

Italian market gardeners oral history project
Interview recorded with Romano Marchioro OH 872-20
at Lockleys South Australia by Madeleine Regan
11th June 2012

OH: This is an interview recorded with Romano Marchioro for the Italian market gardening oral history project recorded by Madeleine Regan on 11th June 2012 in Romano's home Lockleys South Australia. Thanks, Romano, for agreeing to this interview. Could we start by you telling me your full name?

RM: Romano Marchioro

OH: What is your date of birth?

RM: 2nd November 1942

OH: And your place of birth?

RM: Henley Beach Road, Torrensville.

OH: And do you know if your name had a significance in your family?

RM: I don't know why Mum called me Romano. [laughs]

OH: And what about your parents? What were their full names and their approximate birth dates?

RM: Vittorio Marchioro and he was born on 23rd of the sixth ---hang on, 23rd of the 12th '06. And Mum was born on the seventh of April 1914.

OH: And her name?

RM: Angelina.

OH: And siblings? Did you have brothers and sisters?

RM: One brother, Giancarlo. That's all.

OH: (01:51) And do you know what your parents were doing around the time you were born?

RM: Dad --- I think my father was --- in Alice Springs, I think, when I was born because he was interned during the War. He was not ... he was going for his citizenship but the War broke out and the paper work got delayed, and he was interned, he went to work in Alice Springs and so Mum looked after my brother and I when he was away for 12-18 months.

OH: Where did your family live at the time you were born?

RM: At Valetta Road, not Valetta Road, Frogmore Road.

OH: At Kidman Park?

RM: At Kidman Park, yeah.

OH: In those days what was the suburb called?

RM: Not sure, Flinders Park?

OH: (03:07) To complete the information about your background, can you tell me the name of your wife

RM: Mirjana.

OH: And when did you marry?

RM: Now, we married --- 47 years? April 21st, 196..., I think it was 1964. [laughs] A long time ago.

OH: Yeah. And your children?

RM: Darren's the eldest, Vanessa and Martin. Do you want their birthdays? So you want their birthdays? No.

OH: They're married?

RM: Three of them are married. Darren has three children, two boys and a girl. Martin's got three boys and Vanessa's got three boys. The last, she had a boy and then she had twins, which were the last, the last of our grandchildren.

OH: So nine?

RM: Yeah, nine grandchildren. We've got eight boys and one little girl and the little girl's a Downs Syndrome girl but she's still beautiful she's still very, very happy lucky young lady. She is a young lady now, she's 15, I think. I get confused with their birthdays, they come around so often. Last night we had one of our boys 17 so we went to the *trattoria* on King William Street for a meal which they enjoyed which I knew the boys there from La Trattoria because they used to be, when we were in Hindley Street they were in Marcellinas. We've known each other for 40 odd years.

OH: When you say you were in Hindley Street, can you tell me a little bit about that?

RM: Mirjana's father opened the Barbeque Inn, the original Barbeque Inn in 1958, I think.

OH: That's a long time ago.

RM: Yes, he was --- and then we moved to Glenelg, I was...

(05:48) When I was young, as you know, me father was a market gardener and there wasn't enough work for my brother and I to work because he didn't have enough land so Johnny worked and on and off he had other jobs but he ended up back in the market garden and I had an apprenticeship as a wood machinist and then I didn't like that and I got a job in a carpentry business and I worked for Baulderstone's and I fell off a bridge here, Findon Road bridge. Well, I was married, not long after I was married and my father-in-law said, "This is no good for you, come and work in the restaurant." And I went there and worked there for about seven or eight years and then he sold the restaurant in Hindley Street and we moved to Glenelg and we've been there for the last 36 years. So that's where my days went.

OH: (07:01) And Romano if we can go back to your family, I'd like to ask you about your parents and where they were born.

RM: My Dad was born in Malo and Mum was in Monte di Malo which is a hill looking over Malo which is a nice, nice place.

OH: And whereabouts in Italy was it?

RM: In northern Italy it's about 100 ks from Venice. And we went back a couple of times to visit which is good. We met all the cousins and it was very interesting to see.

OH: And do you know why your parents came to Australia? Perhaps if you tell me first about your father's situation.

RM: Well I think Dad's brother was here in Australia at first and I think there was no work for him in Italy because I think Dad had done his military service and when he finished his military service he had no work available so his elder brother was here and he come to join his brother.

OH: (08:14) And do you know what year he came?

RM: Now, I think it was 1923. 1927. Yeah because he was only 22 or 23 when he come here. 1927. Yep.

OH: Do you know what he did when he first came to Adelaide?

RM: Well, he always told us that when he first come, he couldn't get a job anywhere and there were two of them and they were taken to country Victoria chopping wood. They said they had to look after themselves for six months and I think he got pad five pound. And he always said that he had this terrible toothache while he was there. But he worked for six months for five pounds. That's his early days in Australia. And then he come back and I think he done some cement work and from cement work he went into the market garden.

OH: And that was on Frogmore Road?

RM: On Frogmore Road, yes.

OH: Did he own the land that he was working?

RM: No, I don't think he did. No. I think he rented that and then he bought where we are, where we were

OH: At?

RM: Here,

OH: White...

RM: White Avenue Lockleys. here. I was only ten, no probably eight or nine when we moved from Frogmore Road to Lockleys.

OH: (10:07) And what about your mother? Can you tell me the story of your mother coming to Australia?

RM: Well [laughs] They married by proxy. They ... Mum used to tell the story that she used to work with my father's sister in Italy in the *filanda* they used to call it.

OH: What's a *filanda*?

RM: She got friendly and she said that her brother was in Australia and they started writing and from there, she ended coming. She got married in Italy and my father was, got married here. You know like it was like thousands of miles apart when they got married separately, virtually. And then she come here and she was married when she got here.

OH: And do you know which year she came?

RM: Now I think... Johnny was born in '40. I think it was '37. '38. I'm not quite sure. I can't remember exactly. Was that around the mark?

OH: I think that sounds about right.

RM: Yeah because my brother was in '40 and I reckon that would be about right. Yeah.

OH: (11:45) So your father was already ...?

RM: Here.

OH: Here, farming on Frogmore Road?

RM: Yeah, yeah.

OH: And your mother joined him?

RM: Yeah.

OH: And would she have worked with him?

