

Italian market gardeners oral history project
Interview with Bruna Semola nee Zampin - OH 872-39
recorded on 8th November 2016
by Madeleine Regan
at Flinders Park, South Australia

Participants:

Madeleine Regan: **OH**

Bruna Semola: **BS**

OH: This is a recording of an interview for the Italian market gardeners oral history project. I'm recording an interview with Bruna Semola nee Zampin on 8th November 2016 at Flinders Park and my name is Madeleine Regan.

So, Bruna we've had a bit of a shaky start but thank you very much for agreeing to the interview.

BS: That's okay, we have had a few ups and downs so ... [laughter]

OH: Let's hope that it's all plain sailing from here on.

(00:38) So can you tell me please your full name?

BS: My full name is Bruna Antonietta Semola.

OH: And you were born?

BS: Nee Zampin.

OH: And your date of birth?

BS: 19/4/34.

OH: And Bruna, where were you born?

BS: I was born here in Adelaide, probably the Queen Victoria.

OH: And can you tell me if you were named for anyone in your family?

BS: No, I don't think there was anyone in our family that I was named for, not especially, no.

OH: What about your parents? Could you give me your mother's full name and her place of birth?

BS: She was born in Adelaide, I think, and her name was Amelia Katherine Shaw, yeah.

OH: And your father's name and place of birth?

BS: Silvano Primo Zampin and he was born in Riese in Italy.

OH: In Italy and do you know what province that was in.

BS: Treviso.

OH: I'd like to ask you how your parents meet each other.

BS: Well, I think it was at the cemetery, so we were told. Mum went to see her grandmother and Dad was visiting his dead brother who had arrived a few years earlier and had recently been killed in a train

crash at Woodville so he was visiting him with a bunch of flowers and Mum was seeing her grandmother. [laughter]

OH: And which cemetery was it?

BS: That was West Terrace, mmnn.

OH: And obviously love ...

BS: Yes. [laughter]

OH: (02:49) And do you know what work both your parents were doing prior to getting married?

BS: No, I think Dad was just doing anything that he could more or less get his hands on. And Mum I'm not quite sure what she was doing. I think. At one stage she was a doctor's receptionist, working for a doctor but apart from that I wouldn't have a clue at that time?

OH: And do you know what year they married?

BS: --- around 1930, --- approximate date, yeah.

OH: And do you know what their ages would have been when they married, approximately? [laughter]

BS: Approximately, Mum would have been 18 or 19, I think she was. And Dad was around 20, something like that. They were fairly close in age.

OH: And quite young?

BS: Yeah.

OH: Do you know how your mother's parents felt about the marriage?

BS: Not very happy because Dad was Italian, you know, in those days, well, you just didn't mix with foreigners, so they weren't too happy and Mum was more or less --- outcast because she married him. And that was that.

OH: So when you were growing up you wouldn't have had that much to do with your mother's family?

BS: No, not a great deal. She had a cousin, they were friends and they kept in contact a bit and she used to come down and see us occasionally and she was more or less the only one that kept in touch with Mum, you know.

OH: A big thing that your parents did.

BS: Yeah.

OH: Brave?

BS: Yeah it was brave for those days. There weren't many mixed marriages, I suppose you'd call them in those days.

OH: And do you know what your parents were doing around the time you were born in 1934?

BS: Work wise? Well, Mum was home and Dad, I think he used to work for a China man over at Richmond somewhere and he helped him in the garden because he'd do any odd jobs that were around the place, you know. He used to have a bike and sometimes Mum would walk from where we

were living which I think was in Frogmore Road, at the time and she would take the two of us, Milva and myself over there and on the way back, Dad used to donkey Mum home and we would be in the pram and she would pull the pram behind the bike. [laughs] You couldn't do that now. [laughter]

OH: No, no, it's a really interesting kind of little picture to have. Yeah.

BS: Mnnn.

OH: What about your siblings? How many did you have?

BS: Children?

OH: No, brothers and sisters.

BS: (06:20) We were eight girls and a boy. Peter came last and of course he had an accident and died when he was 18. And all the girls, well, there's only one who died recently and that was Angela.

OH: Mmnnn...

BS: And the rest of us are still alive, so... [laughs]

OH: (06:44) And your own family? Your husband's name?

BS: Is Semola.

OH: Romano?

BS: Well, his actual name is Tomasso.

OH: Oh.

BS: But for some reason, he's called Romano. That's sort of stuck, I don't know why they changed it around but ...

OH: What year did you marry?

BS: We married in 1955 --- and we had three children and ---

OH: And you have grandchildren and great-grandchildren?

BS: Yes, yes, we had, we had three children. Robert has our grandchild, great-grandchild, yeah. Margaret and Richard both have step-grandchildren so, you know, it's quite a large family. So it's quite a large family. [laughs]

OH: When you get together, yeah.

BS: Yeah.

OH: Well, thank you for that.

(07:55) I wanted to ask you about your father's arrival in Australia, as obviously a young man.

BS: Mmnn.

OH: Do you know why he came to Australia?

BS: His brother was killed accidentally in a train crash and I think he came out here originally to be with him, you know because I believe that happened after Dad arrived and they ... it just sort of happened and you know that was it.

OH: Do you know what the circumstances were like for him back in Riese in the province of Treviso?

BS: Well they were a pretty poor family and I think like everybody else, just wanted to make a new

life and some of them migrated and hoped for the best when they got here. But conditions weren't the best. They had to take any job that was available at the time because I think it was around the Depression time, you know, so they just took what work they could.

OH: (09:16) And do you know if your father's family had land?

BS: In Italy? Yes, I think they had a bit of land, I don't know how much. But they used to work the land, they had a barn, cows and you know, just a family thing, nothing big. Yeah.

OH: Mmnn ... and your father would've left behind family members. Who did he leave behind?

BS: He had his parents and all the family plus he had, I think there were four boys and four girls in the family and he left most of them behind because Peter was already here. And that was that, you know, he just never went home until about --- 30 years or more after, you know, it was a big thing for him. He always wanted to go back and take Mum and they went back eventually and Mum was really happy to meet them.

