

Italian market gardeners oral history project
Interview with Aida Valentini *nee* Recchi OH872/38
recorded by Madeleine Regan at Kidman Park, South Australia
on 28 September 2016

OH: Oral Historian, Madeleine Regan

AV: Aida Valentini

OH: This is an interview recorded with Adelaide Valentini also known as Aida and your family was Recchi and we're interviewing for the Italian market gardeners oral history project. It's 28th September 2016. My name is Madeleine Regan and the interview is taking place at Kidman Park, South Australia. Thank you Aida, for agreeing to be interviewed today.

AV: You're welcome.

OH: We're going to start with your background. Please could you give me your full name?

AV: Full name is Adelaide Valentini.

OH: And do you know how you got your beautiful name, Adelaide?

AV: Well, my father came to Australia in 1927 but when we were born, he did not want to put grandparents' name as in the tradition. And seeing that he got his bread and butter in Australia, he gave us the names of the city which I am a twin. My name is Adelaide and my brother is Melbourne.

OH: It is a lovely story. Aida, can you give me your birth date, please?

AV: 14th September 1938.

OH: So you've recently had a birthday?

AV: Yes, I did.

OH: Well, belated happy birthday. Can you tell me the names of your parents? Maybe if you start with your father?

AV: My father was Giovanni Recchi but known by Jack Recchi in Australia. And my mother's name was Antonia De Ionno, her maiden name.

OH: Can you tell me where each of your parents was born?

AV: My father was born in Montedinove, Marche¹, Italy. My mother was from San Giorgio La Molara, Benevento, south.

OH: What work did your parents do?

¹ Montedinove is in the province of Ascoli Piceno in the Marche region of Italy

AV: I've always known my father to be in market gardening here. I'm not sure what he did in Italy but I'm sure they were gardeners, coming from a poor family, he decided to come to Australia.

OH: Your mother, did she have work before she was married?

AV: No, she lived with the family at home but she was not allowed to go out to work but working on the farm with the parents.

OH: Right. And around the time that you were born, what were your parents doing?

AV: My father was working, I think it was with Ry Ey in market gardening. My mother, well, she had us, after the year. So she was looking after us so she did not go to work as soon as she came to Australia.

OH: Right. So you had a twin brother, Melbourne?

AV: Mmnn.

OH: And I think you had another brother?

AV: Another brother born in 1944 ... we had him for one month, he died of yellow jaundice.

OH: Very sad.

AV: And one stillborn, she had.

OH: And your own family, can you just fill me on the details of your own family?

AV: I had two children, my daughter, Antoinette and my son, Raymond. And my husband? [whispers] My husband, Amadio Valentini came from the same town as my father Montedinove, Marche in 1952.

OH: And Amadio died?

AV: Amadio passed away on 16th--- No, I'm wrong there. 14th January, 2014.

OH: And you have grandchildren?

AV: I have three grandchildren, Jack, Nathan and Sarah who are twins.

OH: Another set? [laughs]

AV: Yes.

OH: Well, thank you for that background.

OH: (05:10) We're going to continue with the story of your parents coming to Australia and would you be able to tell me when your father came to Australia. I think you've already said, haven't you?

AV: Well, 1927.

OH: Do you know the reason why he migrated to Australia?

AV: Well, coming from a poor family, his father died when he was very young but I'm not sure who sponsored him to come out.

OH: It's interesting isn't it? Like a lot of the people who I've interviewed for the project, don't

know that.

AV: No, my brother might know but I can't remember.

OH: Do you know why Adelaide? Why he came to Adelaide?

AV: For better opportunities in life?

OH: And Adelaide rather than Melbourne, you don't know?

AV: I don't know. He was one not to speak about what went in his life before.

OH: Mmnn. Can you tell me the story of how your parents married?

AV: My father was, knew these people which were related to my mother but I'm not certain by my grandfather's side or my grandmother's side. And he liked the wife of this person, [whispers] do I say the name? His name was Domenic De Ionno but no relation like first cousins with mother, they were related by grandfathers. And Dad said to him: "I would like to have a wife like yours." And when he said that, the wife turned around and said: "I've got the right person for you." And he mentioned her name but Mum had brothers here but that's how she got to know about her. [whispers] Now I'm getting mixed up.

OH: No, that's a lovely story. And you father had been alone here for some years?

AV: Yes, because Mum came out in 1937 but when they were writing to one another, ... I've gone there. Sorry.

OH: No, you're doing well.

AV: No, I've got worked up, not worked up, I'm getting ...

OH: So your father and mother wrote to each for a while?

AV: For a while, but not knowing how to read and write, Mum and Dad did not know how to read and write. Mum always had to get someone to write for her because her parents did not let her go to school because she would write to boyfriends because she was of nine children.

OH: Difficult. So your Dad didn't read or write so he must have had someone who was writing?

AV: I don't know who was corresponding for him but Mum had this family friend who would write for her.

OH: Thank goodness for that.

AV: For letters coming here.

OH: Yes.

AV: But in those years it took time for the mail to come through.

OH: Well, of course, it would have been on the boats, wouldn't it?

AV: Mmnn. I can't remember the date she got married. That, I cannot remember.

OH: That's fine.

AV: But she married by proxy, not knowing him but a brother of my father went to the Marche²

² In the editing process, Aida corrected this to Benevento, where her mother came from

on the day they were getting married in a Registry Office and he stood in place of my father.

OH: And your father would have had to have a similar set up here.

AV: Here. Probably, that I don't know.

OH: And when your mother arrived here, did they have another kind of wedding?

AV: No, she came by boat at Outer Harbour and she had a brother living not far which was one her oldest brothers that came out before here and my father wanted to take home with him on that day. And my Uncle said, this was my uncle: "Let her stay here for a few days and then she can come with you." "No, she came for me and she will come with me and I will treat her gently." And Mum said that did happen.

OH: Oh, that's lovely.

OH: And I forgot to ask you what was your father doing for those ten years when he was here in Adelaide?

AV: Working in market gardens. I'm sure that it was Ry Ey, one of them but there were many market gardeners because he lived in the Campbelltown area.

OH: And something that you told me previously about him building a house?

AV: He bought his first house in 1933, what was the date? I can't remember.

OH: No, that's fine. Which was pretty terrific, really.

AV: Well, after six years.

OH: yes. I understood he built his own house?

AV: Well, I presume he did because I'm quite sure he bought the vacant block but I could be wrong because it could have been the other guy that sold it to him.

OH: And that was in the suburb of?

AV: Paradise.

OH: Right.

AV: Ramsey Avenue, Paradise.

OH: So your mother came to Paradise? [laughs]

AV: Came to Paradise, yes. Came to Paradise.

[laughter]

OH: So your mother had how many brothers here?

AV: She had three brothers here before her but then she had two sisters who followed later on.

OH: So she had quite a...?

AV: Five of them here.

OH: Yes.

AV: With her, six.

OH: Which must have made it easier for her in a way to have that family support.

AV: Yes.

OH: Did you see those relatives on your mother's side often when you were growing up?

AV: Quite often, we were very close. And when my father came out to this side of town, I was, 1947, I think when we come to Lockleys which was known as Lockleys before and -- [whispers] I'm forgetting.

OH: So they left that part...?

AV: And bought some land but my Uncle which was my mother's oldest brother, he came and stayed with us for a while because to be able to help him and tell him what to do, he was more experienced in market gardening.

OH: Because I was thinking that it would have been a big to come right across the city to what you said was called at Lockleys at the time.

AV: Yes.

OH: Can you tell me exactly where your family's land was?

AV: Findon Road but then it was River Road, Lockleys.

OH: How far from was it?

AV: I shouldn't have said Findon Road.

[laughter]

OH: How far was it from say, let's think about the bridge over the river and Grange Road?

AV: Well, we used to calculate it as miles before. I would say half a mile.

OH: From...?

AV: Where we lived.

OH: Yeah.

AV: And to the bridge.

OH: Right. Yes.

AV: Because up to Henley Beach Road, we always used to say it was a mile.

OH: Right. And what side of River Road or Findon Road were you on?

AV: --- On the eastern side.

OH: Right?

AV: Right?

OH: Yeah.

AV: On the eastern side.

OH: Right and we'll talk about the market gardens. Do you know why your parents decided to come to this area?