RM: She did. Yeah. After ... as I said, --- when she always tells another story that she had this terrible finger infection and they were going to take it off but they cut the top of the finger off, not the whole lot but she done a lot of the work when Dad was away. She had to keep us and look after [laughs] the farm. I'm not quite sure what actually happened there. No, she had it very tough in the early days. And she was telling me, or she always said that one year that they had heat waves, 114 for about ten days and to cool off, they used to go down, we had a well, you know, probably 20 foot underground and they used to go down there to keep cool, [laughs] take me and my brother down there to keep cool. I can't remember it but that's [laughs] what she used to tell us.

OH: (13:14) And what do you remember about the family days at Frogmore Road?

RM: Oh, I can remember our back door, we had a vine you know, grape vine that used to grow over the back that used to keep us cool in the summer. And we had on the corner of Frogmore Road, we had a dirt road that used to lead to our house. We had Mrs Destro, actually she's Johnny's god mother. We used to go there all the time because she was Australian and I can remember going to see them because I used to be a bit of a rat bag when I was a little one so I used to go there quite often, I believe. Yeah.

OH: (14:13) And what were your parents growing?

RM: Oh tomatoes, mainly. And sometimes some potatoes but not a lot of it. Glasshouses were always the main go with Dad.

OH: And what do you remember about other people living in that area?

RM: Well, there was the Tonellato's, there was the Piovesan's and the Ballestrin's and Zalunardo. He was my godfather. They were all in that area which they were all, all Italians. They weren't too many Australians around there. And they were all in the market garden.

OH: Were they all growing similar vegetables?

RM: Yes, 90% of them were growing the same stuff, yeah. They all used to go to the city market. They all ...

(15:14) I remember when I was young, I used to go to the market with Dad and always, we used to get there and they used to go to the Crown and Anchor [hotel] it was then. And I remember that Dad always used to have rum and coffee, [laughs] early at 5.00 o'clock in the morning, you know, to keep warm. I never used to have it, [laughs] I was a bit young. But I used to have a raspberry or something like that. Yeah.

OH: And you'd obviously have got up early to go?

RM: Yes, yeah. I remember quite a few times I used to go, being with Dad to the market. It was a good experience. You know the bell used to go at 6:00 o'clock, they all used to come and take their orders but then you had at 6:00 o'clock they blew a whistle and they all used to come and pick up all the gear that they've ordered. Yeah, it was good.

OH: Is that like the merchants?

RM: Yeah, the merchants used to come like the shopkeepers that bought say 20 boxes of tomatoes, they had to wait till 6' o'clock before they could take, I don't know why they done it that way. I suppose it was to give everybody a chance to buy.

OH: I was thinking about your Dad being away for 18 months or whatever. How would your Mum have worked the land?

RM: (16:40) That's ... I'm not quite sure how she done it. I think she might have had some help, I'm not quite sure, to tell you the truth. I --- don't know how she managed because Johnny and I were very young because Johnny was born in '40 and I was in '42 and that was the time that Dad was put away. --- So that's, yeah ... she never really, well, she might have said something but she might have, but I can't remember what she used to say about those times when she had to work.

OH: (17:21) And when you were growing up there, the first seven or eight years?

RM: Yeah, yeah.

OH: Who would your friends have been?

RM: Well, you see I was, unfortunately I was the youngest. Johnny was a couple of years older than me, and from that point on he was probably a year or two younger than all the others, like the Piovesans, they were four... you see, as you say, I was probably five and they were ten or 11, I was a little squirt, you know, I never mixed with them. See I ... all my growing up years, I'd never had a boy my age in the whole community. You know, they were all those five or six years older than me. Which I, you know, that way I had more Australian friends than I did Italian friends. Whereas Johnny he... all the Italian boys, they grew up and stuck together, I had nobody at my age to do that.

OH: You didn't tag along?

RM: No they wouldn't let me. They... well I was too little then, you know. They were 17 and I was ten or 11, you know, which is too big a gap. I remember that I used to stalk and make a pest of meself going around when they used to play. But I was always, always the little one, the youngest one there.

OH: (18:58) And Romano you talked about the vine at the back of the house. I'm wondering if you could describe the house. What did it look like?

RM: Oh, it was a tin shed virtually. Those days they used to make them out of galvanized iron. I think it had two bedrooms and the kitchen, and you know, the Italians always used to, the kitchen was like their living room, they all lived in the kitchen. And you know, wooden stove, there was no electricity then. [laughs]

OH: What kind of floor?

RM: I think it was a timber floor, pretty sure we had floor boards. ---Yeah, I'm pretty sure. [laughs]

OH: And would that have been lined?

RM: Yeah, I think they had it lined, I'm pretty sure it was lined, yeah.

OH: And bathroom and toilet?

RM: I think the toilet was outside and we had a bathroom with the old bath and that was it. Yeah, you know.

OH: Who would have built that house?

RM: Oh, I think it was ... I don't think Dad built the house, I think it was there when he rented the place, it must have been some Australian people, I'm not quite sure. I can't remember the Australian people that were there but I used to know the Destro's, they were up the front and next door, the other side there was --- I had their name, now, I've forgotten. [laughs] There were other Italians but they weren't northern Italians, they were southern Italians. --- No, I can't remember. But all round that area it was were all, all *veneti*, [laughs] not too many southerners there.

OH: (21:08) And do you remember people getting together, families getting together?

RM: Oh yes, yes.

OH: What do you remember about that?

RM: Whenever there'd be a party there'd always be heaps, heaps, well, the whole day they used to be in the big shed and they used to carry on. They used to have good times, really for that time, you know they used to they really enjoyed themselves. I remember they used to sing a lot. [laughs] I remember when we were young we went to a lot of parties weddings and christenings, you know not a lot, maybe 21sts, not too many, not a lot of birthday parties but it would be christenings, or baptisms, that christening isn't it. Weddings, there used to be a few weddings.

OH: And where were the weddings held?

RM: Oh, A lot of them, sometimes they uses to be in a hall. But I remember the Berno's had a big shed you know at ... They were off Valetta Road. And Frankie Ballestrin's father, he had this huge shed and they used to have a lot of parties there. You know it was a big, big shed.

OH: And where were the Ballestrin's?

RM: Which? There's Ballestrin's everywhere. [laughs]

OH: Where were Frankie's family?

