He went on:

¹⁷Interview with Chris Winzar, Goolwa, 14 March 2002.

¹⁸Interview with Mary Battersby, Regency Park, 2 May 2001.

¹⁹*Advertiser*, 6 July 1994.

²⁰Bob Ellis, *Goodbye Babylon: Further Journeys in time and politics*, Camberwell, Victoria, 2002, p 462. Quoting Mike Rann.

²¹*Ibid.*, p 461.

At Don's Table on The Parade, Norwood, Dunstan was again in his element. He was dedicated to good food and entirely serious about it. He was also playwright, director and star at the nightly performance.²²

Largely behind the scenes and with indifferent health, Dunstan conceived the menus, experimented with the new dishes, made the sauces, sought out the best provisioners, and attracted the clientele, both new and old. An example of the Dunstan power to attract customers followed some publicity for the restaurant in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The representative of Alumni Travel in Sydney wrote to say, 'we worked together a few years ago on some study tours to Italy', and he made a group dinner booking for a University of the Third Age tour to South Australia.²³ Friday lunches for special events or special clients were a feature of the Table's calendar, whether to celebrate regional produce from Kangaroo Island or to 'Celebrate the Seasons', with lunches staged in conjunction with Graeme Andrews and his [Central] 'Market Adventures'.²⁴ This program featured Dunstan introducing the menu and the guest speakers, whose subjects included 'the revival of the Australian olive oil industry', 'Wild and cultivated mushrooms in Australia', and 'Traditional English cooking at its best'. Despite this latter aberration, at Don's Table Dunstan was still clearly bent on promoting the best of local and Australian produce. Not all of his clients were impressed, whether by the food, the service, the cost, or a combination of things, but in the restaurant industry it was ever thus. The smallish premises were far from ideal, chiefly because the kitchen was mainly in full view of the diners. In the

²²Tony Baker, *Advertiser*, 12 February 1999.

²³FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Don's Table (Clara Services) folder, Ray Boniface to Dunstan, c 1995.

²⁴*Ibid.*, Dunstan fax to Andrews, 15 March 1995.

eyes of some customers it was a café, pretentiously posing as an up-market restaurant.

One former disciple who dined there quite often found that

the food was generally okay, but...people didn't feel that they wanted to go to a restaurant where you could get the clutter of the kitchen with white tablecloths and white tablecloth prices.²⁵

A more common and widely known complaint was slow service. However, the volume of customers continued to increase and it became clear that the premises were inadequate. Prominent Adelaide restaurateur Primo Caon, who first met Dunstan in the early 1960s and regarded him as 'a good cook, a bloody good cook,' commented:

Dunstan opened up his own restaurant in Norwood which didn't work very well, which was a pity. I mean he had his lover and he was just too slow...the big [customer] complaint was that they had to wait hours for it to be ready.²⁶

Gastronome Barbara Santich had problems with Cheng's use of verjuice in salads, where the sweetness did not suit her palate, but she found it acceptable for Dunstan's Roman chicken, knowing the historical background to the dish. Dunstan's bread was a different matter: it did not pass her basic taste test, a first impression towards evaluating the standard of any restaurant.²⁷

Towards the end of 1995 Dunstan wrote to a dissatisfied customer, apologising for a tardy response to his complaints, with the disclosure that

in September I underwent quite massive surgery for abdominal cancer and a considerable rearrangement of

²⁵Interview with Peter Duncan, North Adelaide, 27 June 2001.

²⁶Interview with Primo Caon, Adelaide, 7 March 2001.

²⁷Interview with Barbara Santich, Adelaide, 3 October 2000.

my digestive organs, and so was unable to act as host in the restaurant as was my wont.²⁸

Dunstan's courage in adversity is one aspect of his life that could never be challenged; not so generally known was his ability to make light of his troubles. Prior to at least one operation at Ashford Hospital, he was given a larger room to accommodate his visitors. A friend recalls what ensued:

He's going for an operation first thing in the morning, sitting around drinking wine, and had Steven bring him food from the restaurant. He's sitting up in bed and we're all just having another feast in the hospital room.²⁹

Dunstan managed to make another comeback, albeit visibly older looking and weaker, but with his passion for life and the life of the restaurateur undiminished.³⁰ He began 1996 by writing what became a regular food and wine feature for the *Adelaide Review*, 'Don's Table Talk', in addition to the political and social commentaries he had been contributing since August 1994. 'Table Talk' could be dismissed as mere puffery for Dunstan's restaurant or, like his other pieces, the repetitious, self-indulgent meanderings of an old 'has-been,' and there is some basis for such criticism. On the other hand, while the restaurant often figures in the Dunstan discourse, it is usually in the context of reporting a new source for figs, or mulberries, or pomegranates, or indicating which South Australian wine or restaurant has earned his approval, or discussing the origin of chillies, or expressing the hope 'that Adelaideans will appreciate even more how lucky we are to live here'.³¹

²⁸FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Don's Table (Clara Services) folder, 12 December 1995.

²⁹Interview with Scott McGuinness, Adelaide, 3 July 2003.

³⁰Interview with Steven Wright, Goolwa, 1 March 2001.

³¹Dunstan, *Adelaide Review*, March 1996.

In his seventieth year and in frail health, Dunstan still maintained a work-load that would have made lesser mortals blanch. He reported ‘personally...[smoking] 250 Ducklings with tea and camphor-laurel leaves’ for the Norwood Food Wine and Music Festival in March 1996. Then came juicing his annual crop of pomegranates, ‘the basis of pomegranate glaze for our venison’ dish, followed by harvesting his quince crop, with picking and pickling his olives soon to come.³² A wintry August saw Dunstan and Cheng presenting food at the Wolf Blass Winery, for the Barossa Classic Gourmet Weekend.³³ The next weekend Dunstan enjoyed the unusual experience of comparing his own ‘stuffed squid’ dish with a variation created by a fellow restaurateur and sauced with ‘North African flavours,’ this offering he generously admitted, made him ‘envious.’³⁴ Dunstan was inordinately proud of his

own invention..., a squid stuffed with the tentacles, sticky rice, chopped macadamias, mint and onion, long poached in Japanese fish stock and wine, and served on sorrel sauce with roast capsicum.³⁵

The Rainbow Connection

Another facet of the many-sided Dunstan, more visible since his ‘retirement’ from public life, was his enjoyment of Adelaide’s gay scene. The restaurant played host to the Rainbow Connection, a gay and lesbian business group with Dunstan as its patron,³⁶ and a series of ‘erotica parties’ that were part of the 1997 Adelaide Lesbian and Gay Cultural Festival, FEAST. The ‘oral and aural feast for the senses...[featured

³²Dunstan, *Adelaide Review*, May 1996.

³³*Ibid.*, October 1996.

