

Italian market gardeners oral history project
Interview with Connie Legovich nee Marchioro OH872/11
Recorded by Eleonora Marchioro on 10th January 2011
at Nailsworth, South Australia

Also present is Eleonora's husband, Johnny Marchioro who is Connies' first cousin

Oral historian (OH): Connie, what is your full name?

Connie Legovich (CL): Constanza Aeda Marchioro Legovich

OH: (00:34) What is your date of birth?

CL: 18 April 1938

OH: What were parents' names?

CL: Francesco and Margherita Marchioro

OH: What were the names of your sisters?

CL: Maria and Adelina

OH: How much older were your sisters? What was it like to be the youngest of three sisters

CL: My sister Mary was 13 years, and Lina, 11 years older. I guess I was a little spoilt being the baby. I can remember Lina making pretty dresses and I knew then what I wanted to wear at that time.

OH: (01:20) How old were you when your father died?

CL: When my Dad died? 18th March 1945? I was one month short of seven years.

OH: And what was your earliest memory of him?

CL: Several, I guess. [laughter] The earliest was my father lighting coal during the frosty months. So when I woke up in the mornings I would always find a little tin of coals to warm my hands on. Then pushing my doll's pram with a baby kitten in it. After several days my mother noticed that the kitten wasn't moving and discovered it was dead. I must have been only three year old at the time. I must have smothered it with love, the poor little thing. Also when I started Kindy, cherry season, my dad would come by with a bag full of cherries at lunchtime for me. My only Kindy friend only told me a few years ago that I used to share them with her.

OH: (02:43) Can you tell me something about your parents' decision to come to Australia?

CL: Well, my Uncle on my mother's side was already living here with my Auntie and he sponsored them out arriving at Port Adelaide on the ship called *Regina d'Italia*.

OH: What year did they come to Adelaide?

CL: 1926. It was the 1st of March.

OH: Do you know why they choose to come to Adelaide?

CL: I guess for a better life.

OH: Were there other Italians living close to them at the time?

CL: Yes, my mother's brother and his wife and his wife's brother and sister.

OH: (03:46) What do you know about what their life was like in the first years after they arrived?

CL: Well, my mother always said it was sad. They both wanted to go back to Italy.

OH: Do you know what work your father did when he first arrived?

CL: Yes, he worked for my Uncle, my mother's brother in the cement business, doing terrazzo.

OH: Did your parents tell you any story about when they first arrived in Adelaide?

CL: Not really only that they had, you know, thought of going back when they had saved enough money, that was their aim. But, hence things got better and [they] remained.

OH: Did you have other relatives who lived in Australia at the time you were a child

CL: Yes, my Uncle Vittorio, my father's brother and Auntie in Adelaide, and my mother's three brothers in Western Australia.

OH: (05:02) What do you know about your family living on Frogmore Road?

CL: Not really as I was only a baby at the time when they were living there.

OH: Did your parents work on the land on Frogmore road.

CL: Yes, my mother and Uncle Vittorio worked the glasshouses together and my Dad because he was an asthmatic had to work for Del Fabbro doing cement work.

OH: Couldn't work the glasshouses?

CL: No couldn't work the glasshouses, no.

OH: (05:35) Can you tell you about the amount of land your parents leased and the kind of house lived in on Frogmore Road

CL: Yes, my sister Lina told me they shared, my mother and Uncle Vittorio shared about two acres of land and the house they lived in was built, was tin and wood built by my Dad.

OH: And how long did your family live on Frogmore Road?

CL: Approximately six years.

OH: Six years. When did your parents move to Pierson street, Lockleys?

CL: After six years, they moved from Frogmore Raod to Pierson Street.

OH: (06:32) Can you tell me what your family life was like at Pierson Street? What did your parents do? How many you know like how many glasshouses? Just tell me you know, what you used to do.

CL: Well I was very young so I was still at school but my father had formed a friendship with Tilletts Monumental and there he worked for him polishing tombstones from home. My mother continued working six glasshouse with my sister Mary. In the evenings, Lina and I would help Mum with all the sorting and packing and my uncle Vittorio would often come and help in the evenings.

OH: (07:23) And do you remember what your Mum used to grow?

CL: Yes, beans which I used to help pick in school holidays and mainly glasshouses, tomatoes.¹

OH: And where did they used to sell their vegie, you know their tomatoes and beans?