RM: They were off Findon Road, they were off Findon Road, well on Findon Road virtually the land and then they had this huge, they had their house and they had the huge shed behind. Then years later, they built on Findon Road. But I can remember that as a young boy.

(22:59) See, I suffered polio when I was, I think it was my second year, I was at Marist Brothers, I was in a, like a wheel bed for months. They used to cart me around and I remember going to all the parties in the wheel bed.

OH: 'Cos you weren't allowed to walk? Or you couldn't walk?

RM: No, I wasn't allowed, I could walk but I wasn't allowed to walk. I used to unstrap myself and get out and walk but I wasn't supposed to do that for the first few months. Yea, I was a bit unlucky because my mother took me to the doctor --- she, because at that time, polio was rampant and instead of giving me an injection, he sent me home. And I went back two days later and he said it was polio. So if had have done it straight away, I could have been, I still, touch wood, I was very, very lucky compared to a lot of young people, I just lost a little, er my leg, right leg's a little bit thinner than me my left leg but I was lucky I could still walk, I didn't have to use a ... When I was younger when I first had it I used to wear a boot with a brace, you know and you can tie around your calf to keep your foot up but apart from that... Yes, I was really unlucky, I should have, --- should not have been there but then Mum and Dad they... I was in t the infectious hospital at Northfield, and they weren't allowed to visit me there because it was an infectious disease [hospital] but a priest was allowed to come and visit me. So the Italian priest used to come, I think it was Father Romano was actually his name and he used to come and visit me because I think I was there for a month.

OH: It must have been a really difficult time for a little boy.

RM: Oh and it was difficult for Mum and Dad too, you know they had a fair bit to do and it hit them pretty hard because I think I was one of the few Italian lads in that area that got polio but I don't how I bloody got it, [laughs] but I got it.

OH: (25:40) And Romano do you know why your parents moved from Frogmore Road?

RM: Oh, I think I do but I don't know if I should say [laughs] I don't know if Johnny has said anything. But we came to see my Auntie, she lived here on Pierson Street and Dad was going to buy a truck, a new truck. And we went to visit because I think my Uncle might have passed away then, I'm pretty sure he had and we went to visit my Auntie and when we got home, I'll never get this and Mum, my mother said, *i ladri* have been, the robbers have been! And I said where are they? You know, I didn't know what they were talking about. But apparently what happened, they lost the money for the truck.

OH: Because they'd kept the money in the house?

RM: Yes, yes, Dad went to the bank, I think he went to the bank the day before to get the money to buy the truck the next day. And it was gone! So I don't think Mum wanted to stay there anymore. And this place came up for sale.

OH: And the place that you're talking about is?

RM: Was at Frogmore Road. The place, where we were born, where I was born.

OH: And then the place that came up for sale?

RM: Was here at Lockleys, White Avenue Lockleys, here. And that's when we moved.

OH: So was that something that you can remember, the family packing up?

RM: I can remember that they were very, very upset about the whole incident. 300 pounds would be like £30,000 like that from those days. And it took them a long time to recover from that.

OH: It must have been such a shock.

RM: Yes, it was, it was.

OH: So when your parents made the decision to come to White Avenue Lockleys, what was the land like that they were coming to?

RM: Oh, the land, the land was a market garden because there were market gardens all around us. But it was like in the middle of nowhere then there was no ... there was all dirt road from all the way along and there was bamboos all the way along. But we lived ... Dad bought it because the river ran along there where he could pump all the water out for his garden out of the river.

OH: So you were right on the river?

RM: Yes, yes, right on the river. I spent half of my younger years in the river, River Torrens. And some of the bigger boys used to come there and we used to go fishing. and we used to ... In those days it used to run dry in a lot of places and there'd be big pools of water and we'd all get there with buckets and throw all the water out and all the fish would be down in the bottom and all the yabbies would crawl out the sides of the banks. And we'd end up with heaps of yabbies and fish.

OH: What kind of fish?

RM: There use to be perch. And congollis, long skinny fish. They were eatable fish. The red perch, These days, you know, the chemicals would kill everything.

OH: And what about the yabbies, like how big were they?

RM: Oh, they were big, yeah, big, I used to go always go yabbing and bring them home.

OH: And how would they be cooked?

RM: Oh Mum used to boil them, you can boil them, you can fry, you know, put them in hot butter, or oil, yeah come big, but we used to have fun. Yep.

OH: And when you moved here I guess we should backtrack a bit, and just talk about you going to school.

(29:57) I wanted to know, in your family, what language did you speak at home.

RM: Italian, we used to always to spoke Italian at home.

OH: And was that dialect?

RM: Dialect. yes, our northern, our Veneto dialect, you know, like which --- when I go back, sometimes I would watch on Foxtel and they speak, and there's a little lady sounds like Mum and Dad talking which is good. I enjoy that.

OH: And when you went to school, did you speak any English?

RM: Oh yes, as I said, our neighbours up the road were English, I used to speak English all the time.

OH: And when you first went to school, where did you go?

RM: I went to Flinders Park.

OH: How would you have got there from Frogmore Road.

RM: Walk. We used to walk.

OH: A decent walk?

RM: Yeah, it was.

OH: How would you have, where would you have walked, you know?

RM: I went from, where we were we could walk right through the gardens, we didn't have to go around the roads, we'd walk through all the gardens. I used to go with Joe Adami, I don't know if you've heard of 'Adami Sand and Metal'? He's the same age as I. And we used to walk together to school. Oh, I only went there one year, my first year in Grade 1.

OH: So you would have walked ...

RM: All through all the market gardens.

OH: So once you got to Findon Road, ...

RM: Yeah, we still kept going ...

OH: Through the gardens ..

RM: Yeah, it's Hartley Road now but then at the time, we used to walk where Adami's used to be right on Findon Road, we used to just walk, there used to be Zerella's market gardens further down there and that was my first year and my second year, we moved to Marist Brothers.

OH: So how would you have got to Marist Brothers from White Avenue at Lockleys?

RM: Sometimes we used to catch the tram, we used to walk from here to Henley Beach Road and catch the trams and then when we got a little bit older, we used to ride the bike.

OH: Because the school was located in ...

RM: George Street. Yeah.

OH: At Thebarton.

RM: Thebarton so we used to walk from here [coughs] to Henley Beach Road and from Henley Beach Road we used to get the tram and then on the dirt road all the way back.

OH: (32:28) And Romano, did you have jobs to do for your Mum and Dad?

