

Italian market gardeners oral history project
Interview with Norma Camozzato nee Ballestrin OH 872/37
recorded by Madeleine Regan at Flinders Park, South Australia
on 21st September 2016

OH: This is a recording of an interview with Norma Camozzato nee Ballestrin recorded on 21st September 2016 at Flinders Park in South Australia. I'm Madeleine Regan I'm recording it for the Italian market gardeners oral history project. Thank you very much for agreeing to being interviewed today.

NC: That's okay.

OH: (00:27) And I'm going to begin with questions about your family background. So could you tell me your full name?

NC: My full name is --- well, I always call myself Norma Carolina Camozzato.

OH: And do you know how you got your first two names?

NC: Well, I never knew where they came from but my mother tells me she liked the name, Norma and Carolina? Apparently was my father's mother's name. I never ever met her, I didn't even know practically that she existed because she must have died when I was very young.

OH: And she didn't come to Australia?

NC: No, she never came to Australia.

OH: No. And can you tell me your date of birth?

NC: [laughs] the fourth of January 1941.

OH: And where were you born?

NC: Ah. Everybody says I was born at Virginia but I was actually born in a hospital at Keswick. There was a private hospital at Keswick. Mum and Dad lived in Virginia with their market garden but a month later after I was born, they must have known before they packed up and came to Flinders Park. So that was 1941.

OH: (01:44) Right. Can you tell me about each of your parents? What were their names and do you remember their dates of birth?

NC: Dad was Giuseppe Ballestrin and he was born on 19th July 1910. And Mum was Cesira Tieppo and she was born 26th May 1914. Yeah.

OH: Where were each of your parents born?

NC: I presume they were born, Dad from Vallà and Mum from Salvarosa. I presume.

OH: Can you tell me a little bit about where that is in Italy?

NC: It's --- oh gee, I don't know the mileage, it's in the region of Treviso. They're both close to Castelfranco Veneto, whether you've heard of that, I don't know? And I think Vallà is near Riese, it's in that same road. And Salvarosa was just a few kilometres over. [laughs]

OH: Thank you. And what work did your parents do?

NC: Well, --- Mum, I think was a ... she said, I was sent to Vallà at her Italian aunt to be as a maid, or a servant, I'm not sure how that was classed. And Dad, well he was 16 when he came to Australia. But he, I don't know, I don't think they did much at home, I don't think he did much at home, I think he said once that him and Gildo which is Ballestrin which is his cousin, they raised rabbits together when they were young. That's as much as I can say.

OH: Do you know if your parents went to school?

NC: Oh, I don't think so. That I can't tell you. If they did, they didn't go very much probably twelve months, two years. No, I'd say no.¹

OH: You were born into the family as number ...?

NC: Two.

OH: And so you have ...?

NC: I have an older brother who's called Lino and a younger brother called Lui.

OH: And when were they born?

NC: Lino was born --- have I got this date right? 14th of July, 1935. And Lui was born on 3rd of October 1950. So I'm the one in between.

OH: You were a big sister by a number of years?

NC: Yes, yes, there was really basically ten years because he was born in October and I was born in January.

OH: (04:33) And your own family? Can you just tell me about your family?

NC: My family? Well, I've got two children, Joanne who is 49 this year, in a few weeks. Paul would be 46, next week. And my husband who passed away 12 months ago. Mmnn. --- That's it, that's my family.

OH: And you've got grandchildren?

NC: Oh, I've got grandchildren, I've got two little kids in Melbourne. One is Clara and one is Stefan and Paul's child who live down at Lockleys, he's only got one, he's got little Asha. Yeah, there's three grandchildren.

OH: Thank you, that's great as a background.

OH: (05:18) Now, we're going to talk about your parents and their arrival in Adelaide. When did your father arrive in Adelaide?

NC: Well, as far as I know, he came out in 1927 with a few other, I don't know.

OH: He came with?

NC: I believe he came over with the other Ballestrins, I'm not sure now but he came over here, he was only 16 and he did various jobs here, I don't know. I think he worked up in the hills and he picked cherries and ate more cherries than what he picked, you know they'd eat a loaf of bread a day because they were so starving hungry, they were young boys. And he came in 1927.

OH: And do you know why he came?

NC: Oh, I suppose like everybody else at that time, to better themselves.

¹ In the editing process Norma clarified that her parents spoke dialect, some Italian and not much English

OH: Your father didn't say the particular reason?

NC: No. If he did, I don't remember it.

OH: And do you know where he actually came when he arrived?

NC: No, I would have said that he came to Adelaide, Port Adelaide but I don't really know that.

OH: It's a long time ago.

NC: It is a long time ago and I wasn't on the horizon then. [laughter]

OH: And --- do you know who your father left behind, in terms of his family?

NC: Oh yes, he left behind... Well, my grandmother, I don't know, as I say, Carolina, I don't know if she was alive. He left behind... And I don't think his father was alive. I never heard him talk about his father. But he had a brother, two brothers, --- one, two, Angela and her sister --- Maddalena, and then there was Vittoria and anymore? [laughs] Not sure. I'm not sure. But ...Oh Pasquale. Did I mention Pasquale? Anyhow. But anyway one of the brothers, he was blinded during the War and ---

OH: So there was a big family?

NC: Well, five or six, yeah. And the youngest sister, the mother Lena, who looked after apparently, no she didn't, my grandmother must have died those years. She looked after my grandmother. When grandmother had died even though I didn't know her name, Maddalena, Dad brought her over to Australia and she arrived here ... I don't know. She was here when Lui was born in 1950 so she might have arrived in 1949 or '48.²

OH: Right. After the War.

NC: Mmmn

OH: And was she single?

NC: Yes, she was single.

OH: Remained single?

NC: Remained single till the day of her death.

OH: Where did she live?

NC: She lived with Mum and Dad and us, at home. Yeah.

OH: Oh.

NC: The other sisters were married... Vittoria, Angela, Pasquale and the one, the blinded guy, he died. So the others all married and lived in Italy.

