

**Italian market gardeners oral history project**  
**Interview with Remo Berno (RB:)**  
**Also present is Remo's sister, Diana Berno (DB)**  
**OH 872 - 46**  
**Recorded by Madeleine Regan (OH)**  
**at Valla', Province of Treviso, Veneto region, Italy**

During the interview, a map is on the table and consulted frequently to show the location of market gardens and other features in the Kidman Park area of South Australia during the 1950s.

**OH:** Thank you very much for agreeing to this interview, Remo.

**RB:** Thank you.

**OH:** (00:34) We'll start with your family background.

**RB:** Yes.

**OH:** What is your full name?

**RB:** My name is Remo Angelo Berno.

**OH:** And your date of birth?

**RB:** I was born on 19th of December 1953.

**OH:** Where were you born?

**RB:** I was born, I think at the Calvary Hospital, North Adelaide.

**OH:** Were you named for anyone in your family?

**RB:** Angelo was my grandfather on my mother's side, Angelo Pastro was my grandfather, yes

**OH:** And Remo?

**RB:** No, Remo, no. No, it's not a common name, it's a very Italian name but it's not common and I don't know why Mum ... she liked it I suppose. [laughter]

**OH:** Could you tell me the full names of your parents?

**RB:** Yes

**OH:** Maybe if we start with your father?

**RB:** Vittorio Pietro Berno.

**OH:** And he was born?

**RB:** 18th July 1909.

**OH:** And your mother's full name?

**RB:** Antonietta, I don't know if she had a middle name, but anyway, Antonietta Pastro and she was born on 14th September 1919.

**OH:** Do you know how many brothers and sisters your father had?

**RB:** Of course. Dad had four, three brothers and three sisters.

**OH:** And what about your mother?

**RB:** Mum had a larger family. I think she had --- eight. There was eight. She had --- oh, one, two, *zia*<sup>1</sup> Norina, *zia* Elvira, Mamma and *zia* Amelia, *zia* Maria, *zia* Rosetta. There were six daughters. And *zio*<sup>2</sup> Nino, *zio* Bruno, *zio* Bepi.

**DB:** *Zio* Bepi. And one died

**RB:** She had five sisters and three brothers and she had a fourth brother that died young.

**OH:** Wow.

**RB:** Of which I know very little about. He was only very young, a boy

**OH:** (02:55) We know that in your father's family...

**RB:** Yes.

**OH:** A number of his siblings emigrated to Australia. Can you say how many?

**RB:** Well, of course. Starting from the one who started it all off. Fedele or Felice, depends. Fedele means 'faithful'. Felice means 'happy'. But anyway, we've always known him as *zio* Fedele, *Uncle* Fedele. He was the older brother, the eldest of the family and he left in '25, I think, 1925. And then there was Alberto, er, I'm not sure if my *zia* Corinna was older? Anyway, one of the sisters, Corinna was her name. Then there was my *zio* Alberto, he also came to Australia before Dad. It could have been '26. My father, he went out in 1927 and then there would have been another sister whose name is Veronica, no there'd be my *zio* Albino because he was born in 1911 so he would have been, he was the youngest boy of the family, my father's family. And he came to Australia later on. He came I think, about, yeah, would be 1938, yes. And then there was the youngest sister, Maria, and she married a Parisotto, yes and they went up to Queensland. So she would have been, she was the youngest of the family and she passed away only a few years ago.

**OH:** So your grandparents lost, how many children who went?

**RB:** There were four of them. Not really, my *zio* Fedele, the oldest brother returned because he had a--- I think an accident on a motor bike and anyway he had, he lost his left leg or part of his left leg. So when they had to operate him and he lost it he came back because of living on his own. So he came back, I think, would've been about '33 or '34 or something like that. He was in Australia for eight years, so I could remember so it would have been 1933. And then, probably, the youngest, Albino went to Adelaide, went to Australia. So that was sort of... He probably, there was a man with my grandparents, you know, as three of the brothers were away, the fourth would remain with the oldies. But then again, my grandfather died, my grandmother died very young. She died around '38 or something like that and, whereas my grandfather died around 1950s, early '50s, so you know, at that stage, [laughs] there was only the brothers and the rest of the family. In fact my *zio* Fedele still lives in the house where Dad and *Uncle* left when there were young.

**OH:** Oh, so the house was there?

**RB:** Yes, the house was there, yes.

**OH:** (06:44) And Remo, what about your mother's family? How many of them emigrated?

**RB:** Only Mum and --- Mum and her brother --- who, we used to call him ---

**DB:** Bepi.

**RB:** Bepi, but I think his name was...

**DB:** Antonio.

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<sup>1</sup> The Italian word *zia* means Auntie in English

<sup>2</sup> *Zio* means uncle

**RB:** Antonio. Antonio.

**OH:** Everyone has nicknames?

**RB:** Oh, especially here.

[laughter]

**RB:** I don't know why because they give them one name at birth or christening or whatever it is and then they change it to another name. But that was a very common, that was common many years ago. They don't do that any more, fortunately.

**OH:** Do you have nicknames?

**RB:** No.

**DB:** No.

**OH:** Did your *zio* Pastro...

**RB:** Yes.

**OH:** Live in Adelaide?

**RB:** Of course. He lived very, he was very close to Mum. My *zio* Bepi, as we used to call him, was two years younger?

**DB:** Yes

**RB:** And he suffered from polio and he had a limp. And Mum was always very, you know, very caring for him because he was, he was a tailor and he lived on the Grange Road.

**OH:** Oh.

**RB:** At Hindmarsh.

**OH:** Did he work from his home?

**RB:** Of course, yes, he had his workshop there. And I can still remember him with his big scissors and the cuttings and he always used to say: "This is a very poor job. No money to make."

**OH:** A lot of work but not much money?

**RB:** We were all very, very fond of *zio* Bepi because he was very, very --- good to us and we always loved going to see him and my..., his, my cousin, Angelo, which is exactly the name of his grandfather, Angelo Pastro, my cousin, Angelo has now his son, Riccardo, he's living in Adelaide. He's been there for three years.

**OH:** Oh, this is the young man who came?

**RB:** Riccardo Pastro, he's there now because we all kept the Australian Citizenship and he used to work, just under here.

**OH:** Oh, in the *pasticceria*?

**RB:** In the *pasticceria*. He learned to become a *pasticciere* which means a baker, you know

**OH:** But specialised in sweets?

**RB:** Specialises in sweets. And he was very good at that. And he's now been living there for over three years. And he's very, very happy, I think Angelo is going back, going to Adelaide in August because, because Riccardo's buying a home there.

**OH:** So he is going to stay?

**RB:** He is going to settle down, yes.

**OH:** How interesting?

**RB:** And his mother tells him every so often: "Come back to Italy." "No, no, no, you come here."

[laughter]

**RB:** "I've got work to do." No he's very, very happy with going back. That's how it is, you know.

**OH:** That's an interesting story of that generation.

You know your mother's brother, was he in Adelaide before your mother arrived?

**RB:** No.

**OH:** Would she have called him?

**RB:** He came out, I don't know exactly when they came out. I would imagine it would have been in --- Angelo is 1956.

**DB:** 1958.

**RB:** I reckon they would have left after the War, they would have left Italy after the War.

**OH:** Right, okay.

**RB:** Because Mum married in 1948.

**DB:** 1948.

**OH:** Okay.

**RB:** (10:39) That was because of the War, Dad used to tell me. He married late because he couldn't come back to the old country. That was, you know, that was --- fairly common of the Veneto people that come back, who didn't... Or they married what do you call it? By proxy?

**OH:** Yes.

**RB:** Or if they were, you know, wealthy enough to come back because it would have meant that Dad and Uncle, first my father, and then my *Uncle* married but first they worked and they passed 20 odd years of having lived in Australia. So they were able to stay here in Italy, you know, a year or seven, eight months to find a girl, to get engaged and get married.

**OH:** And then get married?

**RB:** And then they'd leave.

**OH:** Did your parents know each other before?

**RB:** The families would have known each other for sure. They only lived, say, two kilometres from one another. And as you know, these small towns, everybody knows everybody else. No cars. [laughs] No Internet. The only way you met people were at public functions and ---

**OH:** Church?

**RB:** Church, that's very, very common. But the two families respected each other, put it that way. And so probably, you know --- Dad was looking for a young woman that was able to have a family and who, who would accept migrating to Australia.

**OH:** Yeah, because that would have been a big challenge.

**RB:** Of course it was.

**OH:** Where did your mother live? She was not in Riese?

**RB:** Yes.

**OH:** But two kilometres?

**RB:** Two kilometres. Oh, okay. My father's home was about on the outskirts, say. But they, my father and his --- my grandfather lived on their property. My grandfather on my mother's side, lived, were only in... They rented their land and so, but they were living right in the centre of Riese on a small property, I think they were, my grandfather was, of three brothers that used to live together in an old house and I don't know how many kids. I could remember my mother saying that she didn't have lunch on the table. She used to have lunch on a staircase because there were too many kids. They couldn't fit around the table. That was how Riese was in those years.

**OH:** Yeah. In the '40s?

**RB:** Or earlier

**OH:** Earlier?

**RB:** (13:43) From the '20s and '30s, we're talking about a very, very tough period because it was after the World War I and there was, they were very little, I suppose, I imagine that they migrated because there was very little work here. Families were very large because that meant having, a large family meant you had many labourers in the fields because people used to go to work. I think Dad --- went to Grade 3, Mum went to Grade 5 and that was it. And then they had to work and so --- I know, I recall *Uncle Fedele*, *zio Fedele* saying--- I said "How come you went to Australia?" And he remembered, anyway that's what he told me, He remembered that when he decided, he was married, I think --- or he was --- anyway he left on his own and he was going, he wanted to go to Canada because his friends, people of his age were migrating to Canada and here they used to say "America."

**OH:** Uh huh.

**RB:** America was overseas. It could have been South America, North America but some of his friends were going to Canada and so to migrate then, you needed obviously, you had to have... First of all you had to be of a good family background, you didn't have to have any problems with the law and then you had to have all of your, you had to, you needed ---- sanitary certificates saying that you were fit and able to, to migrate. Anyway, he got all his paper work ready and when it was time to... obviously at that stage I think, the Governments, you know like the Canadian Government and the Australian Government were enhancing migration by giving, you know, paying for the --- the fee, the boat to get --- And anyway, he wanted to go to Canada and when he went to the office, the tourist office or the travel agency whatever it was that took care of this ticketing to --- to go to these new countries. They said: "I'm sorry the boat for Canada is full, and the next one is going to be six month's time." And he, you know, that really put him off. And he said: "Oh." You know, he was in the mood for travelling.

[laughter]

**OH:** Yes.

**RB:** 23 years old and he was all expecting to do his this new life that he was going to start and --- the guy said: "If you want, there's a boat going to Australia." And he said: "Oh well, it doesn't matter." So instead of going to Canada, he went to the other side of the world. That's how he started the migration.

**OH:** How interesting. So, if the boat for Canada hadn't been full...

[laughter]

**RB:** We could have been Canadians.

**OH:** How interesting.

**RB:** Yes, I remember this, he told me about this, yes.

**OH:** (17:26) Going back to the information, and it's great details and great memories you both have, to your father's family. How much land would they have owned at that time?