RM: Oh when I was younger, I don't remember too much. But when I was 13 or 14, I used to help in the garden or try I didn't do that ... I used to try and pick tomatoes and do little bits and pieces for them, yeah. Because Dad was on his own. I remember that he had a horse and he used to plough, do all the ploughing by hand and then later we got a rotary hoe. Everybody wanted to use a rotary hoe. [coughs] But that was very interesting times. We were very lucky in some ways a lot of people didn't have the luck we did.

OH: How much land did your parents buy here at Lockleys?

RM: They bought five acres.

OH: And how many glasshouses could you fit on five acres?

RM: I think Dad had, 14 was the maximum, he had. Yeah. Then they'd move them, every so often they'd move them to put them on new ground, all the time [coughs].

OH: Were you involved in that?

RM: Oh yes, I used to help changing the glasshouses and that.

OH: A pretty long job?

RM: You had to know what you were doing. But I wouldn't say I was the greatest helper around but I used to do bits and pieces. Not like Johnny, Johnny [laughs] was born into it well, he was a couple of years older and he, as I said, he turned into a market gardener which I turned into something else. [laughs]

OH: (34:15) And Romano how old were you when you contracted polio?

RM: I think I was ---- probably about ten, ten years old --- I missed --- a year of school. And from then on, I tried to do me best. [laughs] As I said, I was lucky that some people couldn't bloody walk, I was good enough to still get around, still be a bit cheeky and do silly things. [laughter].

OH: (34:57) I was going to ask you a bit more about your family and how your family celebrated birthdays. Do you remember how your birthday would have been celebrated?

RM: Well, as I said we were lucky we were one of the first people that used to have birthday cakes because of our Australian influence.

OH: Mrs Destro?

RM: Mrs Destro, yeah. She had two daughters, Marie and Valda which, as I said, I used to be there all the time. She'd a lot of time when ... As I said, I was pretty cheeky in my younger day. But no, we always used to try and have birthday parties, I'm pretty sure.

(35:43) I remember Christmas time. One year we got a beautiful big red fire engine and the after, the next day, it was gone. Where the hell was it? So next year, I got the same fire engine. [laughs] I remember that.

OH: And did it disappear the second time?

RM: No, after that I think we were allowed to keep it. But the first time it disappeared and we got it again the following year. [laughs]

OH: And how would Christmas have been celebrated - just in your family or in a wider group?

RM: I don't think that Christmas was celebrated like it is today. But I think it was just in our family group, yeah, I don't know. Honestly, that's one of the things that I cannot really recall, Christmas, at all.

OH: (36:36) And what about First Communion, First Holy Communion?

RM: Yes, yes, I remember that. I remember my Confirmation --- my godfather was Mr Egidio Ballestrin's father. He was my godfather. And yeah, --- as I said, we were going to the Marist Brothers then and at the Church, the Queen of Angels. That's the Archbishop Beovich, he was

the Archbishop at the time and yeah. I remember my religious beliefs were always drummed into us at school.

OH: (37:30) And what about in the family, what was the family feeling about religion and going to Church?

RM: Mum and Dad never used to go that often. But Johnny and I would ride our bikes and go to Findon Church every Sunday. Mum made us go, Mum made sure that we went to Church but they never used to go.

OH: And did you have to get dressed up to go to Church?

RM: Oh yes, always dressed up, always our Sunday best. Yeah we always used to call into Ballestrin's on the way home with our bikes. 'Cos whenever we here we couldn't get the paper delivered so we used to get 'The Sunday Mail' delivered at their place and we used to pick it up and take it home from there.

OH: (38:20) Why couldn't you get the Sunday paper?

RM: Because there were no other houses here. We were the only house up the top up there. Here, where we are now was all lemon trees. The only other house was on the corner, as you come up.

OH: On Henley Beach Road?

RM: No, no. On Pierson Street. There were no other houses on the left here, there where Aida's Mum and Dad [Innocente] live. Remember they come later. There was nothing. It was like jungle. When I first took Mirjana home to meet my parents. [laughs] She thought where the hell I was taking her because there were no lights, there was big bamboos everywhere. So that was what happened there.

OH: So it was really like the country?

RM: Yes, it was, it was. But we were five kilometres from the city. [laughs]

OH: And who else had gardens around this area?

RM: There was Australian people. We had Boss Huelin, he was called and in his younger day, he owned from here to Henley Beach Road. Oh he had a huge amount of land. And then there was --- [coughs] Baulderstone's owned land, Here was Rugari, he was Italian and he married an Australian lady, he was Joe Rugari. And his daughter Rosaria Day, she married Ian Day, the footballer, if you'd known him? [coughs] This was his property, where we are now. On the other side was the Lewis and Lewis sold it to Baulderstone's, you know the builder, Baulderstone the builders, that was the brother, the builder and they sold out and he went and worked for his brother. It was all market garden area because of the river. Yeah.

OH: (40:34) Your [sound of coughing] schoolingOr before I ask about schooling, I was going to ask about whether your parents kept in touch with relatives in Italy.

RM: Oh, she used to get letters, you know, every six months not like now, every now and again she'd get a letter saying your aunties said this or your grandfather said but not a lot of correspondence, no.

OH: (41:01) And who were your parents' main friends?

RM: There was Ballestrin's, Egidio [coughs], Narciso and Maria Ballestrin, Mr and Mrs Zampin, the Zampin's. Oh, there was in that group, the Ballestrin's and the Zampin's and then across the road, then there was Elsa and her husband were later because they came later.

OH: The Innocente's?

RM: And there was Angelo's Uncle, Compostella. Yes, they lived next door. But they had a garden, garden there.

OH: And how many of these people were from the Veneto?

RM: All of them. Yeah

OH: Was it a strong sense of being a community of *veneti*?

RM: Oh yes, yes, as I said, when they used to hold the parties, there'd probably be 100 people, they'd all be *veneti*. They'd all be from very much the same area. Because we're from virtually ... they're all from Treviso mainly but we're from Vicenza which is you know, not a long way away but where the Berno's ... which were very good friends they were other with the family. I don't know if you have heard about the Berno's? Sorry about this cough, smoker's cough. [laughs].

OH: (42:46) And, do you think ... I'm trying to get an idea of where they were situated. Was it mainly the western side of the city?