OH: It would have been an interesting kind of experience for her.

BS: Yes, it was, a different way of life, you know we had it hard here but we know they had it worse over there.

OH: (10:47) And in terms of *you* growing up, I wanted to ask, do you remember who your godparents were?

BS: Yes, my baptismal parents were --- Serafina and Attilio Di Pieri and confirmation was Mrs Santin down at - in Flinders Park area, yeah.

OH: Which Mrs Santin?

BS: The older one.

OH: Oh Costantina?

BS: Yes, that was her name, I can never remember it.

OH: And Serafina and Attilio Di Pieri, were they from the Veneto?

BS: I don't think so. They could have been because later on, Serafina --- on the Board of the Veneto Club so she was there for some years. So she could have been, I really didn't get into it.

OH: How important were your godparents as you were growing up?

BS: We never saw a lot of them because we moved down to Lockleys, er, Findon or wherever, and they stayed in Adelaide because he was a boot repairer and he had his little shop in Currie Street and did a lot of work there, you know. So we never really got to see them that often because we didn't have the transport, you know and they didn't either.

OH: And in those days, from what I understand, it seemed that it was a long way, from you know the Lockleys area into the city.

BS: Yeah, well if you didn't have a truck or something or a bike, there was no trams at the time, I don't think. They came along later.

OH: (12:58) If you think having first memories, do you have a first memory?

BS: -- First thing I really remember is sitting on the doorstep with my dolly and my dolly was an old

sock that Mum had made from Dad and she stuffed it up and put two buttons on for eyes and a bit of wool over the top for hair and made a mouth and nose on it and that was the first thing I can remember. [laughter]

OH: Isn't that lovely?

BS: Yeah.

OH: Where do you think that doorstep was?

BS: I've always sort of felt that it was in Frogmore Road.

OH: (13:43) Right. And where was the first house that you remember?

BS: --- I think it was Frogmore Road, yes.

OH: So can you describe sort of where it was along Frogmore Road?

BS: It was close to the river, there was an old house on the corner next to it and there was a big shed, I think, across the road where Panuccio's used to be. Oh actually there was a house there and Dyson's used to live there and Panuccio's came later. Yes, that's right, yeah.

OH: Who was living in the next house?

BS: The next house, there was Gino Berno and his wife, Jean, yeah.

OH: And she was a Dyson, wasn't she?

BS: That's right, yes.

OH: I understood that in the there was two half houses and in the other half there was another family?

BS: Yes, there were like two flats together --- in our case, the time I'm thinking, Jean and Gino lived next door and Mum and Dad lived in one house and later, Rebuli's bought it and they lived there in and Mum and Dad moved out. That was when they moved over to Lockleys and later on, Elvio lived in one of the houses and Rebuli's still lived on the other side and later again, when Romano's family came here, they lived in one half. So it's been quite a family thing, you know. [laughs]

OH: Yeah. How interesting that so many, you know, *veneti* lived there. Yeah. Do you remember what that house was like inside?

BS: Yes. It had a small kitchen and I think there was about three rooms, if I remember right, one, two, three, yeah, three other rooms, if I remember right.

OH: And when you moved to Lockleys, to the other side of the river, how many of your sisters were born at that time?

BS: Well, I think, oh God, must have been three or four. No, would've been more than that because I remember me and Milva lived in Frogmore Road 'cos I was still very young, myself. --
- Would've probably been about five.

OH: When you moved?

BS: Mmmn.

OH: So roughly what year would that have been or around what year?

BS: Oh, I can't remember, no.

OH: (17:01) Did your parents own that land?

BS: At Lockleys?

OH: Yeah.

BS: No they didn't own that land, they rented it. --- Yes, they would've rented it and Dad put glasshouses on it and we helped him get through it, you know, carry water and helping plant tomatoes and prune because we were growing up by this time and we picked beans and did all the usual things on a garden. [laughs].

OH: Would there have been much land there that your parents were leasing?

BS: Oh, I think there might have been a couple of acres of land. Yeah.

OH: And a number of glasshouses?

BS: I think there were about ten, he eventually got ten and we looked after them, they were a job and a half, had to be moved every couple of years, you know.

OH: Were you involved with that?

BS: Oh yes, as we grew up, we --- worked together, you know, and had little extra jobs to do. But you had to be very careful with the planes of glass, catch your fingers and that.

OH: Did you wear gloves?

BS: No, we didn't have gloves in those days.

OH: So your Dad would be there giving instructions or your Mum?

BS: Yes, they were there saying be careful about this and watch out for that, you know, they'd be pretty attentive [laughs] as much as they could be.

OH: And were you actually on the river? Was your land on the river?

BS: No, do you remember where the Church is?

OH: Yes, on Henley Beach Road?

BS: Yes, that's right, yes. Well, that wasn't there at that stage. We used to live on the land behind there. And eventually, the Maltese priest came and they bought that land there with the big house that used to be on that land, and they started up a small church in the house it was one room that they used to open up for Mass on Sundays and dung the week if anyone wanted to go. And eventually they got enough money to build this small hall and that's where we got married and later on they, of course, they built the big church in the front. Yeah, we got married there, and I think Milva did too.

OH: Right. So your land would have been a fair way in from Henley Beach Road.

BS: Yes, yes.

OH: And what kind of house was there for you and your family?

BS: Oh it wasn't a very flash house it was just more or less two rooms and Dad put on a kitchen and a bathroom at the back, later on. And --- we used to sleep and you know, here was the one bedroom that Mum and Dad had, we had a lounge, one room and then Dad made a cupboard in like a sleep-out out the front and we used to sleep out there. There was no problems with prowlers or anything in those days, you know.

OH: No, no. I was thinking, if you were born in 1934, would it have been the 1940s that you were there with your parents?

BS: Yes, probably in the '40s, yeah.

(21:10) Because they were the War years, weren't they? Yeah, up till '45, yes. We can remember the soldiers coming around the back and they put in what they called dugouts and they used to more or less have these dugouts underground, and they'd eat there and they had sleeping quarters and you know, they was there for a while.