OH: (08:38) And what about your mother? How did she come to Adelaide?

NC: Well, working as a, I believe, as a servant girl at her Auntie's place, whether she was a real Auntie or whether she was just called Auntie at Vallà. She'd met my Dad there, 1934. And mmnn Cupid was around.

[laughter]

² In the editing process, Norma explained that after her grandmother died, her Auntie would have had to go and live with her brother which would not have been a good situation. Her Auntie renewed friendships with all the Ballestrin family

NC: Yeah go on.

OH: I was going to say, can you explain how your father went back?

NC: Well, he went back, as far as I know, he went back in 1934., I suppose to look for a wife, I don't know. He went back in 1934, he went back to his family home at Vallà and then on a certain day in Vallà they had the local *sagra*³, I don't know which day that could be.

OH: The *sagra* is like a festival?

NC: Festival. That's where I think, I believe he met my mother. So they were married on 30th September, set sail for Australia and came back here.

OH: And the interesting thing is that he wasn't alone.

NC: No, no. All the others went with him. [laughs]

OH: So can you just explain...?

NC: Oh I don't know, I can't explain that much.

OH: But how many others?

NC: I think there was --- *zio* Toni, *zio* Doro, those two. I don't know

OH: So, it was Isidoro and Antonio.

NC: I think so, I don't know the other two, I think Narciso, he married in Italy and had Egidio Egidio, as his son, he was in Italy because Egidio is actually Italian, born in Italy. Zio Gildo, Dad's partner afterwards in the market garden, he came over to Australia, single. Always worked with Dad. I don't think he was involved in any of this.

OH: I just think it's really interesting that the two brothers, Isidoro and Antonio and Giuseppe, their cousin came in 1927,

NC: Went back.

OH: ... were here for seven years?

NC: Yeah.

OH: All of them went back.

NC: Hunting for a wife, I presume so. [laughter]

OH: Must have made some money?

NC: Don't know.

OH: And then those three couples came back. What about your mother? How old was she?

NC: She was 20 when she married, and Dad was 24.

OH: And did your mother ever talk about what it was like when she came to Australia?

NC: Well, she just used to tell me, you know, that food was scarce. She was one of eight children, I think, seven or eight children, and she said, you know, that they didn't have much money and: "We'd have half an egg," she'd say, "For food." She told me all the --- basics like that because when I went back in 1963, I couldn't believe it, I really didn't believe that people still had half an egg, bit of radicchio, you know it was ... yeah

³ A *sagra* in Italy is the term given to a local festival that involves food

OH: Poverty?

NC: Poverty.

OH: And what about when your mother came here? Did she ever talk about her first impressions?

NC: Ah, no, she only ever said that she had never thought of going back. She said, I remember her saying something like it was hard, it was a new country, it was tough. But she said, she had married and she was going to stay with her husband and stay here.

OH: Did she have any family here?

NC: No, not at that time, no.

OH: What a big thing!

NC: Oh yeah. Yeah. And I said to her once, I don't know if this is part of my interview... I said to her when Joanne left home, my daughter left home, she went for a job, she went to Canberra. And my mother turned around to me, she said how could you possibly leave your daughter move away home to go to Canberra. And I said to her, but Mum, I said, you came over to Australia, you left your parents, your family. You came over to Australia with a strange man because basically she'd only met him and married him. And she said he wasn't a strange man, she said, he was your father. Okay [laughter] yeah.

OH: Yeah, an interesting comparison, isn't it?

NC: Yes at least I can go and see Joanne in Canberra more than you could go. She only went back once, twice in all those years they were here.

OH: (13:29) Who was close to your mother as a friend, you know?

NC: Well, the Ballestrins were all pretty close. Isidoro, I always called him Doro. Then when the others came over, Narciso, they were always, because they were in that group of market gardeners that congregated in that circle. Narciso had his shed here, Frankie and his father, Doro had it here, and we had it here and they were all...

OH: And you're talking about them all being on the eastern side of Findon Road, or River Road.

NC: Yes, yes.

OH: So there was a sense of being part of that...?

NC: Yes, and I remember going visiting to Narciso's house --- I don't know how often but we used to go and visit, we had an evening not like now and stay home and watch TV, we'd go and visit each other, you know. The same with Zalunardo, zio⁴ Yiyetta, we'd go down to, they lived off Grange Road, and we'd go down there visiting. We sort of, we were very connected that way.

OH: And when you talk about your *zia*, can you just explain how she came to Australia?

NC: Who? Which *zia*?

OH: *Zia* Yiyetta.

⁴ Zia is the Italian word for auntie

NC: Well, no, no. I can't tell you that because I have a photo of her marriage, she married here. So no, I can't tell you how she.

OH: But she came with her mother?

NC: Probably. Little old lady. probably, probably.

OH: Yeah. And she would've been your auntie?

NC: Well, she wasn't really. None of them were my aunties or uncles because they were cousins to Dad.

OH: Oh, but you called them *zio* and *zia*?

NC: I've always called them *zio* and *zia*. Yes.

OH: Yeah

OH: Yeah.

OH: (15:22) And I'm going to turn now to you growing up.

NC: Oh gee...

OH: And ask you who were your godparents for baptism?

NC: My godparents were --- Romilda Ballestrin who was the wife of Antonio and my godfather was Gino Berno, a member of the Berno clan. Yeah.

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

NC: I don't know. [laughs] They were just there. [laughs]

OH: And what about confirmation?

NC: Confirmation, I had then. Gino Berno had married a widow and Irma Berno, she was my godmother for confirmation.⁵

OH: Oh...

NC: You got to keep it all together. [laughter]

OH: Do you think the godparents were important?

NC: I think the Italians classed them as very important because when you're best man at a wedding, you've got that extra, you usually choose a friend, a close friend and they seem to bond for some reason. Yes, very important.

OH: (16:37) Mmnn What do you remember, this is just a question that you might have an answer to, but some of your first memories, as a child?