AV: That, I don't know. Probably he wanted to do something for himself, being employed with somebody else and that's why he decided to come on this side of town.

OH: Did they buy the land rather than lease it?

AV: They bought the land --- from who? --- It was Amadeo,³ I think it was Amadeo's or something.

OH: Right, okay.

AV: The wife was Antonietta, I remember but mmnn...

OH: It's a long time ago.

AV: Yes.

[laughter]

OH: Do you remember moving because you would have been eight?

AV: Seven.

OH: Seven, eight? Yeah.

AV: Not really. No.

OH: You would have had to change schools?

AV: Yes, we used to go to the Paradise school but when we came to live on this side of town, we went to Lockleys Primary School. I think it was for about a year. Then we were, we went to Thebarton because it was a Catholic school. I went to Saint Joseph's Thebarton.

OH: And what about Mel?

AV: He went to Marist Brothers Thebarton.

OH: How would you have got to school?

AV: We did not have a transport to get to Henley Beach Road where we had to catch a tram but sometimes when it was bad weather, my father or my Uncle would drop us off in the truck. But in those years there were buses coming from Glenelg taking workers to General Motors Holden and they had two buses coming back and if we were quick enough we could get that bus and go up to Henley Beach Road. And we'd be on time to catch a bus home, the ten to four. Otherwise when we got older, we had bikes and we would go up to Henley Beach Road putting them in front of a house or at the petrol station and we had bikes to come home. But we never to school the whole way with our bikes.

OH: Yeah, because that would have been quite a distance to ride?

AV: But sometimes when you thought it was later and you'd lost money or you had spent it, you'd be working home too, through the back streets. [laughs]

OH: That would have been a long trip.

AV: Yeah.

OH: And that bus with the Holden workers, could other people like you use it?

AV: Yeah, anybody could have got it. It stopped at Henley Beach Road where there is a chemist

³ Amadeo was the surname of a family

today. And you know, you could get the bus there and it would just stop in front of our house, all you had to do was to hail it and it would stop it.

OH: Wow, that was convenient.

AV: Yeah, just like before Valetta Road, you know, just press the button and it would stop.

OH: That was good.

OH: (17:18) When you moved here to River Road, and I guess you were, more or less, in front of Valetta Road?

AV: Right. Well, we were a bit further up with our house because it was an old tin shed.

OH: Can you describe what it was like, if you went in the front, what was it like, your house?

AV: It was just a tin shed and gradually it got built on with a little room on the side. It had a bit of a garden out the front.

OH: How far was it from the road?

AV: --- Where the houses are now, what would that be?

OH: Oh, not far from the road?

AV: No, not far from the road.

OH: Right.

AV: But it was only a dirt track those years, when we moved here. Wasn't tarred like it is today.

OH: Like River Road?

AV: Yes, even Valetta Road, it was all dirt and there were lots of bushes on the way.

OH: I was going to ask you that, what kind of bushes?

AV: --- They were probably just wild bushes.

OH: And were they tall?

AV: --- Well, I would say it would be a bit like a... what would you call them? Can't remember.

OH: I can't remember the name of them either but I know what you mean, like they were quite sturdy.⁴

AV: Yes, well, you couldn't see what was behind the bushes sometimes. There was vacant land and you could not see what was behind the bushes. When you had to walk up to Henley Beach Road, it was more like a deserted Road, they was about five or six houses

OH: Between your house and...?

AV: Yes.

OH: Wow, what a difference?

AV: Yes. Ballantyne's, we had these two or three houses just where we were, well, the Ballestrin's then.

OH: On the corner of River Road and ...?

⁴ The bushes were most likely boxthorn hedges which were growing along the roads in the area until at least the late 1950s

AV: Valetta Road.

OH: Yeah.

I think it's always been Valetta Rad but it was called James place, many years ago. See I'm going backwards.

OH: That's alright, that's fine. I think it was Saint James Park.

AV: Saint James Park.

OH: So there were the Ballestrin's and then who would have been next along there?

AV: Miss Adelaide Keele. Her name was Adelaide. Her house, you could not see out the front, it was full of bushes and shrubs. She was a person that we never really saw very much. Then there was the Daminato's further up and some other Chinese people that I cannot remember their names. Then there was quite a bit of land that was cultivated by the Ballantyne's, up near the bridge, their house was right on the bridge.

OH: Was the bridge a decent width at that time? Like could cars pass on it easily?

AV: Yeah, cars were passing on it easily.

OH: Yes.

AV: It was a decent bridge.

OH: Yes, then if you were walking beyond the bridge to Henley Beach Road, were there many houses on the way?

AV: --- The Taverna's ---

OH: Did they have market gardens?

AV: I think they would have been about four or five houses from the bridge to Henley Beach Road. Or what I can remember.

OH: Yes.

AV: It was the Taverna's right on the other side of the bridge.

OH: Were they market gardeners?

AV: They were market gardeners with glasshouses. A few houses from the bridge... Oh, you have to ask the questions don't you?

OH: No, you tell me, that's great.

AV: From where we were living there were --- Rositano's and the Chinese was living out the back.

OH: Was that close to the bridge?

AV: No, not right close to the bridge. It was the James, the Jones, I think it was.

OH: The Britten-Jones?

AV: Britten-Jones.

OH: They had a big house?

AV: They had the big house at the back off the road and you'd go in there, you had to go where all these trees were. Going to their house was all with trees and their house was right at the back.

OH: Did you ever go there?

AV: No, never went there. Then there was the Monteleone's. Getting mixed up.

OH: The Monteleone's lived...?

AV: Lived in a shed out the back, in a big shed, like a packing shed. I don;' know if they owned it but it had some rooms done in the front so the family could live there.

OH: Right. And that wasn't far from your house?

AV: No, just after Beltana Avenue. [indicating on the aerial photo] See where Beltana Avenue is there?

OH: Oh, off...

AV: Beltana Street.

OH: Yes.

AV: Yeah and the Mercurio's had land going in there. That's what the Mercurio's used after for packing sheds.

OH: Oh, right. And if we go to your house again, you know, how many rooms were there that you remember when you first went there.

AV: [counts] Four rooms with a small laundry but my bedroom was in the lounge or dining room because it was all in one.

OH: So you had a bed that was made up every night?

AV: Yes. It was there all the time, it was used as a lounge for people to sit on.

OH: Right. So your parents had a bedroom?

AV: I slept in my parents' bedroom until I was 11 years old and then I was moved into the lounge. And my brother was sleeping in another room. And we had a very small kitchen, from the kitchen was the laundry and a little space for a bathroom with a wood copper.

OH: And the toilet?

AV: The toilet was outside.

OH: Right.

AV: Which was called a "dunny".

[laughter]

OH: In those days.

AV: And we had like a drain going out the back, going along the side because there was market gardening and that was for the sewerage to go through.

OH: Right. Do you know how much land your parents owned at that time?

AV: Nine acres, then, it was nine acres,

OH: What were your parents growing?

AV: Celery and potatoes but I remember them having about five glasshouses. Sometimes they would have tomatoes and also beans in there.

OH: Where did your parents sell their produce?

AV: Celery went to the markets in Melbourne and Sydney. Potatoes went to the Potato Board here.

OH: And the tomatoes?

AV: --- Can't remember.

OH: Could have been East...?

AV: Adelaide market, Eastern market.

OH: Yeah. So did your father transport the celery and potatoes to those ...?

AV: It used to be my Uncle who used to drive the truck to the city most of the times.

OH: And this is your mother's brother?

AV: Brother.

OH: Domenico?

AV: That's right.

OH: how long would he have stayed with you?

AV: I think he still lived at Paradise but he was coming here to help my father. He was going backwards and forwards because he lived on Lower North East Road, Paradise.

OH: Was he married?

AV: He was married with his wife. At that time, I can't remember, but was three children.

[thinks aloud about the names of the cousins] Teresa... One was born in Italy, and then two, I think they had here.

OH: Was he working full-time with your father?

AV: Not full-time, no. I don't know what other work he was doing, he was doing concrete work

OH: Right.

AV: Carrying to do concrete. After, they moved to Melbourne with the family. But then another brother came here but he was working up bush in forests cutting trees. All of a sudden, he got a message that his wife and son were arriving and they were coming by military plane. Not notified, Mum had to get in touch with him and he came straight down that afternoon, they had to go out and buy some furniture and make up a bed for them. I think that's when I moved into the lounge. I'm not sure how it all went after that.