OH: Would've been interesting as a kid, to have them there?

BS: Yes, well, we didn't really take a lot of notice because we weren't that old, I suppose. You just see people there and you know, everyday life. [laughter]

OH: So they would have been closer to the river?

BS: Yes, but even then they weren't really close to the river because we were down near the Kidman Park area more or less, you know. The river was a fair way, not a fair way, it was a little way away, yeah. You could walk there quite easily.

OH: (22:23) So how did your parents water the vegetables?

BS: We had a well and there was big trough. We used to, Dad would turn the well on and set it up and the water would run through this trough to our land and he'd make trenches so that the water would run through to the glasshouses or wherever but as it gone on it wasn't as strong flowing so he put in a big tank, a ten thousand gallon tank so by the time water got so far, he could open up the tank and let the water run from that and have the swirls go through, make it a bit faster.

OH: A bit more efficient, yeah?

BS: Mmmn.

OH: (23:20) You spoke about the glasshouses so that you had tomatoes and beans in the glasshouses after the tomatoes.

BS: Yes.

OH: Any other vegetables outside?

BS: Outside yeah. He put in pumpkins and sometimes watermelons. He tried cucumbers, you know, carrots, anything that was in season more or less and he'd have ago at them all. Onions and I think he tried cauliflowers but they didn't work too well. There was too much work to them. [laughs] onions, I've said onions, yeah.

OH: (24:12) And where did your father sell?

BS: Where did he ...?

OH: Where did he sell the vegetables?

BS: Oh he would take them to market. At least a couple of times a week, could've been three but I remember twice. We used to have a horse and cart old Susy, we called our horse, and he used to take them to market with that. And eventually poor old Susy died [laughs] and he bought a truck, a Dodge truck. And he thought he was Christmas. [laughter]

OH: Was it new?

BS: Yes, it was new and he used to go to market with that.

OH: It would have been a lot easier I imagine.

BS; Yes.

OH: Did your mother help in the garden as well?

BS: Oh yes, she did what she could, you know. But she was more or less housebound with the cooking and ...

OH: And looking after the kids?

BS: Yeah.

OH: (25:17) What was your ... what were the sorts of jobs apart from, you know, helping moving the glasshouses?

BS: You mean in the garden?

OH: Yeah.

BS: Well, we'd pick beans and then we'd prune and pick the tomatoes. [laughs] And yeah, pick the tomatoes and sometimes Dad would send them to Melbourne because that's what they did then and we'd have to pack them into half cases and get them ready to send away. The gardeners' supply would come around and pick them up, and then, of course there was the times he went to the market with some, you know.

OH: (26:06) And would that have been the East End market?

BS: Oh, --- yes, yes.

OH: Did you ever go?

BS: Yes, I did, we went up a few times, or I went up there a few times and it was interesting to see just how many gardeners there were. You now, they came in from Payneham and Paradise and all that part of town as well and everybody had something different. Yeah.

OH: You would have had an early start if you went to market?

BS: Oh, definitely, it was a 3.00 o'clock get up and get there early because you get the best spot, you know, the earlier you get there. [laughs]

OH: Do you remember other *veneti* who were there at the market?

BS: I didn't know them that well then because you know that we knew them but not that well. I don't know where they came from, I think they just came from everywhere and we didn't sort of look to see what part of Italy they came from.

OH: Yeah. Do you know how your father and your mother organised to get that land on Henley Beach Road.

BS: Oh no, I wouldn't have a clue. No.

OH: It's a long time ago, isn't it, and you don't ask your parents these things, do you?

BS: No, well we didn't think it was interesting, you know we were only kids, not interested in that sort of thing then.

OH: Yeah that's true.

(27:54) I wanted to ask you about some things in terms of your growing up and family and that

sort of stuff. Did you make your First Communion?

BS: Yes I did.

OH: And where did you make it?

BS: At Thebarton at Queen of Angels.

OH: Was that where you were at school?

BS: Yes, we went to Saint Joseph's there and for most of our life we started off down at Lockleys and the priest just wanted us to go to the Catholic church so Mum and Dad sent us up there.

OH: How would you get there?

BS: Well, we went by tram but we had to catch the tram at Lockleys because there was a section there and we had a pass and the pass didn't allow us to come down further unless we paid a penny [laughs] and we didn't have the penny. We couldn't afford that. So we had to walk up to Lockleys and catch the tram there. Same thing in the night, we'd get off at Lockleys and walk home.

OH: How far would that have been?

BS: It was a fair walk, --- probably about a mile, I suppose. Yeah

OH: A decent walk for [laughs] little kids.

BS: Yes.

OH: (29:29) What language did you speak at home?

BS: Always English. Dad wanted to learn how to speak English properly so he spoke English unless we had visitors or something, you know, then they'd go off in their own language. But it was always to us, it was English.

OH: So did you grow up knowing any Italian or Veneto?

BS: Very little, yeah. We did understand some but we never spoke it because Dad, yeah, always spoke English and he wanted it that way so ...

OH: (30:14) What kinds of things were important to your parents, do you think?

BS: Well, their first thing was to get a house, you know, a house of their own, and that's what they were working for to be independent of rents and things you know.

OH: And that did happen, didn't it?

BS: It did happen, yes, it took a while but it did happen and they were really happy about that.

OH: Do you remember roughly when they moved because it was to Findon, wasn't it?

BS: It was the same year that we got married. It was '55 because they moved there in January and we got married in May, so it was round that time, yeah.

OH: And we'll talk a bit more about your working life and marriage in a moment.

(31:17) I wanted to ask you about where your mother shopped because she would had to have quite a bit of food to feed everyone.

BS: Well, I think that Dad did most of the shopping. When you went into market he would go into the Star grocer, that was in Hindley Street and he'd order because Mum would write up an order and he would take it in and they would deliver it for us. And the meat? He got --- in Waymouth Street,

Mattiazzo. There was a butcher there. And the greengrocer? Well, we had our own vegies so we didn't bother about that too much. [laughs]

OH: And did you have animals, like did you have chickens, cow?