**RB:** They weren't very big properties. They would have been.... I think my grandfather, he had three brothers and my great grandfather split up, probably would have been --- would have been --- maybe ten hectares, so that would be, what? Twenty five acres of land. And he split it up for the three brothers so I suppose my grandfather had eight, nine acres of land, yeah.

**OH:** And the crops that they would have grown?

**RB:** The crops that you see now, mainly corn, wheat, they were the main, they didn't... No market gardening, okay. There was very little --- the probably the weather doesn't enhance it. And it was mainly wheat and corn.

**OH:** (18:41) And on the other side, your mother's family, were they part of the *mezzadria* system?

**RB:** Exactly, exactly.

**OH:** And could you explain that so that...?

**RB:** Of course, yes. That was, I recall my eldest Uncle (Nino) talking about this. It was --- there were many landlords and many of them were very strict as the one where my grandfather and my mother used to live. --- They shared, the rent was paid on *mezzadria* means half, it means exactly half of the crop and half of the produce, say --- produce means also like the --- poultry, the eggs, whatever was produced, half belonged to the landlord and half to the *mezzadro*.

**OH:** And the wine, you said?

**RB:** Of course, of course. And my Uncle, my mother's eldest brother, my *zio* Nino, he used to say, he was very strict: "He always would choose the fattest hen, he would always choose the best, when they split, you know, he would choose the best calf that was born and you know and that. He could remember that was how poor they were, I mean and probably that was one of the things that probably sparked off the migration because there was very little there and they had to live on what they produced, that was it. There was a lot of barter, very little money going around because you know, it was just a matter --- they'd barter the wheat for flour. They'd give so much wheat and receive so much flour. They would give so much --- even grapes and get so much wine. It was --- yeah, very little money going around. Very small shops and very little commerce going on, there was the trading obviously. It was Castelfranco, was a famous area for trading, the square there, that you see piazza Giorgione was where, in fact, they still have those *mercati*<sup>3</sup> where they trade. Once they used to trade, you know, everything, whatever it was beef, poultry or whatever was to be sold. But a lot of it was sold also on a barter system. "I can give you this and you give me that."

**OH:** So not a money economy?

**RB:** There was very little money.

**OH:** And when did the *mezzadria* system finish?

**RB:** I don't know exactly. I would say, probably up to the Second World War. After that, they formally rented it, for money then. I mean slowly ...

**OH:** So your mother's family would have rented?

**RB:** No, no, they probably continued because they --- my grandfather died --- oh, when I was here. That was 1957, that was when my grandfather, on my mother's side, died and we were

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<sup>3</sup> The Italian word *mercati* means markets

here then because I can remember that. I could remember. I have very, very faint memories of my grandfather and then, they would have lived until the early '60s in that house, the old house.

**OH:** Renting or in the *mezzadria*?

**RB:** I still think --- I don't know because my grandfather used to live with other two or three brothers and then they split up and I don't know exactly what would have happened, but it could have been after the World War II so it could've been well into the '50s. In fact --- in fact, when Dad, Mum and Dad [indicating Diana] she wasn't born then --- Mum and Dad, Robert and I came back in 1957, we went to that old house which is about --- 300 metres from where we live. That was --- it all fell down, about the end of the '60s, it was an old home, you know very...

**OH:** Two-storey?

**RB:** Two-storey home but...

**OH:** With space underneath for the animals?

**RB:** That's it, that's it.

**OH:** And you said that there were a lot of people living there, like your mother eating on the stairs?

**RB:** On the stairs. That's it. At that stage, there was only my mother's family living there when we, in 1957. That would be, then again they had so many children. And --- I can remember, there was a hole in the floor, the bedrooms were on the top and I can remember looking down the hole if lunch, if breakfast was ready And I could see my grandmother.

[laughter]

**RB:** That was, I was three years old.

**OH:** Wow. You've got a great memory.

**RB:** These things coming from Australia, you know were probably so much different to what we used to.

**DB:** Did they have a toilet?

**RB:** No.

**OH:** In the house?

**RB:** No, no.

**OH:** So it was outside?

**RB:** Outside.

**OH:** What about a bathroom?

**RB:** No, it was a tub, they used to wash...

**OH:** This is even in the '50s?

**RB:** Oh yes, even the '60s, the early '60s. They used to wash in tubs in the barn where the animals were because often that was where they used to go for --- in the evenings when they all got together and have --- there'd be the *nonno*, the grandfather that would tell the story, no TVs obviously and the grandfather would tell the stories to the grandchildren and it was, a warm room and they had a warm place and so they would meet there in the evenings, the cold winter evenings, that was where their bathroom was, the tub and water and probably.

**DB:** Dad built a toilet for *nonno*...

**RB:** That's right.

**DB:** *Nonno* Angelo.

**OH:** In the 1950s?

**DB:** Outside.

**RB:** Yes, yes.

**DB:** And he was so happy for that.

**OH:** To make sure that there was...?

**RB:** My grandfather was happy.

**DB:** To sit, don't have to be...

**OH:** Outside? Luxury?

**RB:** Luxury, luxury. *Lusso*, yes.

**OH:** Wow. It's a different time in history?

**RB:** Yes, it is.

**OH:** But it's really interesting to hear that side of the story from your mother's family.

**RB:** Yes.

**OH:** And really, I'm surprised that not more of her family emigrated.

**RB:** Yes, well, probably they suffered. One of my uncles died in the War in ---

**DB:** In Albania.

**RB:** In Albania, unfortunately.

**OH:** This is the Second World War?

**RB:** The Second World War, yeah before my Mum left in '48. And I can remember my eldest *Uncle* on my mother's side, he was a *carabinieri*. So...

**OH:** Like a policeman?

**RB:** Policeman. The other brother went to Australia, my *zio* Bepi.

**DB:** Bepi.

**RB:** And the sisters? --- One went to Vicenza. one married in Vicenza, one married to, he's the father of the, my Auntie, the father of Maria and Anita Berno that travelled to Australia. Okay. And he came back from I think from America or Canada. So he was able to buy his property so they managed to settle down, sort of thing. One of my Uncles had a bakery.

**OH:** So things changed in that generation?

**RB:** In fact, in fact, my mother, we came out in 1957, came back here to Italy and they were still very, very poor. And then my mother came back another time, in 1965.

**DB:** 1965.

**RB:** And she came with Diana, only those two.

**DB:** Oh *zio* Bepi had to be operated.

**RB:** Had to be operated, yes, on his leg. He was very bad at that stage.

**OH:** With polio?

**RB:** Yes, he could hardly walk. And he was able to get the good hospital cures near Lake Garda.



**DB:** Malcesine.

**RB:** Malcesine.

**RB:** (28:20) And then, Mum saw Italy changing, '65, you know she could see, you know industry coming in. It was completely different from eight years before. And that's when my mother, started, you know, contemplating returning to the old country.

**OH:** That's interesting so it gave her a more positive feeling because things were changing economically here?

**RB:** That's exactly right.

**OH:** And in the Veneto?

**RB:** In Veneto, yes. Surely. I can remember always, she used to say this, the difference between 1957 was very similar to when she left, very poor, and very difficult times. And from '57 to '65, it was starting to boom. The booming years were from you know, the late '60s - early '70s. That's when it all started up, the Veneto and all the trade, and all the industry and when it started for all the business, started up. It was a very good time to start up businesses. And probably Mum was enhanced by this and ---

**OH:** And thought...?

**RB:** It could be a great place to come back to. Plus she had still many of her sisters, She still had her mother. She actually, Mum died before grandmother did, so...

**OH:** Oh.

**RB:** She passed away in 1972.

**OH:** That was really sad. But interesting that you say about your mother looking and seeing that the situation was improving here...

**RB:** Yeah.

**OH:** Because it helps explain why many other Italians came back to live here at that time.

**RB:** And it also probably explains why the migration stopped towards the early '60s there was no need to migrate any longer because you know, you could find jobs and people started slowly building homes, new homes, starting up businesses, starting going to work in factories, things changed a lot.

**OH:** And futures for the children?

**RB:** That's right, yeah.

**OH:** Yeah, of that's really interesting.

**OH:** (30:41) I was going to come back to you, and ask you what were your parents doing around the time that you were born at the end of 1953?

**RB:** What they were doing? Surely working very, very hard. I can remember Mum and Dad always working, working, they worked a lot.

**OH:** And we'll talk about their work in the market garden after.

**OH:** (31:06) And you can just tell me about who else is in your family apart from... Diana?

**RB:** Diana.

**OH:** Diana, who is sitting here. Diana, how much younger are you than Remo?

**RB:** Five years.

**DB:** Five years.

**OH:** So you were born in '58?

**RB:** No, 1959.

**DB:** No, '59.

**OH:** '59.

**RB:** Five and a half years. Whereas, I was born in December and she was born in March.

**OH:** Oh, okay.

**RB:** (31:29) And then I'll tell you an interesting story about our family. My elder brother is Roberto, or Robert. And he was born in 1949. He was born just after... he was born February 1949. So one year after Mum and Dad got married. And --- we lived in Valetta Road. I was born and I went to Valetta Road, straight off. So I was --- I'll always remember that home. But it was also home for my *Uncle* Alberto and his family. In fact, it was the same home for all of us, it was one family; two brothers, two sister-in-laws and the kids, five children. My Uncle Alberto, my *Auntie* Elvira and Johnny and Marisa. We all lived together. We all lived together, it was one family. And just the, the interesting side was Dad and Uncle were always together. As their older brother, even when *zio* Fedele, he used to work in the Port somewhere, Port Adelaide, and he was working like in some sort of factory that... I think --- what do you call it? Fertilisers or whatever it was.

**OH:** Oh okay.

**RB:** Anyway, he worked there for many years there.

**RB:** (33:09) Dad and Uncle always, they went straight off, as soon as they could, they started working in market gardens. I can remember them at one stage, I think they worked under the older, the old owner of the property that we used to live on the Valetta Road, I think they worked there...

**OH:** Do you know who owned it before?

**RB:** I remember talking about, they were talking about the Butterfield property, and I think they worked there, you know, as labourers. Then they went somewhere up in the ranges. There was a Carletto Zecchin, I can remember who used to have a property up there and they used to work there. And as soon as they could find some land down here, they... I think, the first property that they bought was the one in Grange Road, I think, yes.

**OH:** Right.

**RB:** And I believe, I can't recall but Robert, my brother was telling me that that was where Mum went when she arrived in Adelaide. Dad took her to this home here. Soon after, they moved to Valetta Road.

**OH:** Right. It's interesting, isn't it? Like, we're looking at a map which identifies the market gardens of many *veneti* but also other Italians and some Anglo Australians but when you look at the number of *veneti* how are here, it's really interesting. How did they all come there?

**RB:** That's right. Probably because they were all very close to each other. They came from Caselle which is close to Riese so they probably felt that they were almost like, how we say *paesani* which means from the same country [town] and they probably helped each other and that was fairly common like I can remember the other Italians coming to our place --- if a certain job had to be done or when they were doing refurbishing or whatever was needed maybe, in the shed. I can remember many people coming. And probably Dad and Uncle did the same for them. And that's why they helped each other. Surely being able to live close to each other was one way of keeping contact, of whenever needed I would have said there was probably you know, mutual support, lending or whatever, borrowing money or whatever it was.