NC: --- I don't know --- Oh, going to school, I suppose, because I started school when I was five and I didn't know a word of English.

OH: (16:57) Where did you go to school? [sound of knocking the microphone] that's alright

NC: Oh, Flinders Park, at Underdale Primary School here at the end of Hartley Road.

OH: And did you walk there?

⁵ In the editing process Norma added that Irma Gomeriato was her mother's *paesana* from Salvarosa, a village near Vallà.

NC: Oh yes, we didn't have a car --- I don't know whether Dad had a pushbike either. But Lino, my brother went to school. He was five, six years older than me and so naturally I went along there too. We'd walk to school. I don't remember walking to school *with* him. [laughs] But went to school there and I don't know --- there was no houses around, lots of empty land worked by market gardeners.

OH: This is going along Hartley Road to Holbrooks Road?

NC: Yeah, and then as you ... coming back there was the odd house and then there was a lot of land. This part was all land.

OH: So where the River Torrens is, going up to Grange Road?

NC: Yes, yes.

OH: And dotted around?

NC: Well, they were little, you know, individual market gardens, yeah.

OH: (18:02) And what about your house? I'm interested for you to describe your house when you were growing up.

NC: A tin shed.

OH: Tin shed?

NC: It was what you would have now, fences, aluminium sheets of iron --- and it was just --- one, two, two bedrooms...

OH: When you walked in?

NC: I don't remember that extension being made but we had a sort of little room which was classed as a kitchen and there was a little room on the side on the side, was classed as a bathroom [laughs] It had a tub there.

OH: So it was inside?

NC: Yeah, that was inside, the toilet was out in the middle of the paddock. And there was a great big lounge area, a lounge and then there was two bedrooms. And then I think they built on a type of sleep-out out the back where my brother then slept. Yeah, it was just a tin shed.

OH: Very simple?

NC: Oh, yes.

OH: What kind of floor did it have?

NC: I think it had a linoleum in the kitchen, for sure because I was always told to polish it, wash and polish and scrub it up to shine. The other rooms, I guess were the same. I don't remember the others but I remember that because I had to work there.

OH: And if you went visiting to the other families...?

NC: Similar.

OH: How different?

NC: Well, they had a similar type of thing you know they lived in --- I think Frankie had another one was similar, Narciso, I don't remember. They didn't have much, a couple of rooms bedrooms, you know, yeah. We didn't have a gas fire, no heating. Mum had a wood fire which

heated up the kitchen, anyhow and she'd bake her cakes on that and cook on that. And if she wanted something like an espresso, she'd have a little spirit stove.

OH: For a small, little item?

NC: Yes, yes.

OH: Yes, and what about electricity?

NC: Oh, there was electricity.

OH: And the water was on?

NC: Yes, the water was on but no gas out in the middle of the gardens, there was no gas.

OH: And how far was your house from Hartley Road?

NC: --- Oh, I don't know, a couple of hundred metres in --- may have been more, may have been less.

OH: (20:37) --- You've told me about some of the Ballestrin families around, how many Ballestrin families were close?

NC: In that little group, there was Isidoro, Narciso, and us, G & E [Giuseppe and Ermengildo] because then by this time Ermengildo had came around. And that's that. Antonio had his land over on the Grange Road, Zalunardo who'd married ---

OH: Luigia?

NC: His land was there. --- Any more? I don't think there was any more.

OH: So that was quite a close-knit group?

NC: Yeah, they were all in that area, yes.

OH: (21:13) Then who were your neighbours ...?

NC: Neighbours!

OH: When you were on the farm here?

NC: Those. Then there was the Recchis. Recchi. Mercuri. Mercuri. Girolamo. They all had little patches there. They were the neighbours.

OH: And then on the other side, like going towards Holbrooks Road, who was there, going that way. [looking at a map of the area]

NC: Going that way, over there I don't remember. There was Jarman, Jarman had a house this side, and I think there was a Jarman living over the other side. They were connected, they were brothers or whatever.

OH: That's interesting, Jarman Street.

NC: Well, that's who they named it after because I think this must still be there, what would have been their land.

OH: Where we're on today?

NC: Yes.

OH: Did they have a lot of land, the Jarmans?

NC: Well, theirs went from Hartley Road, I think, to the river, all the strip right through. That I remember.

OH: Right. So your parents...?

NC: Were the next garden on from the Jarmans.

OH: (22:20) And your parents were in partnership with Ermengildo, and what was her name, Norina?

NC: Oh when he came here, yes, he came here as he was single. Then again, he went back to Italy [laughs] and find a wife. And he went back to Italy to Vallà and he met Norina --- and married and came back with her. Norina, in actual fact, is my father's brother-in-law's sister.⁶

OH: Oh, okay.

NC: And she was the girlfriend, we'll call it, of Dad's brother who died, the blind guy. So she was left on the shelf back there in Italy, you know, as the saying goes. And she met Gildo, he went back to Vallà and met her and ...

OH: And your father and ...

NC: And they had been working together, I don't know how they started working together but they were always known as G & E Ballestrin.

OH: Oh.

NC: So she came and joined the gang and she had two boys who live still over there, and yeah.

OH: Would you be old enough to remember Norina coming back with ...?

NC: Yeah. Old enough to remember but don't know too much about. I know she went and stayed with, they went and stayed with --- Primo Ballestrin, don't know if you know him. He lives over on White Avenue, Lockleys. He would have been Ermengildo's --- nephew, Primo was there. So they stayed with them for a certain amount of time till they built the house on Hartley Road.

OH: Right.

NC: And then they lived in there.

OH: And the house you described to me just before...

NC: The tin shed.

OH: How long? [laughter]

OH: Tin shed, how long did you live there, do you think?

NC: --- We went to Italy in 1963, we were in the new house. I would say 1960, 1961. Around that time.

OH: It's a long time, isn't it?

NC: In a tin shed.

OH: But as you said, it wasn't like you [laughs] were the only ones.

NC: Everybody had a similar type of thing. Yeah.