OH: So that family lived with your family for a while?

AV: For a while.

OH: It must have been a busy household?

AV: It wasn't big but you moved in. But then they bought more land further over near the Ballestrin's and there was a big house there, I cannot remember who that belonged to but they moved there and they were working their own land. And then they moved to Paradise after so many years.

OH: So the Paradise connection?

AV: Yes.

OH: Kept going.

OH: (27:30) Did your mother work in the market garden?

AV: Mum worked in the market garden for many years alongside Dad. But Dad was a very hard worker and they employed many people. Many were workers from GMH Holden's and they would be working two jobs at a time doing night shift or day shift and they would come and do a few hours and we would have a hot meal ready for them at lunchtime because they were all single men.

OH: And so your mother and you would have been responsible for that?

AV: Well, Mum used to have food ready every morning and sandwiches made before she'd go out.

AV: (28:15) But when I was 15, I didn't want to go back to school but I was not allowed to go to work. If I wanted to stay home from school, I had to do the housework and cooking inside so Mum could be out early in the morning.

OH: Did you ever help in the garden?

AV: I did not go right out into the garden but when it was time for potatoes, I used to help them cut the potatoes to be planted that were seeds and when we were doing celery, I'd be home but when they would come down with the horse and cart, those years, I would help unload the celery and wash them and I had to get the crates ready which you had to put the names on, you know, who they were going to. It was like a stencil but with a brush. I had to do that. And sometimes I would go out in the garden just to help load up the trolley, the cart.

OH: All hands on deck?

AV: Hands on deck.

OH: When you cut the potatoes for planting, what was involved with that?

AV: Just pick up the potato that's got so many eyes, you would say. And depending on the size of the potato, how many eyes you would see, you might cut two or three pieces.

OH: How thick would they be?

AV: Depends on the potato. When it was very cold, sometimes we couldn't be working out, they would have other things in the shed, the shed wasn't that big, the men would bring the bags to the house and we would sit in the laundry because it was warmer. That's where we used to make

tomato sauce and everything out the back.

OH: Right. So you planted the potatoes in the winter? Like, if it was cold when you were doing it?

AV: Well, probably the winter season, yes.

OH: And those sections of potatoes were planted by hand then?

AV: They were planted by hand to start with but then, with the horse doing the furrows but then it came the time we had a tractor and then the women or someone would be sitting on the back of the tractor, someone driving the tractor and you would be putting the potato in and that would be covering the rows as you were going.

OH: Pretty intensive work?

AV: It was. You needed always three people because they would have one, two people on the back of the tractor on two sides so it would be doing two rows at a time.

OH: And did your brother also help with this work?

AV: ... What I can remember, not as much, because he was working in the city he got a job ... I think it was Clarkson's, I cannot remember properly. But he used to do all the bookwork and everything like that for my father.

OH: When you were both at school were there jobs that you had to do around the garden or the house?

AV: No, not really, you know, I'd be inside the house or anything. I suppose you did get asked to do some things like washing dishes and things like that like every other child but not as much.

OH: Do you remember if your parents with the glasshouses had to move them?

AV: We only had five so they did not really move them. Sometimes there could have been some bit of land left, they would have a bit of lucerne in there, you know and they would dig that up but sometimes that was given to the horse also.

OH: So your parents had one horse?

AV: One horse, that, I can remember.

OH: Any other animals?

AV: --- We had chickens, I remember we had guinea pigs but I can never remember having them to eat so I don't know why we had guinea pigs. That's all.

OH: You didn't have a cow?

AV: --- Can't remember.

OH: Oh.

AV: See what a memory I have?

OH: Oh, I think your memory is ... you're doing very well with your memory. You said there was bit of a garden in the front of the house?

AV: Mum loved flowers, it always looked immaculate. She loved putting flowers in. But on the side there was a bit of land that's where they had the pump for doing the watering and she had a few vegetables on the side just like a few tomatoes for home to make tomato sauce and things like that. But then we would buy tomatoes for making tomato sauce because it would be full days for making sauce.

OH: You didn't use your own tomatoes for the sauce?

AV: Not really. I think sometimes they did but there was only five glasshouses, I can remember. [sound of microphone being bumped] I'm sorry.

OH: That's alright. And the water, I was going to ask you about that. When you say there was a pump, was that a bore?

AV: A bore, yes, that was a bore down this side of the house [indicating on the aerial photo] but there was a bit of land in between.

OH: Right.

AV: But you had to be very careful because you could look down and you could see all this other pieces of pipes coming down, not just going down straight but coming along, to go into the gardens.

OH: Right. Do you know if that bore was there when your family moved there?

AV: I presume it would have been because they were market gardeners themselves.

OH: So on your land of nine acres, you had the house. Were there other buildings?

AV: --- They did put a little house asbestos home ... Oh how far? ... I can't think but there was another little asbestos home put on their land and that was rented out. There was people looking for homes in the area and we would have people living in there when they would come came out from Italy or ... It was just what? A three-bedroom home, three, two bedrooms, you know, toilets outside, laundry trough out the back.

OH: And was that a house for families or for single men or?

AV: We've had families in there with one or two children. Yes.

OH: I was going to ask you about your neighbours. How well did you know your neighbours at that time of growing up?

AV: As soon as we came to this side of town, Mrs Ballestrin who lived across the road and Narciso, they come to Mum and said: "If you need anything, we are here for you." They have been the closest of friends for many years. We got to know quite a few people in the area. Then we are going further up, there was the Keele's, and then the little house, we've had quite a few families that they've always been friends with that have not moved far from this area. One family bought the house from Mr Keele.

OH: Who was that?

AV: The Girolamo's. And then we had... Am I able to say names?

OH: Yeah.

AV: Mr and Mrs Doimo living in there for a while.

OH: And where were they from?

AV: They were from ... *veneti* but I don't know which city now, cannot remember.

OH: What was their name?

AV: Teresina and Livio Doimo.Doimo. [spells out the name] D-o-i-m-o.

OH: Oh, okay, were they market gardeners?

AV: No, I can't remember where he was working but she used to do knitting with machines and she had a lot of work that people would go and ask to have things knitted for them. I've had many clothes done for my own daughter, done by her.

OH: So she was obviously very talented.

AV: But there were other families there but then the time came that Dad had to get rid of that little house and they were in the middle of the building and they didn't know where to go so Dad had them living with them for a while.

OH: Right.

AV: The Doimo's. They shared one bathroom, one laundry, they gave them two rooms and they shared for a while. But I cannot remember how long they were there. And she used to do knitting.

OH: She was obviously talented.

AV: I think she brought the machines from Italy.

OH: (38:06) If you think about other market gardener in the area, perhaps along River Road, do you know the names of any of them?

AV: [consulting the aerial photo] Market gardens, there used to be Ballestrin's but going into Hartley Road but along Findon Road, I think there was the Carbone's. --- Can't think. There was Narciso, one side, then there was his brother, Doro and Frankie, they were on the other side further up. Beppi was in Hartley Road but I can't remember what street it was then because you know, we had land but then it looked like a little drain going down so you couldn't really see the road. Then there was the Tilley's but I cannot remember if they had market gardens, they were on the opposite side. Italiano, he had market gardening but I don't think it came straight onto Findon Road or River Road then. Sbrissa had some land there but it wasn't to do with market gardening. -- I can't remember now.

OH: And then further in, closer to say Frogmore Road, do you remember?

AV: Well, they're the ones, Italian, Frank Italiano, they used to call him. Then there used to be Esposito, Zerella, can't think of the father's name though. De Pasquale, going further up from us.

OH: And do you remember some of the older families, like the Tonellato?

AV: yes, I remember the Tonellato's but they were on Frogmore Road. And the Santin's, we had Santin's on Valetta Road and Berno's and De Pasquale and Canino's ... And we had the Chinese, one was Yik Kee, he was behind the Ballestrin's but I cannot remember...

OH: Oh, you're doing very well remembering all those names. So there were lots of Italians?

AV: Lots of Italians. There were a couple of Australians. One was Collins where they've got Collins Reserve, and there was someone else but I cannot think of the name at the moment.