**OH:** Yes, and maybe, one called another, you know if there was some land available?

**RB:** There you are.

**OH:** Because most people were leasing land until after the War, you know, most Italians.

**RB:** I was aware of that. When I can recall anyhow, they most, were, you know --- it was a stage when they were very well settled families, okay. There were young people arriving, I can remember them because we used to have young people coming to our place.

**OH:** This is after World War II?

**RB:** Oh yeah, yeah, after, when I can recall, anyway.

**OH:** [laughs]

**RB:** So that would be late '50s, early '60s. I can remember these young people coming, young men --- They'd come and live there for a while until they'd find jobs and then it was very easy then. All you needed to have you know, the will to work and there was plenty of jobs to be found and they found it quite easy to be able to settle down and find their own properties or their own homes. That was stage when most of the families were fairly well settled anyway.

**OH:** Yes.

**RB:** They didn't have any --- they had lived all the harder years.

**OH:** '30s, '40s.

**RB:** '30s, '40s. Yes, I remember Dad and Uncle saying that it was, I recall them saying they used to live near the Torrens because our property went right down to the River Torrens. And that's where they had the big water tank. And I think they lived right next to it. In a shack. And you know, a very humble dwelling.

**OH:** At the beginning?

**RB:** Yeah. When I can recall, everybody had their own home, you know, their own cars.

**OH:** Not so many *baracche*?<sup>4</sup>

**RB:** No, no. As I said, on our property, there was these two homes. [indicating on the map] That's where the shed used to be and these would be the two houses and one, we used to call it for a long, *la casa*... the home. Because as you know, we'd speak Italian at home. *La casa di Yiyi*, Luigi, Lui Santin. That's where Lui used to live. And next was another property where people also from Riese lived and they'd stay there for two or three years until they'd find better homes or they'd buy their own home. And I saw this for a number of years, say from when I recall until about almost up to when we left. That was 1969. I can remember these people coming and staying there for a while and then they'd leave and they'd move. So we met a lot of these young Italian migrants, as I said, late '50s, early '60s, I can remember that.

**OH:** And would you father and Uncle sponsored those young people?

**RB:** Well, I know, certainly, my cousins did. They came out --- Anita and Maria Berno. The mother of Lucy and John and her Auntie and their Auntie. They came, they were from Riese. Their husbands were from Valla' and surely they came because of Dad and Uncle. I don't know...

**DB:** Nino?

**RB:** Nino, yes, that's right. One of my other cousins from another Pastro family. A Pastro but who married a Berno.

**DB:** A Berno.

**RB:** Yeah. He also came to Adelaide in the '50s. He left and he returned in the early '60s, I

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<sup>4</sup> The Italian word, *barrache* means sheds or shacks

think. I can remember him returning to Italy. I would... certainly they helped a lot of young people, and Mum --- used to speak fairly well in English. My Auntie, who lived with us, *zia* Elvira, knew very, very few words.

**OH:** So how did your mother learn English?

**RB:** I can remember Dad saying when they left after marrying here, I think he stayed for a few weeks in England and he boarded in a home and I remember him saying he tried to leave Mum as long as possible on her own for her to learn English. And when he returned to Adelaide with Mum, he organised, you know, evenings with many... Dad had already been there for more than 20 years and he had many, many friends, also English-speaking people, friends and he'd invite them home and he'd leave Mum there and I can always remember her saying when she used to get the word "sheet" mixed up with something else.

[laughter]

**RB:** And the laughs that would create. So she knew English fairly well. She was able, she helped, I can recall her helping other families especially when they needed to go to the doctors or lawyers and they'd often come to Mum and ask her to come with them, to go with them to go to the doctors or to the... and I know people can remember that. Every so often I meet someone and they say: "I can remember your mother taking me to the doctors." Yes.

**OH:** A kindness and...

**RB:** That was probably the way of living. They helped each other, a mutual --- it was a community.

**OH:** Yes.

**RB:** And they all lived very close to each other and they helped each other. And there was great respect, we had great respect for these families, you know, it was very... We were almost --- relations.

**OH:** Yes. The closeness.

**RB:** Parties, there was always the big parties in the sheds. I can always remember these people, and then they'd start, especially after a few beers, they started the singing and...

**OH:** Oh, that's lovely.

**RB:** Yeah.

**OH:** (43:08) To finish off the background and family matters, can you tell me about your own family?

**RB:** Yes.

**OH:** You married?

**RB:** I married here in Italy, obviously. We returned in 1969, all of us. I did go back and finish off the last two years of Leaving and Matriculation at school to go then. Then I went to university here in Padova. And I married in 1981, to Teresa Simeoni, she's from Valla', here. And I've got two kids, Alberto, my eldest who is now 35, and Daniela who's 33, 32, she'll be 33 soon. And we, I've been back a few times to Australia with them and Alberto did stay for about six, seven months after he got his university degree.

**OH:** And you've got a granddaughter, a beautiful granddaughter.

**RB:** I've got a granddaughter, yes, Anna, yeah.

**OH:** That's lovely and thank you for so much detail, both of you, it's really significant information. So thank you.

**OH:** (44:40) We're going to talk about your parents and arriving and Do you know anything in particular about your father, when he arrived? Like when he arrived. If you can say the date and any circumstances that you know.

**RB:** As I said, yeah, well ---- He arrived in 1927, October 1927. He was the third brother that arrived. My Uncle arrived the year before in 1926 and his brother arrived in 1925. I don't know much what they did, except hard work. [laughs] And they worked very hard and probably their aim was to build their property and that was done as I've said, moving around. Started probably market gardening was interesting, probably... I can remember him saying that especially after the Second World War, there was a great demand for fruit and veg and so it was a good, it was good business then. And so probably, they saw the opportunity and it was very interesting for them, probably their easiest way to make a living and even though it meant very hard work. I remember, as a boy, helping them and it was very hard working in the glasshouses.

**OH:** I'm going to ask you about that after because I understand that it would have been very arduous.

**OH:** (46:27) But you know, how old was your father when he arrived?

**RB:** He was 18 years old, so he was very young.

**OH:** He was really young. Do you know what he'd been doing prior to coming, like did he do National Service?

**RB:** No, Dad, would not have. No. My Uncle, probably, yes.

**OH:** Fedele or?

**RB:** Fedele, yes, because National Service is when you are 18, 19 years of age. Dad probably left before. My other Uncle Albino, he went to War in Africa so, Africa, yeah. That was common. Dad would have worked at home, you know in my grandfather's property, on the farm. He'd work. I can remember my *zio* Berto saying he was six years old when he started milking the cow. So that was, they'd work very young. Dad, I think he went to Grade 3, and that was it. That meant he would have gone, at nine years of age he would have started in the fields.

**OH:** Wow. Such a different kind of life.

**RB:** Yeah.

**OH:** Do you know anything about where your father lived when he first arrived?

**RB:** No, I haven't got any certainties there. I know it was in Adelaide because my *zio* Fedele was in --- I know they lived in shacks, very, very humble dwellings, very, very, you know, basically, two rooms, you know, a kitchen or whatever it was and a bedroom and that was it. But no, I don't know exactly. I know that he said he was very --- he always liked this area [indicating the map].

**OH:** Yes.

**RB:** That's why they aimed to get property here because probably at that stage, I don't know if the Tonellato's were there. And so they'd always look at that area, because apart from --- they went to work up in the ranges where another Italian had some property but they always wanted to --- pinpoint something here and until they finally found it.

**OH:** Yes, And also being close to the river?

**RB:** Close to the river.

**OH:** Would have been good.

**RB:** Oh yeah. I can remember the water tank.

**OH:** (49:14) Did your father ever tell what his first impressions were, of Australia?

**RB:** Dad was... Dad and Uncle had two different type of characteristics, you know --- my father was more --- probably strict --- he wasn't --- all I actually remember was Dad working very hard from early in the morning till late at night. They'd work even on Sunday mornings because we used to go to church, and one brother would be home, Dad or Uncle would be home preparing the produce for the market. And so I can remember that and you know, --- we, we were a lot younger because Dad was married when he was --- 39 and so, when I can remember him, he was already in his late 40s and whilst I was very fond of him but you know, probably we didn't speak much.

**OH:** Yeah, and probably a lot of men of his generation.

**RB:** Yeah.

**OH:** Were like that.

**RB:** Yeah, very hard, probably you get that way, you know, of having to live such a hard way.

**OH:** Yes, yes.

**RB:** (50:43) But I know he was very fond of Adelaide. And if it wasn't for Mum, I reckon Dad --- in fact, my mother died young, and Dad did return to Adelaide in --- the '70s after Mum died, after a couple of years that Mum passed away. And he went to his brother's, Albino who lived [consults the map] here on Findon Road.

**OH:** Around?

**RB:** Here

**OH:** There? That one, Okay.

**RB:** There. No, sorry, here. That's it. Albino. He went to his brother's and stayed there for --- he came up and back for a while but he was here for about three years because he had still many, many ties and relationships and he'd met a lot of people there. And then towards the end, just before Roberto got married he said: "That's enough." He probably was aware that his family was here and no longer there. But I reckon that if it wasn't for Mum, Dad wouldn't probably have left. He probably would have stayed. He lived, Dad lived most of his life in Adelaide. He died, he was 77. He lived 42 years in Adelaide.

**OH:** And it would have been so much a part of him.

**RB:** Of course it was, of course it was. He was very, he's very well respected, all of our family was very well respected. We respected all the other families too but you know, he felt he achieved --- what he went there for.

**OH:** Yes, yeah. Was it the same for your Uncle in terms of coming back, to Italy?

**RB:** It was Dad that made the decisions. Uncle was, he was elder, but he always looked up to Dad. I'll tell you this, I was telling you this before. We lived as a family. Mum died, passed away on 1st March 1972. Uncle Albert passed away on 1st March, --- 1986. Dad passed away, sorry. [sobs]

**OH:** It's an emotional kind of situation. Would you like to stop, pause for a while?

**RB:** Sorry.

**OH:** That's alright. We can stop.

**RB:** Dad passed away on 3rd March which is her birthday [refers to Diana].

**OH:** Oh.

**RB:** And my Auntie Elvira died only a few years ago, 2014 on 14th September which is my mother's birthday.

**OH:** Oh, what connections.

**RB:** Yeah.

**OH:** That's...

**RB:** Dad and Uncle, when they passed away, before passing away, they spent two weeks in hospital together. It was different.

**DB:** In the same room.

**RB:** It was different. Dad suffered from cancer and my Uncle suffered from Parkinsons. And my Uncle --- turned 81 on 16th February, 1986. And --- he wasn't, Dad wasn't feeling well, he didn't go to his birthday party.

**OH:** Oh.

**RB:** And the day after, two days after, we took him to the hospital and three days later, my *zio* got sick and we took him to the hospital and they were in the same room, in the same hospital at Castelfranco. And then Uncle passed away and then two days later, Dad passed away.

**DB:** Also with the *zio*...

**RB:** And there was another brother of theirs, another brother-in-law of theirs that was in the same room.

**OH:** Oh really?

**RB:** Yeah. But they were so close and probably we got too, we got --- that feeling from them, yeah.

**OH:** The closeness and the bonds?

**RB:** Yeah. Whatever Dad did, Uncle would do, always.

**OH:** So it was...?

**RB:** They wouldn't speak much, you know. They trusted --- and I think it was a real estate agent, really, or his father used to be, I don't know if he was an accountant? Mr Linton. And they trusted him very, very much. All the business they do, they do it through this person. And you know, Dad, whatever Dad --- deem as good for the family, my Uncle would ...