OH: (24:45) And in your family how important was celebrations, like First Communions or birthdays?

⁶ In the editing process Norma explained that she was not sure if her mother knew her zia Norina in Italy and as far as she could recall, her zia Norina had no relatives in Australia.

NC: Birthdays, well, I don't think they were too crash hot. But oh yes, First Communions you'd have a white dress, you'd get dolled up and go to Church and all that. Confirmation also. But birthdays, --- not so --- that I remember. I only had one birthday and that was when I was 21. --- That was a good one. [laughter]

OH: Do you want to say, to give information about that? Like what happened for your 21st?

NC: Oh, we just had, I had 100 people there.

OH: At your parent's house?

NC: No, this was now in Isidoro's place. He had a massive shed, a real what you call now a real big, like a sheep shed, a real big place. And that was the only place to go. And we didn't hire it, we just asked for it. [laughs] And I had a 21st birthday there. And Mum had killed off, I don't know how many, hens, we had boiled hens cut into pieces, chickens. And I don't know what else we had? Food. It was so hot because it's the fourth of January and it was boiling hot and we went through about I think it was three barrels of, 18 gallons of beer. I'm going by gallons because I don't remember... And I think there as another one, a ten one so they went through a lot of beer, ran out of all soft drinks, went to the deli that was down the end here, at the end of Jarman Terrace, there used to be a deli in there, and got some soft drinks to bring back. It was a good night.

OH: And who would you have invited? Or was it your parents who invited?

NC: Oh no. The parents ... Oh, I had a lot of my friends. Um --- my friends, I guess there was my closest auntie and uncle and Narciso and them. People like... At 21, I'd met a lot of people from the other side of town. A lot of boys, we'd go dancing at the Norwood Town Hall, Come along to my birthday party, come along. [laughs] And they turned up. [laughs] yeah.

OH: And did you have live music?

NC: Oh the live music, you might be surprised at this was Frankie.

OH: Frankie Ballestrin?

NC: Frankie Ballestrin --- I think Egidio was on drums, Frankie was on the piano accordion ---- I'm not sure who else was involved. That was our live music.

OH: So that was dancing and?

NC: Oh yeah, on the cement floor in there. Oh yeah. It was good fun.

OH: And had you decorated it?

NC: I don't think so. [laughs] I don't remember. No. I was just happy to have a 21st birthday.

OH: Yeah, yeah, what a nice thing.

NC: Yes, it was the best birthday party I've ever had. [laughter]

OH: Oh, that's lovely.

OH: (28:02) Talking about your family...

NC: Mmnn.

OH: How did your parents keep in touch with relatives in Italy?

NC: Mail.

OH: And would they've kept in touch pretty closely?

NC: Oh, no, no I don't think so. Dad never wrote. Mum used to write to his side of the family and to her side. She'd write and then I suppose eventually a letter would come back in reply and eventually she'd write, you know. There was nothing too elaborate, just plain old letters.

OH: Yes, but obviously keeping in touch was important?

NC: Yeah, they had to keep in touch. Yeah.⁷

OH: (28:41) Yeah. And if you think about your Mum and Dad what was important to them --- in their lives as ...?

NC: I guess --- I suppose you might callas parents, children, working providing for them, you know. --- Don't know. I've never asked my mother that. [laughs]

OH: But you would have observed them ...

NC: Yeah.

OH: Like the things that they focused on like the hard work?

NC: There was always market gardens, always hard.

OH: And we'll talk about that in a moment.

OH: (29:15) You've talked about the language at home like you didn't speak English when you went to school. So did you speak dialect at home?

NC: Yes, still speak the dialect. Yes, I learnt the dialect offa Mum and Dad and that's what I still speak.

OH: And you would have spoken with your relatives?

NC: Yeah, still in dialect, always in dialect.

OH: Yeah.

NC: I mean now I know a few odd Italian correct words, you know, correct Italian but still dialect.

OH: Did you speak dialect at home with Lino and the children?

NC: Yes, yes, though it was easier to speak English to them --- No maybe yeah, might have been half and half because Lino understood English enough, and you know, with the kids it was easier to tell them off in English whatever.

OH: So you were really bilingual, weren't you.

NC: Yeah, I suppose, yeah.

OH: What about your parents, how did they learn to speak English?

NC: Oh, they didn't as such. Dad picked it up going to the market mixing with a lot of the Australians. Him and Isidoro they'd go to the market and I guess that's where he picked up his English. Mum, didn't pick up much at all although she understood more than she poke. She was always stuck at home with the market garden and cooking so she never got out to mix with the others.

OH: (30:42) I was going to ask you, did she go shopping at all. Like did she go the city, at all?

⁷ In the editing process Norma explained that they kept in touch to give their relative news from Australia and this included family, her parents' brothers and sisters.

NC: Yes, occasionally she'd say, go to the city --- and I'll always remember this, she'd go and we'd buy something or something that she wanted them and she'd get out her money and then she'd say: "I sorry, I got dirty hands, working in the market garden." [laughter] She'd always felt sorry about what her hands were like. Yeah she went shopping, not very often though.

OH: What about food shopping? How did that happen?

NC: Well, that happened --- there was, we're going into --- Oscar Mattiazzo had a shop on Torrens Road, I think it was and he had and everything there and so Nillo Piovesan, he'd come around on his pushbike and take the orders from all these Italians and then it was delivered, you know. That was basically ... Meat? Well there was somebody on the Grange Road, called Raggett. I remember that, Raggetts. And somehow, I don't know who they got there but somebody bought the meat. Someone would eventually get there to buy the meat. But that's it. Then there was a guy from Woodville, an Australian man who had a haberdashery van and he'd call around to all the women, the market gardens if they wanted a reel of cotton, or if they wanted to order some towels or sheets and he'd come round because I remember Mum getting two blankets for me for my wedding as a glory box, she'd ordered them offa him, good Onkaparinga, yeah. And he'd come around and he'd know what the market gardeners wanted, the working trousers and working shirts, he'd had them all and if he didn't have them in stock, he would get them in for them.

