

Italian market gardeners oral history project
Interview with Virginia Rodato nee Zampin – OH 872-43

Recorded on 15th March 2017

At Fulham Gardens, South Australia

OH: This is a recording of an oral history interview for the Italian market gardeners oral history project. I'm interviewing Virginia Rodato nee Zampin on 15th March 2017 at Fulham Gardens, and my name is Madeleine Regan.

Virginia, thank you for agreeing to this interview.

VR: Thanks very much for coming here today.

OH: My pleasure.

(00:28) Well, let's start with your family background. What is your full name?

VR: Virginia Silvana Rodato.

OH: And were you named for anyone with those two lovely names?

VR: Well, my father's name was Silvano and I guess that was the second name. Yes.

OH: But you were number ...?

VR: Number six, yes.

OH: Of...?

VR: Of nine.

OH: And how many sisters?

VR: Eight girls and a boy.

OH: So it took a while to get Silvana as the name in the family?

VR: That's true but I don't know really the reason. When I was confirmed I was called, sponsored and Mum put a name down after her. So my third name but it is not registered, is Katherine.

OH: And that was her name?

VR: That's her second name, yeah.

OH: And what about Virginia, do you know why you were called Virginia?

VR: No, I don't know, no.

OH: Could you tell me your date of birth?

VR: The third of the twelfth, '45. [3/12/1945]

OH: And where were you born?

VR: Keswick.

OH: Right. And could you tell me the full names of your parents? Perhaps we'll start with your mother.

VR: Amelia Katherine Zampin. And my father's original name was Primo but I see on most of his papers Silvano has been put down. But his original name, Primo.

OH: And what did your mother call him?

VR: --- Gerry.

OH: Oh, okay.

VR: Yes, yes, she called him Gerry and her name was Milly. So it was Milly and Gerry.

OH: Right. And what was her family name before she married?

VR: Her family name was Shaw.

OH: Thank you, and where was your mother born? --- Was she born in Adelaide?

VR: She was born in Adelaide, yes.

OH: And what about your father, where was he born?

VR: He was born in Riese, in Treviso, Riese, in Italy.

OH: In Italy, and it was the region of Venice, the Veneto...

VR: The Veneto region, yes.

OH: What do you know about how your parents first met each other?

VR: I don't really know that much about them, when they met. Mmmn, I just know they were living in town, they got married in Grote Street and that's about it, really.

OH: And what year?

VR: --- '31, I think, 1931.

OH: And do you know what work either of them was doing before they got married?

VR: I believe Mum was a secretary for a doctor. And my father was working --- I'm not quite sure for who and what but he eventually became a gardener. Whether he was doing that at that time ... and he was working for a Chinese bloke, I think. Now that's recalled. And then, yes, that's what I think and then he gradually got his own garden going, yes.

OH: (03:55) And at the time that you were born, what were your parents doing?

VR: They were living at Lockleys --- and they had glasshouses. And wasn't much room, we had a very small home and Dad had built on to the back of the home and put a wood stove in and increased on the side

with a small bathroom and that's about it. I grew up there and I was about seven or eight when we left that home.

OH: And we can go into more detail about that. We've already talked about the fact that you were from a large family and you were number of eight sisters and one brother.

VR: Yes, that's true. And I remember being at that house and I had a small dog, his name was Spotty and Dad had put a, made a swing on this mulberry tree and we used to play around there, you know and had huge trees around. We use to call them pepper trees and we would get under there and just play with a ball, that was the only thing we had in those days. And that was about it, yeah.

OH: And when you were born, do you know how old your eldest sister was at that time?

VR: She would have been about 14 or so.

OH: Right, so that was quite a distance between the eldest and number six?

VR: It is, it is, it's a fair distance --- there was no playing immediate playing with her because she was becoming an adult and you know, she had chores to do at the house so one of them would have been looking after me.

OH: How old was the sister ahead of you, older than you?

VR: Three years older.

OH: And then what about the one below you?

VR: She was only one year younger or 13 months.

OH: Right.

VR: That was Sandra.

OH: Right.

(06:19) And to finish off the family context, your own family? You married?

VR: I married Mario, Mario Rodato and he's from Castello di Godego, Treviso. Of course, Italy, in the Veneto region. But, yes, I've been married to him for 50 years now.

OH: Congratulations.

VR: More than that, now.

OH: And your children and grandchildren?

VR: I have two children, two boys. Anthony which we call Tony, he's 51 this year or 52 and Dino will be 49 this year. The, both of them are married and they both have two children. The older boy is married to a nice young lady, Lisa is her name and they have two children, a boy, Anthony, 16 and a girl, Marina, she'll

be 12 this year. And Dino, of course, has his wife. Her name is Lisa too and they have twins, three years old, Matthew and Emma.

OH: Lovely. And I know that you've got grandparent duty that you do regularly with them

VR: Yes, I look after the twins once a week, yes.

OH: Thank you for giving that information.

OH: Now we're going to turn to your parents and their story and your family's story.

(08:07) But first of all I wanted to ask you what you know about your father coming to Australia?

VR: Well, he came on a boat called 'Genoa' and when he arrived here, he was greeted with --- he had a brother here and he was greeted with this brother. His name was Peter and they both went to live in town, in Grote Street --- in Grote Street and --- I think they found work for him down immediate work, and he went to work down on the wharfies at Port Adelaide. And after about 18 months or so, his brother died. He was killed in an accident and he was here all by himself except for a couple of *paesani*.¹ One would have been Beppi Giacomelli and he became good friends and helped each other out.

OH: And do you remember what year your father came?

VR: January --- I think it was 15th, 1928. Yes.

OH: (09:31) Right and do you know who else he was friends with at that time?

VR: Well, this Beppi Giacomelli, well, he was very close to him and he found a --- a place for him to live at Lockleys. He said he was doing market gardening, would he like to help out. But Dad at that particular time, he was working for some other people, a Chinese bloke or something and this Beppi Giacomelli, he said it would be a good idea and then we can rent the property together and you know, start up a garden. And of course, Mum and Dad were married and they had a couple of kids and it was an opportunity for him to start that. And then they were friends with Vic Marchioro, Vittorio Marchioro and Angelina, Santini --- it's not coming for me. [whispers]

OH: A lot of others ... we can talk about that later.

VR: Yes. Yes.

OH: (10:49) But do you know why your father came to Australia?

VR: Well, it was just after the War. No. Yes, it was just after the first War, 1928, there. What happened, he was 18 and I don't think there was a lot of work available at that particular time and --- being in that area where he was living was like a lot of rice being grown and was not very good at that particular time for them in Italy. No work around, was no future involved there. So he had a brother out here, or in Australia at that time and he thought perhaps it was the best thing for him to go away and perhaps earn money and go back

¹ The word *paesani* describes people who come from the same village or local area

later. He may have done that. And then of course he met my mother, you know, there was no need to go back. He found a good way here, here at Lockleys.

OH: And --- do you remember if your father had left behind his family?

VR: Yes, he had two brothers and four sisters and ...

OH: And parents?

VR: And his parents, of course. One of his brothers went to Germany and he was working there and of course, sending money home for the rest of the family to live because there was no money around or that type of thing. And, of course Dad migrated out here, his brother was already here and the four sisters, were still in the area and they gradually got married and had their families around there.

OH: And did one other brother come here?

VR: (12:58) Yes, another brother came out here. His name was Antonio and in 1967 he returned back to Italy.

OH: He had another name that people called him? And what was that?

VR: His name was Nico. Nico. And yes, he went back to Italy and stayed there.

OH: Do you know, with his wife?

VR: Yes. Yes, she came out here, I can't remember the date but I would have been, would have been three or four, --- about '49 or something like that. Or she may have been a bit later.

OH: Right.

VR: But, yes, she came out here and they found a house for them to live in --- Peter Berno's? They were, of course, from the same area and they lived there and of course, she worked in the glasshouses and later they bought land on Valetta Road and she was working glasshouses and he would go to work. And gradually they got enough money together to go back to Italy. That's what they wanted.

OH: Where did your Uncle work?