CL: Mum used to send them to Melbourne and the beans here in Adelaide.

OH: (07:52) When your parents moved to Lockleys did they keep in touch with people on Frogmore Road?

CL: Yes, the Piovesan's and Tonellato families. The Tonellato's shared a building which was subdivided in rooms, several rooms and I do know that the Tonellato's had two rooms, a kitchen and dining room and the sleeping and bathroom areas was a train carriage which they called the *vagon*².

OH: What else can you tell me about the *vagon*?

CL: Yes, I can remember Assunta [Tonellato] polishing the floors [laughter] each and when I used to visit Assunta every week and I used to love the little bedrooms you know, I thought they were so nice. Yeah that's about all. And my mother remained friends with Sunta's [Assunta] mother, Lisa and Rosalia Piovesan until they both died. Rosalia would often, would frequently visit Mum in her new house and I would drive her back home.

OH: (09:13) And who were the children from Frogmore Road who you kept in touch with? You know did you socialise with any of them?

CL: Yes, Assunta and the Piovesan boys who I still socialise with now.

OH: What do you do? Do you get together two or three times a year?

CL: Yes, especially with the two Piovesan boys we socialise quite frequently what with birthdays and anniversaries you know that's quite often in a year.

OH: How did you get to be friends with Assunta Tonellato?

CL: My sister was very close with her sister Rosina and Lina used to carry me on her hip around to see Rosina and because in those days there weren't pushers and that was the beginning of our friendship and still remains. In fact we also worked together at one stage.

OH: Where did you work?

CL: At the Adelaide airport over ten, twelve years.

OH: And what was your job at the Adelaide airport?

CL: I was Manageress for the restaurant and canteen.

OH: Did you enjoy doing that job?

CL: Yes, yes, I did. Yes.

OH: (10:55) Can you tell me about what you remember about visiting Frogmore Road when you were a child?

CL: Yes. Each Sunday I would push my bike to go and see Sunta. There we would play with the Tonellato and Piovesan boys. We would play marbles or alleys in those days, we called them, brandy in the middle. Also the Ballestrin boys, Frankie and Egidio and my cousin Johnny

¹ Connie added in the editing process that she also used to pack tomatoes

² *Vagon* is the Italian word for railway carriage

[Marchioro] would join us on many occasions. Sunta would bake the most delicious cream puffs and I was her assistant.³

OH: And do you remember when your other cousin came from Italy?

CL: Yes that was a cousin on my Dad's side. Giovanin and also younger brother Umberto.

OH: (12:05) What do you remember about during the War?

CL: Well, I must have been only about four but I do remember quite a few things the Americans camped on Pierson Street and come to buy milk with their billycans from my mother who had a cow and bring me lollies and drinking Dad's home-made wine. And also planes flying over with a siren. My Dad would then say that they're the Japanese dropping dolls for me. Although we had a trench we never used it.⁴ Also I can remember going to the shops with coupons.

OH: Did you know Italian people who were interned in the War by the Australian Government. Where did they go?

CL: Only my mother's brother and he was interned at Loveday here in South Australia.⁵

OH: Yeah, what about your Uncle Vittorio?

CL: And my Uncle Vittorio in Alice Springs. They're the only two that I know of.

OH: (13:34) Now, can you tell me what [did] your mother do when your father died?

CL: Well, Mum, when Dad died, Mum had to carry on with the glasshouses because being the youngest I was still at school. That was the only thing she knew. Eventually buying her own property also in Lockleys. Then she built her dream home. Then she retired and waited for Dad to call her on his birthday, the 28th of October 2001 at the age of 97 years.

OH: (14:15) What else can you tell me about your two other sisters, you know like, what can you tell me about your sisters, Lina. You know did she get married?

CL: Yes, Lina married a lovely man, Ruggero and had three lovely boys. She kept on with her dressmaking and at the age of 84 she is still doing a little bit for the nursing home and hostel where she now lives after Ruggero died.

OH: (14:51) Where did you go to school, Connie?

CL: I went to the Convent of Mercy at Henley Beach and I spent ten years there with the nuns. They were beautiful memories where I made lifelong friends with four girls. From the day when we all left school in the '50s we started socialising twice yearly and then we got to four times a year and now every two months we socialise in each others homes with about five others joining us including two nuns. We have kept this up for 55 years and also travelling overseas with one girl.

OH: (15:46) What year did you stop going to school?