BS: Oh yeah, every Sunday was chicken day, you know we had a lovely roast dinner, chicken dinner and that was once a week and not like now you go the shop and have your take away whenever you feel like it. But in those days, it was chicken roast on Sunday. [laughs] And that was it.

OH: And that was pretty special?

BS: Yeah.

OH: So you would have had quite a few chickens, then?

BS: Yes.

OH: If you were having them every Sunday? [laughs] What other animals did you have?

BS: We had a cow and a horse.

OH: Who milked the cow?

BS: Dad did.

OH: Did your Mum make butter and cheese?

BS: Yes, yes, she made butter, not cheese and she would boil the milk and take the cream off the top, it was beautiful cream and yeah, butter.

OH: And did you have a garden around the house that you know, was different from the vegetable garden?

BS: We had dahlias, Mum used to keep a lot of dahlias, they were beautiful, all different colours and we used to water them with the washing water [laughs] That was another thing, we used to do the washing on Saturdays. Milva would wash, and I would hang them up and Roma would iron them, when they were dry, you know.

OH: So you had your jobs?

BS: We had our jobs.

OH: Were the dahlias in the house?

BS: Well, when she picked a bunch, yes, they had dahlias all over. They were beautiful.

OH: Yeah. Did you have fruit trees?

BS: Yes, I think we did have a peach and a nectarine and figs, yeah, there was two fig trees there. We didn't have as much. That was about it. Dad would buy a case of apples when he went to the market and there was big cases and yeah, buy a case of apples.

OH: (34:19) Did your father make wine?

BS: Yes, he made wine, he bought his grapes and ...

OH: Where did he buy the grapes from?

BS: I think he got from Patritti, yeah because when he mad the wine, we'd all have to take our turn in the barrel.

OH: What were you doing?

BS: Oh, squashing the grapes, you know, with our feet because we'd all have to keep our feet clean and when we got out you weren't allowed to run around. You had to sit down for the next time that you got in.

OH: So you actually got into a big barrel?

BS: A vat.

OH: A vat?

BS: Yes, it was a big, probably as big as this table.

OH: Was it wooden?

BS: Yes, it was a wooden one, yeah.

OH: So the whole process began there and what about bottling and things like that?

BS: Well, he would drain the wine from the barrel and --- I can't remember how he did it now. It would ferment and eventually bottle it when it was ready. He had to wait so long before he could bottle it, for it to boil. That's right, he had to boil it, [laughs] ferment it. I can't remember how it was done properly.

OH: Yeah, I imagine it would have been a bit of a process, with steps involved.

BS: Yeah.

OH: What about tomato sauce, was that something that happened in your family too?

BS: Yes, Mum used to make it and put it in beer bottles and Dad would come around and knock the tops on with his special little hammer thing and yeah, we used to do that and anything that we could do to preserve the fruit, you know, we would do it. The same thing with eggs, there used to be a product you could buy, you could rub it on the eggs, what was it called, "keep egg" or something, "keep egg" and you'd rub it on and it would preserve the eggs.

OH: Oh, I haven't heard of that like it gave it a skin or something like that?

BS: Like an oily skin. You buy it in a jar and you rub it all over the eggs and pack them away in a dark place and it was called "keep egg", yeah, that's what it was.

OH: Keep-egg?

BS: Yeah.

OH: How interesting so when the chickens or the chooks weren't laying you could...

BS: Have your eggs, just the same. They didn't last forever but you know, if you kept rotating them when you didn't have them, you would always have eggs. [laughs]

OH: Wow. And what about killing the pig? Was that something that happened in your family?

BS: No, we couldn't afford to buy a pig and do that. But I remember later on, Dad would buy the same type of meat and the, the skins, yeah, and he would get someone to help him make it like that. But he couldn't buy the pig, you know, it was too much for us.

OH: So many children, not great income ...

BS: No.

OH: I imagine, to manage to do those extra things?

BS: Yeah.

OH: (38:16) What about, you know I asked about the buying of food, but what about clothes for you children, how did that happen?

BS: Well, I can remember during the War --- we used to - our auntie used to come down, Mum's cousin, we called her auntie. They were big tea drinkers so we used to have coupons and Mum would swap coupons, give them some tea coupons and they would give her clothing coupons and any food coupons that they had, and you know, they'd sort of work it out like that.

OH: And would your mother gone to the city very much?

BS: She used to go in on Endowment day. We used to get five shillings for the first child and if you had more than one and then you'd get 7/6 or something like that instead of the five shillings and she would go in to town

(39:27) But she had to be very careful during the War years because she had to have a permit to go in. For some reason, she wasn't allowed to go without this permit.

OH: And that would have been because she had married an Italian?

BS: Mmmn.

OH: And the Italians were considered enemy aliens?

BS: Well, Dad was naturalised.

OH: But it didn't matter to our government.

BS: No, no, well Dad had to work in the munitions factory in Kilkenny during the War and he also had to work the garden so Mum used to work the garden while Dad was at work and he would come home and help her out.

OH: Wow, that would have been a hard kind of life that they were living.

BS: Yeah, it was hard.

OH: Where was the munitions factory in Kilkenny?

BS: Where Kelvinator is or was. I don't think they're still there now but that was Kelvinator ...

OH: Gee, difficult time really.

BS: Well he was one of the lucky ones, a lot of them were sent up to Alice Springs and out in the bush there but I think because he was a primary producer and also because he was naturalised he was kept in the city. But those that weren't naturalised they were sent up to Alice Springs.

OH: Tough times.

BS: Yeah.

OH: Really tough.

(41:17) What about your parents' social life? Did they have time for a social life? [laughter]

BS: Well, they'd get together with the rest of the people that they knew.

OH: Who were some of those people?

BS: Well, they were the Ballestrin, Zalunardo, Tonellato's, the Piovesan's. Usually there was the same group. Dad would play cards.

OH: Santins?

BS: Yes. Dad would play cards. They all did. Mum would take us out sometimes as well, you know.

But ---

OH: And where would you go, if you went with your Mum?

BS: Well, we would sit around there while Dad was playing cards, and just talk. The women would talk and do their knitting or whatever they did. The kids would run up and down [laughs] until we got tired.