VR: I'm not sure.

OH: And do you know the reason they returned to Italy?

VR: That was always in his heart to do that. He just wanted to go back. He'd been back during that time. He was here about 20 years before he went back and he went back one time and he'd bought a house and he'd done it up and he came back, sold the property and then went back to stay there.

OH: Interesting isn't it? One brother stays. I wonder how your father would have felt when your Uncle went back?

VR: Well, I believe he was lost because every Sunday one or the other would visit each other and but, no, this other one, he wanted to go back that's what he felt, him and his wife.

OH: We'll just pause while you collect your throat.

VR: Yes.

[Pause]

OH: We're resuming the interview after a short break.

OH: (15:34) And Virginia, I was just going to ask you about your Uncle and Auntie's children?

VR: Yes, Auntie Adelia and Nico, Uncle Nico, they had three children. One was Teresina, Irene and Dennis. Teresina lives here, of course but Irene² and Dennis live in Riese.

OH: So they went back with their parents?

VR: So after about 20 years of being here, they returned with two children, Irene and Dennis. Teresina got married and that's why she's here.

OH: Thank you.

OH: (16:23) Now we're going to turn the interview to a little bit of your story about growing up and you've already told me that your parents were living in Lockleys when you were born. Who were your godparents for your baptism?

VR: Mr and Mrs Zalunardo.

OH: Oh.

VR: Noemi's mother and father.

OH: Right, so that's Marena and Yiyetta?

VR: That's right, yes.

OH: And were they ... how important were they as you were growing up?

VR: Well, they used to visit Mum and Dad quite regularly, and of course, I was born and they bought me a beautiful outfit for the baptism and later on, you know we still always kept in contact with each other and I used to visit them regularly myself, when I got older. But unfortunately she died just before I got married. So that was that. But he lived on and we'd see each other every now and then. It was very important to us. Yes.

OH: (17:36) Do you have any first memories? Like anything that you think might have been a first memory of your life?

VR: Yes, I remember --- because I was sick --- I remember Mum taking me up to see a specialist in the tram.

² Irene Zampin married to Giuliano Berdusco, lives in Caselle di Altivole

OH: What was your sickness?

VR: Oh, I had a disease called Pink's disease.

OH: And what happens when you get Pink's disease?

VR: Well, it's a disease of the blood, I believe. I haven't gone into it but I didn't walk until I was three and a half. And --- my oldest sister as I was told, she used to look after me quite a bit. And in the meantime Mum would be taking me up to the specialist for injections in this tramcar and I wore dark glasses and poor Mum, she was having my younger sister, Sandra, at the same time and I remember learning to walk and just taking off like everybody else I guess. By the time I went to school, I was walking quite good and knowledgeable enough to go, you know.

OH: Did that disease have any effect on you after? You know after that first period when you couldn't walk?

VR: --- Well, I was unable, I just laid in bed. And from what I was told, I wasn't well, I'd lost a lot of weight. I had curly hair and it all fell out.

OH: Oh.

VR: And it was quite dramatic, type of thing. But yeah, I climbed out of it like you know, a --- good soldier. [laughter]

OH: (19:41) You've talked about the little house and I'm going to ask you some questions about that but could you tell me the location of where your family home was, that you had your first years in?

VR: Yes, it was Henley Beach Road, Lockleys. And at the moment, there's church there, Christ the King. And at the back of that church was where we used to live. There's a school there at the moment --- St Francis, I think it is called. Of course, the house is not there. But we had a lane. The milkman would come and leave the milk at the top of the lane and we'd have to go and pick it up in a billycan.

OH: How far were you from --- Henley Beach Road?

VR: Not far.

OH: But it was a bit of a walk?

VR: It was a bit of a walk. There was a lane there and --- Dad had a car and we used to walk there. But walking down to school, to catch the tram to go up to Star of the Sea³, it was little bit of a distance, yes. So that's what I remember that. I can't remember much more.

OH: And the house, you said it was very small?

VR: Yes, --- it was originally ... it was one bedroom --- a lounge, we had, a kitchen and that, Dad had built on and also a sleeping area which was built on and also a bathroom, Dad had built a bathroom and of course,

³ Star of the Sea Convent at Henley Beach

in that bathroom it was like the old times, you had the washing machine and all those things and bit of a shower going and a copper and out the front, Dad had a verandah and he enclosed that and some of my sisters were living in there, sleeping at night, rather. But they had a room inside, a lounge room which everyone would gather into at night-time. And you know mum would have a wood fire going and that was about what I can remember.

OH: You had electricity?

VR: Yes, yes, we had electricity and I think, in the beginning, I didn't see that, I can't remember this at all, they had an icebox but later on they bought a refrigerator, a Kelvinator. Yes, they had. I know when we shifted, we had the Kelvinator so it must have been there a few years.

OH: And what was the house made of?

VR: Bricks and iron er, iron roof, of course and very small home for a family, my brother was born and Mum took him home there so it would have been nine, no, eight, Milva would have been married then, yes.

OH: And what was the floor like? What was it made of?

VR: Well, the cooking area and one of the bedrooms and the bathroom --- all the wet area was all concrete. Inside was a wood floor. One bedroom and the lounge, we used to call it the lounge. And out the front, of course, it was concrete on the verandah, it was all enclosed. Yes.

OH: Would that house have been there before your moved?

VR: Yes, very much like. Yes.

OH: What about around near the house? What was the... was there a garden?

VR: Well, Mum had a huge clothesline because there was a lot of us, you know. And you'd probably remember this, that they had, he had like a hoist, not a hoist --- a prop on one side and then a line of wire, a couple of lines of wire and at the back of that there was a row of ... dahlias. My Mum had dahlias, she liked dahlias. And of course, that was on the side of the house. On the back of the house, she had geraniums. I think being a big family, you can't put too much around and she looked after us quite well. But in the front we had a lawn like we have now, a bit of lawn, a few flowers around. Not much.

OH: It sounds like there were some lovely big old trees?

VR: Yes, we had pepper trees at the back of the house and they were huge and we always had somewhere in the summer to sit outside there, under these pepper trees. Yeah.

OH: (25:13) How far were you from the river?

VR: --- A fair distance, I can't recall to walk to there, never.

OH: It wasn't something you did?

VR: No, because at the back of our house was like sand hills, it was all sand there, and then there was a gardener, two or three other gardeners around.

OH: On the property?

VR: Not on our property where we were, but further down towards the river, yes. It was Hanks, Bob Hanks and --- I can't remember too much, maybe have been Lindsay Head or somebody. No, I don't want to say anyone's names, I don't know.

OH: And what about Giacomelli? Was he also working there when you were growing up there?

VR: Mmmn, he worked at the --- the owners of the property where Mum and Dad, we were living, also owned the church and a residence up on the..., a little bit up higher and Giacomelli had his rented, the area next door to ours.⁴ So they were in contact mostly every day with each other saying how you going or come over and have a coffee or... He had a brother came out, Giacomelli, and he was living on the property. Beppi, Giuseppe, he was married and he would go away from the property but his brother would live there.

OH: And his brother's name, do you remember?

VR: I think it was Enrico.

OH: Who was the... like the first one who was a friend was Beppi? To your father?

VR: Beppi, yes.

OH: Right.

OH: (27:06) And did you, when you were growing up there, do you remember if your parents had a cow or horse or any animals like that?

VR: No. I know they had that but I can't remember that. I can only remember having lots of chickens and -- you know, we used to put the bran and pollen together and mix it all and take it in and feed the chickens and collect the eggs and so on. Yeah, that was about it.

OH: Did you have any home vegetable garden? Or did your mother use the vegetables from, the, you know, from your parents' market garden?

VR: Yes, they planted a lot of vegetables for us and the only they had a couple of fruit trees but what we didn't have, when Dad went to the market he would bring home those vegetables and fruit, what we didn't have. And of course, he'd bring home a bag instead of a pound or two pounds, it's be a bag of beans or a bag of, or a crate of bananas or a crate of apples or something like that because he'd just go. Yeah, that's what I remember him doing that. Yes.