**OH:** Would agree?

**RB:** That was it. They wouldn't need to discuss it.

**OH:** So your father had real clarity about the next steps for the business and your Uncle obviously thought there was no need to have any different opinions.

**RB:** Different opinions, that's right.

**OH:** That's really interesting and I really appreciate that feeling that you must have about that closeness and the emotion, you know of

**RB:** Yeah.

**OH:** Of what you had lost.

**RB:** We were probably born into that because of the way that they used to live. You know, they were very close, you could feel what family relationship was. It was that.

**OH:** And it was there. Did you ever feel other families were different, you know, like different from your families? Like two families living together?

**RB:** There were the Santin's and there were the Tonellato's. They weren't as close as Dad and Uncle, that's for sure.

**OH:** Yeah.

**RB:** But you know, they were there, you'd meet them.

**OH:** Yes.

**RB:** They were always there, they were references. You could pinpoint them always.

**OH:** Yeah. What about other kids, like if you went to school and you saw other families?

**RB:** Tonellato's, yes. I went to school with --- I was in primary school with Janet Tonellato, I went to school with Denise Santin, that's Lui's daughter. Of course I can remember them all.

**OH:** Yeah.

**RB:** I can remember them all. Yeah.

**OH:** (57:18) What about non-Italian families? Did you ever think that, or did you ever go to other families and see that they were living a bit differently?

**RB:** No, we had, all the kids used to come to our place. Because we had so much places to play in. There was, we used to have the half cases we were talking about before. The half cases were all stacked up outside the shed and they were great places to play.

**OH:** [laughs]

**RB:** Because they could become forts, they could become --- and then we'd play you know, footie, we'd play, whatever it was, you know, hide and seek, whatever it was, there was so much... And we had people coming, I could remember people who used to live on the Valetta Road, school mates from school coming to our place, yes. I --- I rarely went to their homes.

**OH:** Yeah.

**RB:** Even though, I could see the difference, surely.

**OH:** Yeah. And I've seen the photos of all the girls, with the dolls. You're in them with your cousins.

**DB:** That's right.

**OH:** Going back to, you know when we were talking about whether your father had first impressions...

**OH:** (58:30) Did your mother ever tell you what her first impressions of coming to live in Australia were?

**RB:** She was quite happy, I'm sure of that. She was happy for her choice and she was happy to come to Australia, probably --- having lived such, you know, a life before and realising that she was, you know --- acquiring something in her life.

**OH:** Yes.

**RB:** You know, it was her family. As I said, when I was born, they were well settled at that stage, they had property, you know. And a lot of people didn't have that here. That probably gave you --- a future, it gave you prosperity, it gave you --- and I can remember that she was very happy with this. I can remember the change after she came back in 1965. As I said, probably she realised that Italy was changing and she saw some opportunity here.

**OH:** Yeah, and her family, like her mother.

**RB:** That's right.

**OH:** Her sisters being here would have been important. Did she know *zia* Elvira before?

**RB:** No.



**OH:** Before? No?

**RB:** No because my *zia* Elvira came from another town.

**OH:** Ah, where did she come from?

**RB:** But very close. San Vito d'Altivole which is only three kilometres.

**OH:** Ah.

**RB:** I don't know how Uncle got to meet her. --- Even though, I don't know if they were relations because my grandmother was a Carraro. Carraro, her surname.

**OH:** And that's Elvira's surname.

**RB:** That's Elvira's surname. But I don't know if they are relations, I can't recall this. But --- no, I don't think they wouldn't have known each other because my *zia*, my Auntie Elvira, when she was young, she was a nurse. So she worked in hospitals and not close by. She worked as a... one was in the hospital of Thiene which is about 50 kilometres which meant they would live there. They would live for years (away from home) because they were, most of the hospitals had nuns.

**OH:** Oh yes.

**RB:** And they'd live with the nuns in the hospital, as nurses. You know, they were probably the only jobs that were there.

**OH:** Yeah.

**RB:** And so, I don't think Mum would have known her before.

**OH:** (1:01:10) Was your mother working before she got married?

**RB:** Yeah.

**OH:** What was she doing?

**RB:** Well, she was a housemaid for a while, in Padova.

**OH:** Oh, that was a very common thing.

**DB:** Yes.

**RB:** yes, yes, of course, it was, yes. Another Antonietta which --- I don't know if she is still alive. Your *santola*.<sup>5</sup>

**DB:** *Santola*.

**RB:** I don't know if she is still alive. She married a Baldan who also migrated from Castello di Godego which is very close from here. And she was from Riese. They went, both of them, went to the same family as housemaids in Padova.

**OH:** Oh, how interesting. Were they treated well?

**RB:** Oh yes.

**DB:** Jewish.

**OH:** A Jewish family?

**RB:** Jewish family. Oh yes. We kept, kept in touch, long after Mum died. And they came to Mum's funeral.

**OH:** Oh, what a lovely connection.

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<sup>5</sup> *Santola* is the Italian word for godmother

**RB:** Oh yeah. They've all passed away now. I can remember... we went, I even took my wife to her place. I took --- my *santola* because you know, once a *santola*, always a *santola*. If it was hers [indicating Diana] or mine or my brother's, they were all *santoli*<sup>6</sup>.

**DB:** *Santoli*.

**OH:** Ah.

**RB:** (1:02:33) I took her once, she was here, I took her to Padova to *la signora*.....

**DB:** *Grete?*

**RB:** *No, come si chiamava? No, no, signora a Padova? --- Signora Nelli. Signora Nelli.*<sup>7</sup>

**RB:** Nelli

**OH:** Nelli - [spells out Italian phonetic spelling]

**RB:** That's it, Nelli.

**OH:** Oh?

**RB:** Nelli, and her husband was Alberto Schoen, Schoen. That's a German name.

**DB:** German.

**RB:** They were German, German Jews, you know, that probably came to Italy many, many years ago.<sup>8</sup>

**OH:** Yeah.

**RB:** And anyway I took them to Padova because they could recall quite clearly, and after Mum passed away, it was good and I took my wife there and she can still remember that place. Yeah.

**OH:** That's a lovely connection, and for that family, to attend your mother's funeral so many years after...

**RB:** After, oh yes.

**OH:** Is a real sign of their affection for her.

**RB:** It was. We didn't expect them to come. They came.

**OH:** Oh, how moving.

**RB:** Plus they were housemaids, you know but they were very, very fond of them.

**OH:** And maybe, they were seen as part of the family.

**RB:** Probably.

**OH:** Rather than just as servants. Yeah.

**RB:** Yes, yes.

**OH:** Oh, that's really interesting, so many really important details.

(1:03:53) We're going to talk about you growing up. And we've just talked about your *santolo*<sup>9</sup> or *santoli* which is the Veneto dialect....

**RB:** The godfather.

**OH:** For godparents.

**RB:** That's exactly right.

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<sup>6</sup> Santoli is the word for godparents

<sup>7</sup> No what was she called? No the woman at Padova?

<sup>8</sup> See notes at the end of the interview for more information about the Schoen family, on page 41

<sup>9</sup> *Santolo* is the Italian word for godfather

**OH:** So when you were born and baptised who were your godparents?

**RB:** My godfather was Vittorio and my godmother was Angelina...

**DB:** Marchioro [whispers]

**RB:** Marchioro.

**OH:** And as...

**RB:** I can remember them very well. We were very, very good ---- Dad was --- close to the Marchioro's, yeah. I don't know why because he's not from Riese, he's from ---

**DB:** Malo.

**RB:** Malo, it's fairly far away.

**OH:** In Vicenza.

**RB:** Vicenza but they used to know each other ---- probably he was around here. [indicates the place on the map]

**OH:** Yes.

**RB:** I didn't know that he was renting. I saw Johnny's interview [on the website] that they were on Frogmore Road.

**OH:** Yeah, in fact we're looking at the map now and where Lui and Italia Tonellato are, they bought the land after Vittorio and Angelina moved to Lockleys.

**RB:** That's right, yeah.

**OH:** So, the same land. And Johnny says, you know, his mother wanted to move because they had been robbed, you know.

**RB:** Oh, I don't know this.

**OH:** And didn't feel safe there. And there was an opportunity at Lockleys

**RB:** On White Avenue.

**OH:** Over the other side of the river. But Johnny said that he wished that his parents had bought that land.

**RB:** How about that. Probably closer.

**OH:** Yeah. SO how important were those *santoli* as you were growing up. Like did they see you on your birthday or what?

**RB:** Not that close but I can always remember they being there.

**OH:** Yes

**RB:** Basically at parties. I can't remember probably, you know, it was the patron saints or whatever it was, they used to have those parties in a shed, at our place, at the Tonellato's place, at the Santin's place or whatever it was. And I can recall this were fairly, fairly frequent. And there were the few times that I'd see Mum and Dad, you know, having parties because the rest of the time they were working. Except for Sunday afternoons, you know, Sunday morning, church, Sunday afternoons, the parklands, that was about it. Every so often there was --- but very, very seldom. I can remember going, we went to Melbourne to meet Pastro's, a --- cousin of Mum, he would be our second cousin. --- Carolina Cescato, you were talking about, her eldest son moved to Melbourne and we went there for a week and it was the same time that my Auntie Maria, that was the first time we met her, my *zia* Maria --- went, I think, to Italy from, I don't where, they were living in Mareeba, right up north near Cains. And I remember meeting them in Melbourne.

**OH:** Oh.

**RB:** Probably the ship docked for a day in Melbourne. That was the first time I met my *zia* Maria and my *zio* Guido. I didn't know them, and the cousins, that would have been --- mid '60s, something like that, '67, '68. Before coming back.

**OH:** But it was unusual to have a week off?

**RB:** Of course, of course, with Mum and Dad. I can still remember the Travel Lodge. It was something different, the motel.

**OH:** It would have been wonderful.

**RB:** Out of the common, out of the common.

**OH:** Yeah, yeah.

**OH:** (1:08:05) Your godparents for confirmation, who were they?

**RB:** They were Bruno and Maria Berno. She was my cousin and Bruno was...

**DB:** Husband.

**RB:** Yeah. I was very fond of them. I went back a few times, up and back. I lived, when I stayed two years in Adelaide. I went to the Baldan family, that Antonietta that worked with my mother in Padova, with her family. I lived with them for two years. I did Leaving and Matriculation because I found it hard to get into high school here and new...

**OH:** And it would have been learning Italian?

**RB:** Italian, and it was very tough and I did Engineering and so it wasn't worth all the trouble and I said I'd rather finish off the two years. So I went back there, but I was very, very often there, at my *santolo's* home, yeah. I was very close to my *santolo*. And he always used to call me *fiosso*, *fiosso* which means *figlioccio* which means something like --- son, *figlio* is Italian for son, *figlioccio* means a sort of a son which means when your godparent, the relations between the godson and the --- in that case I was christened...