OH: And you've spoken about the Ballantyne's

AV: Yeah, well, they were up on Findon Road.

OH: West's?

AV: Oh, West across the road, yeah. You had West, Berno's, the De Pasquale, they were on, going up but then they lived next door to us here too, that's where they had their house and a bit of land. Then the Mercurio's bought that land, they were doing market gardening also, two brothers.

OH: The Mercurio's also bought land on...

AV: Then after they bought land on Findon Road, was it Findon Road then? I cannot remember.

OH: It gets confusing, doesn't it, River Road?

AV: Well, they came out in '52, so... Yeah, but they were here for a while, and they came out. I'm sorry. Because of my uncle on my mother's side.

OH: Oh, true? How did that happen?

AV: Well, my mother and her brother?

OH: Mr Mercurio?

AV: My mother and her brother, he was married to the Mercurio's sister. My uncle...

OH: Right.

AV: You'll have to cancel this. My uncle was married to Lucia Mercurio which was George and Pellegrino's sister.

OH: Ah.

AV: And that's how they came out to live on this side of town because they brought them out.

OH: Oh.

AV: I think they did, anyway.

OH: Oh, that's interesting, that connection.

AV: Yes.

OH: (42:45) You know when you talk about some of those names of the Italian market gardeners, some of them are *veneti* families and some of them are from other areas like...

AV: Well, most of them were *veneti*. They could have been two or three Australians which I cannot remember, the Zerella's were mostly from ... not sure but I think they were from the

Naples part and the Esposito's were from the Calabria, Italiano, he was from Calabria. Yeah, I think they were mostly *veneti*, going further up, the Berno's, the Canino's from Calabria, the De Pasquale from Calabria. The Mercurio from, well, Benevento, but the Campania.

OH: Yes. Was there any difference in feeling, do you think between families who were *veneti* or?

AV: We got on as one family with all the neighbours that we had around. We used to know everybody and when there was a party going on, we were always together.

OH: And where were the parties held?

AV: We went to Doro Ballestrin's, he had many parties at his home because he had a big shed. We used to celebrate there. But we used to have a lot of even get-togethers with families, we didn't go out that much. We'd be having barbecues, and what we would do, two or three families we would get together and we'd all bring some food or they'd buy meat and all pay so much each and that used to be our parties. And I always remember we used to go to Glenelg New Year's Day, as children but for many years but with the truck. But what my parents used to do, they would put a tarpaulin on, make it like a room on the truck and all the people that knew us, workers, Mum would be preparing food and with my Auntie, the day before, getting so much food ready and they all came there and they'd all get on that truck and come at different times having meals.

OH: Sounds like it would have been a great day.

AV: But that was the atmosphere, we'd go early in the morning to Moseley Square where we would park the truck and have a get together.

OH: Would you go to the beach?

AV: And we'd go to the beach because it was right on the side of the beach, you know, on the lawns.

OH: Yeah. Did you have tents or you know, shades?

AV: No because we had that big truck there and that was when there was all amusements around Glenelg, those years, you know, so we didn't leave there. Sometimes we'd go and sit on the lawn or people would go walking around but then you'd come back on the truck. If it was tea time if you want something, or lunchtime, come and we've got the food there.

OH: It would have been lovely food, I imagine.

AV: Well, the traditional cutlets and salads, I think it was, I remember, they'd do their traditional fried *zeppole*⁵ because when it's Christmas in Italy, it's fried food. Easter time, it's savoury because it depends on the weather.

OH: Can you tell me about the *zeppole*?

⁵ *Zeppole* are an Italian pastry, a kind of deep fried dough

AV: Well, the *zeppole* were made, do I have to say the recipe? I can't remember the recipe.

OH: Well, they're sweet?

AV: Well, you could do the sweet and the savoury.

OH: Oh?

AV: The savoury were done with an anchovy in the middle.

OH: And flour?

AV: Flour, yeast, bit of oil, water where you have to knead it and sometimes they would also put boiled potatoes in it to make it lighter. But you would put an anchovy before you're frying it when it had risen and put the anchovy in it and fry it in deep olive oil. The sweet ones. So you would do the sweet one first because they didn't have the anchovy in it and then you would roll them in sugar. That was Christmas time. And Mum coming from Naples, the Campania region, they used to make different type of things, we used to call them *crostoli*⁶, which they call them now, they call them *crostoli* here. They use to call them --- can't think now --- They were little things fried. Gee, what were they?

OH: It will come to you. You know the *crostoli*, they were made with flour, sugar?

AV: Sugar, Mum would put cream in here and put orange juice or milk, you know, I'm not giving the proper recipe, milk, orange juice and butter and Mum, instead of putting a lot of milk, she would put cream. And then on a kneading board after that with that warmed up just a little bit, put the flour on the board and you would add all these ingredients and with a bit of brandy, she would do them. And you would roll them out but those years, we didn't have a pasta machine, she'd roll them out with a big rolling pin.

OH: Did they have to be really fine?

AV: The finer the better and we always used to make homemade pasta at home with a knife, not with the machines.

OH: So your Mum was a good cook?

AV: She was. But I learned to do it with a rolling pin too and with cutting, I couldn't do it today, I don't think.

OH: No. Was the *crostoli*...?

AV: The *crostoli* were then cut in strips but sometimes they would make them like little baskets if you wanted them for a special occasion, a little basket or into a bow and you would put honey on top of them with hundreds and thousands. But most times, they were just done plain with the icing sugar.

OH: Were they done for special occasions?

AV: Mostly Christmas time.

⁶ *Crostoli* are a delicate deep fried pastry usually dusted with icing sugar

OH: So Christmas time must have been a busy time?

AV: Because it was winter over there but we would be making them at Christmas here. But when it comes to be Easter, where my mother comes from, the Campania, it would be baking things with like cheese, we would call it *pizza rustica*,⁷ those days. It was like a bacon and egg pie but would be one big one but with sausage, fresh cheese, and eggs and she wouldn't only make one. She would be using about 20, 30 eggs because if you make so much because, you know, you had visitors coming, they'd bring you something and you'd give them some of yours to try. That's how we used to do it.

OH: Did that have pastry on the bottom, that pie?

AV: Yes, but Mum used to make the pastry with butter, milk, and flour and eggs and she used to do, we used to make a sweet one, it's like a rice cake but we would use the same pastry so you don't use any salt and pepper in it so you can use it for the sweet one and the savoury one. That was her tradition.

OH: It sounds like she was very organised because she was able to do all that cooking and baking and preparing as well as working in the garden?

AV: No, Dad did give her time when it was things like that and he was even very helpful when he would come in. We didn't think some men would do dishes but Dad used to help with the dishes in side and he would fold the washing and everything, you wouldn't even iron when Dad would do the folding straight out. But he was a late worker, he'd be out 11:00 o'clock, 12:00 o'clock watering. I'm going from one thing to another, I don't know how it's going to work out.

OH: It's perfect.

AV: He'd be out watering with the pump, night time, 10:00 o'clock, 11:00 o'clock but what he would do when it was celery, he had the water coming right from one side to the other, with a long row, he'd get the water there and he'd go and lay down at the other end and when the water would touch his toes, he knew that it was time to go and change.

[laughter]

AV: He was a hard worker.

OH: That's a lovely memory to have of your father, isn't it?

AV: I'll tell you one thing, Dad had, what would you say? He had a battle with a bull and he won, he got it done. Years ago with market gardening, they used to go out to these farms to get manure, horse and cows, and they went out to get some manure. And Amadio was there, and my brother-in-law who has gone back to Italy was there working with him getting this manure in these paddocks but they didn't see the bull. All of a sudden, there's a bull coming over, and my brother-in-law ran away and go out of the fence. Dad was there, he couldn't get away. He held it

⁷ *Pizza rustica* is a pie with meat and cheese filing inside a pastry case

done until it went to the ground and he didn't tell Mum but when they come back, my brother-in-law told them, he even won with the bull, he got him done with his strength. He must have had to fight hard. I would have loved to have a photo of that.

OH: It would have been great.

AV: But we didn't have cameras, you know, but he's always said it, and a lot of people know: "We know your father, the one who, you know, wrestled with the bull."

OH: So he became famous, obviously?

[laughter]

AV: For that reason, it got around.

OH: Yeah.

AV: But he was a strong worker, a hard worker.