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶Interview with David Hay and Michael Speers, Adelaide, 4 March 2002.

a] specially designed menu of sensual delights,' which guests could enjoy while listening to readings of erotic poetry. Dunstan intended reading extracts from the writings of Sappho, which he claimed, were 'not explicit erotica...[but] about love and affections and situations.' Other readers included Frank Ford, Adelaide Fringe founder, the former secretary of the Prostitutes Association, and 5AN announcer Simon Royal.³⁷

Culinary visit to Mexico

Since mid-January to mid-February was the off-season for their restaurant, Dunstan and Steven Cheng took the opportunity for a trip to Mexico in 1997, based around lessons from 'the great *afficionado* of genuine Mexican cuisine,' Diana Kennedy.³⁸ Their planned orderly departure turned chaotic, according to Dunstan, because of Cheng's tardiness in completing the restaurant closure – 'he always does underestimate the time required' – and Dunstan's health problems, which meant making sure 'we had all things necessary for Mexico's unhealthy climate.'³⁹ At a stopover in Kuala Lumpur, Dunstan found a glass of wine was 'ridiculously expensive' and the Yum Cha at a Chinese restaurant did not measure up to the best Adelaide version. In addition they were forced to drink beer, when the only wine listed could not be found. Dunstan observed that, 'obviously my efforts to get wine drunk with food of the 'Malaysian Synthesis'...have had little success.' This was surely not unexpected, given the dominance of beer in tropical climates and the local interest in non-alcoholic wine demonstrated at his Adelaide Week in Penang back in 1975. He

³⁷*Advertiser*, 29 September 1997.

³⁸Dunstan, *Adelaide Review*, February 1997.

³⁹FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Don Dunstan, 'Diary of Mexico Trip', 16 January 1997. The pages are not numbered.

was concerned about short-term memory loss and had ‘to restrain a trend to hypochondria.’⁴⁰

The pair arrived in Mexico City on 21 January, then flew on to Villahermosa, Tabasco, and their first evening cooking class with Kennedy. Earlier in the day, the class had been sent out in teams to the local markets for the fish and other produce. Kennedy presided in a makeshift kitchen behind a dining room and created ‘Tamale Choya, Mole de Pescaro Tortillas’. Dunstan pronounced ‘the fish exquisite, the shrimp tremendous’ but found the ‘duck plantain tortillas’ of the second lesson ‘not memorable’. Perhaps this had something to do with chocolate consumed on a tour with Elaine Gonzalez, ‘an international authority on chocolate.’ He noted, using his favourite Dunstan descriptor, that ‘everywhere I’ve tried hueros rancheros the sauce is not as flavoursome as mine.’⁴¹ At the end of the course, in spite of poor organisation and various other minor disappointments, Dunstan felt that ‘we have succeeded in a substantial part of my aim to discern new ingredients and techniques.’ The pair dutifully attended an Australia Day reception at the embassy in Mexico City and later went on to Kennedy’s home, ‘Quinta Diana,’ at Zitacuaro. Dunstan was well pleased to find a virtual clone of his Clara Street kitchen. ‘The kitchen is well planned with an island cooking top with copper range hood, and looking over a generous eating area. Isn’t it remarkable that the best cooks work that way!’⁴²

Kennedy also grew fruit, vegetables, and herbs in an effort to be as self-sufficient as possible. Visiting San Miguel, Dunstan took to drinking tequila with a chaser of tomato and wild orange, plus the obligatory salt and lime, but criticised the

⁴⁰FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Dunstan, Diary, 1997, 18 January 1997.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 21-24 January 1997.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 27-29 January 1997.

otherwise ‘good’ paella at a flamenco restaurant because it ‘lacked the saffron of the classic dish.’ At Oaxaca, he decided that eating grasshoppers was a curiosity not for serious gourmands and hoped customs would clear the quantities of various types of ‘chile’ he had purchased. Returning to Mexico City, Dunstan was ecstatic at eating

a perfectly cooked steak, with a green sauce with *epazoto*, and purslane. I had waited for years to find a dish which made the use of purslane worthwhile, and this was it. I shall grow and use it, Whoopee.⁴³

Dunstan reported to his *Adelaide Review* readers at the end of his first week in Mexico and shared with them his motivation for the journey:

We came to Mexico because of my strong belief that Central America, the source of many of the foods we take as an essential part of the traditional cuisine of this country: potatoes, tomatoes, “French” beans, sweetcorn, avocados, chocolate, pineapples, peanuts, capsicums, chillies, (the list goes on) still had food resources and techniques of using them so far neglected in Australia.⁴⁴

Barbara Santich believes Dunstan’s trip was ‘very innovative’ and important, because ‘Mexico is climatically relatively similar to South Australia, or parts of it are, and he thought that there were things there that would be appropriate...more or less based on the climatic similarities.’⁴⁵ Dunstan was introduced to a range of chillies not ‘used in Australia’, ‘the leaves of the Hoju [sic] Santa’, the chaya shrub, which he hoped to grow at Clara Street, plus new uses for the plantain – the neglected cooking banana he had demonstrated on ‘Fun in the Kitchen’ back in 1982. Dunstan had already decided ‘we were right to come, and look forward to more revelations yet.’ He concluded his

⁴³FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Dunstan, Diary, 1997, 1-8 February 1997.

⁴⁴Dunstan, *Adelaide Review*, February, 1997.

⁴⁵Interview with Barbara Santich, Adelaide, 3 October 2000.

account of the Mexico trip in the April edition of *Adelaide Review* and had already planted tomatillo seeds, though on Kennedy's advice these were to be transferred to 'higher ground' in Don's Grove at Steven Wright's Inglewood property. His experimental 'nopales', made with the cactus 'paddles' from locally cultivated 'prickly pear', had proved more sour than the Mexican version, 'but it is a food resource which does provide at its best something quite delectable and it would be absurd to neglect it.' He was adamant that the menu at Don's Table would soon list Mexican style dishes demonstrated by Kennedy, including squash and pumpkin flowers, stuffed with hashed pork and cheese in 'light crepes', and stuffed 'chile pasillo'.⁴⁶ Before the Mexico trip Dunstan had already offered Kangaroo 'Island turkey poached in traditional Mayan sauce, (chilli and bitter chocolate mole) enhanced with the Australian flavours of bush tomato and native currants.'⁴⁷ Customer reaction to the dish is not known.

Later in 1997 Dunstan was in his element as one of six food judges at Regency Park for the Regional Cookery section of the inaugural *Tasting Australia* festival, the brain child of TV chef Ian Parmenter. He 'spent two concentrated days tasting and sipping...[and found it to be] an exhausting but exhilarating time.' He believed that, 'it could not have happened without the facilities and the professionalism of the staff of Regency Park Food School,' and made the further point that restaurants and not popular demand were the driving force behind the 'use [of] local and indigenous produce.'⁴⁸ The National Trust nominated Dunstan as a Living National Treasure in February 1998. He flew to Sydney to accept the award as 'the only past or present premier of any state' to be so honoured. There was no category for cooks, he noted,

⁴⁶Dunstan, *Adelaide Review*, February, April, 1997.

⁴⁷FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Kangaroo Island produce, Don's Table (Clara Services) folder, 19 May 1995.

⁴⁸Dunstan, *Adelaide Review*, November, 1997.

‘but Margaret Fulton made it’ to his delight. Never one to miss a culinary opportunity, he used the trip to try two of Sydney’s top four restaurants, one of which was that of former South Australian chef Tim Pak Poy. Dunstan decided the ‘delicate and subtle nuances’ Pak Poy had developed were not what Don’s Table was about, and that Adelaide lacked ‘the population and wealth [required] to support this sort of establishment.’⁴⁹ Dunstan’s particular blind spot precluded him from ever admitting that this was also the case in relation to some of his own more grandiose projects while premier.