RM: Well, the ones I knew they were all there this side. As I said the Berno's they had, they owned half of Findon, Lockleys there. You had the Ballestrin's which were across the road, the river from us. There was Gildo and his cousin, actually, they weren't brothers but they were the Ballestrin's, they had a huge, big lot of land over there. And there was Frankie's father, Jimmy's father. They were all over that side. That was the Ballestrin's. Then you had the Tonellato's and the Santin's and the Berno's, they were all in that area. The only ... there was the Recchi's which they weren't *veneti*, they were *napoletani* but they were there on Findon Road. I play golf with Mel [Recchi] every Wednesday and Thursday. [laughs] He was, he used to knock around with Johnny and that group, Jimmy and Johnny and Bruno¹, they were all that same age. But see, I was four years, five years younger which ...

OH: Yeah, there's a difference, isn't there?

RM: Yeah, a difference, yeah. [coughs]

OH: (44:26) You know, when you think about those families, would it be true to say that a number of them had a number of sons who were involved in the business or they farmed together?

RM: Well, when you look at it, well, like Frankie², he worked in the garden but Jimmy didn't work the garden. Ah, there wasn't a lot but Johnny, he worked the garden but there wasn't a lot that went on with the market gardens. Well, the Santin's, see they --- well, the Tonellato's, none of their boys carried on with the market gardens. They got too much money for the land [laughs] so they had it sewn up. So it was only Johnny and Frankie you could say, in that group were the only ones that ... see Bruno never, he was an engineer so he never, oh, he used to grow a little a

¹ Jimmy Ballestrin, Johnny Marchioro (Romano's brother) and Bruno Piovesan

² Frankie Ballestrin

few tomatoes, but Bruno's brothers went into the market garden but they ended up giving it away. So out of the group of that time, not a lot of the boys carried on with the market gardens.

OH: Why do you think that might be?

RM: Well, ---- for a start, the land would have, the fathers might have sold the land and then the education, they got more educated with the kids see Jimmy went and did concrete and somebody else ... Bruno was an engineer. The schooling helped them get ahead. --- But Johnny wanted it, he liked doing that, as you can see. And Frankie done that for a long time too. He wasn't far from Johnny's place. He moved from Findon to just off Port Wakefield Road there, at Bolivar. I can't think of anybody else that took it on.

OH: It's interesting that it didn't continue, as you say, with many of the next generation.

RM: No, no, not the next generation, not too many at all. You see, I ---- see, the Santin boys, I don't think too many of them, their sons went on with it. Tonellato's? None of them. --- No, they all went different ways, different directions.

OH: And also ...

RM: (47:20) Because the land got too expensive to maintain because of the taxes, [laughs] you know and they all moved up, up Johnny's way, up Bolivar way with the market a lot of them went that way, because here they all sold up, of course. And the kids got better jobs.

OH: And the land got sold?

RM: Real estate, yeah. Dad sold his property when I was working at the Barbeque Inn at the time, and we used to get a lot of people, a lot of land agents and we just happened to be talking one day and Dad had always said he wanted to sell, wanted to sell. So I this guy come down and they sorted it all out and they virtually... See, unfortunately we weren't smart enough, you see the bloody government took half Dad's land for a reserve.

OH: Along the river?

RM: Along the river and they never got a cracker for it. Never got a penny and they claimed all this land and if you were smart enough to get a lawyer to fight that. We should have got paid for it.

OH: And when your father decided to sell, how did the land get divided? how many houses got built?

RM: I think probably eight to ten blocks. See, where his house is, it goes back around, it stopped where Huelin's was, but Dad lost half his land to the government, they reclaimed it. Which was wrong.

OH: (49:31) And Romano, going back to your life, how many years of school did you have at the Marist Brothers?

RM: I went to second year high school.

OH: And how did you like school?

RM: Oh, I was a bit of a ratbag at school. [laughs] --- As I said, I didn't stay ... 'cos being with my polio, I got spoilt a bit. You know, Mum and Dad, if I wanted something they'd go and get it for me. Whatever I wanted I got and I didn't like school. [laughs] And then I went, as I said, I

got a job as a wood machinist and I done well there. I done my apprenticeship, I passed that so I was a qualified wood machinist.

OH: (50:19) Who did you do your apprenticeship with?

RM: Sutton's Furniture, it was called.

OH: And where were they?

RM: They were at Thebarton, West Thebarton. And then I met Mirjana, as I said, I got a job as a carpenter which I wasn't a carpenter but I got passed as a carpenter and I got work for Baulderstone in the construction where you don't have to be too ... it's all concrete work which was quite simply really and use your brain a little bit and I worked at the Adelaide hospital for 18 months and then I got transferred here to the Findon Road bridge, and there were two of us and a foreman and we done most of that work. And when we were nearly completed, I got pushed by, I accidentally got pushed and I fell on the side of the river and I broke me bone in me ankle. As I said, then my father-in-law said that this is not a job for you, come, and I went into the Barbeque Inn and I worked there for seven years or eight years until they sold and then we went into partnership here at Glenelg, my father-in-law and I.

OH: (51:42) And what work were you doing for the seven years, say at Hindley Street?

RM: Oh, cooking, preparation, yep.

OH: And how was that moving from doing the other work?

RM: It took a bit of time, yeah. You learn, you just watch and see what they were doing. 'Cos my father-in-law he was ... his parents before the War, owned an abattoir in Yugoslavia and he was a very, very good butcher and he knew ... I used to go with him to buy meat 'cos even before I started working there when I had some time off, I used to go there, if I had holidays or something, I would go, we had a van I used to go with him and we'd go to meat places and he'd go there and he'd have a stamp, Barbeque Inn stamp and he'd stamp all the meat that he wanted and if they didn't send it oh 'cos in those days the Barbeque Inn at Hindley Street, they used to serve a couple of hundred people of a day, it was so busy. I remember we used to shut at 10.00 o'clock and then my father-in-law, to help one of his friends said we would open till 1.00 o'clock and at 1.00 o'clock we'd still have people trying to get in, you know And after a while, the gentlemen left and I used to do a lot of the night, 1:00 o'clock shifts you know. And then we went down to Glenelg where we've been for the last 36 years.

OH: And you work there every day?