OH: That's a dramatic story.

AV: No, he was a hard worker, Dad was.

OH: (53:50) You say that he would work late at night. What time would the day begin for him?

AV: Of a morning? Depending, wintertime, it was time for cutting celery, you'd be out early in the morning, cold and frosty, wind and everything. Normally, sometimes you would have *grappa*. I know it was illegal but we'd have *grappa* there. Even the workers there would have a sip before they'd go out with a coffee, to warm up. But it was very hot and cold weather out there, raining and everything, he would wrap a bag around him to cover his clothes, you know, and with a piece of string. Sometimes then, you'd get the other bag and you'd put it inside and you'd put it like a cape over your head. That's how they were working in the market gardens those years, with the cold weather, very cold because the morning, you would be cutting celery, you'd be taking them into the shed. Sometimes you'd have a break to go for dinner, Mum had done something then you'd go back in the shed, 10:00 o'clock, 11:00 o'clock, you'd be packing celery. And I did go out and help with the nailing of the celery, you had to nail the boxes down.

OH: Were the boxes very deep?

AV: Well, they were quite deep and they were made by Innocente, we got them from him and it depended on the size of the celery, they had to be graded: 12, 18s or 20s, depending on the size. They all had to fit into the same box but you knew what you had and we had the stencil with the name and then with the number, you'd put on what was going in what.

OH: So it was all a process, wasn't it?

AV: It was a process.

OH: And it had to work really efficiently?

AV: Yes, and then put onto the truck, you know. You'd get them from there and putting them, it was like a press, you'd put two tops on it, like two pieces of fine wood and then the press would

put it down and you would be nailing them, three on each side. You had to be quite quick to keep going.

OH: Keep up with it all?

AV: Yeah.

OH: And then, those were boxes?

AV: That was going to the railway station, being sent to Melbourne or Sydney.

OH: Because Adelaide was known for being a great place for growing celery?

AV: Yes. I think even market gardens out at Paradise had a lot of celery growers. And actually, I think they had a lot of orange groves down there. That was at Dernancourt, though.

OH: Right.

AV: Because Mum used to help sometimes, people across the road had oranges and things and when she could she'd go out and help them there. Sometimes even there, gardens with onions and things like that, when it was time for picking onions.

OH: This was locally?

AV: Locally. But here was just their land but when they were out there, I can remember. Yeah.

OH: Oh, right.

AV: I'm going back the front. Sorry.

OH: No, no, that's fine. It's really interesting isn't it about how families just had to work so hard in the market garden, and the constant work?

AV: Yeah. And you were sending your celery, didn't have an excuse was: "Oh, they had a disease." "They weren't ripe." They were paying, they weren't paying.

OH: So all of that mattered?

AV: Yes, many times, even like Amadio, I can't remember who'd go for Dad those years, they would go to Melbourne and see the buyers but it wasn't always easy.

OH: And that was to establish a relationship with the buyers?

AV: Well to see you know, what was going on in the Melbourne markets.

OH: Right.

AV: But I can't say it on tape now.

OH: Yeah. Oh, that's interesting. You know we're talking about the market gardens and the fact that your parents had the nine acres and then they bought some more land or got some more land?

AV: We leased it, I think it was across the road, I think it belonged to the Education Department, I'm not sure.

OH: Oh, this is off Valetta Road?

AV: Yes, on Valetta Road, that released more land over here. [indicates on the aerial

photograph]

OH: Did that mean that it was still the same crops, celery, potatoes?

AV: Celery and potatoes. That's when, I wasn't working, even when I was married because this was after we were married and my husband was working with Dad to help out. And it was right up the river and you have to bring out drinks because they're working in hot weather. I'd get up there, by the time I'd walk up there, be walking back, and you'd hear them whistling that I'd go back with water. And I never had time to stop inside.

OH: No.

AV: I wasn't working as full-time but I had things to do, too.

OH: Yes.

AV: It was the same when I was with Mum and Dad, you were going up, they were up the end and you had to drop off water or wine, take their lunches at 10:00 o'clock, sandwiches most times but then there was a hot meal at lunchtime.

OH: Always a hot meal?

AV: Always a hot meal.

OH: What would your mother have cooked?

AV: It would be minestrone, a soup, a pasta dish because they were all single people going to work. There were even a lot of women who would come and work also and they did have shift work going home but they would come out for few hours, you know. So it was always a hot meal. Roast potatoes with chicken or something like that.

OH: And so that means your mother was preparing that food or you were, when you finished school?

AV: 1:00:01 Mum was preparing but when I finished school, I was left in the kitchen. She would tell me what to do but I was left doing things in the kitchen

OH: How old were you when you left school, Aida?

AV: 15.

OH: You didn't want to continue with school?

AV: Will I tell you the reason? [laughs]

OH: Yes.

AV: Because I met Amadio but from earlier, I was a child when I met him but he was my cousin's brother-in-law. And he'd come because his sister was living with my parents which they put a caravan next to the little house and they built on a little kitchen. So he was going there for his meals. But he was living at Sbrissa's at that time.⁸

⁸ In the editing process, Aida explained that families also stayed at Sbrissa's if they did not have accommodation. He built extra rooms from crates obtained from GMH. Sbrissa also taught Italian to some of the local children from Italian families whose

OH: What year did Amadio come?

AV: In '51.

OH: How old were you in 1951? ---13, 14?

AV: 12, 13?

OH: Yeah. 12, 13, yeah.

AV: '38, '48, [counts the years] 13, yes.

OH: 13.

AV: Yes.

OH: So, you...

AV: Well, I fell for him but then he was coming home [to her parents' home] even though but he wasn't allowed to come home but when my Dad, you know. He asked Dad and he asked me, did I understand? Would you like to go out with me? But we were not allowed to go out?

OH: Why?

AV: Because those years you weren't allowed to go out with a boyfriend.

OH: Not by yourself?

AV: Not by yourself, no. Whenever we had to go out, Mum had to come with me.

OH: So where did you go?

AV: Not much, my brother... Not very far. We used to go to the Odeon picture theatre a lot, on a Saturday night.

OH: Where was that?

AV: Henley Beach Road. Sometimes we'd go to the pictures in town but Mum would always come. I never went with my brother.

OH: Was your brother allowed to go out by himself?

AV: He went out more than what I did, being boys, you know, they'd drive around whatever.

OH: What was that like going out with your mother and Amadio?

AV: Well, you were brought up, that's the way you were brought up.

OH: And did Amadio understand that?

AV: Well, [laughs] he comes from the same school. And I said: "I don't want to go to school." Then when Amadio asked me to go out and I said to Dad: "Amadio has asked me." He would have asked Dad too, well, he probably knew what was going on because you could always get a chance to see one another because when they're working out in the garden and he would come in and so there was a chance there. If you want to, there's a chance. And I said: "But I don't want to go to school." Because I was not allowed to have a boyfriend while I was at school. So I did the

parents wanted them to learn Italian as well as speak dialect. Aida remembers about five or six children who attended those lessons at Sbrissa's home.

wrong thing and I left school.⁹ But I don't regret it but I do regret sometimes I should have had a better brain.

OH: So you left school and what was...?

AV: Then I was allowed to, not allowed to go out with him but he was coming home at night time but that was still when we living in the little shed, I call it a shed, I don't call it a house, the tin shed you'd say. And he'd come over but Dad would be the one, if he wasn't working out late at night, he would go to bed around half past eight or 9:00 o'clock some nights. When Amadio was there for an hour or so because we'd be sitting in the kitchen, you didn't have a heater on, you had the wood stove, and we'd be sitting around the stove and he'd be knocking on the sheets, and you could, because it was tin and you could hear it: time to go to bed. And you'd have to go off. Yeah.

OH: How long...?

AV: I was 15 but I married at 18. I lived in the new house, I call it the new house, only for three months. We moved in September and I married in December.

OH: And that year was 19--...?

AV: 1956.

OH: Your parents must have felt very pleased to have this brand new house?

AV: Well, they were, they were happy with the house. Well, it took a while but they did build a new house there. It's still in the family name.

OH: Yeah.

AV: Hopefully, for a while.

OH: In those years between 15 and getting married at 18, tell me the sorts of things you were doing every day?