**OH:** Confirmed.

**RB:** Confirmed, sorry.

**OH:** But obviously close and warm and...

**RB:** Yeah, it was family.

**OH:** Extended family, yeah.

**RB:** Family yes, because they were very close to Mum and Dad and so, it was home for me.

**OH:** Yes.

**OH:** (1:09:56) I'm going to ask you now about your home on Valetta Road. And I'm going to ask...

**RB:** I hope I'm going into too much detail?

**OH:** Your detail is fantastic.

**RB:** I'm trying to find the --- drawers in the memory and take them out.

**OH:** Well, I'd like to congratulate you both because you're doing such a good job. And if you want to make a pause.

**RB:** No, no, it's okay.

**OH:** That's great.

So I'm going to ask you as if are explaining to somebody coming in off Valetta Road, what did they see?

**RB:** Yeah.

**OH:** And then I'd like you to describe exactly what the house looked like, you know, if you went through the front or the side door?

**RB:** Yeah. --- The road was an old gravel road, obviously that went along the side of the property, it took us to the house. [indicates the map] There was the shed, the garage, before. The garage was built many years later. The shed was over here and the garage was at the back of the house. So we often, often used to drive into the garage, get out and get into the house through --- *la cucina dei Santini* which means the Santin kitchen because apparently, I didn't, I can't remember them living there. But apparently they lived there in that home for a while before they moved to their home in Frogmore Road. So we went into the house through that, it became the TV room. But there was still the sink there, I can remember that.

**OH:** So that was at the front of the house or side?

**RB:** No, the back. Coming in from the garage.

**OH:** Oh, right.

**RB:** We'd walk into the house which was the entry of that part of the house. Then there was the long corridor that took us --- our rooms were right next to, our bedroom, mine and my cousin's and my brother's --- our rooms were up here. The two girls' room was on the other side of the corridor. And then there was Dad's bedroom and Mum, Dad and Mum's bedroom and Auntie and Uncle's bedroom.

**OH:** On either side of the corridor?

**RB:** The corridor, that's right. Then there was the end, that was the front of the house, obviously, the other entrance --- there was a --- what do you call it? Not the dining room. The -- *salotto*.

**DB:** *Tinello*

**RB:** Yeah. It was the --- the lounge, sorry. And on the right, there was the like, the main door, the entrance so if you were coming in from the entrance say, from the Valetta Road side, on the left, there was the lounge, on the right, the kitchen. Then they extended, that was where the laundry and the bathroom and the toilet was. And on the outside, they built another verandah as an extra space. That was our house, yeah.

**OH:** So it was a large house?

**RB:** Oh, yeah, it was.

**OH:** So down the corridor...

**RB:** Oh, we lived comfortably, we lived comfortably.

**OH:** Three rooms on either side?

**RB:** Yeah, one, two, kitchen, *zio* Berto's room, and your bedroom [speaking to Diana]

**DB:** Bedroom.

**RB:** On this side there was the lounge, Mum's.

**DB:** Mum's.

**RB:** Robert's.

**DB:** Robert's.

**RB:** Down the end, our bedroom where me and...

**OH:** You and Johnny?

**RB:** Johnny. Then the *cucina dei Santini*.

**DB:** TV room.

**RB:** The TV room. So it was comfortable, yeah.

**OH:** (1:13:37) When did you get the TV?

[laughter]

**RB:** Oh, early '50s. --- I was surely at primary school so it means '58, '59. We went to school young. I think I started when I was about four --- because I turned five in December so we started early. She [referring to Diana] started school, she was still three years old. Because Marisa, two years older started at school and she started crying. None of us went to kinder, kindergarten and so that meant we spoke Italian till school started.

**OH:** Oh, okay

**RB:** And when she saw Marisa because I used to go to school with Johnny and Diana, when she saw Marisa getting all dressed up for school and everything, she started crying. And I can remember Sister Perpetua, she was the nun who ran the school in Flinders Park, saying "Oh, take her, buy her a dress, bring her to school, she'll probably, you know get bored and sleep or whatever it is. So she'll just do it for the novelty of the first few days. And she kept on going to school from then. So we started quite young, going to school, yeah, that was it. I can't remember the point?

**OH:** Oh, we were talking about your house and the ways things were structured in the house and who... Oh no I'm going to ask you after, in the market gardeners part.

**OH:** (1:15:32) You know, as you went down the drive, what else did you see between Valetta Road...

**RB:** Surely on the right, surely on the right there were the glasshouses. There would have been --- 30, 30 or 40, 30 glasshouses for sure. There were very many. They were from the entrance, from one side to the other, on the Valetta Road front, there were all glasshouses. The photo that you see, Dad and Uncle out the front, that's where they used to be.

**OH:** Yeah.

**RB:** And then there was a second row of them, just behind. There used to be glasshouse further down but they didn't last there for long. And the rest was mainly lettuce, cauliflowers, cabbages, potatoes, there were a lot of potatoes, spuds, and --- yeah, that was the main, artichokes, artichokes, yeah.

**OH:** Who was eating artichokes at that time?

**RB:** I didn't like it when I was young, I didn't like them.

**OH:** And now?

**RB:** Of course I do. Of course I do.

**OH:** Yeah, beautiful.

**RB:** Yeah, but they were obviously... I think they were very --- well sold, I think.

**DB:** Cucumbers.

**RB:** Cucumbers. And in the glasshouses it was tomatoes, cucumbers and beans but the most, the majority were tomatoes and cucumbers.

**OH:** Yes, okay.

**OH:** (1:17:04) Just a little bit more about your family. You've told me that you spoke *dialetto* at home, the dialect.

**RB:** As all the people, as all of the people.

**OH:** Yes.

**RB:** We say we speak Italian but it wasn't Italian, it was dialect.

**OH:** Yeah, and...

**RB:** Which is still spoken here in the Veneto region, it was probably... each area in Italy has its own dialect but --- whereas in many other regions, they've lost this tradition of speaking in dialect, in the Veneto it's still very strong. They still speak a lot of dialect, it's fluently spoken even in offices, even in doctor's whatever it is.

**OH:** And young kids, do they speak dialect?

**RB:** Of course they do. My son --- started young to school and they told us speak in Italian to him because he's got to learn. He started off in Grade 2, sort of thing and they say, Alberto was speaking with us in Italian, it's when he went to school, that he learned dialect.  
[laughter]

**OH:** Because of the kids.

**RB:** Because of the kids.

**OH:** In the playground.

**B** (1:18:24) What about living in the house with your Aunt and Uncle and cousins, how were the arrangements in terms who did cooking, cleaning, what happened?

**RB:** My *Auntie* Elvira looked up to my mother. My mother had very strong personality and so, yeah, probably, I don't know how they decided but it was, you know, the same kitchen, the same, we'd always used to see them together. It was much ---

**OH:** Did they both cook?

**RB:** Yeah, cooked, washed and it wasn't anything --- We'd speak to Auntie as if we'd speak to Mum. Well, you know it was normal.

**OH:** It was just the same.

**RB:** It was the same family.

**OH:** Yeah, very, very close.

**RB:** Yes.

**OH:** (1:19:21) Where did your mother and Auntie shop, for say food or clothes?

**RB:** We had --- it wasn't --- I suppose it was early '60s, late '50s when supermarkets came in. Before that it was the grocers and they were Italians, mainly Italians.

**OH:** Do you know which ones?

**DB:** Adami.

**RB:** Adami was meat. --- The grocer's was --- I can't remember the name exactly, it was in --- there was a Rebuli...

**OH:** Yes.

**RB:** Who had a grocer's shop.

**DB:** On Findon Road.

**OH:** [consults the map] Somewhere up here on Grange Road?

**RB:** Yes, further down.

**OH:** Or maybe down there?

**RB:** Yeah, towards, off Frogmore, up here, [locates the place on the map] yeah, just before the hill.

**OH:** Oh, yes.

**RB:** And the ---

**OH:** And the Adami's were here? On Findon Road.

**RB:** That's right. There was a butcher, we used to call him, I can't remember his name but he was "Butcher Adami". He was one of the Adami family. A lot of goods were delivered to us. Champion Bakery for --- bread and then, all of a sudden I can remember supermarkets coming in, going to the supermarket. Then in town, it was very much Harris Scarf, when they went to...

**DB:** John Martins, David Jones, Myers.

**RB:** Yeah. And it was big do for us because they'd take us with them. So we went to town, we'd leave in the morning, then Dad or Uncle would take us to town, stay there for most, late morning to early afternoon, then they'd come and pick us up.

**OH:** Oh, and did you have lunch in town?

**RB:** Of course, yeah.

**OH:** Where did you have it?

**RB:** Oh, I remember going, there was the Adelaide Arcade or in the shops they have stock there, sandwiches basically.

**OH:** Oh, that's really, really nice.

**OH:** (1:21:24) Who did your parents visit regularly --- if they had time?

**RB:** Oh, surely. I remember Marchioro, for sure. Dad.... Dad and Uncle, the Uncle had, Johnny and Marisa's *santoli* were the Santin's, the ---

**DB:** Brion.

**RB:** Brion, which is...

**OH:** Up in Murray Bridge?

**DB:** Murray Bridge.

**RB:** Murray Bridge, yes. Because Brion was from the same town. Well, she...

**DB:** Her mother, *zia*'s mother ---

**RB:** That's right. My *zia* Elvira's mother was a Brion so they were cousins or whatever it was. So, that's where Dad and Uncle would sort of split up. And we'd go to the Marchioro, for sure, the Griguol...

**DB:** Torresan.

**RB:** Torresan.

**DB:** Maschio.

**OH:** Where did the Torresan live?

**RB:** When I can remember them, they were just off Tapleys Hill, on the Grange Road just off



Tapleys Hill Road, they had a property there. At that stage, what was his name, or was the *santolo*?

**DB:** Gino.

**RB:** Gino.

**OH:** Excellent memory!

**RB:** Gino Torresan was in roadworks then he had a company doing roadworks. That was before he started off the ---

**DB:** Winery.

**RB:** Winery. And the Torresans.

**DB:** Maschio.

**RB:** Maschio.

**OH:** Where did Maschio live?

**RB:** In Riese?

**OH:** No, here. [indicates the map]

**RB:** Here, Maschio --- she's still alive, Flora.

**DB:** *Santola* Flora.

**RB:** Flora, the wife of Gino Torresan is a Maschio. Her name is Flora Maschio. They were from Riese.

**OH:** Oh.

**RB:** And the Maschio. I can remember her father, he migrated to Adelaide and her brother lived here. [points to the map]

**OH:** On Grange Road?

**RB:** On Grange Road before, somewhere before the Grange Road, before Hindmarsh, anyway

**OH:** Oh okay.

**DB:** Near Hindmarsh.

**RB:** Yeah.

**OH:** And they were market gardeners?

**RB:** No. Torresan's were, as I said, I can remember him having a roadworks or something like that, business. The others were, yeah, the Tonellato's. --- As I said we'd all meet at these functions, weddings or whatever it was.

**OH:** (1:24:16) And I understand that there were many occasions in the Berno shed?

**RB:** Yes.

**OH:** For the community?

**RB:** Of course.

**OH:** So, weddings?

**RB:** Weddings, mainly weddings, yeah.

**DB:** And Confirmations. Our Confirmation.

**RB:** Our confirmation party was there. When we had ... I can remember their confirmation party.

**DB:** We were seven.

**RB:** There were seven girls, seven kids getting confirmed. That was Diana and Marisa...

**DB:** Elisa.

**RB:** Elisa Pastro,

**DB:** Angelo.

**RB:** Johnny Pastro, I think. Another cousin.

**DB:** Lucy, maybe.

**RB:** Could have been Lucy, Anyway there were seven of them.

**OH:** A big party?

**DB:** Because Mum was *santola* of Lucy and --- Elisa.

**RB:** Santo Baldan was... There was many of them.

**OH:** And like the connections between the families.

**RB:** Of course, of course.

**OH:** What do you remember about that party?

**RB:** As I said, after a few beers, the men used to get up, they were very ---- even weddings, you know, weddings weren't proper dinners. There were catering and so they'd put --- like, it was mainly, I remember it was chicken and prawns.