Don’s Table II

By early 1997 it had become obvious that larger premises were a necessity for the restaurant. As Dunstan noted, ‘we lose custom because we are in a shopping centre and people don’t like to sit in the corridor area however we dress it up.’ The partners looked at taking over the well-established Da Libero restaurant, but the asking price was out of the question. Steven Cheng’s older brother, ‘Chili’ (Cheng Chi Sin), a Hong Kong-based investor, was looking to buy a property in Adelaide ostensibly as ‘an investment to provide business migration for his sons.’⁵⁰ Dunstan reported in his November 1997 ‘Table Talk’ that the Cheng family had purchased ‘a beautifully restored nineteenth century bluestone adjoining the Rose Park Wine Cellars on Kensington Road,’ but not the reported price of \$450,000.⁵¹ The property would become Don’s Table II, and he was already looking forward to planting numerous fruit trees, herbs and warrigal greens as part of the landscaping. Dunstan and Steven Cheng

⁴⁹Dunstan, *Adelaide Review*, April, 1998.

⁵⁰FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Dunstan fax to Michael Speers, Don’s Table (Clara Services) Folder, 21 May 1997.

⁵¹*Advertiser*, 13 March 1999.

aimed to open their new restaurant in early February, with the official launch during the Adelaide Festival of Arts in March. It was an unhappy Dunstan who reported to his *Adelaide Review* readers in February 1998 that ‘the Cheng family...[had] decided...[that] an addition compatible with the historic buildings must be constructed to accommodate the service areas,’ and as a consequence the opening would likely be delayed until April. Further, because Steven Cheng, who was to forsake the kitchen for the role of manager, had given *Gourmet Traveller* the February opening date, Dunstan apologised to readers who had been misinformed. All of this was a portent of disasters to come with the Cheng family and in particular Steven’s oldest brother, Chili. In the meantime, Dunstan was still able to rejoice in ‘the wonderful flavour of tomatoes sun-ripened in one’s own garden...[as] one of the great pleasures of life.’ The tomatoes were destined to be pureed and bottled, a biennial Clara Street event. Dunstan had to limit his involvement to some bottle washing, with his friends processing and bottling the crop. He and Steven were too busy ‘feeding ravening hordes on the Parade at the Norwood Food and Wine Festival...[with their black satin duck terrine or Steven’s yabby quenelles].’⁵² This was the last event catered for from the restaurant on The Parade; the doors were closed in May. A final review had this to say:

Few ‘living national treasures’ are crazy enough to open a restaurant when well into retirement. But then, Don Dunstan has already proved saintly enough to write an important cookery book while Premier of South Australia, championing Asian flavours well before they became fashionable...Like Don himself, the place is at heart informal. The prices are restrained and the menu rewardingly exploratory.⁵³

⁵²Dunstan, *Adelaide Review*, April 1998.

⁵³ *Dine 1998: eating out in South Australia*, Ann Oliver and Nigel Hopkins (eds.), Kent Town, South Australia, 1997, p 47.

The second Don's Table at 87 Kensington Road opened early in July although more work remained to be done on 'the courtyard, the garden, and the food history centre.' This innovative feature was to be housed in a small 1840s cottage and attached stables. The concept was classic Dunstan, and he planned to exhibit nineteenth-century cooking artifacts, including a yet-to-be-found 'Jacka' stove, a brand made by some of his South Australian antecedents. Further displays would cover 'domestic and restaurant food practice history for South Australia.'⁵⁴ His TV interviewer friend George Negus opened the restaurant proper before an audience of invited guests, who were duly impressed by the premises, the food and the wines. Representative comments came from two Regency Technical And Further Education College [TAFE], invitees; they wrote to welcome 'a new elegance to the Adelaide's [sic] restaurant scene. The food wine and company of the evening made George Negus's opening a memorable event.'⁵⁵ The Adelaide Hilton's chief concierge and his wife commented. 'Your new premises is a true asset for South Australia. The food and wine were fantastic and we were impressed with every course from the degustation menu.'⁵⁶ The new restaurant could seat about 100 diners with up to 70 in the main dining area, and there was also a courtyard for those wanting to dine *al fresco*. Pre-dinner guests were invited to enjoy a glass of wine, with coffee cake for the peckish, while chatting quietly in a library-like ambience or thumbing through bound volumes of gourmet food magazines. One of Dunstan's praiseworthy aims was to ensure noise levels were well below the ever increasing decibel count in most Adelaide restaurants. A lunch

⁵⁴Dunstan, *Adelaide Review*, June 1998.

⁵⁵FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Don's Table (Clara Services) folder, B.Lawes and R.Than to Dunstan, 8 July 1998.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, P. and A. O'Reardon to Dunstan, 6 July 1998.

service was now available, and at the suggestion of the neighbouring wine cellar picnickers could order boxes of food to accompany their liquor purchases.⁵⁷

Dunstan and William Morris

Dominating the restaurant concept in a uniquely South Australian way was evidence of Dunstan's William Morris connection. From his university days Dunstan was much influenced by Morris, the nineteenth-century socialist polymath, both politically and stylistically, and followed his precepts 'in the setting up of the Jam Factory workshops'.⁵⁸ Morris also pioneered dress reform, the idea of dressing to suit the climate, not staid tradition, and Dunstan took early heed of this sensible dictum both in Fiji and later, very publicly, in Adelaide.⁵⁹ Chris Menz, who curated the 1997 William Morris Exhibition at the South Australian Art Gallery, knew Dunstan and of his interest in Morris. In Menz's opinion, Clara Street clearly reflected Morris's views on comfortable living.⁶⁰ Certainly Morris made it clear in his own voluminous writings as to where he stood in relation to cooking and food. 'Any one who professes to think that the question of art and cultivation must go before that of the knife and fork...does not understand what art means.'⁶¹ In the first of a planned series of four newsletters a year, Dunstan shared some of his knowledge about Morris:

When most people think of William Morris they think of his designs on fabrics and wallpapers which gave life and colour to Victorian homes. However, William

⁵⁷Dunstan, *Adelaide Review*, June 1998.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹*Weekend Australian*, 20-21 January 1996.

⁶⁰Telephone conversation with Chris Menz, 5 April 2002.

⁶¹E.P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, London, 1977, p 665. Thompson was quoting from Morris, 'How I became a Socialist,' *Justice*, 6 June 1894.

Morris was much more than this. Morris was also a renowned poet, designer, craftsman and social reformer.⁶²

And like Don Dunstan, William Morris was a generous host, had a gourmet's interest in food and enjoyed cooking. In Dunstan's words, 'he was a...discerning food-lover and devoted to keeping a good cellar.'⁶³ These various and rich aspects of his life were a significant inspiration to Dunstan.⁶⁴ Also like Dunstan, Morris was criticised by socialist critics who abhorred his love of good food and wine. Member families of the Adelaide Establishment in the late nineteenth century, anxious to display their wealth and artistic sensibilities, 'bought more of the products of Morris and Co. than any other part of the world outside England.'⁶⁵ Before World War II the Morris influence played an important role in Adelaide's arts, crafts, and design scene, culminating in a permanent collection at the South Australian Art Gallery. Dunstan acquired a 'unique' set of Morris curtains for the small front room and a fully restored example of the once-popular Morris reclining chair, one of many locally made replicas. Reproduction or original curtains and wall hangings featured throughout the restaurant. A bookcase containing works by or about Morris and copies of cartoons of the great man by Sir Edward Burne-Jones completed the ensemble.⁶⁶

Publicity for the new Dunstan restaurant included a video taping session early in August with Ian Parmenter, widely known because of his 'Consuming Passions' television program. Dunstan provided information about himself and the restaurant,

⁶²FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Don's Table (Clara Services) file, Don's Table Newsletter, n d, c July 1998.