AV: Mostly at home but I used to go to town sometimes on my own. But we used to have, Mum would be going to town, not very often, but it was once or twice a year, we had the full day going into the city, with my mother and my auntie and other people around. Because Mum could speak English, those years, she was an interpreter for a lot of them.

OH: Oh, how did you Mum learn English?

AV: Just by speaking to people, she had good neighbours at Paradise, they were Australians, the Ramsey's and they were very good to her. I won't say it was fluent but she got by. And she has taken a lot of people out shopping, to doctor's and things, those years.

OH: And helped them out?

AV: And helped them out.

OH: At home what English did you all speak as you were growing up?

AV: Mostly Italian, mostly Italian.

⁹ In the editing process Aida explained that she left school at 15 and did not keep in touch with other girls. She was not really allowed to go out with other girls who were her age.

OH: When you went to school, did you know English?

AV: Yes, we did know English because even when we started school at Paradise, we were Italians but there were English people there too, in Lockleys, so. Yes, we did speak some English. But it was mostly Italian.

OH: Yes, and with Amadio, what did you speak?

AV: Italian.

OH: (1:06:16) So for those years you were helping out, like would you have got early in the morning, you know, with your parents and start the day with them?

AV: No, I wasn't getting up that early but Mum would call me before she would go out into the garden.

OH: What time would she go out?

AV: Sometimes she would be going out about 8:00 o'clock, half past seven, depends, summer is different to winter but even in winter, she would be out working in the garden alongside him.

OH: And then you were in the kitchen or?

AV: In the kitchen most of the time. But you know, Mum would also help to get the sandwiches ready. We used to have the little local shop we used to go and get fresh bread and small goods.

OH: Where was the local shop?

AV: It's where 'Baa Moo Oink' is now¹⁰.

OH: Oh.

AV: Yes, two little shops, and there was a butcher's shop and it belonged to Oro, they're *veneti*.

OH: Oh, right so that's here on... [consulting the aerial photo]?

AV: On Findon Road.

OH: Right.

AV: Which was River Road, can't remember which year it changed to Findon Road.

OH: Yeah. So, making the sandwiches and then there was another hot lunch, later on?

AV: Before they'd go off. The power!

OH: The power has just gone off but we're still able to record.

AV: Okay. [laughs] light a candle? Shall I get a torch?

OH: I think... Can we just go on, if you're alright?

AV: Yeah, okay. Okay.

OH: So, the hot lunch?

AV: Yeah, well, we'd be making the hot lunch, and they'd be coming about half past 12, lunch had to be ready because a lot of them would be going away at 1:00, half past one. They started their afternoon shift about 3:00 so they had to get time to go home and get ready to go work, the

¹⁰ A butcher's shop on the western side of Findon Road

second shift, the workers.

OH: They'd come into your house and eat?

AV: Yes, always in the house. As much as it was a little room, we always managed to have them inside. The lunch, 10:00 o'clock was out in the garden.

OH: And that's where you had to go and deliver it?

AV: Yes, you'd take out wine and water and sandwiches but the Continental bread, you know?

OH: Yeah.

AV: And you'd bring out the sandwiches, but lunchtime was always home, inside.

OH: How many would you have had?

AV: Sometimes it could be five or six, just depends, you know.

OH: Right.

AV: But most of them all came in. Not many would not come in.

OH: So when you met, you know, Amadio, and you said that he used to come at night, what work was he doing at that time?

AV: He was working at that time ... he had already bought the land. To start with, he had started at GMH, Holden's too but he only started about a year and a half because he was having problems with the paint shop. He wasn't very well. But he and his brother-in-law bought land here where we are now.

OH: On Valetta Road.

AV: On Valetta Road and started working market gardening and I think it was about --- '74, no would have been later ---- I think about '76, '77 he decided to buy a truck you know, because we sold the land and he bought a truck with Readymix for quite a few years. But for three months before the truck was ready, he worked at target as a cleaner just to, you know, do something because he could not just sit around doing nothing. But he's always been a truck driver. We have land down at Burton but we've never really worked on that, only put wheat in one year, we weren't farmers but he leased the land to a couple of people who were growing vegetables. Then we built workshops, that's where our income comes from.

OH: Right.

OH: (1:10:49) Going right back to when Amadio began living here, where did he live?

AV: He lived with his sister for a while which they had built after he had come. He was living at Sbrissa's. As long as someone was coming from Italy, you'd go there, Egidio? Giglio? I cannot remember his Christian name now. Well, he had his house just off Findon Road and he was having rooms there. He [Amadio] lived there for a while. Then the sister built this two-roomed house here and he came to live with his sister for a while but then they had a bit of an argument. He said, he got his mattress, put it on his back, went through the garden went back to Sbrissa's for

a while. Then he decided to build the house here, and he built the house before we got married. So he would have lived here for about six, seven months before we got married.

OH: Can you tell me about your wedding? When did you get married?

AV: On 22nd December, 1956. We were married at the Cathedral, then we had our wedding reception at Centennial Hall which there would have been about 1,000 people. Those years, you'd invite everybody. I think we were the second Italian wedding there. Can I say their name? Dean and Ida Griguol had their wedding there first and I think we could have been the second couple that got married there.

OH: What did it feel like to have so many people at the reception?

AV: For me, myself, my age, I didn't think much of it. 'Cos being 18, I think, if someone was to get married today I'd say: "Oh, that's too young." But I think we were brought up that we were more mature, and the idea was: "Oh good, I'll get out of the house, I can do what I like." But that changes [laughter] once you're married. Isn't that, you think: "Oh, I'll be allowed to go to the pictures, we'll go dancing here and there." But that all changes after you're married.

OH: It's not as... not quite like that.

AV: No. But when we got married, there was plenty of food. Going back to the *veneti*, we knew a lot of the *venetis* around here, we got the wedding catered for in some ways but a lot of home cooking was done at home and we went to the Riviera bakery which was on Holbrooks Road. That's where we had a lot of chickens cooked but they were all cleaned at home, plucked at home, the chickens got ready but he did the cooking for us at Riviera Bakery.

OH: You would have needed a lot of help, wouldn't you?

AV: Yes, but then we had this friend, family friend, Mr Dieso, he used to do a lot of cooking. He came and stayed at Mum's for two days, they were cooking a lot at home also but then we had sandwiches made and everything. There was plenty of food for those times but it wasn't a hot meal. You had paper plates with chicken, a bit of cheese, a bit of small goods on it. That used to be it. But those years, people did not let you know whether they were coming or not. Sometimes you'd go to a wedding, there was too many people, not enough food. Not because it was our wedding, we had plenty of food that went on for days.

OH: You had plenty left over.

AV: Being on 22nd December, the Italian tradition, Christmas Eve, you fast for meat and we didn't know what to do so we had people come back from the Hall on the Saturday night, they were invited to come back the day after when we had our packing shed that was all emptied out and a lot of people came back for drink and food. The Monday night, there was still a lot of food left, Mum and a few ladies got together and made like a spaghetti sauce and cooked us meat again and I think they had pasta, they invited all the people that helped at the wedding. And a lot

of people still speak about it today, the older people that they can remember.

OH: That's lovely.

AV: Mmnn.

OH: So it was a real community kind of feeling?

AV: It was a community and when we got married, we did not go away for a honeymoon, those years but I had a family living in this house and we came back to the house that night. It's not that we went to a hotel. Quite embarrassing, but pulled through.

OH: That's good, I'm glad that you did.

AV: Mmnn.

OH: How did you buy your dress?

AV: We found a dressmaker out at Saint Peters but there was a family friend, now I cannot remember her name, we met her through someone. She gave us the address and she helped Mum a lot, organising for me to get this dress made and everything. But I remember going into David Jones for the material and then we went to Saint Peters but I cannot remember the name. I think it was College Park, those years, there.

OH: Who were your bridesmaids?

AV: My bridesmaid, maid of honour was my cousin's girlfriend at the time, Vicenzina De Ionno and my second bridesmaid was Norma Ballestrin.

OH: And Norma was --- a neighbour?

AV: A neighbour, a friend that I had. We would get together, she was a friend that I had most of the time, yes.

OH: (1:17:21) Who else were your friends as you were growing up?