**DB:** Prawns.

**RB:** Prawns and chicken.

**OH:** Salad?

**RB:** Salads, yeah and --- then bread and cheese and...

**DB:** *Dopo*<sup>10</sup> salami.

**RB:** Salami, of course...

**OH:** Who provided the food?

**RB:** Well, I don't know. It was there. [laughs] I don't know. Probably they'd bought it or they'd all bring it there. I don't know

**DB:** A lot of beer.

**RB:** A lot of beer.

**OH:** A lot of beer. And keg, kegs?

**RB:** Oh yes, of course, of course and that's when the singing started.

**OH:** And was there music, you know, people playing?

**RB:** Oh, later on, there was, later on, I can remember.

**DB:** Ray.

**RB:** Ray Tonellato.

**OH:** Ray Tonellato - on the accordion?

**RB:** On the accordion, yeah. And --- I can remember singing but at one of the parties started, record players, tape recorders, they started coming in. I can remember a party with Robert and

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<sup>10</sup> The Italian word, *dopo*, means after in English.

his friends but that was almost, you know the end of the '60s. But before that it was mainly get together and singing and that. Yeah.

**OH:** Oh, and who cleaned up after the parties. Did you kids?

**RB:** The women, the women, for sure. Not men.

**OH:** Jobs for the women?

**RB:** Jobs for the women. Of course.

**OH:** (1:27:03) You've talked about your parents going to church, or your families. Where did you go to the church?

**RB:** Mainly at the Flinders Park church.

**OH:** Yeah.

**RB:** Very often there. Sometimes Hindmarsh because it was part of the Hindmarsh parish. Sometimes Hindmarsh.

**DB:** (Scalabrini)

**RB:** A lot --- That's right, it used to be called Gleneagles, up here. [indicates on the map]

**OH:** Off Grange Road?

**RB:** You know where the Mater Christi church is?

**OH:** Yes.

**RB:** That one. In fact there is a Saint Pius the Tenth statue that Mum and Uncle, that Mum brought back in 1965.

**OH:** Oh.

**RB:** Yeah, if you go to look at the Mater Christi church, there is a statue of Saint Pius the Tenth.

**OH:** Yes. From Riese.

**RB:** from Riese, yeah. And they bought it from Italy, they went with the local --- parish priest.

**DB:** Parish.

**RB:** Parish.

**DB:** Priest.

**RB:** Priest, there. And they went to a place in, near Bolzano to buy the statue, because it was a wooden statue, a carved wooden statue. And on the ship, on which you travelled...

**DB:** Galileo Galilei or Guglielmo Marconi.

**RB:** They travelled from Italy and they took it back.

**OH:** How big was the statue?

**RB:** Oh, it's a fairly big one, it's about [indicates height]

**OH:** Life size?

**RB:** Yes, life size, yes.

**OH:** Does it have an inscription that your mother ---

**RB:** I don't think so. We saw it, once. We went to the Mater Christi church and saw it was there.

**OH:** Oh, I'm going to go and have a look.

**RB:** That's where the Scalabrini, the people --- the religious from Italy had a community there.

**OH:** Yes.

**RB:** A big community I don't know now?

**OH:** No, not so many, no. And there's a lot of funerals.

[laughter]

**OH:** (1:29:14) I'm going to ask you questions about the market gardens...

**RB:** Yeah.

**OH:** And I'm wondering, if you could just for people listening, locate exactly where your parents and aunt and Uncle's market garden was, that you grew up on.

**RB:** I can remember it very well on the Valetta Road, halfway down the Valetta Road between Findon and Frogmore. Valetta Road now goes down to Henley Beach and then it stopped on the Frogmore Road and halfway down on the --- west side of --- the road, it was a property that went from Valetta Rad to the River Torrens.

**OH:** Did you spend much time on the River Torrens, as kids?

**RB:** Not *on* the River Torrens, not in the River Torrens because it was always: "Be careful. Don't go there." You know. But it was the river, okay. I don't think I ever went into the River Torrens but we used to play a lot especially because there was the water tank and where they used to pump the water up from the river. There was the water tank and next to it was an old shack so we used to play there and play ... cowboys.

**OH:** And is that the shack that your father and Uncle lived in?

**RB:** I remember that they used to say they lived right on the river but it was something very, very humble but we used to pay in those tin sheds. We used to play cops and robbers, we used to play and Cowboys and Indians, we used to lay, you know, the war, and kids, anyway.

**OH:** No wonder you had lots of kids there because it would have been a great place for adventure.

**RB:** Of course. There was the bamboo... Part of the property was divided by bamboos so you could, you know...

**OH:** Actually on the property?

**RB:** Yes.

**OH:** Oh, okay.

**RB:** One was right next to the shed. That road [indicating on the map] that goes down here was all bamboos. Down here there was bamboos, playing, bamboos were great.

**DB:** Chickens, near there.

**RB:** Yeah, that's right, that's where all the poultry was.

**OH:** So you had chickens and...?

**RB:** Mainly chickens.

**DB:** Mainly chickens.

**RB:** I remember a cow.

[laughter]

**RB:** My Uncle always had a cow. Fresh milk.

**OH:** Yes.

**RB:** That was until, almost going back, probably the last few years we didn't have it. But I mean, a long time we used to.

**OH:** Yeah, in fact there's you know, a photo with a cow.

**RB:** Yeah, that's right, with a cow.

**OH:** Which has a cow.

**RB:** Which has a cow.

**OH:** A beautiful photo.

**RB:** I think that's my *zia* Elvira.

**OH:** Okay, I'm glad you've identified that. If you know...

**RB:** That was mainly *zio* Berto's work.

**OH:** Right.

**RB:** I seldom saw Dad with the animals because obviously he'd buy the chickens and that but then it was all ladies' work.

**OH:** Okay, to look after them.

**DB:** Mum and *zia* made butter with the...

**OH:** Oh.

**RB:** Oh yeah, Cream and butter.

**OH:** You had a good diet.

**RB:** Of course it was.

**OH:** And lots of fresh vegetables. Did you have any fruit trees around here [indicating the map]

**RB:** We used to have a cellar, there was, we had a cellar just outside of the house and on top of that there were vines and there was some vines --- a few vines around but not many, they made very lousy wine.

[laughter]

**RB:** Because you know, but Dad said it was good. And...

**DB:** Some orange trees. In the front.

**RB:** Orange, peach.

**DB:** Lemons.

**RB:** Yeah, lemons, peaches but it was mainly vegetables, vegetables.

**OH:** Well, that was a market garden.

**RB:** Yeah.

**OH:** (1:33:14) If you were walking along Valetta Road, as you were growing up, what would you have seen?

**RB:** Well, there were the Zampin's, the first family that we met, that we see on the left, [looking at the map] the Zampin's where Nico Zampin.

**DB:** And Delia.

**RB:** And Delia, yeah. And then I can remember the Valentini and the Mercurio's and the Griguol that used to live here. But I can remember the Valentini and the Mercurio's. A family, that's a place that I used to go because Tony Mercurio was just about my age and we used to go together so I'd go to their place even though they weren't *veneti*, but beautiful people. No, further down, I remember going to the, I remember the West property, of course. As I said, we didn't live right next door but they were always there. And they were mainly celery growers. Their produce was mainly celery. We didn't have any celery. My *zio* Albino did, over here [indicates on the map] He used to grow celery too.

**OH:** And what did it look like, I mean, in terms of houses, land?

**RB:** A lot of land, a lot of green and the road was just a small strip of, of bitumen and then a lot of you know, gravel on the side, dirt -- a lot of open spaces and houses --- I can remember going onto the Frogmore Road, and on the left, it changed soon. There was an old house here, De Pasquale house and then that was knocked down and then the school was built there. I haven't got many memories of the people ... I know there were people were living here, the Rebulis, but I know --- Semola used to live down this way.

**OH:** Ah, in fact they used to live in the Rebuli house.

**RB:** There you are. I remember that was one of the people that we might have met. But mainly it was down Valetta Road, on the right to Frogmore to the Santin's or the Tonellato's.

**OH:** Would you walk there?

**RB:** --- No, not really, no not really because Mum was very --- we didn't, she wouldn't even agree to us going to school on bikes because she was afraid of traffic and so Dad and *Uncle* would always take us to school, always.

**DB:** Always.

**RB:** No buses.

**DB:** No buses.

**RB:** No buses. No.

**OH:** That was unusual.

**RB:** Yeah.

**OH:** (1:36:14) Do you remember how much land your father and Uncle had?

**RB:** Sixteen acres, I believe.

**OH:** Sixteen?

**RB:** Sixteen acres.

**OH:** Wow. Because when you look at it on the map, it's a very large ---

**RB:** Property.

**OH:** Parcel, yeah.

**RB:** Sixteen acres, I've always heard that number. Might be 15, it might, I don't know, I think it was sixteen.

**OH:** But I understood, that the Wests, for example, had about ten.

**RB:** Yeah, well... it's larger.

**OH:** Maybe, it's definitely larger.

**RB:** I know it was sixteen acres.

**OH:** Yeah, and a big lot of land to manage.

**RB:** That's what I said that I can always remember hard work.

**OH:** Yes. [laughs]

**RB:** It was hard work when we had to go and help them especially when they had to --- they had to spray, you know, in the glasshouses and it was very hot, very humid and very hot.

**OH:** Do you remember what they sprayed?

**RB:** --- Something ---

**OH:** Something bad?

**RB:** Something that probably you couldn't spray any more.

**OH:** I agree.

**RB:** Because you know...

**OH:** Where did the vegetables get sold?

**RB:** At that stage, Dad and Uncle had many --- clients that were, you know, regular, shop, shop owners, shop dealers and many of them, or we'd deliver to theirs and mainly it was left overs because Dad went to market on the Mondays.

**OH:** Was that the East End market?

**RB:** East End market, for sure.

**OH:** Who took?

**RB:** My *zio* Alberto, he'd go to the East End market.

**OH:** There's a beautiful photo, isn't there with cauliflowers on the truck and I think it's your mum, your aunt, and your Uncle and your dad?

**RB:** Yes.

**OH:** (1:38:12) Who worked in the market gardens?

**RB:** Dad, Uncle, Mum, *zia*, whenever needed obviously. And then we had people, one of the -- - labourers that used to work with us lived there for a long time. His name was Albert Wyatt and he was almost part of the family. He lived, he divorced and he lived on his own in his later years.

**OH:** Did he live on your property?

**RB:** Yeah, he lived in one of the houses for a while and then he shifted. I can recall his family, I can recall the Wyatt family. I can't remember her name but they were good people but anyway, they split, I can remember his sons and daughters and they used to come and play at our place and then he split up and so, you know. I don't know if he divorced or just, and for a while he was staying in one of these houses and then he moved and I don't know where.