⁶³Dunstan, *Adelaide Review*, June 1998.

⁶⁴Don's Table Newsletter, n d, c July 1998.

⁶⁵Dunstan, *Adelaide Review*, June 1998.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

plus his ubiquitous 'Roman' chicken recipe, now 'served with Celtic green puree,' for Parmenter to cook on camera. In typical Dunstan fashion he included a long *nota bene*, explaining how the dish resulted from 'an exploration of Roman cooking', and a potted history of garum and mustum, finally adding a cautionary note to avoid using them as a sauce. Later in the month another TV chef Geoff Jansz filmed Dunstan cooking his trademark 'stuffed [poached] squid with sorrel mayonnaise', although the chef for the new restaurant was advertised to be Shaun Nielsen. Dunstan acknowledged the Greek origins of the dish, which he probably first encountered in the home of Greek friends at Norwood. His version used sticky rice, Australian macadamia nuts, Japanese fish stock, Australian white wine and a 'French' touch with sorrel leaves. The knowledgeable Jansz commented 'that perhaps people found...[the fusion of tastes] confusing'. Not so according to Dunstan, who responded with a lecture on his rationale:

The tastes are not confused but carefully worked to go together for a particular taste sensation which doesn't try to invent new and incongruous things. We take proven tastes which we carefully match and we may use a technique from one country to enhance the texture and lift the flavour of a taste which comes from the tradition of another country. The great advantage for Australia is that the range of our ingredients and known techniques from our multicultural heritage broadens our ability here to provide a wide range of dishes and flavours.⁶⁷

Dunstan did not record Jansz's response. Dunstan's always high media profile, his many contacts and assiduous networking, ensured multi-media exposure including

⁶⁷Dunstan, *Adelaide Review*, August 1998.

references in airline inflight magazines. Don's Table was also about to have its own website.⁶⁸

Tony Baker, alias Sol Simeon, found his way out to Kensington before long, in spite of trying not to pre-empt a self-imposed 'lengthy "settling in" period.'⁶⁹ Baker and his wife were much impressed with the new premises, 'entry off a tessellated tile verandah: high ceilings and deep cornices, a roaring fire, wooden bar and soft piano music.' The service providers in waistcoats excelled, and

Mine host, Don Dunstan, [added]...to this elegant yet intimate atmosphere by roaming among guests for a quiet chat, conveying the impression that each table [was]...of honoured friends rather than anonymous clients.

Baker noted that Dunstan himself also managed to shop for the best quality local produce, while continuing to provide other fruit and vegetables from his Clara Street garden. Lessons had clearly been learned over the years since 1994. The menu was now an exercise in seductive brevity, accompanied by a 'compact but well-chosen wine list.' The pair ranged through 'terrines of vegetables,' 'pan-fried duck livers,' 'seared beef with sweet potato and caramelised onions in meat jus,' 'Atlantic salmon in sweet corn sauce,' 'berry compote,' and 'raspberry and vanilla terrine of ice cream,' all of which were up to expectations.

Sadly, all of this publicity and the other frenetic activity proved to be of no avail, as Michael Symons, in a role-reversal as Dunstan's client, shortly discovered. He and his wife with their small daughter dined at the newly opened Kensington Road

⁶⁸FUSA, Dunstan Collection, Draft publicity material, Don's Table (Clara Services) folder, probably written by Dunstan, nd. c June 1998.

⁶⁹ *Sunday Mail*, 23 August 1998.

premises ‘several times in a row’, because it was convenient and they thought underpriced, thanks to Steven Cheng’s management. They returned once again without their daughter, and Dunstan came over and said, ‘Well this is the last time that Steven and I are going to have you at this restaurant.’ They assumed this to be because the child had been noisy and disturbed the ambience on their earlier visits. However, as Dunstan hastened to explain, he and Steven Cheng had reached crisis point and were about to walk out of the restaurant, breaking their business connection with the Hong Kong branch of the Cheng family. According to Symons:

Finances had been extremely sporadic for the place and Don – I mean that wouldn’t shock me much in my life, but for Don it was a bit eye-opening to find how weird this money supply was. But...it became clear to him that various illegal activities were occurring, [and]...as ...directors of the company, but minority directors, he and Steven were being compromised.⁷⁰

Writing about the sequence of events, Dunstan managed to retain his equanimity in the face of huge adversity. ‘Over the period of development of the project,’ he said, ‘quite irreconcilable differences about the conduct of the company and its accounts arose.’ Dunstan and Steven Cheng resigned their ineffectual directorships and had no choice other than to sever their connection with the undertaking, which they did shortly before Dunstan’s birthday on 21 September 1998. The Hong Kong branch of the Cheng family under Chili Cheng took over, and for a short time ‘Don’s Table’ became ‘The Table’ restaurant. Dunstan, writing in what was headed ‘Don’s last table talk,’ said, ‘I will not now comment further on what has been for us a very saddening and costly experience.’⁷¹ Waiting in the wings was an even crueller blow; two weeks later his

⁷⁰Interview with Michael Symons, Wellington, New Zealand, 24 January 2002.

⁷¹Dunstan, *Adelaide Review*, October 1998.

doctors' diagnosed terminal lung cancer.⁷² Dunstan was brought low by having to end Don's Table II, and numbers of his friends believe it 'hastened his end'. Scott McGuinness, a journalist friend of Dunstan's, agrees:

He was just devastated by all that. All that he wanted to do was to have wonderful premises, wonderful food, wonderful people to eat it, and...pay for it along the way, and he was very concerned about Steven's welfare.⁷³

Dunstan's last dream for his restaurant to become an artistic showcase displaying fine South Australian food and wines, together with a history of cultivation and cooking in the context of the multi-cultural society he claimed as his own, could not be fulfilled.⁷⁴

In the few months remaining to him Dunstan continued to find solace in his garden:

The snow peas are full of promise, the apricot tree has set its best crop ever, the avocados which last year were a sad disappointment have this year decided that my heart needs succour, and are flowering with great enthusiasm.⁷⁵

He still dined out as much as possible and recommended an Indian restaurant now trading in the Norwood premises first occupied by Don's Table. His last food article for the *Adelaide Review* appeared in December 1998, and he described lunching with friends at the Botanic Gardens Restaurant, using his familiar food adjective 'flavoursome' to describe not only the char-grilled squid but also the main course of flathead. He reflected on 'how fortunate we are in Adelaide to have places like this to

⁷²Interview with Steven Cheng, Norwood, 1 December 2001.

⁷³Interview with Scott McGuinness, Adelaide, 3 July 2003.

⁷⁴Interview with Steven Cheng, 1 December 2001.