RM: Oh, at Glenelg? I used to work, when I first started, I used to work, used to get there at 6.00 and get home about 11.00 at night. That was ... When we first went down there, my father-in-law, [coughs] because he wanted to go to Port Adelaide and we said we'd go to Glenelg so we picked the spot but he said, "Ah, Glenelg, a village, a village" So we opened up and the first night we opened we only had two waitresses on I think Mirjana was there and I was there cooking on me own because we didn't ... and we were full. The next night we were there and it was absolutely the same and we weren't expecting it and there was a bloke that wrote from 'The Advertiser', the dining man from 'The Advertiser', his name was Stan James, do you remember Stan James? Well, Stan come in this particular night and we didn't ... At the finish he said, "I'm Stan James from 'The Advertiser'" Oh yeah, and says "I'll write a bit about you in the paper."

And he gave us a tremendous write-up, he said the wait's been worth... because he said he had to wait, 'cos we were so busy that people had to wait to be served. He said that the wait was worth it, and from that day onward it was so full for so long. We were so lucky in a way, very lucky. [coughs]

OH: Yes, it sounds like it was really hard work too?

RM: Yeah, it was hard work, yeah. But then later years, we got a good lady in and Mirjana and I had quite a lot of time off. We still done a lot of work but then we relaxed, we got a couple of cooks. And that was after about 10 or 12 years working seven days a week. [laughs] But that was the way you had to do things.

OH: And Romano, we might leave that there at this point and pick it up in the next interview. So thank you very much.

RM: Right. That's okay.

Interview No: 2 recorded with Romano Marchioro

OH: This is a continuation of an interview with Romano Marchioro for the Italian market gardeners oral history project recorded by Madeleine Regan on 11th June 2012. This is the second interview.

(00:22) Romano we were talking about work at ...

RM: The Glenelg Barbeque Inn. [laughs]

OH: And you were talking about the many long hours you first used to work. So could you talk a little more about that?

RM: Well, as I said when we first started to be so busy and we were, and we just established ourselves and we put in the hours and then as we got further down the road, we hired more people and we didn't have to do as much ourselves. [coughs] We hired this good friend, actually of Mirjana's and she more or less took over and ran it for us with an iron fist and she was a very tough lady and gave us a bit of time and get out and do a few things. 'Cos when we went to Europe, she was there and she ran it for us while we were away. We were away for eight weeks because we went to America on the way back for three weeks. So we were away ... and she done a very good job. And now, I go five days a week, I go there and open up for the boys.

OH: What time is that?

RM: I get there by 6:00 o'clock every morning but then I leave by 2:00, 10:00, 11:00, 9:00. And Wednesdays and Thursdays, I don't go because I play golf and I don't cook anymore, only if somebody's sick or they need an emergency and I step in. But now the boys do most, all the hard work that I used to do.

OH: And what do you do at 6:00 o'clock in the morning?

RM: We open up to allow the man to light the charcoal which is the charcoal, it gives him to time to do the fire and gives us the time to clean because it's a very mess ... charcoal is a very

messy job, you know, a lot of black soot and that, and we got to give the lady time enough to clean it up properly. And when I get there and then I prepare some of the meat for the boys and that's it.

OH: So it's a bit more ...

RM: Easier now yeah, and so it should be! [laughs]

OH: (03:04) Romano I'd like to ask you about your Italian heritage. What did you know about Italy and about Malo and Monte di Malo as you were growing up?

RM: [laughs] Well, not a great deal because you know we'd used to say Malo. Dad used to have photos and he used to show us, "There's a trotting track and we used to live here and you know, when I was young, I used to do this." And Mum, Monte di Malo which is up on the hill and she used to say her and her sisters lived upstairs and one downstairs. It was hard to imagine, we couldn't ... But once you got there you could see where it was all from which was good.

OH: (03:53) And can you tell me about the first time that you went to Italy?

RM: Yeah, as I said, the first time we arrived, we arrived, we flew from Germany, 'cos as I said, Mirjana's parents, Mum come from Germany and we visited her aunties and cousins. We flew to Venice and we picked up ... because one of the cousins had been here as well, one of the cousins on Mum's side of the family, he'd been here with his wife. And Umberto's Mum and Dad come to pick us up at the airport which it turned out to be a funny story. When they drove us to Malo and we were on the freeway and the first time in Italy and ...

OH: What year was this?

RM: '88 and so when you get there, they all want you to be part of them. So Mirjana went with Umberto which she could speak English with and [laughs] I got shoved into another car and the other cousin that was here, he was on his own with our luggage. [laughs} But anyway ...

OH: Can you just explain about Umberto?

RM: Umberto? He'd been here before with his grandmother

OH: And his grandmother was your ...?

RM: Dad's sister and Umberto spoke English quite well because Mirjana and my other two, my children could communicate otherwise we would have been in big trouble. But then, as I said, we got to, we got on the freeway, one of the drivers he said, it was Umberto's father, I'd just met he said we'd stop for a beer before we go anyway because it was hot and we went and had a beer and the cousin who was following us, and he was in front of us, actually, he got to Umberto's house where we were staying and we took probably half an hour, three quarters of an hour to get there and he dropped our bags and that was the last time I ever saw him. [laughs] It's true, true story.

OH: Why?

RM: He got upset because he didn't know, well, I didn't know what was going on, either. [laughs] Yeah. So that was a funny story, really. Never seen him since. I've been over again, I didn't see him, seen his wife and his wife's been here with her daughter and we looked after them when they come here. And he's blood, he's ...

OH: He is your mother's nephew?

RM: Yeah.

OH: (07:07) And what was the feeling like when you got to Malo?

RM: Oh, cousins come from everywhere, you know. It was the first time for me and they were so good. Which is a little bit more difficult because Mirjana can't speak the language. She can understand a lot but they were so good, so good to her, as well, you know, like Gabriella which is ... Oh she treated us unbelievably. Everywhere we went because Mirjana said she liked gnocchi so she went to a friend's place and made the best *gnocchi* ever ... [laughs] you know what they're like... No, we had a good time. She had her sister Loredana, and then there was Fabio. And we all --- There wouldn't be a half hour somebody would be sitting home and somebody would call in and say hello which is unbelievable.

OH: And what were the conversations about?

RM: O how ... Dad was still going then, at the time. How's Dad? Because they all loved Dad, they all loved me father.

OH: Had your parents returned to Malo?