⁴ In the editing process, Virginia clarified that Giacomelli worked on the same property off Henley Beach Road where her family was living and where the Franciscan priest was living

OH: (28:37) And talking about shopping and food for the family, where would your parents have bought their meat? Do you remember?

VR: Hmm, I can't remember much. I think Dad used to buy it in town, in the market, I'm not quite sure. And the groceries, they had a --- a grocer, I'd suppose you'd call him a grocery fella had a shop in town called the Star grocery. Somehow or other, Mum would get an order to him and he would bring down an order bring it in a couple of crates or something like that, once week or once a fortnight or whatever. When he'd arrive, you know, he'd have a drink or whatever because he'd be going from one house to another. Of course, that particular shop only had European food like pasta and oil, you could buy it in a bigger quantity than some little grocery store so I think they got most of their gear there. Mum would buy a bag of sugar and big quantities of things and these people supplied all that for us.

OH: (30:06) And what about clothes and things like that? What do you remember about your Mum and Dad buying clothes for maybe the kids and themselves?

VR: Yes, well, I always had a lot of hand-me-downs but I always had one good outfit. Mum would buy us, well I remember her buying for me anyway, one good outfit every year and then the rest was from my other sisters or you know, that family type of thing. And then she would make, Mum was very handy with her hands and she would do a beret and scarf and I remember...

OH: Was that knitting or crochet?

VR: She was very good at crochet. She would do doilies and she'd make baby blankets for different people and she was very, very good with her hands.

OH: How did she get the time?

VR: I don't know, but I remember, this is going off the story but she wanted a coat for my brother and she said, "Oh, I can't make that coat. It doesn't look good for a boy, crochet and knitting and that." And of course there was not much money around. So down this lane where we were situated at Lockleys, there was all almond trees. And she said, "Come on you kids, we've got to go and pick those almonds." And we'd pick them all and she went and sold them and bought a coat for my brother.

OH: That's a lovely story, isn't it?

VR: Yes. [laughs] Yes. I often think about it. Yeah, and then of course she made a beret, a boy's beret with a peak at the front, type of thing for him. Mmnn.

OH: And you know the good outfit you remember having over the time you were a child, where would your mother have bought that?

VR: Oh, she used to get Child Endowment, at that particular time and that mostly went for our clothes. And she would buy, let's say, I don't know, you'd go in town, there used to be a couple of shops there. And she'd

say, "I need that one. That'd be good for that one. Can I bring it back?" Or something. And the lady got to know her and she would help her out in different ways to get them up or down, whatever.

OH: Did you go to town much with your Mum?

VR: I went a few times. We always went with the tramcar. She would have to go to different places to pay bills. And then we would go the last stop would be the fish shop, the fish shop in Hindley Street, I think it was. And we'd go buy a fish and then she would come home and she would fry it and we'd have fish and chips for tea that night. Yeah. It wasn't often but it was like a treat.

OH: And somebody would have done the potatoes?

VR: Oh, yeah, someone done the potatoes and everyone chipped in to give it a go. Yeah.

OH: (33:41) And another part of your growing up... Can you tell me where you went to primary school?

VR: Yes, I went to Star of the Sea here.

OH: At?

VR: At Henley Beach.

OH: And how did you get there, to school?

VR: I went with a tramcar.

OH: And you would have had other sisters going with you?

VR: Yes. Oh, I had Sandra and --- I think my younger one, Cynthia, for a short time. Yes.

OH: And then, what about high school?

VR: I only went one year and that was at Findon High because that was in the same street where I lived.

OH: Because the family had moved?

VR: Yes.

OH: Yeah. And we'll talk about that, too.

OH: (34:27) What about your First Holy Communion? Where did you make your First Holy Communion?

VR: Star of the Sea.

OH: Was that a big event?

VR: Not, well, it was a big event for me personally because you know, taking First Holy Communion. I would have been about seven, Think. And we all had to take a plate and I wasn't allowed to eat because that was the common thing to do and then you take the plate into the convent before and then afterwards we would go and have this plate of, you know a few in the family and Dad would pick us up in the car and then off we'd go home.

OH: Did you have a white dress?

VR: Yes.

OH: Who would have made that?

VR: Well, I can't remember anybody making it, I think it was a pass down.

OH: Right.

VR: Because Mum would buy two or three, well she had two or three and of course, we all went through that and perhaps she might need it because it had been passed down a few times, I might have needed a new veil or something. I can't remember getting a new one but anyhow it was a good frock, a nice frock. And we used to use that for processions after at Lockleys.

OH: Oh.

VR: So that was nice. You know, we'd all ... the priest, because we were on the Franciscan fathers' land, they would come down to Mum and say, "Milly, I need four or six kids for the procession tomorrow because it's the Feast of Immaculate Heart of Mary." Or something. "Oh yeah, alright, Father." And a few rose petals, of course and then we'd be in the procession and dress up in a white frock, of course. So they got used quite a bit, it wasn't just there.

OH: What about Confirmation?

VR: Yes.

OH: Because you told me that you had your mother's name for Confirmation.

VR: Yes, My sister, Bruna, was my sponsor and yes, we just had like a family dinner and that was it, yes.

OH: (36:57) Who were your friends at school?

VR: Hmm, let me think... [laughs]

OH: It's a long time ago.

VR: It is a long time ago. I can't remember going out with any of those girls because we moved house and I would have been what? 12, 13 when we moved --- I'm not quite sure. No.

OH: Were there other Italian girls at Star of the Sea?

VR: Not a lot. There were some. But there was a confusion because shifting, you know, if I was friends with that particular one, it would be to visit her and then it wasn't the telephone, wasn't around like it is now to keep up with friends, yes.

OH: (37:57) And you told me that you went for one year to Findon High School, how old were you when you left?

VR: Fourteen.

OH: And at 14, what did you do?

VR: Well, --- I got a job, of course.

OH: Where was your job?

VR: I used to work in a bake house at Trimmer Parade, here at Seaton. Yes, it was early morning rise, of course.

OH: Was this Badenoch's?

VR: Mmmn...

OH: What time did you start?

VR: Well it was different times. On Friday it would have been 2 o'clock.

OH: 2:00 am?

VR: 2:00 am in the morning.

OH: Oh! [exclaims]

VR: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday was 4:00 [am]. And Monday was 3:00 [am]. Yes.

OH: How good were you at --- getting up?

VR: Good. I put the clock on, the alarm. I used to ride with a bike there. Dad bought me a bike and I went there with this bike in the morning. And we came back with a bike, as well. [laughter]

OH: Was that your choice to work there at Badenoch's?

VR: Well, I was making good money and I was still very young, of course, and the wages then was not like it was now. If you were young and even though if you were working with a person older and doing their same work, you wasn't getting that wage what they were getting. But working early in the morning, you got like penalty rate, so you were getting a bit more.

OH: How long did you stay at Badenoch's?

VR: Until I got married.

OH: What was the actual work you were doing?

VR: Well, I started off just packing cakes but I came to a part when I got to a higher level and I was the, directing --- packers how to pack the cakes and which customer they would go to and make sure they went out correctly and I became like a supervisor, yeah. And I kind of built myself up a bit. But when I got married, my husband and I decided to have a family so he didn't like me going to that job any more. So I just stayed home.

OH: And when you were doing the work there at Badenoch's, all the years that you were there? Because you went at 14 and what age were you when you married?

VR: Twenty.

OH: So six years or so. Always those shifts?

VR: Yes.

OH: Really early in the morning? You must have got used to shift working shift work?

VR: Yeah, it didn't worry me. Never worried me. I was... I didn't mind working there.

OH: (41:25) And what did you do for a social life, as a young girl, as a young woman?

VR: Well, during --- at the age of 14, I had a few friends and we used to go out, pictures and it was mostly on the weekend because through the week, you know even those girls were still at school, they had better opportunities than me. And they were still at school. And I just used to visit them in their home and they would come to my place on their bikes and I would go there. And that's what it was. And I met my husband, I was about 16, 16 and a half. so ...

OH: How did you meet Mario?

VR: I went to a wedding with my friend.