⁷⁵Dunstan, *Adelaide Review*, October 1998.

show to friends' and remembered an earlier 'fine' lunch there, courtesy of Richard Mackie, 'who looked after our wine-list and gave us great service at Don's Table for years.'⁷⁶ Other memorable meals with friends followed at d'Arry's Verandah restaurant, McLaren Vale, and Nediz Tu restaurant in Adelaide. Dunstan provided greens from Clara Street and other backing for Steven Cheng, who set up his own 'Don's Table kitchen' as part of Peter Duncan's short-lived 'Round the Square' computerised, multiple cuisine operation on Victoria Square.⁷⁷ In spite of the prognosis of his doctors, Dunstan remained remarkably positive and had already made his 'unctuous plum pudding with Coopers Stout ready for the family [Christmas] celebration.'

Don Dunstan's Cookbook II

Perhaps more importantly, Dunstan had also revised his original cookbook and 'restored' the dessert recipes and the secrets of conjuring up Peking Duck, deleted in 1976 by Rigby's cost-cutting. The second edition of *Don Dunstan's Cookbook* appeared in Adelaide bookshops just in time for Christmas shoppers in 1998. John Scott, from local publisher Calypso, had suggested to Dunstan that this was a worthwhile first venture for the company. Dunstan needed little persuading, because he was also aware of the constant public demand for second-hand copies of the original. Scott ran a second-hand bookshop on The Parade for 20 years and had a 'standing order for copies of his cookbook' from Dunstan. Scott says, 'I sold him dozens over the years...He would autograph it and give it to friends and people he ran

⁷⁶Dunstan, *Adelaide Review*, December 1998.

⁷⁷John McGrath, 'An Adelaide Adventure', *Adelaide Review*, October 1998.

into, particularly in the restaurant industry.’⁷⁸ When editing the cookbook, Scott was greatly impressed to realise that

it was nearly 25 years since the book had been published and it still wasn't dated. He was well ahead of his time at the time the book was written. He was interesting, it was very insistent on the importance of fresh produce, the best quality ingredients. He obviously knew quite a lot about classical Europe, particularly French and Italian cooking, but he'd been very influenced by Asian cooking as well, and he was really a full decade ahead of his time in the way he managed to fuse them.⁷⁹

Because of problems finding a suitable venue, the delayed launch of the new edition took place at Clara Street with ‘a few invited guests and what qualifies as a horde of media’. Dunstan somehow still managed to handle the catering with much of his old élan. George Negus interviewed his friend Dunstan for the last time. The media publicity ensured a good deal of interest and a successful launch. The *Advertiser* cruelly photographed a gaunt, obviously ill Dunstan posed in his kitchen, as he had been on the cover of his cookbook in 1976, then ran both photographs side by side. They reported that ‘despite declining health, Mr Dunstan maintains a fierce intellect and love for friends and family.’ He clearly included himself in commenting, ‘every cook who is any good is always on a learning curve.’⁸⁰ A highpoint Scott recalls was a request from Government House for six autographed copies of the book. The governor’s wife, Lady Neale, was apparently a Dunstan fan.⁸¹

Less than two months before he died, Dunstan and Steven Cheng spent a few days at Thorn Park Country House with the owners, old friends David Hay and

⁷⁸Interview with John Scott, Bridgewater, 14 March 2001.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

⁸⁰*Advertiser*, 19 December 1998.

⁸¹Interview with John Scott.

Michael Speers. The emphasis was, as always, on good food and wine, and Dunstan bought cases of wine to take back to Clara Street from two Clare Valley wineries. Hay suggests:

I think he knew that it [his death] was close, but he wasn't going to give up his own sort of selection, of still looking forward to eating [and drinking] and he was fascinated by everything we were eating.

Hay also believes that it was Dunstan's passionate interest in food that was still driving him. Surrounded by friends and family at Clara Street in his final days, the emphasis remained on food, wine, and convivial conversation. Dunstan's schoolteacher daughter, who had taken leave to cook for her father and his friends in what proved to be the last week of his life, recalled:

He was fussy about food even then and he wanted stuff cooked properly. He had some grand idea about how I had to go into the market and get some shinbone veal or something, I don't know how much that was going to cost me. Oh yes, he also thought he'd have me going to Marinos and get a prosciutto, so he could carve pieces off that. That's how it was, there was never any expense spared to get good ingredients.⁸²

Local Labor Member of Parliament Vini Ciccarello cycled round with a basket of produce from her own garden, including a butternut pumpkin, to supplement supplies for the kitchen where Dunstan's daughter was presiding under instructions from her father:

The last day, the last thing he ever ate...was some pumpkin soup...and all these instructions were given about how – as if I'd never cooked pumpkin soup in my life. But yeah, it had to be done this way...plus sherry added to it...Food was incredibly important to him...and

⁸²Interview with Bronwen Dohnt, Goolwa, 9 June 2001.

wine...He was always very polite, but he was really intolerant of badly cooked food.⁸³

Pumpkin soup had long figured in Dunstan's repertoire. He prefaced his pre-cookbook, private recipe notes with the comment that, 'pumpkin has been a despised vegetable because it has been usually badly cooked'. He thought his own soup recipe gave it kinder treatment.⁸⁴ As that last day drew on Dunstan lapsed into a coma, and his friends took turn-about 'to sit on the bed and hold his hand and whisper things' to comfort him.⁸⁵ Meanwhile in the living area, an impromptu 'pre-wake' celebration of Dunstan's life continued until later that night. A close friend says:

It was respectful, but there was food and wine, and people talking about – obviously Don...and the different ways that Don had affected their lives...So you know, right to the last minute it was an entertaining, warm environment, and food was a major part of it.⁸⁶

Another Dunstan intimate, Maggie Beer, has her own memory of that day:

I do remember one thing as we were all celebrating – I was going to say celebrating his death – but that's what we did. We gathered around and told stories, laughed and cried, all sorts. But I remember looking up and there on the pergola were these grapes that were wrapped in muslin to protect them from the birds, and I thought you know, this is what this man was all about.⁸⁷

⁸³Interview with Bronwen Dohnt, Goolwa, 9 June 2001.

⁸⁴'Max's Menu competition,' *Sunday Mail*, 30 June 1976.

⁸⁵Interview with Scott McGuinness, Adelaide, 3 July 2003.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*

⁸⁷Interview with Maggie Beer, Adelaide, 24 April 2001.

Dunstan and Celebration

Dunstan's lifestyle at Clara Street was basically simple, although a privileged member of the middle-class he was not given to ostentation but rather to demonstrating the culinary delights created from his vegetable garden and other fresh local produce. This view was supported from an unexpected source, the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* who wrote, 'And although he changed the way Adelaide wined and dined, Mr Dunstan kept his own life simple.'⁸⁸ During most of Dunstan's years at Clara Street his birthday was always cause for celebration, and sometimes dual celebrations were held to accommodate his disparate circles of friends. Maggie Beer and her husband were among one of the circles:

He started inviting us every year to his birthday parties, the 21st of September, the equinox. And Don always cooked, and that was you know what really cemented relationships, in terms of having this amazing interest in food...He'd do Stephanie's [Alexander] Satin Duck and if he got it wrong he'd be really distressed. And he was really worried about his pigeons and I showed him how to cook them.⁸⁹

On other birthday occasions he would entertain his children and, although long divorced, their mother. A favourite venue for a time was the Uraidla Aristologist restaurant, where joint owner Michael Symons first met Dunstan in 1981:

So when we set up we saw Don a lot, it seemed to become a family place where they'd come to the restaurant for birthdays, so he was often there with his [former] wife and children and grandchildren.⁹⁰

⁸⁸*Sydney Morning Herald*, editorial eulogy, 13 February 1999.