AV: I can't say I had many close friends at home but we used to know these girls when we would go to church, used to be Saint Joseph's, Captain Cook Avenue and we'd be going to church through the market gardens, didn't go through the main streets, the Zerella's, and the Ballestrin's, cutting through the streets and that's when I would meet a lot of the friends, Santina Ballestrin, Dolfina Ballestrin ... there was Connie Marchioro, there was Assunta Tonellato, a lot of the girls from here. We used to know one another, not that I used to go out with them, but Norma was the one who would always come around on a Sunday afternoon or something if she had nowhere to go.

OH: Oh.

AV: Mmnn. Then I got to meet these other people, you know, when they were coming from Italy, like my Uncle's side, they had daughters and children so we were growing up with them also.

OH: Yes, because you had quite a group of relatives, didn't you?¹¹

AV: Yes.

OH: (1:18:40) I was going to ask you about the other traditions that you had in your family because you've already talked about the food made for Easter and Christmas and you mentioned before about the tomato sauce. Can you just tell me a little bit about making the tomato sauce?

AV: Tomato sauce ...I can remember we had glasshouses but I can't remember that we always made it with our tomatoes. They'd go out to Virginia, Two Wells, to buy tomatoes and come home with tomatoes. What you would do, you would find somewhere in the shed, you'd put them all down separately and you'd let them ripen up. It's best if they ripen on the plant but you let them ripen. When it was time to make the sauce, you'd be getting coppers ready, big drums, petrol drums, diesel drums, just to boil your tomatoes in with the bottles. We used to get beer bottles for them. But when it was time to do the tomato sauce, we'd have buckets or sometimes you'd had the old laundry trough, just depends, we'd have to wash those tomatoes and put, our way, we do ours cooked, from the Campania.

Mum used to do them cooked, you'd put them in the copper, just let them come to the boil and get a big, we used to have celery crates then, you'd leave a couple of the better ones, clean, and once they just come to boil, you get a colander and pull them out and drain them in this box. Then we had the hand --- the hand saucer, but sometimes at the beginning we didn't have the machines to do it, they had made like a sieve. They had like a round plate and they had put a net under it and we were doing it by hand by rubbing the tomatoes in and the sauce, coming into the saucepan. And then you put the salt, a handful of salt or your basil leaves but mostly basil leaves were put in the bottle, one by one, to have that flavour. You took the bottles up, you put your tops on, we'd have a small thing and with a hammer, you'd put it on. Today, it's automatic, you know, they've got special presses.

[sound of knocking at the door]

OH: Oh.

AV: The door.

OH: We're just going to pause the interview for a moment.

OH: We're resuming the interview after a little break and Aida, we were just finishing off talking about the tomatoes because you'd got to the point of putting the basil in the bottles.

AV: And putting the sauce into them with a funnel and a ladle. You were filling each one. But in those years, what was happening also, not realising, well, filling them up really properly and

¹¹ Aida recalled in the editing process that the social life for her parents involved visiting and hosting family and friends. There were also invitations to weddings and christenings which were important social occasions.

you'd find a lot of times, your bottles would be broken when you'd bring them out. But we have learned differently today. But each bottle was wrapped in newspaper, we'd put bags in the copper, potato sacks around the cooper or even in the drums where we would boil the bottles and cover them with the water and let the water come to the boil. And you let it boil for another 15 minutes, 20 minutes after a good boil or even more. And that was done with wood, we'd go looking for wood to light the copper, today gas bottles are used. That's the way we used to make our sauce. But when the day after you would take them out one-by-one, you'd find quite a few bottles had cracked.

OH: Do you know why?

AV: Because they were too full.

OH: Oh, I see.

AV: But after many, and we would put those bottles away and reuse them every year. You would not throw your bottles away because they were the beer bottles we were using. And today we still make sauce but we would put in a bit less, we'd leave about an inch from the neck, on the top so you don't break as many bottles. So methods have changed. But also my mother, coming from the Campania, we used to make pieces of tomatoes. You'd get a tomato and cut it up into small pieces, small wedges as much as you could, put them into the bottle one-by-one and that was the tomato we used to make, use with pizzas. And also Mum used to make a tomato paste that Dad had made with the celery tops [of the crates], he had put all these boards together that had a hole underneath, and made it with a bit of hole underneath with a bit of an opening and when they made tomato sauce, she would make the tomato sauce and then there was thicker one that she would make and that would be left out in the sun for days where she had keep on turning it to make it as a paste and put it into big jars and you could use that as a spaghetti sauce also.

OH: So there were three different kinds?

AV: Three different types. We'd have like a big --- sometimes you could fit, it's like, not an aquarium but, you know, there were big containers, like big canisters but it was glass and Mum would put all that paste in there and put oil on top so it would not go off and you would keep it for a year.

OH: Did your mother had a pantry where she kept all of these bottles or where were they stored?

AV: we had them packed in the shed, put them in the shed because we did not have a cellar, those years. But coming from myself, we had a cellar under the garage in the shed, where we used to have our car, and it was a packing shed and we had a cellar so we had used to have our wine and sauce put in the cellar.

OH: I was going to ask about wine. Did your parents make wine each year?

AV: Dad used to make it, going back to Paradise, in the big shed, he had a big tank in the shed underground where he used to make his wine. He had the press for making it and he always used to make his wine and we always used to make it here at Lockleys also.

OH: Where would you get the grapes from?

AV: They would go up to I think it was the Patritti, is it? --- Was it McLaren Vale? I can't remember.

OH: Patritti, I think, was at Seacombe Gardens or somewhere like that.

AV: Was Patritti the one with the oil? I know sometimes they'd go up the vineyards, up Marion Road, right up to the top and getting the grapes to make their wine. But even like us we had a tank at the back of the shed where we put them, once you done the wine, you put it in there to let it ferment. And after so long, you put it under the press and you have to press it out and then after so long, you'd put it into your barrels and we'd put it down in the cellar.

OH: Again, it's a big process, isn't it?

AV: It's a big process but coming from an Italian family, sauce, wine, and pork.

OH: I was going to say, did you kill the pig?

AV: Small goods. We used to buy it, I have never done it myself. Mum was the expert there again. They'd always make their homemade sausages and prosciutto. And Amadio used to do it here. I was always left in the kitchen side because you had people doing it so you'd be in the kitchen but I had nothing to do with the meat or anything like that.

OH: Because that was a process too.

AV: Over so many years now, we have not made wine or pork.

OH: (1:27:35) Going back to when you were a child and your mother would have had to bought groceries and food for the family. Where would she have shopped for groceries?

AV: When she came out from Italy, living at Paradise, there used to be a little corner shop that was a grocery and post office, right at the end of the street. That's where she would get a lot of her things. But not knowing English, the storeman, would say: "Come in and just walk around." But when we moved to Lockleys, we used to have Crotti from Currie Street which had a store there. They used to come around and take orders and Mum would order what she needed from there. There was also another one, I cannot remember his name, he used to come around also with groceries or take an order and deliver the week after. We had a fisherman coming around with fish, we had someone coming around like with a truck for drapery and once a month he would come around and that's where we would get a lot of our clothes and things like that. But then we had our, Henley Beach Road, there were a few shops there, used to be Peterson's the drapery store where we used to get a lot of things also.

OH: So shopping...?

AV: And our commas, chemist. Comma? How can you correct that, oh my God. [laughs]

OH: The chemist was on Henley Beach Road?

AV: On Henley Beach Road, I cannot remember the name. Wynns? I think it was but I cannot remember properly. We had our chemist and our doctor there.

OH: (1:29:39) And Aida, when would your parents have finished working in the gardens, do you think?

AV: --- That, I cannot remember. I cannot remember which year they sold the land.

OH: Would your father have been, you know, I was wondering, would he have been 60 or 65 or?

AV: Dad would have been in his 70s.

OH: When he finished?

AV: Or 65 because he used to suffer a lot with gout and that's when he had to give up work that he couldn't do it any more. I think he would have been around about 65 or 66.

OH: Right. In the years '65, '66?

AV: Yes. Or it could have been later, I cannot remember.

OH: And then what did your parents do after that?

[sound of heavy rain continues]

AV: Well, Dad kept the house with another one, two, two blocks on one side, two blocks on the other. His belief was bricks and mortar, not believing shares or things like that. He'd built flats, he built, bought some flats at Lockleys and he had some spare land like two blocks would be on the side of the house, that's where he used to pass his time with his vegetables and he had this little chicken shed at the back and that's what he used to do to pass his time.