**OH:** (1:39:26) And as you were growing up, what were your jobs in the garden?

**RB:** [laughs] We weren't too fond of going to the garden.

[laughter]

**RB:** It as hard work but it was mainly picking potatoes, spuds, we used to call them. Dad had the tractor with the machine that would pick up the potatoes that would throw them on the land and you had to pick them up and put them in buckets. Dad and Uncle would do the tomato picking because it was fairly, they had to choose which, you know it wasn't automatic sort of thing, but they'd leave the buckets and we had to go in and out and take out the buckets on the

trailer of the tractor, picking up the cases of lettuce they'd put, they'd cut the lettuce put them in the boxes and we had to pick them up and take them to the tractor.

**OH:** Were they the same as half cases?

**RB:** No, the half, the crates, the half cases were for the tomatoes and tomatoes and the cucumbers. Whereas the crates that were a little bit bigger were for the lettuce and then here were cauliflowers and cabbages.

**OH:** Did you have jobs every day?

**RB:** No, no.

**OH:** So when would you have worked in the garden?

**RB:** Probably it was too often for us, [laughter] but not enough for dad and Uncle. But whenever needed, no whenever needed. They'd call us and we were --- I left when I was 15, so it was say, from nine, ten, probably later because we didn't have a hard life there not at all, not at all.

**OH:** Not in comparison to your parents.

**RB:** No, no. But that, it was mainly on Saturdays, Saturdays. During the week, no, it was school, school home, homework TV, that was it.

**OH:** We're going to take a pause for a minute. Just pause this.

**OH:** I'm aware of the time, like how are you going with time? There we go. Sorry. We're returning to the interview.

**OH:** (1:41:52) We were talking about the Veneto community in Adelaide and I was asking Remo and Diana about the kind of support that was provided to young men after World War II. Were other families providing the same?

**RB:** I can recall, as I said, young men passing on, you know, our home, our property. They'd live there for a short time and then they'd move on, probably that was part of their, they used to go boarding and they used to say. That was common and it was common for the younger families like Mum's nieces and other younger cousins or young people that were related to us, would come to Mum and Dad for help, you know, be it economic help or if it was something, if they needed to go to the doctors or whatever it was. It was mainly Mum and Dad that helped them out, I can remember that, and it was quite common.

**OH:** (1:43:09) And I'm not sure whether your parents and your Uncle and aunt were in Adelaide when the Veneto Club was built?

**RB:** It was built later on. In fact, it was built, I actually attended because when I was in Australia in 1970, '71, I think that was when they bought the property of the Veneto Club and I was there then and there was a *Casa Italia* but we never went there.

**OH:** Your parents obviously had quite enough of the connections?

**RB:** That's right, yeah. I believe Lui --- Luigi Tonellato used to go there. But no, it was in town, it was in Adelaide but it was something that I heard about I don't know even know if I ever went there.

**OH:** (1:44:13) I'd like to talk to you about school. Where did you go to primary school?

**RB:** Primary school was at the Flinders Park primary school.

**DB:** Saint Joseph's.

**RB:** Saint Joseph's, that's right. And it was near the church off Captain Cook Avenue which is [indicates on the map] here. This is Captain Cook Avenue.



**OH:** On the map, yeah.

**RB:** And this is where the church was. And there was also a cottage here and I think --- I can remember going to school, the first years of school was in the cottage, I think even though there was school. I can remember school there was a partition on the back of the church and I can remember, not exactly a class, even though it could have been higher grades and soon after, the school was built, the primary school.

**OH:** And when you went to school, even though you had spoken dialect at home, did you know any English because of Roberto having been?

**RB:** No. There was no television then because I remember TV, we're talking about it before, TV came in at the end, towards the end of the '50s. And the first family that we used to go, to watch TV were the Adami's.

**OH:** Oh, on Findon Road?

**RB:** And I can remember then, I was young but probably we'd walk, we'd walk from school to the Adami's to watch TV and then Dad would come and pick us up. That's something that I can quite remember. And soon after Mum said: "No. That's enough. We're going to buy a TV."

**OH:** Have our own TV?

**RB:** Of course.

**OH:** I wonder what you enjoyed about school?

**RB:** Oh, it was great --- you know school was a place where you met your school mates, I liked school and --- it was, yeah, it was good going to school and then there were the school holidays and back to school, it was part of your life.

**OH:** Yeah, Where did you go to high school?

**RB:** We went to the --- what do you call it? Christian Brothers?

**DB:** Salesians?

**RB:** Saint Michael's College. That was as in Beverley. We went to grade 7. We went to primary school up to Grade 6 in Flinders Park. We went to Grade 7 and then to high school in St Michael's and soon after they built the Henley school and that's where, it's a De La Salle brothers' college.

**OH:** Right.

**RB:** Saint Michael's but it was a De La Salle but I think it's only... If you go down to Valetta Road, right to the end, that's where the school is, it's on East Avenue. No, East Avenue is up here. [indicates on the map] the other one, whatever it was. It became a very, that's where the school is now.

**OH:** And how did you get to school?

**RB:** Car. Dad. Dad or Uncle.

**OH:** Even to Saint Michael's?

**RB:** Even to Saint Michael's, always, always. I don't know if it was a choice of Mum and Dad. They didn't, we had bicycles but [probably they were afraid of car accidents. No buses. Very rarely went on a bus, it was always by car.

**OH:** You were lucky. [laughter]

**OH:** (1:48:24) How many of your friends at school were from Italian families?

**RB:** Oh, I'd say, I don't know percentage wise but it was a good number, surely and a lot of them. As I said, I went to school with Janet Tonellato, Denise Santin, I can remember them

well. Then obviously in high school, we'd meet other Italians. I remember one of my friends was Claude Feltrin, he used to live, the Feltrin family used to live on Adele Avenue.

**OH:** Oh, yeah. Were they market gardeners?

**RB:** No, no, his father used to work, he would be after the Second World War migration.

**OH:** Oh, okay.

**RB:** He used to work in Holden's.

**OH:** Yeah.

**OH:** (1:49:15) And what kinds of social activities did you enjoy as you were growing up? Like were you allowed independence from the family?

**RB:** Not very much, not very much. We'd play football or cricket.

**OH:** For the school?

**RB:** Yes, of course which meant it was exciting, I liked that. Apart from that, it was mainly, yeah, home. As I said I lived, I was only 15 when I came back. Probably Mum and Dad still considered we were young and that they were very precautious. We didn't go around much. At the end, you know, I think, I don't know now but then, a driver's licence was obtained at 16 years of age. So Robert got his driver's licence, he'd cart us around somewhere and then we'd meet up. And then we had... one of the photos you've got is of our friends, one is Italian, Luciano Gugliemin.

**OH:** Is that the big car, with the big fins?

**RB:** That's it, the Chev. Another one, Luciano used to live, *mamma mia*. Gugliemin used to live exactly...

**OH:** Near Frogmore Road?

**RB:** Frogmore Road, for a while but then he shifted. Then there was an English but his name was Eckhold which means German, for sure but we were good friends and we used to go to school together. And then there was Sean Taylor, his father was Irish. And then there was, I used to call him Casaretto. I thought he was English but Casaretto is an Italian name, he could have been a fourth, fifth generation Italian. Yeah.

**OH:** (1:51:17) Did your family ever go to the beach?

**RB:** Always.

[laughter]

**OH:** In summer?

**RB:** That was one of the part of the good things in summer. And they used to take us down to Grange or Henley Beach.

**DB:** Not Dad and Uncle.

**RB:** Not Dad and Uncle, no. Mum and Auntie and the kids.

**OH:** Did your Mum and Auntie drive?

**RB:** No. My Mum, I could always remember, we had used to call it, a buckboard, a utility, they used to call it a buckboard and she tried to drive, it was in the garage, she was in the shed, and she ended up knocking, I don't know how many tomato buckets, over and that was it. She said: "I won't try again."

[laughter]

**DB:** Not again.

**RB:** Not again. She did it without Dad's knowledge but, no, no they didn't drive.

**OH:** So would your father or Uncle take you to the beach with your Mum and Auntie?

**RB:** Morning, load up the family, all down to the beach, under the jetty and that was there, I can remember getting scorched by the sun. But there were a lot of people. I can see the beaches now and they're few people. In our time, there was a lot of people, with their tents or under the jetty, the jetty was the favourite spot.

**OH:** Yeah, especially for the *veneti* from this area.

**RB:** Oh, yeah. We'd meet there and play there, for sure.

**OH:** (1:52:41) I wanted to ask you about naturalisation. Do you have dual citizenship?

**RB:** Yes. We all have.

**OH:** Italian and Australian.

**RB:** Yes, and my children.

**OH:** And your children. Did your parents become naturalised?

**RB:** Yes. --- I know that Mum and Dad became naturalised before Roberto was born. So that would have been soon after marriage. I don't know when exactly but Mum was also an Australian citizen.

**OH:** How important would it have been for them to become naturalised?

**RB:** I'm not sure if my *zia* Elvira became naturalised but I know that many remained Italian without becoming, it was important for Dad, I suppose for owning property for being represented but I know that it was an issue that came up when Robert had to do military [service] over here and he was able to maintain Australian citizenship. It wasn't automatic because when he was born, Mum and were naturalised Australians. So they considered them to be foreign citizen. In fact, I didn't because I was under age whereas he was able to maintain only the Australian citizenship, and in fact, he became also an Italian citizen only about 20 years ago or something like that.

**OH:** That's interesting, it's you know, a switch, isn't it?

**RB:** Swapped around.

**OH:** (1:54:41) We're going to talk about your parents returning to Italy. And you said they returned in 1969 and really, that you think your mother's influence in seeing what the situation was like?

**RB:** Well, my *zia* Elvira would surely have been happy. As I said, she knew very little English because she was always, she always had Mum nearby and she didn't need to learn English. As I said, Dad and Uncle were fine living in Australia, they had no problems at all. But probably, Mum thought they were working too hard. We weren't going to follow in their footsteps, so there wasn't much point. And I don't think she was too happy about aging there, you know. But that was their choice.

**OH:** So in 1969, I'm trying to think how old were each of your parents?

**RB:** Dad was 60 and Mum was 50.

**OH:** So, moving on in their life?

**RB:** In fact, I think that Mum sort of came to that conclusion it was either then or never. It was, if it was going to be older, it would be too late. We were still at school and Roberto just did first year university and if it was anything after that, it would be too late to move back. And they certainly had the ---

**DB:** Robert came here ---

**RB:** In fact, the year before, Dad and Robert came, they came here to sort of explore, Dad had taken a look, where to live, where to go and sort, he was probably getting a hold of the idea, anyway. And then, unfortunately Mum became sick. She had breast cancer. Dad had to come back, had to come back to Adelaide and Roberto stayed here. And then it was up and back for a while. And then March, April '69, we all came back.

**OH:** A really big decision?

**RB:** It was, it was.

**OH:** I understand that from what you've said, that you came with your parents but went back to do your last two years of high school?

**RB:** Yes.

**OH:** So what was that experience like?

**RB:** Eh, it was, I liked coming here because it was a completely new world, completely different from Adelaide. You can appreciate that. But then again, it was nice, had many cousins, many friends, many cousins, anyway and they introduced me to friends and started going to school. That's when it got hard and I didn't see much future there. So after, anyway at the end of the year, January, flew back to Adelaide and finished off the last two years of school?