⁸⁹Interview with Maggie Beer, Adelaide, 24 April 2001.

⁹⁰Interview with Michael Symons, Wellington, New Zealand, 24 January 2002.

This contact proved valuable for Symons in attracting a prestigious Dunstan to the first Australian Gastronomy Symposium in 1984. But it was the Clara Street celebrations that became almost legendary and allowed Dunstan to perform feats of cooking and hospitality for his many friends.

A noteworthy exception occurred when several of his friends organised a seventieth birthday celebration on behalf of Adelaide's Gay and Lesbian community. Len Amadio, Steven Hayter, Scott McGuinness, Damien Parer and Don Storen formed a committee and produced an appropriate extravaganza at Gekkos Landing restaurant near the Torrens weir. The honoured guest and his partner were greeted with French champagne, then conveyed across the river via gondola. On the restaurant landing 'Don Storen had about eight strapping young men in pink shorts and white shirts, who did the guard of honour as Don stepped off the gondola and came into his seventieth birthday party.'⁹¹ Hayter produced a 'big screen' video collage of Dunstan's life for the occasion, and Robyn Archer performed in tribute to her old friend. Jerry Connelly also helped entertain the 'couple of hundred people there, and the wine flowed, the food flowed endlessly...it was a very fun afternoon. And it was an opportunity [for the Gay community to salute him, because]...Don had always remained publicly very circumspect about [his] sexuality.'⁹²

Dunstan's birthday celebrations were famously the high point of his year, but his entertaining was not confined to the one annual event. Christmas Day breakfast was another but only for his closest friends who shared the simplest of fare, fresh-

⁹¹Interview with Scott McGuinness Adelaide, 3 July 2003. Also interview with Greg Mackie, Adelaide, 10 February 2003.

⁹²Interview with Greg Mackie, Adelaide, 10 February 2003.

ground coffee and homemade croissants.⁹³ Later in the day the menu, and with it the guest list, expanded almost exponentially. For his numerous friends Sunday lunch invitations were something to treasure. If the weather was clement, poolside parties were the order of the day, with Dunstan presiding over the nearby barbecue. On indoor occasions guests sat around the large wooden table while their host cooked his favourite, fiery goat or chicken curries and quantities of rice. In later years Steven Cheng helped with the food and wine. But Clara Street remained Dunstan's domain, and entertaining chosen friends was to do what he loved most of all. With the food served, he would take up his rightful place at the head of the table and read Andrew Marvel's poetry aloud or excerpts from an old favourite Lawrence Stern's *Tristram Shandy*.⁹⁴ Greg Mackie sold books to Dunstan in the late 1980s and for a period regularly attended Sunday lunches. He met and enjoyed the company of a diverse group of people. Mackie found Dunstan to be

A very reserved man...a very shy man. He in a sense was content to be host. To prepare and present the food...He was a very generous host...Don enjoyed an opportunity from the invitation of one of his guests to tell stories of achievements past, but I never had the feeling that he forced them on anybody.

According to Mackie and other invitees, there seemed to be different circles of friends, some of which overlapped on occasion. He sees an insecure Dunstan as standing in the middle of the circles:

Sometimes I felt [he] hid behind his stories of achievements past, and hid behind his hosting, his hospitality. And...when invited would step up to the

⁹³Alan Orreal, Don Dunstan Retrospective, FEAST, 8 November 1999.

⁹⁴Chris Winzar, 'Kitchen Wisdom,' FEAST, video tape courtesy of Steven Cheng, 20 November 2002.

microphone, metaphorically speaking, and deliver a great story.⁹⁵

But food was the dominant factor, and Mackie, like others, found ‘there was really...an endless feast.’

There was lots of food, lots of focus on his own produce and on the best, fresh produce that he needed to bring in. Clearly by that stage he well and truly had his public profile as something of a gourmand. He was passionate about food and he would light up with the opportunity to talk about food.⁹⁶

Mackie, like this later Dunstan, moved comfortably in Adelaide’s Gay scene and at times the Sunday lunches were confined to this circle. Another Sunday might see a mixed assembly, since Dunstan’s friendships ranged across the spectrum of Australian and overseas society.

Scott McGuinness enjoyed many Sunday lunches and other gatherings. He introduced his mother to Dunstan at the Festival Theatre and a lunch invitation soon followed. Dunstan generously included mother, partner and sister in what became a memorable event:

We got there Sunday at one and Don had been out in the morning and bought this huge fish...he’d baked it with all the seafood as well, the scallops and oysters and an amazing sauce...And we sat around under the grapevines in the backyard and just had this amazing meal, it was superb.⁹⁷

Dunstan was a messy cook, as his daughter has already confirmed, and McGuinness added his own observation:

⁹⁵Interview with Greg Mackie, Adelaide, 10 February 2003.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*

⁹⁷Interview with Scott McGuinness, Adelaide, 3 July 2003.

I can always remember Don, because whenever he'd cook he would have his glasses on, always got muck all over them. I could never work out how he would actually see what he was doing. Always this stuff all over his glasses, steamed up or where he pushed them up with a finger that'd been in something he was preparing, it was lovely.⁹⁸

Although seldom averse to claiming credit for himself, whether justified or not, Dunstan never proclaimed that he was a chef. Maggie Beer describing herself says, 'I'm not a chef, I'm a good cook'. Dunstan 'called himself a person who loved to cook'.⁹⁹ Beer describes the distinction between chef and cook in the following way:

Ah, a chef is a trained person who thinks with her head, umm, yes, thinks with her head. A trained person you know on straight food, but great chefs are more than that – but a cook is someone who does it for love...cooking is something about love and sharing and you know, different.¹⁰⁰

Food as a Metaphor for Love

Allan Patience interviewed Dunstan more times than any other person and wrote about 'The Private Don' in August 2000:

After our interview sessions he would sometimes invite me to eat with him. He would go into his kitchen and effortlessly conjure up a sumptuous meal. He was relaxed and insightful as he cooked. He believed that preparing food for friends was a wonderful way of loving them.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸Interview with Scott McGuinness, Adelaide, 3 July 2003.

⁹⁹Interview with Maggie Beer, Adelaide, 24 April 2001.

¹⁰⁰Interview with Maggie Beer, Adelaide, 24 April 2001.