OH: So was he, did he have a shop?

NC: He must have. No, he always turned up with this van like a caravan that you ... and he opened up the sides, like a food van, looked like a food van. But on one side he had one lot of stuff and on the other ... if they wanted cotton and elastic, and as he calls it *modande*, he used to have the odd word, you know.

OH: In Italian?

NC: Yes.

OH: But he wasn't Italian?

NC: No, no, he was English, Australian.

OH: Yeah. Oh how interesting.

NC: Yeah, yeah.

OH: So he must have had a circuit?

NC: He must have realised there was money involved in here because all the Italian ladies couldn't get what they wanted or couldn't leave the garden as often as they wanted. And he had a nice little run.

OH: Mmnn. yeah, Very handy.

OH: (33:30) What about social life in your family? I get the idea that the Ballestrin families you know, saw a lot of each other but who else would your parents have mixed with?

NC: --- [laughs] I don't know really. When somebody got married they all turned up, they were all invited, I don't know ... there was the Berno's over there, there was the Tonellato's there, they were all mixed up together, you know, Santin --- there wasn't much of a social life really, if you think about it.

OH: What you said earlier makes sense, like the visiting at night and...

NC: Yes.

OH: That was obviously really just important.

NC: It was just, you know, staying home on a Saturday night, Oh we'll go and see so and so and we'd go there because now you think I'm not going there, watch TV, something on TV to watch. But those years, we did, we did visit one another.

OH: (34:32) Did you ever go to the beach with your parents?

NC: Yes, yes.

OH: Where did you go?

NC: Oh, Henley Beach, Henley Beach.

OH: What do you remember about that?

NC: I remember rolling up in the truck with Frankie and his Dad and parking alongside the hotel, port of call, the front bar for the men, the women had to go into the lounge, we weren't allowed in the front bar. The kids all had a raspberry, you know a raspberry drink. And I remember Mum, we'd cross the road and I can still smell, the peaches, she'd go in the fruit shop and buy a few peaches. They were beautiful. But I can remember [laughs] --- Dad, at Henley there used to be it was the Henley jetty and there was another big cement platform that underneath people --- sat, because it was sunny, they sat, and I remember Dad putting on a pair of bathers. He had this great big blanket round him, somebody held them on, Mum or, and he'd pull up these bathers. I don't even remember him going in the water, to be honest. But I can remember that we always went to Henley Beach.

OH: And did others go there too, other families?

NC: Oh --- yeah, I think my *zio* Narciso did, with Lina and Egidio, I think they came along, we'd all pile on the truck, there was only the one mode of transport. If we went, were invited to a wedding, we'd all get on the truck. [laughter]

OH: In your beautiful clothes?

NC: Yeah. And I remember pulling up on Henley Beach Road, at the Thebarton theatre, traffic lights and we'd all, there was duck all these people on the footpath and we'd all duck our heads, we didn't want them to see us. [laughter]

OH: And one other thing about social life, did your family go to Saint Kilda? On New Years Day?

NC: No, that was --- I don't remember Mum and Dad coming but I used to go, go along with the others. Yeah, St Kilda was a thing, yeah, New Years Day.

OH: And how many people would have gone?

NC: Oh well, you know, if you take in the Ballestrini --- and their families --- and those other people who went, I don't remember too much but I remember I went. Yeah, it was good fun.

OH: (37:11) Yeah. I was going to ask you do you have any memories, of, you know, the War years. You would have been quite young but do you...

NC: Well, I was born in 1941 so I don't remember much about the War years.

OH: So you remember your parents telling you about it?

NC: No, no and that's why I went to the Archives to get all that information on my father because I was interested but I don't know anything about the War years as such.

OH: You told me previously I think that you knew that your father had gone up to the Northern Territory.

NC: Yes, yes. Now --- 'cos on those papers he was told to go to Barmera, is it Barmera or somewhere on the Murray on the Riverland? But he also told me that he'd been up to the Northern Territory, up at ... I remember him mentioning Materanka Springs, Daly Waters, Katherine --- Oh God,--- anyhow he was up in that area chopping trees.

OH: And he was part of the Allied Works Council?

NC: I suppose, yes.

OH: Yeah, and it was obviously a difficult time for a lot of Italian people.

NC: Well, you know, I mean, he was sent up there because he was not a naturalised Australian.

OH: But you know, even naturalised Australians got ...

NC: Got involved in that.

OH: Yeah.

NC: That, I did not know. But he was the one to talk about the area, about the Northern Territory because I was so interested in going. He told me all about the termite mounds and all that, you know. And I wanted to see them. It's only about five years ago that I went and I did actually see them all. It was really good.

OH: You had a good feeling about?

NC: Yeah, I'd like that area, I did.

OH: It's interesting isn't it, because it's so different?

NC: Oh, yeah.

OH: (39:05) We're going to talk about the market gardens.

NC: Mmnn...

OH: And the first thing that I'd like to do, if you can, is try and give a visual location of where the market gardens were in relation to, you know, Holbrooks Road and Findon Road or River Road.

NC: Over there. [laughter] We were --- the Recchi's and then there was ... We were next to the Jarman's and we had a piece, --- I think they did come up to the river, we had half that amount.

OH: So your land didn't go down to the river?

NC: Not at first, I don't think so. But I remember afterwards when Dad, obviously I wasn't told finances but when he bought that other piece, it went to the river. So he had another big strip alongside of the Jarman's.

OH: Right. And your father, as you said before, was in business with Ermengildo.

NC: Well, they traded as G & E Ballestrin in the market garden, yes.

OH: And where did that family live in relation to your house?

NC: What, the iron shed or the new house?

OH: The iron shed when you were first growing up.

NC: Well, he was, he lived, when he was single, he lived with Isidoro.

OH: Right.