OH: Who was your friend?

VR: Gilda Favero, Favaro. Gilda Favaro and we were good buddies.

OH: And where did Gilda's family live?

VR: About two ks [kilometres] from home. They lived just off Findon Road, on the corner of Findon and Grange Road. So it wasn't a long way from Angley Avenue but you know, I could go on my bike and she often came to my place. We'd stay over on the weekend, type of thing, yes. And we'd go different places, during the day, we'd go... a couple of times, a group of us would go to... on the Popeye, that type of thing and --- we didn't go to that many places [laughs] down to the beach, places where it didn't cost a lot.

OH: And which beach did you go to?

VR: Just down here to Kircaldy because you could catch the bus at Grange Road and that would take you straight to the bus, to Kircaldy, to the beach there.

OH: At Grange?

VR: Yes, at Grange, more or less in between Grange and Henley Beach. Yeah. Then we'd get off the bus and go to the beach, and get back on the bus and go home. And that was it, yeah.

OH: And was Gilda's family from the Veneto?

VR: Yes. Her Mum and Dad came from Riese, the same town as my father. And they knew them, of course before, for a long time. So we became good friends, yeah.

OH: Did they migrate to Australia before the War or after the War?

VR: I think after the War, yes, I'm not quite sure of their history.

OH: (44:20) So, going back to meeting Mario, you were at a wedding?

VR: Mmnnn.

OH: Was it Gilda's wedding?

VR: No, no. Gilda asked me to go to this wedding with her family, of course. And Dad said to me: "You have to ask the people that --- was, you know, the bride and groom's parents, if we could go.

OH: Who were they?

VR: Oh, I can't remember. ---

OH: Veneti?

VR: Yes, yes.

OH: Where was the wedding?

VR: I can't remember, can't remember at all. Anyway they said: "Yes you can bring her." So I went with her and I met him there at this wedding. And he asked me out and I thought oh well, why not? You know, that was it.

OH: How were your parents? What was their reaction to Mario asking you out? Was that okay with them?

VR: Yes, they didn't seem to mind. Of course he had to come around to the house, there was none of this off the road type of thing. And I wasn't ... because Mario, he was working in the country, he'd done concrete work and his boss had asked him to go away and do big jobs out in the country. He'd go to Millicent and Coober Pedy, not Coober Pedy, where the ...? Woomera. He worked at Woomera, different places and he'd be away for three or four months. Well, I'd only see my husband once before he'd go and then when he come back, it'd be in three months time and that was all good and well. So they were happy about that type of thing. Yeah. Then gradually when he'd get home, just after all of this going away and back after two, a couple of years, he decided to work for himself with his brother-in-law.

OH: And who had he been working for, before?

VR: Del Fabbro. Yes, he was there for a few years. Then he decided to work for himself with his brother-in-law, in a partnership.

OH: What was their business called?

VR: ---

OH: Oh that's alright.

VR: I can't remember, no, can't remember, no.

OH: That's okay.

(46:56) What year did you marry then?

VR: In 1966.

OH: So you were how old?

VR: 20.

OH: And how did your parents feel about you marrying?

VR: Yes, they were really happy that I married him because he built this house and I was going into something really good and I was really happy too because at that particular time, if you remember, a lot of people were struggling and you know, if you wanted to get married, some, a lot of people lived with their Mum and Dad and I was fortunate enough to have a house built. Yes.

OH: How important to your parents was it, do you think, that you were marrying a Veneto? Not just a Veneto, but a man who came from the same village as your Dad?⁵

VR: I think they were extremely happy about that. Yes. I think they agreed with everything, yes. I was, for me he was the one, anyway, so ...

OH: (48:15) We were talking about language before and I just wanted to ask in your family, what language was spoken in the home, with your Mum and Dad?

VR: Mmnn. Mum understood Italian quite well. Never, I never heard her speak although I heard when I've been away or to Italy, I've heard people say that your Mum used to speak Italian to us but I never heard her speaking but in the home, we spoke only English. Dad spoke quite good English, he used to write a little bit as well without having, I don't think he went to school to learn, you know, he'd read the paper and write a little bit, mmnn.

OH: And when your husband visited your parents, what language did Mario speak?

VR: Well, to my father, he would speak in Veneto and to us he would speak in English. Mind you, Mario come out to Australia in 1960 so he hadn't been here a long time so he was more fluent in Italian so gradually he spoke, it came upon him to speak more English as I was speaking English to him.

OH: And did Mario come as a single man?

VR: Yes.

OH: You know, by himself?

VR: Mmnn.

OH: Did he have any family here?

⁵ Mario came from Castello di Godego, a village about 4 kms from Riese Pio X

VR: Yes, he had a brother and two sisters here already. He went to live with his brother and he was quite fortunate then to have somewhere to go but he came out with the Government and his trade, by trade he's a steel fixer so the Government brought him out. But he had to pay his way of course, like many other migrants.

OH: Did any other of his other brothers or sisters come as well, after him?

VR: Not after him but there's been several that have come out as a tourist type of thing.

OH: How many were in Mario's family?

VR: Eight.

OH: Oh, very similar to your family. [laughter]

VR: Yes, yes.

OH: (50:44) How did your father keep in touch with his family in Italy?

VR: Well, when we were first married, it was mostly letters. There was no telephone in his house until --- oh, it would have been 1976.

OH: This is your parents?

VR: My father's, my husband's parents.

OH: Right. What about your own father?

VR: Mmnn ...

OH: How did he keep in contact with his family, you know, over in Italy from the 1920s, '30s, on?

VR: Well, --- in those days there was a lot of immigrants out here as well and a lot of times, they would bring him a letter and he would have the latest news, of course. And then, other than that, he would write himself, letters and that would take, those days, about a month to arrive there. But, in the meantime, perhaps someone had went to Italy and they came back and they said, "I've been to see your family. They look good. And your mother, this or your father, that. Or they had a good harvest this year." That's what...

OH: So there was a kind of exchange?

VR: Yes. yes.

OH: (52:13) I'm thinking about your parents and what kinds of things were important to your parents?

VR: Family life. They always wanted us there but it kind of changed after a while when my brother died, we kind of like, pulled back a bit. Course Mum was depressed and Dad was depressed but before that, you know, a good family life. My oldest sister would come around once a week, that's Milva, of course. And perhaps they would make gnocchi also we'd all have *gnocchi* that night because Milva was there. Another time it'd be just risotto or a dish of the area, type of thing or soup or minestrone but then, they would eat and

go home and come back on the Sunday night. Sunday night everyone would gather there after tea or before or whatever, if it was Father's Day, something would be for tea but if it wasn't, it'd be after tea. And they'd play a game of cards, possibly. And that's what I can remember.

OH: (53:39) And we haven't talked about your brother's death, but can you tell me about that?

VR: --- Well, a very sad time. My brother, of course, he was only 18 when he died.⁶ He was working for Mario. And he was trying to get a job and then all of a sudden there wasn't any available and he said, "I'll take this job until..." What he wanted, I can't remember - "... until something comes up." And he was working with him for about a year or so and everything was going good. And he had this accident and of course, you know, upset the apple cart, they would say. Yes, but we were all depressed about it. I think Mum was the worst but we all found a way to get over it, I think. When you've got children, you throw your love there.

OH: Mmnn, it must have been a very sad time.

VR: Mmnn. Well, my kids would have been about four, the older one, and the other one would have been two. It was a bit tough.

OH: Mmnn.

VR: Yeah, it was pretty tough. You hear a motorbike go by and you'd think he'd been arriving and all those types of things. But... yeah, we've all got our own thoughts about it.

OH: Mmnn. Yes.

(55:21) Your parents' social life. Who were the important friends for your parents?