¹⁰¹Allan Patience, *Don Dunstan Foundation Bulletin*, Adelaide, 2001

In other words, Dunstan used food as a metaphor, a metaphor for his love of the other, whether they were friends, family, lovers, or indeed anyone he invited to his table. Dunstan had long abandoned his Anglican beliefs, but the following quotation by a modern theologian captures, I believe, the core of Dunstan's belief in friends and food:

It is no accident that sharing a meal is the most common activity of friends, for the pleasure of good food and conversation with people one enjoys and trusts is symbolic of fulfillment at a very deep level. On such occasions one feels, in body and spirit, comfortable, accepted, satisfied. Most religious traditions – and ours is no exception – focus on the importance of sharing food, for food, like sex, unites all creatures at the levels of both need and pleasure. But the sharing of food, like friendship itself, is potentially a more inclusive phenomenon than sex, for food can be shared with any other and with all others.¹⁰²

Michael Symons used the quotation to argue that the early Christian *agape*, or love feast, was a central belief in which 'love' and 'meal' were interchangeable.¹⁰³ The private Dunstan was not given to displays of physical affection, but used food and hospitality to express his otherwise inexpressible love for the other, in this case his friends and family.¹⁰⁴

Dunstan's Contribution to the Food Scene

Adelaide restaurateurs interviewed in the course of my research agreed on the importance of Dunstan's contribution to their industry. Primo Caon had this to say:

¹⁰² Sallie McFague, *Models of God: theology for an ecological, nuclear age*, 1987, Philadelphia, p 167. Quoted by Michael Symons, 'Eating into Thinking: Explorations in the Sociology of Cuisine', PhD thesis, Flinders University of South Australia, School of Social Sciences, 1991, p 149.

¹⁰³ Symons, 1991, pp 147-150.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with David Hay, Adelaide, 4 March 2002.

Don was very powerful in recognising the talent and what this state's got. He put his shoulder right behind it, and that's where I respect him...anybody that was interested in good food he'd get right behind it and support it, as well as the wine. Look this state has probably got the best value for money, food and wine, in all of Australia. It was that recognition see. That was great and plus the fact he recognised the European status of food and wine and he honed [sic] on that.¹⁰⁵

Caon's fellow restaurateur Nick Papazahariakis commented:

He [Dunstan] was the first recipient of the Hall of Fame by the restaurant industry...He has been instrumental in bringing the industry to where it is in Australia wide really, not just South Australia. I mean we became the revolutionary food state in this country...using new produce, fresh produce, and changing concepts.¹⁰⁶

Winemaker Adam Wynn bluntly summed up Dunstan's leadership:

He was a leader and we tend to forget that in the current environment...politicians...[now] follow opinion polls and really give a shit what everybody thinks – Don didn't. He was a leader in the true sense...he led by example and his enthusiasm was infectious. He didn't single-handedly create the food and wine culture of South Australia, but he did a hell of a lot to encourage it. I think it would be wrong to say that it was his creation, but his influence was doubtless there from the leadership point of view. It was quite extraordinary.¹⁰⁷

It is a truism that nothing happens in isolation, and Wynn quite rightly alludes to other factors already discussed. Symons and others have written a good deal about the dominance of the food processors in this country.¹⁰⁸ He has also commented that 'if

¹⁰⁵Interview with Primo Caon, Adelaide, 7 March 2001.

¹⁰⁶Interview with Nick Papazahariakis, Kent Town, 28 February 2001.

¹⁰⁷Interview with Adam Wynn, Carrickalinga, 19 April 2002.

¹⁰⁸Symons, *One Continuous Picnic*, 1982, see especially Part III, chapters.13, 14, 15. Sarah Sargent, *The Foodmakers*, 1985, pp 110-116.

Adelaide's civilised reputation is to be credited to one person, it has to be Don Dunstan, the gastronomic premier.¹⁰⁹ The decades of the 1960s and 1970s were times of great change, none more so than in the domestic food market-place, thanks largely to the linkage between television advertising by the food processors, mass use of the motor car, and proliferating supermarkets. Rising incomes were matched by rising expectations and dining out became part of the weekly norm for many fortunate consumers. But it was still possible for a player in Dunstan's position and with his combination of attributes to help influence change. Former South Australian Liberal Party premier Dean Brown, who is hardly noted for praising his Labor Party opponents, had this to say about Dunstan:

Don Dunstan was someone who did set out to change our whole perception of food and lifestyle and dining, and I think he did it extremely successfully. And in fact, of all the things that Don did – Don had a passion for the arts and he had a passion for food, and I would say this changing the lifestyle, in terms of how we perceived food, and what food was – was one of his greatest achievements.¹¹⁰

John Spoehr knew Dunstan well in the last years of his life and has effectively confirmed my argument that food was at the centre, not the periphery, of Dunstan's life:

He championed cultural diversity and celebrated that diversity in his own life through his eclectic approach to cooking and love of gardening. Food was at the centre of Don's life. Sharing food, wine and good conversation with close friends helped to nourish and sustain him during difficult times.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹Michael Symons, 'Dining in South Australia: A Tribute to Don Dunstan,' *Mietta's Eating and Drinking in Australia*, Melbourne, 2001, p 259.

¹¹⁰Interview with Dean Brown, Victor Harbor, 18 March 2001.

¹¹¹John Spoehr, 'Introduction,' *Don Dunstan: Politics and Passion, Selected Essays from the Adelaide Review*, John Spoehr (ed.), Unley, South Australia, 2000, p 18.

Conclusions

Dunstan's restaurant ventures are confirmation of the central importance of food and drink in his life. In his partnership with Steven Cheng Dunstan became all of a piece, by fully accepting and relishing in his absorption with food. In spite of his imminent death, the celebration of Dunstan's life and life-style by his friends accorded with his own no-nonsense approach, while the enjoyment of food and drink remained a consolation until the end. The publication of the revised cookbook just weeks before his death confirmed the accuracy of the accolades the original version earned their author in 1976. Food and friendship to Dunstan meant celebration, whether the annual rituals of his birthday, Christmas, or simply entertaining a selection of his wide circle of friends at Sunday lunch. He also used food in friendship to convey his love for the other in the way that best suited his complex make up.

Chapter Ten

CONCLUSIONS

The young Donald Dunstan suffered a disjointed and frequently unhappy childhood whether in his Fijian birthplace, or back in South Australia from whence his parents came. Plagued by bouts of serious illness and unable to please those dysfunctional parents, his precocious interest in food and cooking assumed an importance not usually equated with a male child of his era or social class. Dunstan's notions of social justice were formed during his childhood in Suva, and it was the exotic aromas and ingredients, the heady mixture of Indian and Fijian cooking that also imprinted their messages on his psyche. The sensual delights of tropical food provided some degree of compensation for the lack of parental love. A schoolboy fascination with ancient Rome led the adult Dunstan to embrace both the cuisine of the Mediterranean and the life style. At St Peters College Dunstan was the classic outsider and dubbed a half-caste Melanesian bastard in later life; he was none of those things. But he looked and acted the part, and that was enough to ensure the continuation of his torment. His status as the perpetual outsider was confirmed when he discovered the enjoyment to be found from cooking. The resurrection of Roman recipes became a particular esoteric challenge in his later life.