OH: Whose places would you have gone to most often, do you think?

BS: They used to take it in turn, Sometimes they'd come to our place. Sometimes we'd go to Tonellato's. And what was it? Santin's? Not very often. Go to Ballestrin. Who was the people who had that train?

OH: They were the Tonellato's.

BS: Tonellato's, that's right, yeah.

OH: Berno?

BS: Yeah, Gino Berno, yeah.

OH: Not Pietro and Albert?

BS: No I don't think they went there very often, they were in the same group, more or less, you know.

OH: Marchioro?

BS: Oh yes, Vic, yes, Vic and Angelina, they were good friends.

OH: To your parents?

BS: We used to live up the road from them, I did.

OH: Yeah in ...

BS: White Avenue

OH: White Avenue in Lockleys, yeah.

(43:28) What kinds of occasions were important for your family?

BS: Oh, --- just birthdays, we'd have you know, at home. There wasn't any big occasions because nobody could afford it so ... It was just Christmas, I suppose and Easter. There was no big occasion unless there was a wedding. And after the War, you know, the men, started, the migrants they brought out their girlfriends and there was a wedding just about every week. [laughter]

OH: Do you remember going to weddings?

BS: Oh, yeah, *do I?* Well, I was a bit older then, I was about 18 or something myself, you know, but there were a lot of weddings then.

OH: Where were the weddings held?

BS: Sometimes in a shed, sometimes in a hall but usually in a shed because, you know, it was easier, cheaper.

OH: And a good space?

BS: Yes, and it was a lot of open space, you know, you could sort of make as much noise as you wanted. [laughter] And believe me, they did make a noise. They were all happy about it. Everyone enjoyed themselves so ...

OH: (45:12) Did your parents go to church?

BS: No, they weren't regular church people, no.

OH: But obviously they must have thought it was important to send you children to the Catholic school at Thebarton.

BS: Well, the reason we went there was because the Catholic priest came down -- I wouldn't say insisted, but they're Catholics and they should be going to a Catholic school. Anyway he came down that often that he sort of drove them nuts. [laughter]¹

OH: So they had to agree. [laughter]

BS: Yes.

OH: (45:55) I was going to ask you about when your parents moved to the house in Findon. What do you remember about all of that? I know you were obviously getting ready to marry but how was it in the family, at that time?

BS: Well, we'd only just moved and --- Well, we had to move all the glasshouse and everything over there, you know ...

OH: Everyone had to ...?

BS: We all had to bog in and help.

OH: It must have taken a long time?

BS: Well, not really because I had a boyfriend, I was engaged. Milva was married and Roma and Angie both had ... they were engaged if I remember right, and all the men, all helped, you know, plus anybody that had a bit of free time. They all helped one another and that's how it made it a bit easier because we couldn't do it by ourselves. We were girls and everyone else had boys in the family so... [laughs] You know, we couldn't, we weren't strong enough to do too much of it but we helped Dad as much as we could.

OH: I imagine because you were family members the expectation was that you would've helped.

BS: Yes, that's right.

OH: In all sorts of ways, like you were saying with the packing, the pruning and all those things?

(47:33) So when your parents moved to Findon, how much land was there, there?

BS: Probably one and half acres, I think, if I remember right. There was a big hole down the bottom which we couldn't use but I think there was roughly one and a half acres.

OH: What was the hole at the bottom?

BS: It was just a dump that they'd taken dirt out of or sand or whatever it was and it was just left open.

OH: Was it a new house?

BS: No. it was an already built house.

OH: How many bedrooms would there have been?

BS: There were four bedrooms and a large, well, Dad built a large kitchen. There was only the one small kitchen there and he enlarged that. It was huge, it was double the size of this and four bedrooms,

¹ In the editing process, Bruna clarified that the priest was Father Smythe. Her parents were expected to pay school fees if they

bathroom and that's about it, I think.

OH: How important was it for your parents to have that house and land?

BS: Well, it was lifetime dream, wasn't it? [laughs] Yeah. They were, it as very important to them because they struggled all their life, you know and it was just something that they did want desperately and they managed to get it.

OH: --- The house was in Angley Avenue, were there other Italians around that area?

BS: Yes, there was --- can't think of their name now. No I can't think of the name. Brazzalotto's. Can't remember their name, there was Brazzalotto's and then there was another family further down. There were other Italians. Gino Berno lived in Findon Road, not too far away. Yes, there were quite a few around there.

OH: Your parents continued to grow the same kind of vegetables?

BS: Yeah.

OH: (50:10) Did your parents ever employ anyone to help them?

BS: There might have been a time when they had a very casual labourer when they were really busy and they had to get someone to help us. But not very often because we just had to do it ourselves, you know [laughs].

OH: Yeah, yeah.

BS: We'd get up early in the morning before we went to school or work, and help out a bit, pick a few tomatoes or beans or whatever needed to be done. And home again at night, we'd do the same thing, you know.

OH: What time would your day have begun?

BS: Well when we were busy, it would start around as soon as the sun came out, as soon as there was light.

OH: Wow.

BS: And we'd get up, pick tomatoes or beans or whatever. About 8 o'clock we'd finish there and get ready to go to school and come home and it's be the same thing again until dark.

OH: Pretty hard life, pretty full days?

BS: Yes, and then we'd have to do our homework and you know, it was the same thing again the next morning. It was a long day, yeah.

OH: (51:33) What about Saturdays and Sundays?

BS: Well, Saturdays, we did the washing [laughs] And that was a full day. --- Saturday night sometimes when we were a bit older, we would go to a dance or something when there was one on.

OH: Where would you go?

BS: St Patricks'. But I don't think we went every Saturday night. no.

(52:04) Sundays? We'd get on our bikes and go for a ride somewhere, sometimes with a group, sometimes by ourself, go down the beach.

OH: So you and the oldest sisters, you and Milva and Roma?

BS: Roma, yeah. I don't think Angela was old enough at that stage. Can't remember that.

OH: Which beach would you go to?

BS: Oh, Henley Beach, yeah, down --- and Grange, sometimes we'd go to Grange.