OH: So he had a good vegetable garden?

AV: He always had a good vegetable garden. Now, after he died, but before he died, he said to Mum when I go I want two units put on that land. And there are two units there which now belong to my brother, and there's the other three units that belonged to my father, they were given to my brother, and I had taken over on the right hand side, two units and some units he bought at Lockleys, Cross Street, Lockleys, they were given to me, and they are in my name and my children's.

OH: Right. Your father was good provider?

AV: He left us with a good inheritance.

OH: What about your mother when the work finished in the gardens, how would she have spent her time?

AV: Mum always had a house full of friends. She always had her friends, like Cesira Ballestrin, Norina Ballestrin, there used to be a lady who used to be a dressmaker, they'd always come

around. She had a lot of friends around and Mum loved baking and she did a lot of baking. A lot of people would say: "How do you make these?" "Well, come around and we'll do them together." And she did a lot of baking. She didn't really go out that much, having Dad at home but Dad did not annoy by having to be home all the time but she was the type, she would go out to visit her sisters out at Campbelltown, which she'd catch the buses to go there. She would always have lunch ready for him, on the table and a plate of biscuits or cake in case someone come around. So when someone came, Dad would get the coffee and the biscuits that were on the table.

OH: Very organised.

AV: But she loved her baking. Dad was not an early one to come in at night for dinner. Mum used to get annoyed sometimes, said: "I'm eating on my own." But she would have dinner ready for him. She would wash her plates before that she didn't have to do them after. All that was left was his. But he would help if he was inside the house.

OH: (1:33:47) Did your parents return to Italy?

AV: Mum and Dad have gone back to Italy twice but now I cannot remember which year. The first time Mum wanted to go back and Dad would never go, he said: "No, no, I'm not going back to Italy." Mum said: "Whether you're coming or not, I'm going." So Dad decided to go with her and after he went the first time, he wanted to go back the second time which they did. They went to Italy and London, I think. But I cannot remember the dates.

OH: (1:34:24) Aida, did you and Amadio go to Italy?

AV: I've been to Italy twice. The first time I went by ship with the *Galileo* in 1964 with the two children. We went in March, left on 13th March and came back in September. But we had, we changed the ship coming back 'cos there was friend in Italy who was partially blind, he wanted to come back to see his son that lived two houses up which were the Piereosanti's and he wanted company to come to Australia. We could not get another seat for him on the ship we were coming back with. We postponed that ship, we came back with the *Oronsay* to bring him back. It was not the same.

OH: No.

AV: I think there was only ten paying passengers on that ship coming back with the *Oronsay*. The others were all the migrants. Was it the \$10 migrant coming back those years in '64.

OH: What did you, well, first of all, did you go to your, well you would have gone to your father's village because it was also Amadio's.

AV: We went to the Marche and I spent five days in Mum's home town, only five days, we went to San Giorgio.

OH: Were there relatives there that you met?

AV: My mother still had two sisters alive and I did meet them and some cousins, but we only

had five days there and other friends. But going out for lunch and dinner but it was lovely town, yes. But the Marche, we went to my father's but Amadio's sister which lived in Australia had gone to live in Rimini where they bought a hotel after 13 years living in Australia. So we were based most of the time at Rimini with them. And there were a lot of Australian people, knowing them have gone to visit.

OH: Mmmn. It's a beautiful place, isn't it?

AV: Mmmn.

OH: And we're coming to the end of the interview, in the dark, because of the power going out.
[laughter]

OH: (1:36:54) But, Aida if I asked you do you feel Australian or Italian, what would your answer be?

AV: I'm going to give you a honest answer. I feel more Italian than Australian, I don't know why, because I've been brought up with the Italian culture with my parents, having an Italian husband how did not speak much English, I've always mixed more with the Italians. But I've still tried to mix with Australians, also. Because my sister-in-law is Australian-speaking, and my daughter-in-law is Australian but I still try to mix.

OH: Mmmn. But it's interesting, isn't it, that feeling of being Italian?

AV: I don't know why.

OH: What does it mean to you do you think, to be Italian?

AV: I'm proud of both. But if someone asked me: "What are you?" I'd turn around, I say I'm Australian." But I feel as though I get a second look because I'm dark, I normally get told I'm Italian or Greek. [laughs] But, no offence, but sometimes I feel I'm more Italian, I don't why. It's hard to explain.

OH: Yes.

AV: But even here I've joined the Probus Club because I need to be able to mix with Australians. I go to the Marche Club once a month, because it's Amadio's hometown and I've got a friend who takes me.

OH: Where's the Marche Club?

AV: At Darley Road, Paradise.

OH: Oh, Paradise again?

AV: Yes, it's all from the Marche region more or less.

OH: Does that feel comfortable for you to be in that community?

AV: It does because we've always been with him there, it was hard to get back into it after he left. But you know, I only go daytime. But I have joined the Probus Club because I need to mix with other people. I have been asked to go to these other places where they have luncheons and

things, I still do go but I have to mix with both. That's what I have found.

OH: Yes, yes.

AV: As my daughter says, I'm forgetting English because I always watch Italian TV, don't know why.

OH: Perhaps it was you said earlier about growing up in a family that was Italian and parents from different parts of Italy too.

AV: Well, not being allowed to go out when you're younger, you couldn't mix with girls from school or anything like that, you know. Yes, I used to go and play basketball but Dad, I always had to argue with Dad. "What is she going out for?" When he'd see me with a school uniform on, or basketball.

OH: But to feel Italian is a really lovely thing because that is your heritage and also your husband's heritage too, an important part of you, I think.

AV: It's probably wrong but that's how I feel.

OH: I don't think it's wrong but it's just the right way that you feel. And I think it's really interesting.

AV: You know, I have to say Australian because if I have to sign something, where were you born? Australia.

OH: Yeah.

AV: But I do feel more Italian.

OH: Yeah, and I think it's that feeling that is very strong.

AV: And when I went to Italy, people were looking at me, I think when we went the first time, coming from a country town that Amadio came from, they probably thought I was an Aborigine. And when they saw me, I was washing ... shouldn't be speaking on that now ... I was washing clothes out the back, at the laundry trough. And I heard someone say: "But she's not black." So they probably ... now I shouldn't say,

OH: They probably thought...

AV: I shouldn't have said that.

OH: No. That's alright. I understand

AV: Can you cross that bit off.

OH: No, I understand what you're saying.

AV: No, no, it's prejudice. No.

OH: No, I mean you're repeating...

AV: They thought I was Australian, I was an Aboriginal.

OH: Yeah, isn't that interesting?

AV: That's what they expected. They think we had kangaroos out in our houses.

OH: Yes, and if you...

AV: Look, I'm sorry about that.

OH: Not, that's alright.

AV: I regret that one.

OH: But I think you were repeating what people said and they probably thought that you...

AV: I heard them and they probably thought I couldn't speak Italian...

OH: Yes.

AV: Because they knew Amadio had an Australian wife.

OH: Yeah, and for them they probably thought an Aboriginal which is very interesting.

AV: Oh, gee I wish I hadn't said that one.

OH: Aida, you've provided all sorts of really interesting information about your family and the experience of growing up and being in this community here, you didn't move far from your parents' home?

AV: Not at all.

OH: About 20 steps, maybe?

AV: Not at all.

OH: But is there anything else you would like to say before we close the interview?

AV: Well, sometimes I still go out the front and I look u at my parents' house and I can picture all the people that would be sitting on the lawn at summertime which that does not exist any longer.

OH: Who would have been sitting on the lawn?

AV: The Girolamo's, the Mercurio's, the Melillo's, there's another little Greek lady that lives across the road. We'd see someone there and they would all be accumulating and that's when we would be having the bottle of wine and watermelon in summer months 'cos we didn't have air conditioning in the houses at those years.

OH: And the watermelon?

AV: I still picture that when I go out there, I still look, and that's what I can see.

OH: It's a beautiful memory.

AV: That is my memory there.

OH: And that's a lovely place to end the interview. And I'd like to say thank you very much for giving such terrific information and for your memory. Thank you for contributing to the oral history project about the Italian market gardeners.

AV: It has been a pleasure.

OH: I'm pleased to hear that. Thank you very much, Aida.

Interview ends at 1:43:25