CL: Oh gosh! It must be 1953 or 4, something like that.

OH: And what did you do straight after school?

CL: Started work?

³ Connie stated in the editing process that she remembered the weddings of Virginia Santin who married Oscar Mattiazzo and Orlando Tonellato who married Lea Griguol

⁴ Connie added that the trench was at "the back of the house, dug out by my father."

⁵ In the editing process Connie added that; "My mother used to visit him quite often."

OH: Study?

CL: Started work.

OH: Were did you, what was your first job?

CL: Dressmaking. I left school when I left school I started working in a fashion house, I started doing dressmaking. I continued sport, tennis and basketball which I loved. And on Sunday nights I'd go to the Italian Church dance at St Patrick's Grote Street and once a month it was held at the Cathedral in the city, with Assunta. Her married brother would always drive us there and pick us up. Lina would always make me a new dress for each week and when I got home she would ask me if I was the best dressed. Of course I was! At least I thought so. But I did receive lovely compliments from the boys. There I met my husband and had two wonderful children.

OH: (17:02) When did you get married?

CL: In 1957.

OH: What's the names of your children.

CL: And I had two wonderful children. Paul Anthony and Amanda Jane. And I now have four beautiful grandchildren.

OH: (17:22) Can you tell me about significant things in your adult years?

CL: later on in my 40s I took a course in, a two-month course, in nurse assistant. And after that I received my nurse assistant's certificate and started working in a nursing home for 12 years. And after having a fall and injuring my back, after a year's rest, I started working for the western suburbs domiciliary care with the community, with the Italian community until retirement age.

OH: (18:13) And tell me did you ever went back, visit Italy?

CL: Yes, I went back in 2001, it was my first time and then again in 2009 and 2010.⁶

OH: And tell us what was your feeling when you went to visit your parent's own town.

CL: Oh it was lovely, beautiful. [laughter] lovely position. Oh I just love Italy, full stop. Everything about Italy I loved.

OH: And did you meet some of your relations there? What were they like?

CL: Yes, nine years ago I met all my relations on my father's side and stayed in one of my cousin's apartments the last two times we went.

OH: How many relations have you got, roughly?

CL: Oh I don't I've got that many. About 30, I suppose. There were so many of them, you know. The first time I didn't get to meet all of them. Anyway 2009, I met everyone of them. And had some wonderful times with them.

OH: Can you just tell us the story about when you went your mother's parents, when you went to visit her house that she lived in when she was a little girl.

CL: That was really lovely. I was there talking with this lady that her son owned my mother's house and during the conversation, she told me that her mother had a best friend that went to Australia and I'm thinking yes, my mother always used to talk about a best friend that she'd left

⁶ Connie confirmed that she had visited Italy five times and she wanted to get to know her relatives

behind. And when she mentioned that her mother's best friend had a sick daughter, I straightaway realised who she was and I said, I said that my mother had a great friend [phone rings] her name was Maria Pensa and she said yes. Well, I said: "I'm the daughter of Margherita." And I said: "I'm the daughter of Margherita Marchioro." And it was lovely. And through her later on because she lived next door to my mother's cousin, I got to meet mother's cousin, you know. Yes

OH: That must have been ...

CL: And that was the only relative on my mother's side that she had in Italy. Yes.

OH: Yes, that's a nice story.

CL: Yes it was a lovely story. And quite sad at the time because we both broke down and cried. We only wished that our mothers could have been alive to tell them that we met, yes, two daughters met.

OH: (21:30) What else can I ask you? What about your life now? What do you enjoy doing at the moment?

CL: Well, I enjoy looking after my grandchildren. [laughter] I just love my four-year old grandchild Jordana, after 11 years. We call her the surprise baby. She's just beautiful. That's my enjoyment, you know. And I still love going out with friends and dressing up. It's a joy.

OH: Now, is there anything else that you would like to tell me about - your family?

CL: Not really.

OH: (22:27) And I understand that now you live in a house very close to where your parents lived on Frogmore Road. Can you tell me why you have returned to your roots.

CL: Yes, I've always been one for buying and selling and building. [laughter] I've built several homes in my years because I enjoy interior decorating so that was like a hobby for me I guess, buying blocks and subcontracting my own homes and decorating and when I decided that I'd love to do it once more it was by coincidence that land came available on Frogmore Road. So there I am! That was in 1994.⁷

OH: ---Well, Connie thank you very much for sharing your story with me. I really appreciate you giving such interesting information about your life in this interview today.