OH: If you were in a group, who else would be with you?

BS: I think --- it was Tonellato's, --- Oh, not the Santin's, I think they were in an older group, sort of thing. And we had a couple of girlfriends, the Pasin's, they would come, a couple of girls from out at Norwood and they would stay the night with their friends or something. Usually the same group, it was. Yeah.

OH: It must have been fun.

BS: Yes. Well, there was no television or anything in those days so we had to find our own fun.

OH: (53:33) And going back a bit to talk about your schooling. So you went to St Joseph's for primary school. And then how many years of high school or secondary school did you do?

BS: I did two years, I went up to Grade, Second Year. That would be about nine, wouldn't it? I don't think I finished that year because I was 14 and I had to go to work to help Mum and Dad out because they wanted this house, not that particular one but they wanted to buy a house so they sent us to work.²
[laughs]

OH: So it meant that your wages were helping them?

BS: Yeah.

OH: (54:25) When you left school, how did you get a job?

BS: Well, Milva was already working at Brazzales.

OH: That's the mica factory?

BS: That's the mica factory, yes. And I got a job there as well. So Dad bought us a bike but we had to pay him back and he, we paid him back and we used to ride to work on the bike and that was from Lockleys to Liverpool Street in Adelaide.

OH: Just off Hindley Street?

BS: Yes.

OH: How long would that have taken?

BS: About an half an hour.

OH: A decent amount of time.

BS: Mmmn...

OH: What was your actual job there?

BS: We were mica processors. We used to --- they don't have them now but they used to be elements for irons and things. And they used to come from Alice Springs or India, used to have big sheets of mica coming from India and we'd have to sort of, stamp on it and they had presses there to cut the stamps out, the sizes that were needed for the irons and anything else that was electrical. That's what we did.

² In the editing process, Bruna explained that she enjoyed typing and shorthand but was unable to continue with these subjects because she had to leave school.

OH: And how many people would have worked there?

BS: I think it was about 20 there when we worked there.

OH: I understand that there were quite a lot of Italian girls?

BS: All Italians, yeah.

OH: And did you know any of them before you went there?

BS: Yeah, we knew some of them. There was a lot that we didn't know. There was some south Italians, and a couple of Romanians and you know, we all sort of got on together. [laughs]

OH: And it would have been quite a change to go from being a schoolgirl to being a working girl.

BS: Yes, it wasn't easy --- you had to cope differently, you know.

Part 2 of the interview recorded on 8th November 2016

OH: This is a second interview recorded with Bruna Semola for the Italian market gardeners oral history project. I'm recording the interview on 8th November 2016 at Flinders Park in South Australia and my name is Madeleine Regan

So thank you Bruna for interview number two.

OH: (00:24) We were just talking your life at Brazzale's mica factor and you were 14 when you went there. And what was you know, social life? Were you meeting other young people at that time?

BS: Oh, we used to have the weekend off and we'd go for rides on our bike which was really all we could afford. Sometimes we'd go to the pictures on Saturday night and that was about all that more or less do because there was always jobs to do at home in the house sometimes, and we'd have to get our clothes ready for work. That's how we spent our weekend. [laughs]

OH: Your pay was not just for you, was it?

BS: No we had to share it. We brought our envelopes home and Dad took out a fair bit and we --- would giving 30 shillings, I think to start off with --- and anything we wanted we had to buy out of that. Dad bought a bike for me and I had to pay some of that back every week and we managed like that, you know. We used to help them buy this house that they desperately wanted so that's what we did.

OH: (02:09) Where would you have bought your clothes as a young woman?

BS: Oh, just anywhere in the usual shops, Coles and I think they had Coles around the place somewhere. There were a lot smaller shops then and not so many around now but we used to go through the small shops and we'd find just anything we wanted, you know.

OH: (02:44) And how did you meet your husband?

BS: Oh, well, after the War everybody nominated somebody to come out and when someone arrived, well, there was always a bit of a welcome party. So I think I met him in a --- Ballestrin's that one of these welcome parties and he --- well, we just sort of met. There were two or three that arrived that and everybody was there to meet them because when somebody came from overseas they usually knew someone who was already here and we'd all go there and you now and have a bit of a chat, they'd buy a barrel of beer and put something in to eat so we'd stay there for a while and then off we'd go home.

[laughs]

OH: Romano said that he came from the same village as the Ballestrin's.

BS: Yes, I didn't realise that but that's what he said, yeah.

OH: So you met him. And then how old would you have been when you met him?

BS: Oh probably around 18 or 19 or something like that.

OH: And were you able to go out and spend time with each other?

BS: Well, we didn't get together for a good 12 months or more, you know. --- When we did, well, I was working and he was working and was more or less just the weekend we'd go to the pictures or something or he might come around one night during the week if he got home a bit early or if the weather was alright because he didn't have a car, it was all bikes, you know. In fact we didn't get a car until after we married. Well, everybody was in the same position, no car ...

OH: Where was he living and working at that time?

BS: He was living with Narciso and Maria Ballestrin and they found him a job. I think he started off at National Terrazzo and later on he went to Kelvinator, they were still there then and then he moved onto Holden's at Woodville and he stayed there until he retired. Yeah, that's where he started in National Terrazzo.

OH: (05:54) So after a certain period, you made the decision to get married to each other?

BS: Yeah, I think we were probably going out together for about three years or something and we delayed it until I turned 21 and we, he was building a house, one of his brothers was here in the meantime because he'd saved up the money that he had to pay his nominee and paid them off and saved up some more to bring another brother out and together they started to build a house and in the meantime they were saving up money to bring out a couple more brothers so they brought them out and then another one came and eventually they brought the whole family here.

OH: The whole family, wow! How many was that all together?

BS: Well, all together it was eight boys and a girl.

OH: The same as your family?

BS: Yes, they lived over in Frogmore Road in the same house that Milva and Shorty, that was his nickname and his family and we had lived there earlier so it was quite a gathering there. [laughter]

OH: Quite a coincidence. You told me you got married on Henley Beach Road, at the Catholic Church.