VR: Well, they had several good friends. They had Vic Marchioro, Vittorio Marchioro and his wife, Angelina. And they went on a trip to Italy with them on this boat, I think it was called the 'Oriana', together. And Vic was living in Vicenza⁷, a different area but they got on well together. I think Dad bought a car while he was there and they went around together a little bit. And that was one of the things. The other thing was they went to soccer. Of course, Vic Marchioro would be there and Innocente and all the soccer fans, you know. And afterwards they would have coffee at your place, or my place or their place, wherever. They kept that up for long time. Then they would go to the Carrington Street Italian --- Club there. Once a month, there'd be a big dance, a ball. You can come if you'd pay your own ticket, type of thing. So he'd get, Dad would organise a table and then of course, Mary Tonellato, Bert, Alberto would be very good friends of theirs as well. And they went to a lot of places, they went to Japan with them. Very, very good friends. They're ... Berto's Mum and Dad was Peter's godmother when he was born so they carried on a good relationship between them. And Gino Berno, you know different things, he would come down and have his daily visit because he lived up the road.

⁶ Virginia's brother, Peter, the youngest member of the Zampin family, born 8th June 1953, died in a motor-bike accident in 1971.

⁷ Vittorio Marchioro had emigrated from Malo in the province of Vicenza

OH: This is when you were at Findon?

VR: Yes. And then every year, almost every year, they would go to Victoria, Wangaratta. They had friends there in Myrtleford, in that area. They'd go up to the snow. Mount Hotham, Mount Buffalo, those areas there. Sometimes they would go down to Melbourne but they did whatever they wanted to do. As I say, I can't remember everybody but they had a good, a lot of friends. Yes.

OH: And they obviously liked to travel?

VR: Yes. They done a fair few travelling things. I think they went to Italy three times. They had nine children and I often think about it's --- who has nine kids and then can do all this?

OH: It's great that they could.

VR: No, they made their mark here, yes. They done a lot of travelling, they had everything what they wanted in the house, you know. At that particular time, they had conditioning, ducted air conditioning, and yeah, a nice lounge and kitchen and whatever.

OH: (59:00) And what about your mother's family, how close was your mother to her family?

VR: My mother had a stepsister and she lived in Perth. So it was not much communication there at all. And her mother lived here up at Stepney. I think she lived other places as well but I remember visiting her there. And she would come down to visit Mum with a taxi. Perhaps she'd go to the races or something and after the races, she would visit us. Dad would take her back home. There wasn't a lot of communication but in those days, it wasn't easy to --- for a young lady to marry an Italian man, or for an Italian to marry an English girl or Australian girl. So there was a bit of friction there but after they were married years and years, I think it faded away a bit. You accept things.

OH: So do you think there might have been some racism?

VR: Well.... probably was, probably was. We didn't have much contact with Mum's family. She had a cousin. We used to call her Auntie Nelly. I don't know if that was her correct name or not but Auntie Nelly. And she'd visit us quite regularly with her husband. And her first husband's name was Purse and he would come with a... like a ute and he had some food on the back or something. Yeah, it was quite good.

OH: That's a nice memory to have.

(1:01:02) But when I asked about racism, I was meaning also, you know, wider in the community. Do you think there was racism?

VR: Mmm. Probably was. Her mother was from a big family and they were from, I think, Brady, I think that was her name, her maiden name. And there was about 16 in her family so there was Uncle Perce, Uncle Jimmy, Uncle Bob. Oh, there were just so many. ... Uncle Bernie. They would visit Mum and Dad every now and then but not a real regular basis. Yeah, the thing was to keep it all English or all Irish or whatever and Dad was a bit of --- outcast, as you would call it. [laughs]

OH: And I was thinking not just in that family but you know, more widely.

VR: Mmmn.

OH: Because it wouldn't have been very common for a young Anglo Australian woman to marry an Italian.

VR: No, I suppose not. I think that --- when Mum got married to Dad, I don't think her mother was very happy it at all or anybody else to be honest that would have married an Italian fellow. Because the First World War, I think if you remember was ---- the English were against the Italians. --- No, they were *with* the Italians and the Second World War, they weren't. But even those days it wasn't, wasn't too good.

OH: No. Did your parents ever talk about World War II and what that was like for them?

VR: Well, the only thing that Dad ever brought up was --- during World War I he had one of his hands a bit severed. There was like those, what do they call those round things they throw out? Anyway he went to pick up a small --- thing which he thought it was like a tin and it was a bomb. And he had his thumb joint jointed and a couple of his fingers blown off, I think, on the top, tips. Yeah. And that was the only thing because we recognised that you know, when he put his hand out, you could see that something was wrong and we'd ask that but other than that, he mentioned anything, you know.

OH: (1:03:57) And what about World War II, here in Adelaide? Did your parents ever, you know, talk about what that was like for people from Italian families?

VR: Mmmn, well, they were restricted and I think Dad was given a leave type of thing and he had to work at a certain place and go the police station and tell them that you know, booked in and you know, that type of thing. And then, of course, things started to ease out a little bit being married to Mum. He was naturalised, I think before the Second World War but he was still like on call. Gradually he got into the gardening area and that helped a lot too.

OH: (1:04:51) Well, we're going to talk about the market gardens. So you've established already that there was a first market garden that they had at Lockleys. Would you remember how much land there was there? At Lockleys?

VR: I think around about two and half acres, something like that.

OH: And how many glasshouse? Roughly?

VR: Roughly.

OH: Like would there have been 40 or 10?

VR: I'm not sure, maybe 12.

OH: Right. And what did your parents grow?

VR: Tomatoes...

OH: In the glasshouses?

VR: And then they grew potatoes outside and some other vegies too. But I was pretty young at that time. I knew more of the Findon, more so than --- the other one.

OH: When did your parents move to Findon because you said you were about 12, is that right?

VR: No, they moved before that. I would have been about eight.

OH: So, about 195- mid to late to 1950s. 1957?

VR: About that. Yeah, about that.

OH: How much land was there at Anglely Avenue?

VR: Round about two acres, two acres which is a fair bit really.

OH: Yeah.

VR: For a single person, I mean for him.

OH: Did your Mum help out in the garden too?

VR: Yes. I didn't see Mum working a lot in the garden but of course, we were going to school so she would help in the morning. And then after lunch, possibly, she would stay home, in the house. And of course, when we came home from school, that was our duty.

OH: (1:06:49) I was going to ask you about that. What were your jobs?

VR: Yeah. I remember --- we would go to school, come back and work in the glasshouse and when we got out, when we had our holidays, we would have to help moving glasshouses and that was a very heavy job. That would be two months. So like, that time, until we went back to school.

OH: And what did it involve? Can you describe what you had to do?

VR: It would be to take the glass off the glasshouse.

OH: Were there two or three glasshouses, er glasses on the side?

VR: Well, some were two, earlier on and gradually, I suppose when Dad got more money, he went up to the three which was much better to walk in on the outside. We would take the glass off and put it in boxes and move, the boxes would stay there and the next thing would be the rafters and then there would be very long planks of wood that the glass used to sit in and then there would be the taking out of the posts, removing each end of the glasshouse, taking all this to another area where you would have to build again. So the posts would have to come out that was holding it up, the original, and of course, if they were damaged, they would be replaced. They all had to be painted with an oil because waterproof and something to keep them longer so they wouldn't deteriorate so much. And then start to do the glasshouse, build them up again. Put the posts in and make sure they were measured and ... And you'd do that and you'd start to put the glass

back on, the rails on the side, the ends put back on. And usually by that time, it was time to go back to school and then, you know ...

OH: So you remember doing that a lot over a summer?

VR: Over --- well, would you say Christmas holidays, you know, you leave school at the end of the year and you would go back in early February, at that particular time.

OH: A lot of work?

VR: It was very hard because we were not men. We were young girls, you know. But that was a bit tough. Me and my sister, younger sister, she was bigger than me, a bit taller than me.

OH: That's Sandra?

VR: Mmmn. And she was bit more. Oh she doesn't look heavy but those particular times, she was more stronger than me and she could handle more than me. But she used to work... We both used to work together, type of thing, because the other sisters had gone. They were all married or... Christine started a job, she was 14 when she started a job. And then, of course there was me and Sandra there. The other sister was too young, she's about three years younger than Sandra. you know, that was the way it went.

OH: Mmmn. Hard work.

What about when you had the jobs inside the glasshouse? Can you describe what you had to when you'd come home from school?