CL: Thank you, Eleonora. Thank you once again.

Continuation of the interview with Connie Legovich nee Marchioro

OH: We are restarting the interview with Connie Marchioro because we thought of other questions to ask.

(00.08) When did you first meet your mother's relations from Western Australia.

CL: The first time I met two Uncles was soon after my Dad died in 1945. My Uncle Nello [Gaetano] and my Uncle Fiorindo came to visit Mum straight after.

OH: What was your uncles' names?

CL: Fiorindo and Nello Marchioro. And they were all born in Monte di Malo.

⁷ In the editing process Connie added that it was "pure luck that land became available."

OH: How old were you?

CL: (00:46) I was six. At the time I went back to Perth I was 16. My Uncle Nello and Auntie Teresina and my cousin [Carmen] came to Adelaide with a new Customline in those days and they took me back with them. We left Adelaide about 2.00 pm in the afternoon on a Sunday, I remember. And we drove past Ceduna and had our first, arriving there at 11.00, 11.30. And had a sleepover, slept in our clothes so we'd have an early start in the morning. Left at 4.00 o'clock in the morning and we arrived the next morning at 1.00 am that was New Year's Eve. Had a sleep and that same night we went a New Years party where I met all my other Uncles and Aunties and cousins for the first time.

OH: How long did you stay in Western Australia and what did you do?

CL: I was there for 14 days. I was shared around my other Uncles and my mother's sister, Maria. Spent 14 lovely days going to the beach, picnics and dances with my two cousins. Yes, and I ...time came and I travelled back by train by myself. Mum and Mary picked me up at the Adelaide railway station.

OH: Do you still keep in touch with your relations in Western A

CL: Yes, I've travelled back to Perth on five different occasions and I am still in contact with two of my cousins by phone quite frequently.

OH: (02:49) What was your social life after your father died?

CL: Well not much because my mother didn't go out much, you know. I had a sick sister Maria at the time so Mum was restricted but we used to go and visit my Uncle Vittorio and Auntie Angelina nearly every Friday night for tea and vice versa. My Uncle Vittorio would always walk us back until he bought himself a truck and then he would drive us home.

OH: (05:14) Do you remember your Uncle Vittorio telling you stories?

CL: Yes, I can remember that quite vividly. One of the nights hew as walking back home, he found a large knife near a celery patch and from that day on I was petrified coming home even though our Uncle was walking us back

OH: How long did it take it to walk from Frogmore Road to Pierson Street?

CL: Yes, about, I would say about 20 minutes. We used to cut through the Tonellato and Piovesan property and come out onto Findon Road and then Pierson Street.

OH: What was the road, was there any road?

CL: Oh yes, the road was bitumen at the time. Yes. A small narrow little bridge but apart from that, the road was good.

OH: What other story can you tell us?

CL: Well, one of

OH: Romano

CL: My best times were school, naturally but winning the South Australia School Tennis pennant with my other team Colleen, you know, we won the SA school pennant which was lovely. And sharing birthday parties with Assunta as we were born the same month two days apart but one year apart and going to the pictures with my sister Lina and our next door neighbours, two girls.

OH: (06:15) Can we go back a little bit? Can you tell me the story about your cousin Romano?

CL: Yes, I can remember Romano, he was only a young little boy. We were still living in Pierson Street at that time. And he was started digging up Mum's back garden and after a while he came across and found a jar of money hidden that Mum had hidden. And also he also used he to come and play cards when we moved to Lasscock Avenue. Every Friday he would come and play cards with Mum and Mum would thoroughly enjoy his company. And I can remember you know Romano came to visit Mum in hospital the night she died that was brought about you know about the playing cards. I know I always remember Mum and Romano that night.

OH: Connie, what are you doing in retirement years?

CL: Well, after a few years in retirement, I was asked by Uniting Care if I would like to come back as a casual doing two days respite only. I went back doing two days and eventually cutting it back to six hours per week which I am still doing now at the age of 73. [laughter] And babysitting for my four-year old beautiful granddaughter, Jordana.

OH: well, Connie thank you very much for sharing your story with me. I appreciate you giving such interesting information about your life in this interview today.

CL: Thank you Johnny and Eleonora. Thank you.

In the editing process, Connie added in response to a question about her identity and heritage that she felt "Australian-Italian but [is] very proud to be call a Vicentina."