BS: At the Catholic Church.

OH: What about your dress? Where did you get your dress from?

BS: I bought my dress from Miller Anderson's. I'd gone up the road to buy something, I can't remember what it was and I saw this dress in the window in Miller Anderson. I thought, Oh God! I fell in love with it and I went in and inquired about it and the lady didn't want to take it out of the window. And I said, I want the one in the window. [laughs] And so she got it out, got someone to get it out. And I tried it on and it was just made for me. [laughs] And the funny thing was that one of the young

lasses that was working with us, she came in and she said "I saw the most beautiful wedding dress [laughs] up in Miller Anderson's." I said: "Oh did you?" And she said: "Yes, but when I went back to get it, it was gone. And the woman told me that it had only just been put in the window and that's why she didn't want to take it out." [laughter] Anyway, I started to laugh when the girl said to me that she saw this dress and it was gone. And she said "You. You got it."

OH: And how would you have paid for that?

BS: --- Time payment, you know lay-buy. That's how we had to buy everything those days. Just didn't have the money to outlay it, you know.

OH: And some of your sisters were your bridesmaids?

BS: I had three of my sisters bridesmaids and two were flower girls. And Romano had three of his brothers as groomsmen, best man, yeah

OH: And where did you hold the reception?

BS: It was on Taylor's Road, I can't remember the name of the hall.

OH: Taylor's Road?

BS: South Road, now.

OH: Oh, the corner of George Street?

BS: Yes, that's it.

OH: And how many people would you have had at your wedding.

BS: It was probably about 400 then.

OH: It was so many?

BS: Yeah, They had big weddings then but they weren't posh like they are now. We had to do our own catering, cook our own chooks and get all the smallgoods ready and bread and everything, we had to organise everything ourself, put the flowers on the table, get someone to set the tables. It was all done by yourself then.

OH: A lot of work to get it all organised.

BS: Yes, well the same people sort of did it all the time, everybody helped and that's what made it so easy.

OH: And when you got married, was the house that Romano had been building with his brother, finished?

BS: Well, we had, the actual house outside was finished but --- there was no floor coverings or anything. In fact one bedroom didn't even have floors in it. [laughs] and we had an outside dunny and that wasn't finished. But everything else, well we just moved in and of course, we had his brothers living with us and they sort of helped out a little bit too, you know.

OH: How many of the brothers were there?

BS: There were four of them. There was five of them altogether. So there was Romano and four of his brothers living with us.

OH: And did you go back to work at Brazzale's?

BS: I did for a few months but later on I just stayed home because it was getting a bit much you

know because I had to do the washing. They were very good, they used to help me quite a lot. And I did all their washing and ironing and everything but ...

OH: A lot of work?

BS: It was a lot of work

OH: For a young woman?

BS: Yes, I suppose but you know, I grew up quick. [laughter]

OH: I imagine, that you must have, you know, grown up quickly like that.

BS: Mmmn.

OH: (12:34) I wanted to ask about your parents and visiting Italy. I remember you saying earlier in the interview that they went after your Dad had been away for 30 something years.

BS: A fair while. Yes, I, we were married at the time. I can't remember what year probably the '60s, early '60s that they would have gone overseas. It was the first time for Mum, and the first time for Dad. They were away for about six months, I think.

OH: (13:24) Did the garden keep going while they were away?

BS: Well, Sandra was home from school at that stage and she didn't want to go out to work anywhere so she stayed home and looked after the garden. But they had already been planted and everything was ... There wasn't too much work to do at that time, you know.

OH: Yeah.

BS: And Gino Berno and Vic, Vic Marchioro used to come over and just check up on her and make sure she was doing the right thing but she was quite happy to stay home and look after the garden.

OH: She was obviously, you know, used to it and well organised and your parents trusted that she'd do it?

BS: Yes, she was quite happy to be home.

OH: Did she go to market?

BS: No, she didn't... I can't remember whether if it was time for market at that stage. I think the crop had already been finished and she was just more or less looking after it, the glasshouses and anything that was around to be done.

OH: (14:49) How important was it for your mother to go to Italy?

BS: Well, she had never met any of the family over there except Uncle Nico, what was his name, Antonio, they called him Nico, for some reason. And she... it was quite important for her to go because she was happy to meet that part of the family.

OH: And she didn't speak Italian?

BS: She spoke some Italian, she made herself understood. She got on quite well with them.

OH: It would have been interesting for her.

BS: Yes, she mixed with the Italian women here, more than her own family. Yeah.

OH: Which is interesting, isn't it because she would have been unusual in a way?

BS: Yes, she didn't see much of her own family, even her Mum. She used to come down occasionally

to make sure that everything was ... that she was alright or not. But they never used to mix with her very much. Because she had married Dad and they just didn't approve of it.

OH: But your mother must have been very open to being part of the Italian community?

BS: Well, she'd mixed with them all her married life and she understood them and got on well with them so she thought, well not meet the family, you know. They can't do nothing now, I've had my family and that's the way it is.

OH: (16:49) Yeah. You know you mentioned about your father's brother, Nico, or Antonio. When did he come to Adelaide?

BS: He came here --- Oh probably around '50, I wouldn't be sure about that. But he stayed here for a few years and brought his wife out and I think he had two, two children then. And the other one was born, Irene was born here. Was it Irene? I can't remember. Anyway, they had three children and they stayed here for a few years and then he decided that he was going to go home. They took Irene and Denis home. Teresina was the oldest one and she had been married and she wanted to stay here so that's what they did.

OH: What work had he done when he was here?

BS: He worked in a market garden --- around near where Narciso Ballestrin was living. --- That's right. I'd forgotten about that. [laughs]

OH: That's interesting. I wonder how your father would have felt when his brother went back?

BS: Well, he was a bit disappointed because he was the only relative he had here. He did have two nephews here. One went back. And the other one, I think he's still here, his wife had died but he's still here.

OH: That's Zampin?

BS: Yeah. He --- I forget what I was going to say?

OH: About the nephew?