Determined to make South Australia his own social laboratory for change, Dunstan became a Labor politician. After serving a 12-year long apprenticeship, he played political games with his Liquor Licensing Royal Commissioner to avoid upsetting the entrenched interests of the breweries and the Australian Hotels Association. He later claimed the kudos for smoothly introducing radical measures that ensured the consumption of food and drink in civilised combination. The abolition of the infamous six o' clock closing of hotel bars in September 1967 meant that South

Australia fell into line with the rest of the country. The licensing of restaurants led to a general upgrading of standards and promoted the growth of the industry. A generally higher level of disposable income and the socialisation of dining out were contributing factors, but part of a worldwide phenomenon. In other words, there was no smooth or seamless overnight progression to a new Dunstan-driven wining and dining utopia. Adelaide's lukewarm reaction to Dunstan's 1973 push for *al fresco* dining is a case in point, with the passing of another decade or more required before it found acceptance. Dunstan's ideas for a local version of *la dolce vita* were not formulated until an overseas tour in 1969, and it was the next year before he announced his plans for a tourism industry centred largely on improving food and drink facilities. Based upon his own constant study of the restaurant and catering industries and his close friendships with restaurateurs, both in Australia and overseas, Dunstan decided that a world-class training facility needed to be established in South Australia. By exercising a high level of personal involvement, and with the happenstance of loan funds from a Labor government in Canberra to boost his own treasury's finance, Dunstan set in place a new School of Food and Catering. In the 1980s the school established a worldwide reputation for excellence and became the Regency Hotel School. Dunstan's passionate interest in wining and dining was never more apparent than with his government's sponsorship of restaurants at Ayers House and the failed project to build a grandiose restaurant cum tourist facility at Windy Point. While he was still premier of the state his close association with John Ceruto in The Red Garter and The Coalyard restaurants is another indicator of his restaurant passion.

Publication of *Don Dunstan's Cookbook* in 1976 marked the beginning of the recognition of Dunstan as a food authority by Australia's gastronomes. It also raised

his celebrity status in the wider community and introduced his readers to new concepts of cuisine. The cookbook revealed much about the intense level of Dunstan's interest in food and foodways that had previously been revealed only to his closest friends. At his centre, Dunstan embraced both food and sensuality. In his cookbook he called for the spice of variety, both in life and in food. His exploration of the historical movements of ingredients and tracing their introduction into new cuisines remained a major enthusiasm, as did experimenting with recipes both ancient and modern. In the cookbook he called for another 'awakening' of interest in Australian cuisine such as occurred after World War II, thanks to the influence of European refugees migrating to this country. Because of his own explorations into Asian cuisine, especially Malaysian, Dunstan wanted to see a fusion of the techniques and ingredients of East and West. Always paramount in his writing and practice of food preparation was an emphasis on using the best and freshest ingredients available. He practised what he preached by becoming an expert home gardener and cultivating a wide range of fruit, vegetables, and herbs: the more exotic the better. He also tried to push his Department of Agriculture towards experimenting with exotica. Premier Dunstan provided the appropriate settings for change in Adelaide, an opportunity not lost on chefs Cheong Liew and Phillip Searle, who ventured into an eclectic mix of cuisines. At the beginning of a new century, variations on their original theme dominated a new Australian cuisine across the whole of the continent.

Dunstan's abrupt abandonment of the political centre stage early in 1979 did not diminish his passion for variety in food or life. He ate his way back to health in Italy and bought land in Queensland to grow tropical fruits and vegetables. Unable to reproduce the triumph of his cookbook in other genres, he tried his hand at becoming a chef on commercial television, and, when that venture failed, he re-emerged as head of

the Victorian Tourism Commission. His sojourn in Melbourne ended prematurely amidst considerable controversy, but he injected new life into a largely moribund department. Dunstan used the familiar food-and wine-based methods he had evolved in South Australia to revive Victoria's various festivals and introduced new variations. The Melbourne restaurant scene became as familiar to him as that of Adelaide. He was able to move more easily in gay circles and met his final partner, Steven Cheng, in 1986 at a Melbourne dinner party. Naturally, he wined and dined a wide circle of friends at his temporary home, just as he had done at Clara Street. Dunstan participated in the first symposium of Australian gastronomy at North Adelaide in 1984, while he was still based in Melbourne. He shared in the legendary final banquet produced by Cheong Liew and Phillip Searle and with his companions paid due homage to the precepts of Brillat-Savarin. His presence and involvement at several of the early symposia were recognised as making a valuable contribution to the cause of Australian gastronomy. Dunstan appropriately presented the opening address to the theme 'Food in Festivity' at the 1988 symposium in Sydney. The content of his paper 'Tradition and Renewal in Australian Gastronomy' revealed the evidence and extent of Dunstan's own long history of interest in food and drink. In 1988 Steven Cheng joined Dunstan at Clara Street and the beginning of their partnership in food, with Cheng also embracing food and drink as his own be all and end all. Their joint venture as proprietors of the first Don's Table restaurant on The Parade, Norwood, in 1994 marked the fusion of all the food-and drink-related ingredients that had been such a dominant influence on Dunstan throughout his life. Don's Table was his restaurant and his fulfilment. Dunstan had both friends and foes that regarded him as an enigma. In my view, as I have endeavoured to demonstrate in this dissertation, the key to understanding the man lies in appreciating the importance of food and drink in his scheme of things. Food and drink were his cause and his comfort; they were also a source of his adoration.

Future Research

I of course make no claim that this dissertation is the definitive account of Dunstan and food. While I have touched on his contribution towards transforming the culture of food and drink in South Australia, further research might profitably examine the question in more detail. Research could be directed at tracking the transformation of Australian cuisine from its origins in Dunstan's Adelaide to the eastern states and thence around Australia to determine the degree of his influence in that context. This research could usefully extend to look at the international scene and compare the equally dramatic changes that occurred in The United Kingdom, Europe, Asia, and the West Coast of the United States in the final decades of the twentieth century. The picture I formed of Dunstan and his influence, resulting from more than forty interviews, was remarkably consistent. However, Dunstan touched the lives of many people, and the opportunity remains for interviewing an even broader sample with the possibility of a different result. Professor Christine Slade of Macquarie University has recently begun a project to form a database of any source material relating to Dunstan's public and private life. Part of the initial study is aimed at identifying and interviewing Dunstan's oldest surviving friends and colleagues. Assuming this project comes to fruition, my own interview tapes could perhaps help form the basis of another research tool for other historians. Dunstan bequeathed his large collection of books on cooking and the history of food to Steven Cheng. Dunstan's supposedly completed, but unpublished tropical foods cookbook may well be at Clara Street. It might be possible to persuade Cheng to allow a suitable researcher to access and at least to catalogue the collection, thus contributing a further perspective on Dunstan's life with food. Dunstan's son Andrew inherited his father's papers, notes, and other writing, and he and his younger brother Paul spent some time with their father in the period after he moved out of the marital home in 1972. Andrew lives in the United

States and his brother is in Queensland; both could be reasonably expected to throw more light on Dunstan's life in the early 1970s if they agreed to be interviewed. The current premier, Mike Rann, donated his own collection of Dunstan material to the former Constitutional Museum, from whence it vanished without trace. In the circumstances and given their close relationship over many years, Rann might consider allowing access to Dunstan's reports and submissions to Cabinet in relation to his many overseas trips and the various projects discussed in this dissertation. The Don Dunstan Foundation, with chapters in Melbourne and Sydney, attracted a large audience to its April forum 'Think Global: Eat Local, Food Issues for South Australians in the Global Market.' Many of the foundation's older members knew Dunstan personally, and an appeal for relevant memorabilia to be donated, or copied, for the Dunstan Collection would surely be a worthwhile exercise.

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