

Has South Australia always been home?

As I was born in Victor Harbor hospital in 1947, I guess that makes me a local. My father was a Congregational minister at Pt Elliot. Later we moved to Rose Park where I went to primary school, then interstate to Bendigo, and back to SA to Norwood to Wellington Road Primary. Later I went, reluctantly, to King's College where my father was a chaplain.

Eventually I would return to the Fleurieu as in 1981 Maggi and I bought a beach shack in Normanville for family holidays and made it our home in 1990.

What would you change about your childhood?

Nothing. We were much loved, my parents were great, and an extended family of farming uncles, aunts and cousins meant wonderful holidays at Wallaroo and Black Point fishing and swimming. The only blot was not going to Norwood Tech. At the more academic Kings I failed everything except art. I was practical, and not interested in book learning. As a youngster I was always scrounging paper to draw, and for a lifetime I have watched to learn how people make things.

At what age did art become a way of earning a living?

Straight away. At sixteen my first job was window dressing at John Martin's which met my interests and talent for display and design. At night I did a class at Stanley Street Art School in North Adelaide with sculptor Owen Broughton who became a mentor. With my supportive father I made many visits to scrap yards and by eighteen I had a hundred copper kettles and various collectibles. I opened an antique shop on Norwood Parade in those heady days of the sixties when everything seemed possible. Wheeling and dealing in antiques, I owned various businesses, and was known for riding a penny farthing bike around the streets. I learned considerably from Jimmy Elder about buying and selling antiques, going all over with him to various homes and to Pro Hart's gallery, all the while developing a good eye for furniture and art.

I even designed and sold outlandish men's clothes, dressed bands such as *The Masters*



Apprentices and in one of my shops in Gay's Arcade the live music drew big crowds.

I restored furniture and searched country areas for antiques, even trekking further afield to Victoria and NSW to unearth treasures.

They were wild times with both blips and big successes, and we had shops located in Norwood and Unley, and then a gallery in Kensington.

Why did you and Maggi relocate to Normanville?

By 1990 the children had left home, and the heyday of antique trading was flagging. We took off camping around Australia for eight months and both loved being on the road. The changing landscapes, particularly around Alice Springs and Broome and Western Australia's colourful beaches, thrilled us, and Indigenous art and its powerful designs blew us away.

Seeing what artists and artisans across the country were doing inspired me to follow my own dream to make things. I came home bursting with ideas.

Settling permanently by the sea, we revamped the dark Normanville shack into a light and airy home. I began creating, carving and sculpting, building driftwood furniture, binding barrels in rope with seagulls on posts, and making big clown dolls. Selling through Annie at "Outdoors on Parade" at Norwood helped us follow this new direction. Clients from there commissioned further work or came to buy at the home gallery Maggi and I set up in Heathcote Street.

It seemed business was good, so why did we lose you to the Barossa?

Yes, things went well for us, and we loved the district and the beach lifestyle. Clients found us and I did a day a week dressing store windows for a while at Bell's in Victor Harbor as a side line. Then in 2000, despite our own business prospering, I accepted a consultancy then a full-time position assisting the community store in the Barossa design a new supermarket. In on the planning from the ground up, I chose the layout, colours, fittings, and décor, and made unique fixtures too. By 2003, however, the lure of the sea and this community pulled us back to Normanville and we set up a gallery on Hay Flat Road.

Did you expect such a strong response to Seagull Droppings?

It was amazing. At first it was a gallery outlet for things I made, and I began painting and readily selling those canvases too. When we added coffee, cake and gift lines, we were so busy that time for my own art lessened. Groups of walkers came, and flash cars parked outside the funky building which was just a shed with a quirky garden at the back. Kids loved it, so did connoisseurs of coffee and people interested in art. It became what magazines called "a Fleurieu destination."

My granddaughter said, "I want a garden just like this." Now that the gallery showcasing your work and collections is part of your home, it still retains a magic. How do you do it?

We both remain collectors, love interesting objects and have an eye for their placement. I spend hours awake at night thinking about a painting or an object to create, or ways to reuse materials. Next day I'm making it happen. I'm always thinking about design, effective combinations of items and layouts of rooms, a courtyard or façade.



There is a sense of the exotic about how you live. What travels, cultures or artists have influenced you?

In Australia, the Indigenous artists amaze me, and an appreciation of their work has inspired our personal collections, as has Maggi's interest in African sculptures and basketry.

While I marvel at the stirring landscapes of John Olsen and Fred Williams, I don't claim they have influenced my work. I'm a décor artist prepared to paint to order and to sell at affordable prices so that young people can decorate their homes and visitors can acquire reminders of the sea. Over the years I've sold hundreds of paintings, but I don't call myself an artist. I don't fit into groups of artists or enjoy "art" talk although I appreciate and give credit to the talents of others including many locals and am interested in their work.

I love things Japanese, hence our tiny courtyard here, and in Norwood our huge Japanese garden took up the adjoining block. We loved travelling overseas in France and Spain, and particularly Morocco with its souks and markets and colour. I suppose all this has lodged in my psyche and changed how I think and perceive. I am always interested, curious to look and think about how things are done, then adapt to serve my own ends.

And here there's always the beach and the sea to fill me with ideas.

Andrew, spending time in the beautiful spaces you and Maggi have created, and hearing you speak with passion about "doing" is inspirational. I know the moment I leave you'll seize the day to be making something else.