**OH:** What was that experience like without your family there?

**RB:** Yeah, it was an experience. Fortunately I was in a beautiful family, the Baldan family. There was the mother, my *santola*, Antonietta and her husband and they lived in two houses with their daughters who were married. So, it was good, it was near, near here [points on the map] near the Captain Cook Avenue, where is it? They lived just off here on Elizabeth Street.

**OH:** On the northern side of Grange Road?

**RB:** And so it was like going back home, you know. I was young then. I didn't realise, unfortunately Mum was getting worse, health-wise and she wanted me to come back between Leaving and Matriculation. So that was an experience, you know, I was on my own, travelling on my own, it was good, you know.

**OH:** Flying?

**RB:** Flying, yeah. A flight then would be eight or nine stopovers. Yeah.

**OH:** Exciting for a young kid?

**RB:** Rome, Athens, Beirut, Bombay, Singapore --- Yeah, there was a lot of stopovers.

**OH:** How long did it take?

**RB:** It was a couple of days but it was exciting, it was quick, it was good.

**OH:** Adventure?

**RB:** Of course. Even the boat trip back in 1969, was an adventure. It was beautiful, it was lovely, you know. It was a lovely time because Mum got better because she had her breast cancer and she had one of her breasts removed but she was happy, she was healthy, she was...

**OH:** Looking forward?

**RB:** She as looking forward because you know, there was the four of us. Roberto was here. And she was looking forward and we were 15, 16 years of age. The boat was ours, we went all over the place.

**OH:** And did you enjoy it, Diana?

**DB:** Yes.

**RB:** Having meals every day in the, you know...

**DB:** I had this experience in 1965 when I came with Mum and *zio* Bepi. I knew the boat, they didn't.

**OH:** Yeah.

**RB:** It was very exciting.

**OH:** It sounds like it was lovely.

(2:00:40) So your father had been already to look at the situation here, did he buy land or was there already land?

**RB:** He already had some property here.

**OH:** Right.

**RB:** Because he had, they didn't... probably '57, '65 they took some money over. Don't ask me how? [laughs]

**OH:** You weren't allowed to?

**RB:** Oh I don't know, I think so, it could have been cash, I don't know, that's something. But surely it was their money obviously. It could have been wired over through banks or whatever it was. But they had property, they had some property here.

**OH:** A house to come to?

**RB:** No, no. Unfortunately Mum, we got back, we went to relations. My *zio* Berto went to his home which belonged to his brother then but it was his home that he was born in. I don't know if he was born there, but anyway he lived there. And it's still there, it's where my cousins live now. And, we went to Mum's sister, an *Auntie* of ours, she had a big home and she gave us accommodation for a while. Except unfortunately, it was sad --- my Mum pledged her health to --- Our Lady of Lourdes as she got over the breast cancer, she was again feeling well, we went to Lourdes, all of us, all the Berno's, the two of us, Dad and *Uncle* bought new cars and we drove to Lourdes. Unfortunately on the way, probably Dad spun off the road and Mum got worst off unfortunately. She had some, what do you call them? Spinal ---

**OH:** Fractures?

**RB:** Fractures. She suffered very much from that, yeah. But anyway she got over that but unfortunately the cancer came back and did the rest. Actually she didn't get to see her new home.

**OH:** Oh.

**RB:** She died. We came back '69, '72, she passed away.

**OH:** Oh, all that time you were staying with the relatives?

**RB:** With the relatives. I was in Australia.

**OH:** Yes. And you were a young...? [referring to Diana]

**RB:** Yeah, school, but they were good people. We still have very fond relationships with them. In fact, one of my cousins there, his eldest, his only boy now, unfortunately he's lost his daughter, his only boy is now living in Sydney. He's a cook.

**OH:** Oh.

**RB:** That was completely on his own. He became a cook, he did school, you know, *scuola di alberghiera*. Specifically for that trade.

**Break in the interview – new interview card.**

**RB:** [speaking about a relative who has migrated to Australia] He went to Germany, didn't like that, went to Sydney and he's got a family there now.

**OH:** How interesting. So there's a few...

**RB:** New migrations.

**DB:** New migrations.

**OH:** Within your small kind of family.

**RB:** That's right.

**OH:** (00:18) So when you came back to Italy after doing Matric or Year 12, you went to university at Padova. Did you already know Italian?

**RB:** I studied Italian...

[mobile phone rings]

**RB:** Oh. Turn it over. I studied Italian at high school, the last two years. And one of the people I used to live with, knew Italian very well and he taught me, he was my private tutor for Italian. So I picked it up well enough to go into university anyway.

**OH:** Yeah, so you had good preparation then?

**RB:** Oh yeah. That's when I learnt Italian. Before I didn't know Italian, it was just only dialect, basically.

**OH:** Yeah and it is different, isn't it? And the grammatics.

**RB:** Yeah, the grammatics, it's...

**OH:** (01:11) You talked about having returned to Australia. How many times have you been?

**RB:** Oh, after that, after --- those two years of schooling, I went back in the early '80s once. And then soon after, married. And then went back, oh about four or five times, I reckon. Once with my family.

**OH:** Ah ha. [looking at a photo]

**RB:** And once, that was just, that was my 50th about two, a couple of days before leaving and that's when I took my wife and my kids for the first time to Australia.

**OH:** Oh, it's a beautiful photo. It must have been a great experience.

**RB:** It was, it was.

**OH:** And because did you spend time in Adelaide?

**RB:** Of course. Because I showed the...

**OH:** Where did you stay?

**RB:** Eh, we were staying then, hang on --- we went, *mamma mia*, that year... I rented a place in Brighton.

**OH:** Oh.

**RB:** I asked Ray and one of his clients had a beautiful home right on the beach, beautiful. In Brighton. Because I had relations: "Come here. Come here." No, no. It was a family. Plus I wanted to be fairly free to move around. And one of my friends, gave me his car, this Claudio Feltrin gave me his car and we used to drive around. It was beautiful. We took them down ... I had never been to Kangaroo Island, it was beautiful, lovely experience, travelled... We started from Adelaide and went up to Cairns, so...

**OH:** You saw a lot of the country then?

**RB:** Yeah.

**OH:** (02:58) And how important was it to show your wife?

**RB:** Oh, I was very proud.

**OH:** And children your own area where you grew up in?

**RB:** I was very proud of that, you know. It was part of my life, it was part of my youth, it was part of... I had a beautiful time. I can remember it was beautiful. I don't have any bad memories about Adelaide. I can't remember anything that put me off or... It was always good, you know, people was good, life was good, school was good. I really don't have bad memories of Australia. It's a beautiful country. I loved football, I loved cricket.

**OH:** Not soccer?

**RB:** No, I do follow soccer here. [laughter] I'm very sport-minded.

**OH:** (03:47) How do you feel now about your heritage? You know, what would you identify yourself as?

**RB:** I obviously understand that we are Italian. Our origin is Italian. When you live here, you understand your roots, how you were part of this community but at the same time, I would feel absolutely comfortable living there. As soon as I get to Australia, it's home, you know. There's no... I must say that we were --- at my period, obviously, I don't before, I know it was not that easy then. But I know that they were very well respected by the Australian community, the Australians, like Dad, all of the Italians were very well respected you know. They were hard workers, they were respectful, law-abiding, every so often you heard about someone who played up but that was very rare. So --- you were well integrated into the community. I'd never felt --- you know, there was some "wogs" and things like that but that was fun, it was, you know, nothing special, nothing. And so when I get to Australia, it's like home.

**OH:** (05:13) And do you think that you would feel different from your friends here in Italy who grew up here?

**RB:** You, you are different. You have this --- and they always, I mean I've been living here for a long time, you know, too many years.

[laughter]

**RB:** But they always talk about your life in Australia. And they keep on asking: "What was like in Australia?". I tell them: "Look, it was 40 years ago." [laughs] Every so often you go back so you know what it's about. It was the *new* land, it was the *new* country, you know. Here, we've got history, there's so much here, there's so much to see. But that's always something special, and the way people went there, settled there, lived there, raised families there.

**OH:** It's something interesting for people to understand.

**RB:** Of course. And they keep... It's always intriguing for people and they always talk about it, always. Whenever you talk to someone: "Oh, you're from Australia. What's it all about? What was it like? What did you feel?" They always ask these questions, yeah.

**OH:** And what about your children? How important was it for you to get the Australian citizenship for them?

**RB:** Well, as I told you, Alberto, --- I wanted him, I asked if he wanted to go after university. I said if you'd like to stay, to see if he was an Australian citizen, he still is an Australian citizen. He went there on his own, just to try it for a while. He liked it but he preferred to come back. But at least, he saw it, he went to see it. Daniela liked it very much and she said one day she'd take her daughter there.

**OH:** So who knows what will happen in the future?

**RB:** Yeah, yeah.

**OH:** (07:16) I want to say thank you very much to both of you for this interview, the great details, the information and the history. Is there anything else you would like to say before we complete?

**RB:** Well, first of all it was a pleasure. I'd like to thank you, Madeleine, I admire what you're doing.

**OH:** Thank you.

**RB:** I didn't understand at the beginning, not now, the first time that Robert was telling me about it. But I understand that it's very intriguing work. I can understand that you're working your way into what happened --- 80, 90 years ago. And that's a story that explains why so many people lived in the same spot, the same area. I admire very much the work you are doing and I'm sure that it's going to be a great --- it's going to be a great documentation for a lot of people, a lot of people. I've said so much, I think I've said enough, really.

[laughter]

**OH:** Well, thank you, I appreciate your reflections too about the project because I hope that for the next generation...

**RB:** Of course.

**OH:** It will be valuable resource.

**RB:** Of course.

**OH:** But again, thank you very much for giving so much of your time today and for your great memories and your contribution.

**RB:** It was a pleasure.

**OH:** Thank you.

**RB:** It was a pleasure.



**Addendum added by Remo Berno in response to a further question about the Schoen family and how they managed during the War**

**How did the Schoen family manage, being Jews in Italy, during World War II?**

I have only faint memories of the Schoen Family mainly through my mother's stories. Aldo and Nelli Schoen lived in Padova but I do not know when they settled there. It could well be that Aldo Schoen was of German origin but born in Italy. Schoen is a very common German name. I'm not aware of Nelli's maiden name, all I know is that they were both of Jewish religion. Aldo Schoen was a lawyer. I only met Mrs. Nelli about 3 or 4 times, but I never had the chance to meet her husband or their son and daughter. When I met Nelli I was still fairly young and had little information regarding what happened during WW II. I never recall any conversation with Nelli as regards to those times.

I am not aware of how and when my mother was put into contact with the Schoen family. My mother was born in 1919 and probably went to work as a house maid as a young girl. Therefore, mid to late 1930's. I remember mum saying that Nelli's mother, also Jewish, took refuge in a Catholic convent during the war and as a sign of gratitude she became a Catholic. I'm afraid that's how far my recalls go. I am not aware of how Italian Jews in Padova managed to live during the war. Racial laws were introduced by the Fascist regime in 1938. My mother was then 19 years old. With these laws, there was "only" racial discrimination at first. The deplorable deportation of Jews in Italy to concentration camps began at the Jewish synagogue in Rome on the 16<sup>th</sup> October 1943. Some Jews from Padova were deported in December 1943. Probably at that stage my mother was no longer with the Schoen family, who managed to stay safe somehow.

Remo Berno

Riese Pio X, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2018