RM: Oh yeah, they'd been back quite a few times, yeah. They'd been there quite a few times. And we --- as I said, they booked out a restaurant, they all come, from but only from my father's side of the family, they all lobbed. Then at Monte di Malo, we, 'cos I still had an auntie, Mum's sister was still alive at the time and we had the same up there. Not as big, I didn't have as many cousins as the Malo side but they really made you feel good, they really did.

OH: (09:02) How important would it have been to your parents that you were there?

RM: Well, they'd loved it. Actually one of my cousins, we rang up Dad, Dad must have got sick after that. He was supposed to be wealthy, my cousin, and we went to his house and we rang up Dad while we were at this party that they organised and we rang up Dad and Mum to say where we were and what we were doing. Then after that we went back to Germany and that's when my father got sick. Luckily when I come back and went to see him, I couldn't believe it, his face was that big, he looked like a little baby and he came good and he lasted another three or four years or longer. He seen Darren get married. Yeah.

OH: (10:0) So the links for your parents back to their relatives were strong?

RM: Yes, yes, oh yeah.

OH: And they've been strong in your generation with you and your brother?

RM: Yeah, well, Johnny's been over there three or four or five times. I've been over twice and the last time, it was only there for ten days or something because [coughs] at the time, it was a sad time for us because they had just had this horrific accident and it wasn't a really good, pleasant time for us to be there. And we didn't mix as much as we did like the first time. But they still come around because we stopped at the other sister. But it wasn't the same. And unfortunately it happened probably a week, two weeks beforehand and he was just riding along and this blooming idiot ran into him.

OH: And how old was he?

RM: His wife was pregnant but I don't think she had the baby. He was only 24, 25. Did you see his wife? His wife was with him when you were there? No. [coughs] No I think she was pregnant when we were there.

OH: And I just want to ask you, Romano, what were your first impressions when you got out of the car at Malo?

RM: (11:54) [laughs] Well, because everything is so tight. But when we got out at Malo we actually went to Gabriella's place which was this warehouse, where they had the house they looked after they had to be 24 hours a day to let people in and out but that was their job. That was part of their job looking after the factory ... because semitrailers were coming and going and they had to be there to let them in and let them out. But yeah Malo nothing [coughs] like Adelaide. [laughs] Very compact, a lot of houses side-by-side, upstairs, downstairs, you know, it's a lot different from here. But where we were at Gabriella's was like home because there was nobody else was there. He had his own garden out the back. We enjoyed our time there.

OH: We're coming to the end of the interview but there are a few questions I'd like to ask you. (13:15) If you thought about the opportunities you've had in your life, what have been some of the best opportunities?

RM: In what way do you mean?

OH: Well, I guess if you look back, you think ...

RM: I could have done this or could have done that?

OH: Yeah, or what have been the things that have been good for you?

RM: Oh, Yeah, well, I think me family, for a start, has been good. You know, we've got nine grandchildren and we love them all especially the two little ones that keep us right on our toes, keeps Mirjana out of my hair, I can watch TV ,cos she's watching the twins. We could have done I think we enjoyed ourselves because we've been to America about five times, we've been to Hong Kong, we used to go there every couple of years. We've seen a bit of the world and I think I'm getting at the age that I don't really worry about traveling. I'd rather sit here at White Avenue but just to see your kids doing well and hopefully the little business we've got on Jetty Road keeps going for them. Apart from that you know, we've done a lot of things. I don't have any ... just like to see the Crows³ win a few more games and the Eagles⁴ win a few more games. [laughs] Apart from that, we're pretty satisfied with our lot.

One regret I ... years ago a friend of mine, we bought a unit on the Gold Coast. It's on the 14th floor, three bedroom, huge unit, beautiful, beautiful view. And we had it for about seven or eight years and the kids loved going up there because I had bought it in partnership and then he wanted to sell. He wanted to sell, I said that's fair enough and I said I'll buy your half out. And every time I went to put a price on it, it had gone up, 10, 000 and then another 10,000. Then I thought, "Oh no." So we sold it and I've never been able to live it down ever since. I get into heaps of trouble from Mirjana. I should never had done it, should never have sold it. It was a beautiful unit. But that's the mistakes you make in life. Should have kept that one.

³ The Crows are a South Australian football team in the national Australian Rules league

⁴ The Eagles are a South Australian football team

OH: (15:48) And I'm going to ask you, how do you think of yourself. Are you Australian? Italo-Australian? Italian?

RM: No, well, I'd class myself as an Italian. Yeah, well, what can you say? They say where are you from? I say I was born here but my parents are Italian, that's what I am, Italian. And my children now, they're breaking up more and more. They're part Italian, part German, Yugoslav and then their kids are part so and so. The Italian is breaking but I think they still class themselves as Italians. My sons?

OH: How would they talk about that?

RM: Oh, they love it. They've been, they've seen Malo, they've seen Monte di Malo and they've seen all the cousins. They realise where their grandfather come from. And I think they appreciate that and I think they appreciate going there to see where they come from. Yeah, hopefully they class themselves half Italian anyway.

OH: And do you think that --- people in your generation whose parents had come from Italy would feel similarly?

RM: I know me brother would. I wouldn't know too much about what other people think. But I think --- we were brought up speaking Italian and you never lose that, you never forget that and you never forget if you've been there, you never forget your cousins your aunties, and your uncles. Surely, why not? You're Italian, you're Italian. [coughs] What do you think? Is that the right way to think or not?

OH: Oh, I don't think it's right or wrong. I think it is really interesting that sense of attachment and the sense of link to your parents' heritage.

RM: I think if I always went back to Italy, I'd always be welcome back to where they come from even though they're all thinning out, I'm losing a lot of cousins, we've only got one Auntie left. She must be getting close to 100, I'd say. Umberto's grandmother, --- she come here --- three times, I think she came. She come with my Mum's sister together one year. [laughs] And it's funny, they went for a walk along the river here, and they got lost. And I was going to the football that day and I said "Oh ..." We ran around everywhere looking for them, looking for them, couldn't find them and where they were, I don't know if you've heard of Mary Urbani, you know Mary Urbani? Oh, well she's not Urbani, she's --- or whatever. But she found them and they were in there having coffee with her. Half of the () we're all running around looking for them. They were quite happy there sitting there having a cup of coffee. The old aunties...

OH: (19:33) Romano, if you think about Frogmore Road, where you born and raised ...

RM: Yeah.

OH: For the first, you know, seven or so years of your life, what do you think have been the biggest changes in your lifetime?