VR: Well, the first thing would be, you'd have to make sure the ground was really wet. So there'd be a couple of nights of doing that. Dad would do it too, through the day, I'm not saying it was just us, he would help out. And then he would provide the plants and he would make all the little rows and then we'd plant the tomatoes and then after a couple of week, if any had died, we'd replace. Then, of course, there was the strings put up so the string, and once they started to grow, was the pruning and of course, it was dusty because you know you can get germs, not germ, disease⁸ and then, of course, manure, pruning...

OH: Where did you get the manure from?

VR: Dad used to go with the truck some place. He'd get sheep manure which was very --- touchy, type of thing. You had to water it down a lot because it was you know--- it was, how can I say, just wasn't able to put it on tomatoes...

OH: Straight away?

VR: Straight away. He'd have to water it down to make sure it didn't burn the plants or the roots or whatever. And then --- what else? I just don't know.

OH: That's a lot. What...?

⁸ Virginia explained in the editing process that the plants were dusted to protect them from disease

VR: Then I went to pick tomatoes and whatever and start the whole year again.

OH: And were you involved in grading them? Or sorting them?

VR: No.

OH: Who did that?

VR: Dad used to do that because we'd do all the jobs and come in with all the buckets at night and put them in the garage and the next day, he would do that and get us the job ready for the night. [laughs] Or start to, type of thing. But he had his work cut out for him. He wasn't there with his arms folded, he was working too, with us.

OH: How did your parents water the vegetables at Anglely Avenue Findon?

VR: Well, they had two huge tanks. They had a well and this, he had it tested for the salt because it's quite salty in this area and he'd have to put so much water, so much from the well and so much water from the tap to make not too salty, the proper ingredients, anyway. And then he'd fill this big tank up with water and he'd let the big pipes, of course, he would put the pipes to a distance going right down the property. And then of course the tap on the top and you'd unwind the tap and the water would come out and you'd put it into different glasshouses, the rows, let the water run through these little --- valleys that you'd make to go into the glasshouse and as the trough would fill up, you'd get a shovel and put the dirt there to stop that row from taking any more water. And then it would go to the other side.

OH: Quite involved?

VR: Yes.

OH: A lot of steps involved in everything?

VR: It was very you know, once you got into it, it was a normal routine type of thing.

OH: It wouldn't have left much time for you to do other things when you were at school?

VR: No.

OH: Like you would have had school, come home, help?

VR: No.

OH: What about on the weekends when you were at school?

VR: Sunday was a holiday.

OH: For everyone?

VR: For everybody. When I was there.

OH: What happened in your family on Sundays?

VR: Well, Sunday, you know, we'd just lay in and some of use would go to church if we wanted to. There was no pushing about that. I used to go to Our Lady of the Manger [Catholic primary school] every now and then.

OH: At...?

VR: No, down at... because we were living at Angley Avenue --- where Nazareth⁹ is now.

OH: Right. On Crittenden Road?

VR: Crittenden Road. And I'd walk there and walk back with my sister if she wanted to come or whatever. And after that, it would be nearly lunchtime. And Mum always had a roast. Roast lamb or roast beef or pork or that. And then Dad would go and visit his brother or someone lease when his brother went away, he'd go and visit other people. And after lunch would have a nap and then I would visit my friend Gilda or something like that. That's what happened. It was like... we had a day off.

OH: It must have been good to have that time.

VR: We needed that.

OH: For everybody.

VR: Saturday was a work day until about 3:0 'clock. And you'd get up early and work.

OH: (1:16:14) Where did your parents sell their vegetables?

VR: He had a spot in the market.

OH: At the East End?

VR: East End market. He would load up the truck or we would, you know.

OH: Another job.

VR: Once or twice a week. And we'd weigh the beans in 12 dozen bags, huge, like that [indicating size] What we picked or tomatoes in cases because we were growing beans also.

OH: In the glasshouses?

VR: Yes. And then of course, they had to be weighed in big bags.

OH: And you were involved in weighing?

VR: Oh, yes. He had a big scale on the floor, on the ground and he'd had to put them in a big tub of water to keep them fresh and then load them up on the truck ready for market next morning at 4:00 o'clock, he would go and sell them.

OH: How were tomatoes sold from your garden?

VR: He sold them in half cases.

⁹ Nazareth Catholic primary school campus at Findon

OH: Who made the half cases?

VR: I'm not quite sure. He did buy some from Innocente but he bought them from somebody else, I don't know their name. Yeah. He would buy 500 at a time or something like. And then you had to put the paper on, there had to be this paper.

OH: Did you put the papers?

VR: Yeah, it was just a matter to put over the top of the box on both sides.

OH: And that was like butchers paper?

VR: Yes, yes.

OH: There is so much process involved, isn't there? Everything has that step.

VR: Mmmn.

OH: (1:18:09) Who were your neighbours at Findon?

VR: --- On one side we had Lasscocks when we first arrived. And on the other side was an Australian woman and they were elderly and they sold it to Dad's nephew, the property. It was about two acres there. And his name was Lino, Lino Marin. He of course, did glasshouses too, him and his wife. On the other side, Lasscocks sold the property and there was houses built there. That was later. But for a long time they just grew roses and different plants, you know, and they would sell them out.

OH: So they were quite big properties?

VR: Mmmn.

OH: All along Angley Avenue?

VR: yes, mostly. As you came into Angley Avenue, there was Gino Berno. Then there was Lasscocks, then there was us and the elderly woman living next door that turned into glasshouses with Lino Marin. And then there was a little asbestos place and then there was another place and his name was Pergoletti and across the road, there was McCallum and he had a big --- garden there. He had acres, I think he would have about ten acres and sold half of his property to the Findon High School and then he kept a certain amount and then he slowly sold that to ... and just lived in the house because he was elderly by that time.

OH: Was it a market garden that he had?

VR: No glasshouses but...

OH: Out in the open?

VR: He had celery, carrots and all that type of thing, vegetables. Then we had a dairy farm as you came into the street there.

OH: Close to Findon Road?

VR: Yes, on the corner of Findon Road and Angley Avenue. I can't remember their name.

OH: Did you get the milk from there?

VR: Yes, we went with the billy there and got the milk and I can't remember his name, no.

OH: Oh, you're doing very well with that memory. It's fantastic.

(1:20:54) Do you remember the other *veneti* who had market gardens around in the area?

VR: Yes, there was, besides Gino Berno, and then there was another one, Fragona and they sold out too because things started to being develop there and they went up to Salisbury. That's all I can remember there.

OH: What about over towards Grange Road, do you remember the *veneti* there?

VR: Yeah, I remember all of them, Zalunardo, Ballestrin, on the Grange Road. Gee, wait a minute --- I don't know if Pastro had some or not, further down. But I'm just talking about the Grange Road, behind my Mum and Dad's property. At the back of my Dad's property there, it was all open. It's all closed in now. There was no gardens there, at all. But further down Findon Road, there started to be all the Ballestrin, Gino Berno, my Uncle, Uncle Nico. And then, who else was there? Santini, Rebuli, Milva's people, Milva's husband's people, rather. It was everyone you could think of anyway. Tonellato. We was all good mates altogether. If something went wrong in one place, it was all get together, we'd better find out what it is, you know, and help each other out.

OH: And --- you've talked about your neighbours both at Lockleys and Findon, did you have a sense of being part of a community at either place?

VR: yes, I did because you go along the street and you know who lives there, you know who lives there and there was always that comrade type of feeling about the area. It was good, a good feeling about it.

OH: (1:23:38) Were your parents members of the Veneto Club?

VR: Yes, they were members and they always participated each Sunday and there was a family night.

OH: What happened at the family night?

VR: Yes, yes, they had their anniversary there. And everyone... if you want to see Mum and Dad, don't go in the night-time, on Sunday night because they'd be at the Club. If you wanted to see them they were, type of thing. It was either one place or the other. They were good, yeah. They made different --- a lot of friends there, as well which they knew everybody when they went there and did their dancing like everyone else. They were part of the furniture.