NC: With Frankie over there, he lived in that house. And when he went to Italy and married, well then he moved, as I said, to Primo, Primo Ballestrin's house until he built a house where, well, the boys have knocked it down now and built that big white house, two units, there next to my Mum and Dad's house.

OH: And would your Mum and Dad have built it around the same time, the new house?

NC: Oh well, when they divided, subdivided a block for them, they subdivided a block for ourselves. Now, their house went up first because they needed it and then I don't remember how long afterwards, our house went up. But when we went to Italy in 1963, we were living in that house.

OH: Right. And what other buildings were on the market garden?

NC: Ah, there was another shed where they ... because Dad grew celery so they'd have to go out in the garden and they'd chop the celery and throw it on the cart with the horse and bring it back to that shed and each stick of celery would be washed with a pressure hose. Each one was washed and then each one was put into celery crates. So there was shed where they worked that. Can't remember anything else. With potatoes, they bagged them out in the ground. Tomatoes? Yes, tomatoes, they brought into the shed and each ... what's the word? Divided into the various sizes and so and put into the boxes. That's in the shed.

OH: So did your parents have some glasshouses?

NC: Mmnn.

OH: How many did they have?

NC: I'm guessing ten, I'm guessing because I really don't know.

OH: That's alright.

NC: They were on the bank of the river, along the back of the ground towards the river.

OH: So the celery, was that grown near the glasshouses?

NC: Well, it was, I mean, the glasshouses were across the back and then the rest of the ground was divided into celery. First of all it started with the celery. Once the celery got chopped off, it got marketed then they'd start with the potatoes, in the same land.

OH: Right

NC: They'd rotate them.

OH: So they had a crop all year round?

NC: Yes, there was no rest.

OH: Right. No. So how much work did your mother do in the garden?

NC: Always, she was always in the garden. Always. That was it. That was her life. But ... yeah.

OH: And looking after the children?

NC: Well, yes,

OH: And cooking?

NC: And cooking all that, you know. But that was her life. She went out into the garden and she'd say... when I was around... when I was young enough to understand, she'd say, I'm going out to the garden, Do this, do that! I was trained, I used to look after the house but I didn't like it. [laughter]

OH: Did you have any jobs in the garden?

NC: No, I wouldn't go out there.

OH: What about the, your brothers?

NC: Oh, Lino? You know he would help --- I don't even know if --- he went to CBC and he was brainy and he'd come from school, I don't remember him doing much, to be honest. Lui was more inclined to work the land, he could drive a tractor and you know, help them out that way. Me? No, I had to stay home and if there was spaghetti to be made, and the sauce to be..., I didn't make the sauce but I had to look after it. You know, I had to be home. I went once oh, when I was over 20, I went once to help dig potatoes. Oh never again!

OH: [laughs] Why not?

NC: Oh it was painful. You talk about y our back ache. Oh. Very painful, bending over and picking up.

OH: A lot of strain on the back?

NC: Oh, yes.

OH: Did your parents have their own garden with you know, animals, fruit trees and things?

NC: No we had a garden --- not with fruit trees but Mum had a sort of like a little patch that grew, I think I've got a picture there somewhere, she grew radicchio, I suppose, something, and basics. And animals? Well, she had a fowl house, with roosters, then she had turkeys, she had ducks. What else did she have in animals?

OH: And Norma, were they for eating?

NC: Oh yes, we had a good feed. [laughter] And coming down from the river, there was like a little creek-y type of thing that flowed water through, it wasn't an actual creek, I think Dad might have dug it out. And so there was always water there, flowing through. And oh, turkeys were () lovely.

OH: They had a good life?

NC: Oh, yes, oh yes, they had a good life. Yeah.

OH: Did your parents use the river for watering?

NC: Yes.

OH: Did they also have a bore?

NC: Yes, they had the bore from the river, they'd get up there and start it up and gush the water out from the river. Yes, they used that. Oh yes, they did have a bore --- I seem to remember but they used the river water as much as they possibly could. But there was, by the old tin shed, house, I think there was a bore there next to the horse's stable.

OH: Because your parents had a horse for quite a long time?

NC: Oh yes, they had a horse to drag the cart here, drag the cart there and to do the hoeing.

NC: (46:49) And we had a cow. Dad milked her and we had fresh cream every day, if we wanted to. Mum would put it in big containers and stay overnight and next morning rake off all the fresh cream. [laughter]

OH: How lovely. Did she make cheese?

NC: She did.

OH: Butter?

NC: No, butter, I don't think she ever attempted but cheese, she did. And she'd buy the junket tablets and you put them in the... I don't know if it had to be warm milk ... and then she'd put them in there and I don't even know how long it stayed in there but it then it'd gradually all, like you buy ricotta now, it all comes up like that and she used it. She had a round container with all holes in it and fill it all up with the ricotta thing and then press it all down. Yes, she made cheese.

OH: It sounds like she was a really good provider?

NC: Well, yeah.

OH: In terms of food.

NC: Yeah. Yeah.

OH: Like having the ducks and turkeys and chickens.

NC: Oh, the ducks were beautiful and the turkeys, of course. Yeah. And we always had fresh eggs, you know. We were well provided for that way. We always had chickens, oh gee, come on. Then there was --- the pig for salami.

OH: Where did you, do you know where your parents got the pig from?

NC: Oh, various places. I think the last lot were from Daminato, up there at Salisbury. But they had the pig, killed the pig. We had salami and buns and the sausages and you know, you never wanted for anything, really.

OH: And was that an annual thing?

NC: That was an annual thing?

OH: (48:30) What about wine?

NC: Oh, yes, that was another thing, traditional. Around Easter. We used to go picking our own grapes.

OH: Where did you pick?

NC: Williamstown. I remember Williamstown I used to like going up there. Mum would provide the food. Well, Frankie's mother would provide her family and we'd all go up there and we'd have this nice chicken in the middle of the plants. And, yeah, I remember picking grapes, then coming home and the men would squash it and carry on. Yeah.

OH: Was it always red wine?