RM: Well, I think the move for a start, you know 'cos as I said, I grew up going up to the Destro's all the time and I remember they Piovesan's and Tonellato's, they lived in a big house like the kids had speedways around the house on bikes. I was too little but I used to go and watch them and they used to have races around the house. And the other side, the Tonellato's had an old train they used to live in and I'd never forget that.

OH: And now when you go to that area, what do you think about changes?

RM: Yeah, oh well that could have been us. Dad could still have been there if that other thing hadn't happened, I'm pretty sure. I think that caused and made them move. [laughs]

OH: The land now, it's hard to imagine...

RM: Yeah, it is, it is, because it was huge, you know and the bloke that moved in where Dad was, ended buying it, was Lui Tonellato and I think he lived in our house and I think he bought the whole caboodle which was acres of it which was good for him, you know. We, unfortunately Dad lost half of his land to the bloody, to the river, the river reserve, review.

OH: (21:34) And now in Kidman Park, there's almost nothing that would ...

RM: No.

OH: ... give you an idea about the hard work of the market gardeners.

RM: Well where Telstra is, used to be there used to be Ballestrin, Zalunardo, then Destro's moved there. So there was three and they had their properties down the bottom end, you know, Zalunardo ...

OH: Near Grange Road?

RM: From Grange Road, yeah. There was Toni Ballestrin, which is, have you heard of Toni? Then there was Zalunardo, they had their house, they ended up moving. He was my godfather, he married --- one of the Ballestrin's, sister. And then there was Destro's, they moved, they just had a little block, they just had a house, they didn't have any land, they lived just off Grange Road there for years. I still remember going past there, the changes that have happened there are just unbelievable.

OH: And what are, do you think are the main changes?

RM: Well, just all the housing and nothing that was there before is not there, it's just gone. I reckon where Destros were is where St Vinnies is there now. Something like that. They were right at the top end of Grange Road there. No, it was ---

(23:18) As I said, I was always the youngest out of the group. I missed out on everything that the big boys done. And there's nobody and there's only Jimmy Ballestrin's sister, she's about my age and she might be a year older than me. Lina, she's Campagnaro now but she was Lina Ballestrin. And she's about the only one my age. All the rest were five or six years older.

OH: You came at the end of that?

RM: The boom! [laughs] --- As I said, the Piovesan's, Bruno was the youngest. Frankie he was the youngest, no Dolfina was the younger than Frankie but she was a girl. Then the Ballestrin's, Jimmy, there was Lina then there was his brother but he's probably five years younger than me so that didn't work that way for me either. So I was unlucky in a way not to have Italian boys to knock around with. But Johnny, as I said, they're still friends to this day. My friend, I went to see him, my best man, an Aussie lad, we're still friends. I went and seen him Friday because he's going in for a stent on Wednesday, you know. So we've kept friends for all these years.

OH: So, long friendships?

RM: Yeah, they're a couple more that ... Aussies but one's Italian, his parents, Mum and Dad were Italian but he married an Aussie girl. Rigoni, I don't know if you know the Rigoni's? Robert Rigoni. We still see each other. So... But those Italians, I really haven't got friends like Johnny has, you know.

OH: And it depends really yeah, when you are born and ...

RM: Yeah, Johnny's kept in ... Johnny always has Bruno, Frankie and they all get together and have their meals. But I was that drop out, the five years.

OH: Makes a difference, doesn't it?

RM: Yeah, it does, it does.

OH: Well, Romano thank you very much for your interview today and for contributing to the oral history project about the Italian market gardeners because your perceptions are really important and really interesting to add, so ...

RM: Oh, [laughs] I hope so but as I said the market garden part of it, I didn't have a lot to do with. [laughs]

OH: No, but you do have some memories of it.

RM: (26:21) Oh, I do, I do. I remember Dad, Mum, yeah, off Frogmore Road. I remember I used to run barefoot up and down that road.

OH: And it wasn't bitumen at that time?

RM: No, no, it was gravel, gravel, and the old horse and cart and the sleigh. I used to ---Yeah they had it tough too, Mum and Dad, they had a hard life.

OH: And why do you think it was so hard?

RM: Well, I don't know whether it was hard, I think in a way, my Mum and Dad, what they done, they enjoyed themselves. They --- Dad never used to miss going to the [Veneto] Club, he never used to miss going to the football. He used to go to the soccer. He always enjoyed himself which was good, you know. I think money wasn't the end of the world for him. I think he lived a good life compared with a lot of, you know, shouldn't talk about people but you know, people with a hundred times more than them would not have enjoyed themselves as much as he did. They're always worried about the almighty dollar. I think Dad was --- Oh Mum, she was a bit tight in a way but I think they did get out and enjoy themselves, which was good.

OH: And at the same time, obviously worked very ...

RM: Yeah, very hard. You know like, later years in life, we had, we're not, millionaires, we're comfortable. But you know, Mum used to come and Christmastime she'd give the kids, give us \$1,000. "Mum we don't ... you use it you ..." She used to cope and save and she was happy to give the money which we didn't really need. We were better off than she. But no that was the way they were brought up.

OH: To give and ...

RM: Yes

OH: To be generous?

RM: Yeah, save like hell and then give it to us. You know, which she should have enjoyed herself more than worried about us. But that was the way they brought ... They had it hard in their lives and they tried to make it easy with the kids.

OH: And it's interesting that different generations are doing things different ways.

RM: Oh, that's right. Now what we've got, the kids have got. [laughs] we, you don't mind, that's what you work for. But, you know Mum bloody worked hard at that time she that she'd scrimp and save and Christmas time she'd give \$1,000 to him, to him, \$1,000 there and no need to do it and she loved doing it. [coughs]

OH: It's interesting her life coming here in the 1930s and you know, starting off life with a man that ...

RM: That's right.

OH: That she didn't know.

RM: Well, I mean that they stuck together all those years. Dad was 83 or 84 when he passed away and they had their ups and downs, you can't say that doesn't happen. They done alright for themselves. She worked hard.

OH: It's an interesting history to look at, you know to move from Italy to Frogmore Road, and here to Lockleys.

RM: Yes, Frogmore Road, yep, I certainly remember Frogmore Road. Not a great deal, but I do remember it.

OH: Well, thanks again it's been really good to interview you and I really appreciate your reflections.

RM: Thank you.

Interview ends