OH: And the fact that your mother wasn't a *veneta*, obviously didn't matter to people?

VR: No because she had a good character and acknowledged everybody and when you knew your Mum, I think everyone, you know accepted her for who she was and she was always pleasant to talk to. She'd had quite a good education and ... Yeah, I think she was good.

OH: And she was obviously seen as a really important member of the community along with other women?

VR: Yes, everyone that came in, they would always go and say hello to Mum and I know you so and so, yeah. I think that she was generous in many ways. Yes, she would make, she would crochet different rugs and that for a new baby or you might say, "Oh, my daughter-in-law's having a baby." " Oh right." And she'd turn up with this little rug or doily or something. In the end everyone had enough rugs [laughter] and she was

crocheting and that for the --- Red Cross. She used to go down to Flinders Park, there was place there once a week and she would crochet something and give it to them to send away for the needy and ... yeah. And she got ... even when Dad passed on, she wasn't a person to just sit down. She had her own way, she was an independent person.

OH: Did your mother drive?

VR: No. But if she needed to go somewhere, she wouldn't wait. She would catch a taxi and she would go. Perhaps someone would take her home or something, yeah.

OH: (1:26:49) And we talked a bit about food before and your Mum always having a roast on Sundays, there was Italian food in your house too, wasn't there? In your family?

VR: Yes, yes.

OH: Did your mother learn?

VR: Yes, I think Dad taught her in the beginning, going back many years. I never seen him teaching her. But she would cook anything, a roast she would cook or pasta. She would cook liver, tripe anything that he did like and of course, her mother was a cook. She used to cook in the outback, her Mum. There was some kind of... you live with your Mum and you get an idea about how things are cooked anyway. So that here's not that much difference between English and Italian only a bit more sauce or, what would you say? You know, the same thing?

OH: (1:27:57) What about Italian traditions with food and wine in your family?

VR: Mmnn ... Well, Dad --- he used to make wine. He sometimes, he would, years back, he would buy the grapes and then because we had our own property, he planted the vines and he used to make a bit of wine from there.

OH: From your own grapes?

VR: Yes, he had a few vines there, you know. Enough for him. He was never a big drinker, my Dad, just enough for one glass on the table for lunch and tea. And he always made his salami.

OH: Did your family have other people that you killed the pig with?

VR: Mmnn.

OH: Who would you do that with?

VR: Well, he would do it with his brother. And maybe, earlier in the years, say with Milva's husband, they might, she might have done it with them or with Roma's husband, half and half. And they'd call a butcher in to do it properly and you'd have to pay him type of thing and he would do the mincing and all that. Everyone would be with their hands on trying to do everything. Later on, he used to do it with my husband, go out into the country, he'd buy a pig and my husband would put it on the truck and bring it back and call the butcher. Before he'd bring it back, he'd clean all the skin, take all the hairs off and take the guts out and the butcher would be ready to take it apart the next morning in and have all the casings ready. And he would come here and they'd make the salami together and then they would weigh it out, "That's for you, and that's for me."

Share whatever it is, the money as well, whatever. It was a costly, it is a costly thing to do.

OH: And it takes time too, doesn't it?

VR: It takes a day or two days to go and gather one day and make it up the next, yeah.

OH: And what about *sugo* or sauce? Sauce, I mean, not *sugo*.

VR: Well, earlier on Mum used to do the bottled sauce, earlier on. But as time went on, she didn't do that any more. I think she bought more of the concentrated sauce. If it was an Italian meal, definitely it would be made the Italian way with *sugo* and tomato paste or whatever. But meat. Yeah.

OH: (1:30:59) When did your parents sell the land at Angley Avenue?

VR: --- They sold the land just after my brother died. Because --- that was in '71, he died, probably about '74, '75. and they sold the land --- and they had a block, he retained a block on the side of the house so he could just potter around if he wanted to plant a few vegies or tomatoes or whatever.

OH: Did he retain any of the glasshouses?

VR: Mmmn. He had one nice big one there. And he used to like getting into that and going around and yeah, just, that's what he wanted and he had a few lemon trees and all fruit trees around. And when he died I think Mum sold the property there because she couldn't keep up with it. It was just calling in people to clean up and became a hindrance to her. So she decided to sell and she just kept the block where the house was on.

OH: And she stayed in the house?

VR: Yes.

OH: (1:32:24) What year did your father die?

VR: '82, 1982.

OH: And what about your mother, when did she die?

VR: '89. No, wait a minute. '98, I think.¹⁰

OH: And was she still living at the house when she died?

VR: yes, she'd had a stroke and within a few days, she passed away. But she kept up quite well, she was an independent person. Oh, my sister, Sandra, the one younger than me, the younger one, she would buy all the groceries and I would get people to go there, like the chemist or the podiatrist, hairdresser and different people to help out, the doctor. Everyone was coming home because she didn't want to go anywhere. And if she had an operation, she came here twice, during that time. Stayed a couple of months each time just to build herself up. "I want to go home, I want to go home." And she'd go home.

OH: Did she continue to be part of the Veneto community after your father died?

VR: Yes, I think she would go with Sandra sometimes and yes, if she was well, she would go. If she wasn't, she'd stay home. It was like a weekly thing. When Dad died, it was 1982, she would have been 72, I think, round about that age and she was still able to cope with a lot of things. As time went on, you get sick and she was walking with a frame, the last few years. So it became a bit complicated. You were a bit frightened to

¹⁰ Silvano died on 26th August 1982 and Millie died on 26th August 1999

take her out because you didn't want her to fall ... all different things, you know.

OH: Yes.

OH: (1:34:46) I wanted to ask you about your trips to Italy. When did you first go?

VR: My first trip was in 1970.

OH: And would that have been the first time that Mario had returned?

VR: Yes, he came out in '60.

OH: Were his parents alive?

VR: Yes.

OH: So you met his parents?

VR: Yes, I met his parents, they were very welcoming, stayed with them in their house. He had a brother living there and he was married with two children. And I took my two children as well and one was only three and the other was one. It was winter time and it was very, very cold and of course, there was snow and it was beautiful, a beautiful time, an eye-opening thing, you know, The house that they lived in was quite old but by the time I went back in --- 1976, they had a new home, a beautiful home.

OH: In Riese?

VR: No, in Godego.

OH: Oh, Godego, oh.

VR: So that was nice to see that. And then I went again in '82. I think it was about '82. His Mum was married 50 years and the two sisters from here and his brother went also. So the family was altogether.

OH: Oh.

VR: It was an extremely beautiful time. More? [laughs]

OH: And what about meeting your father's relatives? Did you meet them in Riese?

VR: The first time I met everybody, I went there, I went to each house and I met all his sisters, all Dad's sisters and his brother where Dad grew up there. And yeah, that was pleasant. Of course, they were, the first time it was still old, everything was old, living in houses 100 years old and not much bathroom facilities and that type of thing. But they were all hard workers, you know they worked from morning to night. Most of them had little stables and cows and calf and piglets and all that type of thing which was all good. They used, they needed that to survive. And gradually, with people going out of the family, coming back with money, they all seemed to be able to afford a new home and gradually like my father, er my husband's people, they built a new home with all facilities and that which some of them were beautiful.

OH: (1:38:10) What was it like meeting your father's relatives and seeing where he had come from?

VR: Oh, it was an eye opener because you had kept one opinion. My mother had told me about what would happen but when you go there, it's in reality and it was all good. You know, you'd see how the roads were made, narrow roads and valleys with water running along the side of the road. That's all stopped now. And it was an eye opener and I'd go from one to the other. Of course, I couldn't speak Italian, it was a bit hard so my husband had to interpret for me. And some were, the first one, you know was horrible, the houses and

that. But the second time everybody had just managed to get this new home.

OH: Mmnn and the economy I think was a bit better?

VR: The economy had moved. You could see things changing. You'd go down and see that wasn't here, this wasn't here. It became more industrialised.

OH: And Virginia, you said to me before, that you kept in contact with your Uncle Nico and Auntie Adelia's children who went back?

VR: Yes.

OH: So you would have seen them when you went back to Italy?