NC: Yes, yeah. Always. I don't know why. They didn't worry about me. I didn't care about wine. But we always had wine, we always had the pig. And when the calf came along from that poor little cow, we even ate the calf. [laughter]

OH: So it sounds like, you know, it must have been such a contrast for your mother having had that experience of poverty in her home.

NC: Yeah, you know, I mean, I've never eaten, I mean, half an egg. Who has half an egg? --- You know, I've never done that here in Australia. You know, over there ... we went back there in '63, to Mum's houses, my grandparents, her parents were still alive. So there was four of us, four of them, and my two ... there was ten of us. And my auntie would have one chicken. --- She'd cook a chicken for ten. So you can just imagine how much you got, you know. And she'd put the biggest slice for the man, biggest leg or whatever for the man and then my father, because he was a guest and then she'd go to my grandfather but my grandfather didn't have any teeth so ... [laughs]

OH: Made it difficult. [laughter]

NC: Yeah, anyhow, then she'd think that piece was too big for him, I'll swap it so she'd be swapping pieces, it was terrible.

OH: It must have been ...

NC: For me...

OH: Such as shock.

NC: For me, it was an eye opener. I never believed any of that. We went to visit Dad's sister, my *zio* Angela and she lived with her mother-in-law and --- she made us a cup of coffee, and you know, we were only going to stay there a couple of hours and she said I'll make you a cup of coffee and the mother-in-law went up to her bedroom and brought down the bottle of *grappa* that was under her bed that was available there but in the meantime my auntie had knocked the *caffettiera* and had spilt all the coffee. --- We never had a cup of coffee.

OH: There wasn't any extra?

NC: No, I never forgot that.

OH: Wow!

NC: Here, you would just say, I'll make another.

OH: Yes.

NC: No.

OH: We'd always have the coffee.

NC: Yeah. Some of those little things really were very much an eye opener for me. And I was 22 at the time and I thought gee, you know.

OH: Yeah and knowing that's that what your parents would have experienced too. So different.

NC: So different.

OH: (51:47) You know your auntie Maddalena...the one who lived ...

NC: Ida Maddalena.

OH: Ida Maddalena.

NC: We called her *zio* Nena.

OH: Nena. So what did she do in your house?

NC: Oh, she worked in the garden, as well. She was young enough, I presume. I didn't know much about her, really. But she lived with us. And she worked in the garden and then when Lui

was born, she was looking after him and she'd make the cheese for Mum and she was the general ... But she never married and ...

OH: And did she have a room to herself in the house?

NC: No, I slept in the bed with her. I didn't like that and even in the new house, we had a shared bed with her until she died.

OH: And when would she have died?

NC: Oh --- I don't remember.

OH: Like, you were young?

NC: Oh no, I was over 20 and she lived quite a while. I don't remember.

OH: And was she part of the social life of going to visit people too?

NC: Oh, sometimes, but she preferred to stay home.

OH: Quiet.

NC: Yes, because we often said to her, Why didn't you go off and become a nun?--- She was very religious. Oh. And she said, Oh, no, that wasn't in God's plan for her. His plan was that she stay single as she is.

OH: (53:16) And were your parents religious?

NC: Oh, not to any great extent. Mum went to Church every Sunday. Dad, not so much ---- Yeah.

OH: (53:32) And you told me about what Hartley Road looked like when you walked to school to...

NC: Yeah.

OH: Flinders Park there, or Underdale. So, not many houses?

NC: No, in fact there's one or two of the houses are still there, the older ones, are still there. But no there weren't many houses. In fact I was a little bit frightened sometimes because there were a lot of bushes around and Pine Street there opposite the oval, there were a lot of bushes and I had to go all the way round though I could cut across Jarman's, the front of Jarman's house but then I was frightened that they'd tell me off. But they never would. But.

OH: And was there a road?

NC: Yes, sort of, bitumen, was just a track. But it was bitumen and it got ...

OH: All the way through to River Road?

NC: No, it got to Jarman's house, there and then you had to go round the corner, turn there to go right then go left and then you'd come into Pine Street and all that area there was all bushes there and things. And I used to be frightened of that.

OH: And did someone own that land?

NC: --- Don't know.

OH: What kind of bushes do you mean?

NC: Oh I mean bushes, bushes, boxthorns and things, you know, real wild bushes. But then again, I don't remember it being bitumen, but when you got to the corner where our two houses were, at the time, that was dirt track then going through to Findon Road. That was a dirt track.

OH: And could cars go on it?

NC: Oh yes, yes, cars could go on it.

OH: And do you remember in winter if it got tricky?

NC: It got muddy [laughs] because Dad, on his property would order usually once a year before winter, a load of gravel and put it on his track in the middle of the garden so that he had something solid to go on. But of course, the other one belonged to the Council, he wasn't going to do anything there. Yeah.

OH: (55:47) And you spoke earlier about your Dad going to market. Where did he go to market?

NC: Adelaide, in the city.

OH: In the East End?

NC: East End.

OH: How often would he go?

NC: I think they went once a week --- because a lot of the celery he didn't take any celery there, all the celery ... Well, He'd take it to the goods yard, is it Mile End at that time? The celery was all consigned to Sydney and Melbourne --- and tomatoes, I don't know whether the tomatoes, but most of them went into Adelaide. And potatoes, there was a place out at Kent Town, I think, that had the Potato Board and he'd take the potatoes there. But they'd go, as far as I know, once a week. Mmnn...

OH: (56:36) It's really interesting, isn't it when you think of him coming as a 16 year old and then making a life with your mother and working so hard. Like did they have other people working for them?

NC: Ah, various times, when there was the glasshouse that had to be all hand dug, --- before the season started. Well then they'd ask some of the younger generation that had come over from Italy some of the new migrants and they'd earn extra pocket money so they'd come along and dig up there. Oh, no I don't think, --- don't think though Mum after had two brothers that came here, I don't know whether they helped out with the potatoes, I'm not sure on that one.

OH: And did they stay, the brothers?

NC: Yes, they stayed here, they lived with us in that tin shed.