BS: Yeah, --- well this one here actually he packed up the whole house and family and took them back to Italy with his furniture and everything, one of them. When they got over there, they decided they didn't like it so they brought everything back. [laughs] Then they stayed here, he's still here.

OH: What a ... you know, it would be a bit unsettling, wouldn't it? Or very unsettling, really.

BS: Yeah, I don't know what happened but they just didn't like it here and they decided to go home, packed up all their furniture and everything and then when they were there for a couple of months, they decided they were coming back. And they did.

OH: It's interesting isn't it?

(19:55) When did your parents die. Bruna?

BS: Dad died ---, I think it was 1972. Look, I'm not sure about this but Mum lived ten or 12 years longer. And strangely enough, she died on the same day, August 26th and Dad died on August 26th but Mum died years later, few years later.

OH: And did she keep living in the house at Findon?

BS: Yes, she stayed there by herself. And she was not going to move out of there for anybody. That was hers, yeah she worked hard and long enough to get it and she was going [laughs] stay there. And she had a stroke and taken to hospital and she was never well enough. She died, actually died.

OH: (21:03) When your father died had he already retired from the market garden?

BS: Yes, he had retired for a few years and --- he just used to get in the car. They'd decide to go out for the day so they'd go up to Murray Bridge and buy an ice cream [laughs] or else they'd decide that they were going to come and see the girls and ... Dad still kept a few beans and tomatoes and stuff to keep himself busy and he'd bring us all around a handful of beans, you know, just to see how we were going and keep us with fresh veggies. Yeah. That's what he used to do, keep himself busy. [laughs]

OH: A lot of the older market gardeners continued to have their own you know, backyard garden, didn't they?

BS: Yeah, well, it was something to keep them busy you know, after you've been working hard all your life, you can't just sit down and do nothing. I know even Romano now, he's, you know, we're starting to feel our age and he's always had his little backyard garden but he's starting to feel it a little bit too, you know.

OH: Yeah.

BS: He's inside more now. [laughs]

OH: Well, the winter we've had, it's bad ...

BS: It's been pretty bad, yeah.

OH: (22:43) You went to Italy?

BS: Mmmn ...

OH: What was that experience like because you and Romano went?

BS: Oh, 1988, yeah, I remember it because it was the Bicentennial year. [laughs] Yes, it was an experience to see how different the two countries sort of live, you know. I enjoyed it, I really did and I really liked the scenery, the antiquity of it, you know. But I wouldn't like to live there. This is my country. [laughs] I'm staying here. [laughs]

OH: Romano would have had some relatives that you obviously met there?

BS: Yes he had, well, all his family, aunties, uncles, cousins, all his family. His family was the only one that came here. And his mother, someone else asked her one day: "Are you sorry you came here?" She was about 56 or 60 or something, and she said: "It was the best move I ever made." [laughs]

OH: So the mother came and what about the father?

BS: Yes, the whole family came here. The boys brought them out. The boys brought them out.

OH: Wow.

BS: There was two boys and a girl like after the others came and they brought them out and she said that it was the best move she'd ever made.

OH: Isn't that interesting?

BS: Considering her age to change from one country to another like that not speaking the language but believe me, she made herself understood. [laughter]

OH: And where did they live?

BS: In Frogmore Road.

OH: Oh.

BS: In *that* house. [laughs]

OH: Oh, okay. Oh, the house that's seen many people. [laughter]

BS: Yes, believe it or not! [laughs]

OH: (24:57) How did you feel about your Italian heritage, as you grew up?

BS: --- I was really not so proud of it you know, because we were teased all the time but as I got older, I felt more proud of it you know, I was part of it that I had two countries that I could not rely on but sort of --- I can't sort of find the right words but I enjoyed being partly Italian.

OH: So you feel partly Italian.

BS: Oh, yes, in some ways. I suppose most ways because they were the only ones that we really mixed with. We didn't have a lot of Australian friends, we mostly, spent most of our time with Italian people.³

OH: And marrying an Italian, as well?

BS: Well, there wasn't ... you know, it seemed like the right thing to do [laughs] at the time.

OH: It's interesting, you know, how we feel our heritage and how important it might be to us.

(26:24) Is there anything else, Bruna, that you'd like to say, about the market gardens and your family?

BS: Oh, just that I wouldn't like to go through it again. [laughs] I've had enough of that and it was a hard life. I know it was hard for us, I know it was hard for Mum and Dad. I know I wouldn't like to do it again.

OH: I've heard that before.

BS: Have you? Oh?

OH: Yes. And the difficulty of growing up without having a lot of extra things you know, time. Time was important, was always important for market gardeners.

BS: Having extra things, we didn't bother us that much because we didn't know any different, you know. Time? Well, time was always important because you had to, like the tomatoes and everything, you know, you always had to be ready at a certain time but it's the same with everything, I suppose, isn't it?

OH: But I was also thinking about you girls having to get up at light ...

BS: Oh yeah.

OH: So the work in whatever was required before school or before work and then after?

BS: Yeah.

OH: Pretty regimented.

BS: Yes, well we missed the tram sometimes going to school, you know, and we'd have to wait or the next one and get to school late and get told off and when we came home, some nights we had to clean

³ Bruna clarified in the editing process: "we would stay as a group, no pressure those days."

the school before we left. This was on a Friday night, we'd have to clean our classroom out. And every week there was a different group that used to do it because when it was our turn, we'd finish late and that would mean we'd miss the tram home. We couldn't catch the tram after 5:00 o'clock. We had to pay for it because our pass wouldn't allow it and we'd have to walk home from Thebarton. That's if we missed the 5:00 o'clock tram.

OH: Wow!

BS: And then we'd got told off because we got home late. [laughter] It was never-ending.

OH: Couldn't do the right thing. I can understand that way of life would have been very hard. It's an interesting reflection to say that you wouldn't really want to do it again.

BS: No, I wouldn't want to do it again.

OH: Well, Bruna, I'd just like to say thank you very much to contributing to the project about the Italian market gardeners and today I've learned -- a whole lot of new things because of what you've said. So thank you very much for your time and for contributing to the project.

BS: Well, if I could help, but you're welcome. [laughs]

OH: Thank you.