VR: Mmnn. they ... It's not --- they live in Riese and Godego, Castello di Godego, is not far, it'd be about five k [kilometres] from there. So it was a weekly visit there. My Auntie Adelia, Nico's wife, as soon as she heard I was there, she would ring me and of course no-one was at home she would meet me at the church on the Sunday, and of course, there was a big reunion between us and her and her husband. And she would take us home to her place to have a lunch or tea, you know and celebrate a little bit. And we kept in good contact with them all the time.

OH: That must have been lovely for you.

VR: It was because English speaking although Uncle Nico and Auntie Adelia didn't speak English. Irene did, and it was good.

OH: Yeah, and nice to have that link.

VR: Just a link. Where I was staying, Mario's place, they treated me more than welcome but I just felt it was part of my family there, you know, it was part of my heritage there. So any time spare, we would visit them.

OH: How lovely.

VR: Mmnn

OH: (1:41:08) Well, I was going to ask you about your Italian heritage. How do you feel about your Italian heritage?

VR: -- Well, I feel I'm more Italian than Australian because of the many trips I've done and I've been also involved with Italians, most of my life, my married life or even before. So you know you have a group of friends, everyone's Italian. We go out and social events which is good and it's not to say that I don't want any others. There's been other people involved. I'm friendly with a Greek person. My neighbours are all Aussie around here. We're all friends, Christmas and all that get together and what can I say? Yeah.

OH: And growing up, did you feel, how did you feel then? More Italian than Australian?

VR: Yes, because I had my girlfriend, she was from Riese and then she had friends from nearby, Ballestrin's and those, and then we had our other friends, like boyfriends not as a boyfriend but just friends. They were all from the same area, and as a group of Italian Australian-born and these Italians come out you know and we'd get together and have a dancing thing on the weekend and it was all Italian. Yeah. I feel mostly Italian, mmnn.

OH: And what do you think it means to feel Italian? Like ---?

VR: Well, I like to keep a bit of heritage there. You know, my lunch, you know, when it's my birthday, I've got my family here. When it's Fathers Day and different occasions, I feel I'm honoured to have them here because ...

Break in the recording of the interview

VR: (00:00) ... family means a lot.

OH: And do you think that, you know, family in the Italian way, is a bit different?

VR: Well, I feel lately the last five or six years that I've, when I go out and I'm speaking with Australians or some other ethnic group, or can be anybody, that it's more now for them than what it was say 20 years ago. Because they seem to say, "No, come over to my place," and they let their kids go there. They're having a barbecue together and they're socialising more together than what they did say in 1975 or maybe '76. That's my opinion. It's becoming more interactive in an ethnic type of a group of people. Whereas, you see in some families, it could be you're married to an Indian or to --- a Yugoslav or something, you know and you say, "Come in and work together."

[Virginia's husband, Mario Rodato comes into the room]

MR: Good afternoon.

OH: Good afternoon. We're just going to pause the interview for a few minutes.

[The interview resumes]

VR: I can't remember what you said to me.

OH: Oh, I was asking about how you felt about the, you know, the Italian, the Australian and you were saying that you think now it's more probably about sharing between the communities.

VR: That's right. I think that years back, you would see the Italians would stick to the Italians, the Australians maybe stick to the Australians, the English would more or less like it to be that way as well, and Yugoslav, that way. But now it's not that. It's, you see that it really an ethnic family, now. I think it's become more now and I think that helps the community to join in and socialise with everybody more, accept people more.

OH: Yeah.

VR: That's my opinion. You know.

OH: (02:14) What do you think about your parents starting their life together in the early 1930s when Italians weren't so accepted by the Anglo Australian, you know, people? What do you think about them?

VR: Mmmn. I think it would have been very hard. Very, very hard and difficult. Except for their friends like the Ballestrin's and the Marchioro's and that, they had that opportunity on the weekend, on the Sunday to communicate to visit, to go out together and they had picnics and different things, you know. And I think that's what kept the ball going. Just that, but Mum couldn't turn around, to the others, to her side because of

what they weren't there. They may have been there but I wasn't there to see that. So I don't know.

OH: (03:12) And what do you think about your father coming here, as you said, as a very young man?

VR: Well, being 18, coming away from your parents, your family and being on a boat for how many days, I think it would have been 40 days, maybe a little bit more and --- starting to wonder what, what is ahead on this boat? Where am I going? Alright, he had a brother here which was, you know you're going to meet him. That's good. But on arrival, I think to turn around, not being able to speak English and find out that some people weren't accepting that it would have been a bit of a let down. But if you're going to live with people of your own tongue or your own language, you can communicate with them and possibly they would have said, "Don't worry, we're here for a cause. Let's get on with it." That's what I think they done.

OH: (04:29) What do you think now about the strength of the Veneto community of market gardeners?

VR: Well, I think they made a great contribution to the State, to the Government because they were good workers. They provided for their own family. They weren't, they weren't... I can't, I don't know if there were criminals or any criminal way, they were pretty honest. I don't think they wanted anything for nothing. They worked very, very hard.

They were always willing to help somebody else. Like my father, he brought out several people. He provided, he tried to get them jobs. And when he didn't have the money to do that. He would say, "Look, I've only got x amount." You know, and pass it on to those people. Some people, after a while, could come and ask him for money to bring out their family. Yes. And Dad, he was in rented property --- with six, seven eight kids at that time. So he'd say, "Alright, I'll lend you the money and then you can give it back." And of course, they came back and gave him the money. You know, you help and that particular time, if even if it was someone else's glasshouses went down, "Come and work for me a couple of days and I will help you. Or give you food or pay you or..." They would work out between them. Do people do that now? I don't know.

OH: Why do you think they did it then?

VR: Because there was nowhere else to go. I don't think the Government would come out and say, "Here you are, here's some money or I'll help you to fix up the glasshouses." Yes, they had to find money from somewhere to fix them. And food. I don't know. I just think they were a great bunch.

OH: And we're just going to stop that interview here for one minute.

We're resuming the interview with Virginia.

OH: (07:21) And Virginia, you were just talking about the strength of the community and how important it was that people helped each other. And I was wondering what you might have thought about, you know, how we say that there were those pioneers who came around the same time as your Dad, 1926, 1927, 1928. What do you think now about that group of people who came out and you know and started their lives here?

VR: Those people --- I just can't really say the words --- a lot of them had no family here. So they got stuck into trying to get a house for themselves and provide for their family, to do the best they can do. And provide the right things for their kids as well so that they didn't have to persevere like they did. When they come out,

they had nothing, probably an empty suitcase and so the only thing for them to do was to work and I believe they were really great people to do that and provide for their family in a lot of ways, it helped the State as well, they were very good citizens, to me. They were excellent just being, having the guts to do that.

OH: And socially?

VR: Socially --- six days a week was hard work and seven days, most of them, most of them would have a few hours off. That was more or less in them when they were young. And they would go to church or something when they were back in Italy and come back, have their little sleep in the afternoon and probably go and play bowls in the afternoon if they were in Italy or just catch up with their mates or something and that was always that atmosphere here, as well. I suppose some didn't, but those that I knew done that.

OH: And finally, I wanted to ask ... as we're closing this interview because you've given some great information and really good memory for details, but is there anything else you would like to say about your memories of the market gardens, your family or the Veneto community?

VR: Well, I just think that --- 99% of the *veneti* that come here, they come here to make a good life, to provide for their family, to be good citizens, to have a better, have a better days for their children, mostly because their life was more or less for the first 50 years over. And what was left was for their kids to provide better education, a good life for them. But in doing so they've been great.

OH: Well I'd like to say thank you for all the information provided today and also for getting the initiative going for interviewing the Zampin sisters. A year ago now. So thank you very much, Virginia, for that, and for the interview today.

VR: I hope it sounds alright. [laughs] Listen, go through and take out things whatever you wish because some of the things may be overboard.

OH: Oh, we don't do that. But I really appreciate your memories and contributing to the project in the way you have. It's been really helpful.

VR: I hope so.

OH: It has. Thank you very much, Virginia.