OH: It must have been a full house. [laughter]

NC: And Mum cooked for them, washed for them and --- one only died 12 months ago, actually. But they had various jobs and eventually they both married. Actually my uncle Joe, he married his girlfriend or his wife. When she came here, she was single, they married when he was still living in our house. Then he moved out. The other one, other one, I think went back to Italy [laughs] found a wife. He lived over in Collingwood Avenue, down there, just over the road, Flinders Park. Yeah.

OH: The one who got married, who was that?

NC: My uncle Joe. Mum's brothers. They were two brothers.

OH: And do you remember that wedding?

NC: --- Not really. No.

OH: Was she an Italian woman?

NC: Yes, he was, she... they might have already been engaged when she got here. I don't know. She was his girlfriend from Italy, she wasn't a stranger. They came here, and she came over here and they got married. I don't remember the wedding, to be honest.

OH: Mmm...

NC: The other one got married in Italy, the other brother, Mum's brother, he got married in Italy and came over here with his bride.

OH: So you had quite a big extended family?

NC: Oh yes, yes, because both those two uncles, one had a daughter and a son and the other one had two sons so over the years, they'd married you know, yeah. And apart from the Ballestrins because they all spread out and you know, we're all, still always friends even though I don't see them very often these days. But, you know, they're always there.

OH: Yeah. And you told me where you went to primary school, were there other kids from market gardens there?

NC: Oh, golly, I don't know.

OH: Not in your class?

NC: --- That, I don't remember.⁸

OH: (59:47) And where did you go to secondary school?

NC: Well I left Flinders Park here in Grade 3, I only did two years and I went to Hindmarsh, St Joseph's Hindmarsh in Grade 3.

OH: How did you get to Hindmarsh?

NC: Well, walked to top end of Crittenden Road and Grange Road and was given threepence to get up to Hindmarsh in the tram --- and then as we got older the threepence didn't last, you know. We walked home to Crittenden Road, we could buy a coke at the end of the road, have a drink. But then we still had to walk home, [laughs] you know.

OH: A fairly big distance?

NC: It is a long distance, yeah.

OH: And did you go to St Joseph's Hindmarsh with any other kids you knew?

NC: No, no. Made friends of course but I didn't know anybody.

OH: How many years of high school did you do?

NC: Two.

OH: (1:00:55) And then what did you do when you left school?

NC: Well, I left school at 14, and --- the noise from home came out that I was going to stay home and work the garden, not work the garden, work the house, do the cooking, the washing and all that. And I thought "like fun". So I went up and looked at the paper, I don't even know if I saw the paper, must have had a paper because I saw it and went applied for a job.

⁸ Norma added when she edited the transcript that she did not remember much about her school days. She explained that education was important for the boys. She said: "Being a girl I would stay at home to do housework whilst Mum worked the garden."

OH: And what was the job?

NC: Just typing.

OH: And you'd done typing at school?

NC: Yeah, I'd done typing at school, wasn't very smart but I did typing and shorthand and that. And this company was ... they were money lenders and so I had to type out documents and similar to this sort of thing, you know, fill in the details.

OH: What was the name of the company?

NC: The company was called General Distributors, they were in Gawler Place. And I got the job, only two people had applied for it, mind you, those days. I got the job I came home and said to Mum that I'd had the job, I was going to work I wasn't going to stay home.

OH: How did your parents respond to that?

NC: Oh, I don't think they said anything, really. I don't remember Mum putting up a fuss about it. I had to work five and a half days a week, Monday to Saturday lunchtime and yeah, it was ... when I came home, of course, I had to do the housework.

OH: Even though you had...

NC: Yeah, I had the kitchen floors, always a thing.

OH: Polishing them?

NC: Polishing them, yeah.

OH: What did it feel like having a job? It must have felt pretty different.

NC: Yeah, it was different but I had to give the money to Mum.

OH: Like all of it?

NC: Well, I had enough to keep me going to buy my bus fare or tram, you know, I didn't have any spare cash to play around with.

OH: So what happened if you wanted to buy clothes?

NC: I'd have to ask her for the money. She would give it to me but she wouldn't let me keep my wages. Yeah. Once, I bought a beautiful skirt, I like, I remembered liking it in Myers, I took it home. She didn't like it. I had to take it home. -- - My mother was tough. Maybe that's frivolous, you don't buy things like that, I don't know.

OH: So you buy things that are kind of serviceable and...

NC: Yes. Yes

OH: You know nothing...

NC: That last longer, You don't buy these pretty things. Which I loved it.

OH: So how long did you work at General Distributors?

NC: I worked there till I was, till I went to Italy. I was 22.

OH: In 1963?

NC: Yeah, I retired probably the end of 1962. Had plans to go to Italy with Mum and Dad.

OH: So you went with Lui as well?

NC: And Lui. Lui was only 13, yeah.

OH: We'll talk about you going back to Italy in a moment.

OH: (1:03:43) But I wanted to ask who were your friends at that time?

NC: Oh, the Zerellas [laughs] over here. There was Pam Zerella, Joyce, Mary. Then we had Sunta, [Assunta Tonellato] and not so much Connie [Marchioro]. I wasn't involved a lot with Connie until after. Mary Portelesi, well she was Mary Palazzo, she worked for 'The Sunday Mail'. And we'd always go to town and we'd go to the night clubs and.

OH: What night clubs were around?

NC: Well, they were in Hindley Street, they were a couple there. We'd go for a meal and a drink. Barossa Pearl was the in thing. Yeah.

OH: So your parents didn't put restrictions on you?

NC: No, no. I mean, well, you don't come home at 2.00 o'clock. But midnight or whatever because we'd all come home in a taxi, we'd share a taxi.

OH: And drop off?

NC: Yeah, each one individually so she knew that if I was going to the last one there or the third one there, I couldn't be home by midnight. You know, that wasn't that restricted there. Yeah, we had a good time?

OH: Did you ever go to Las Vegas Night club, you know, in Hindmarsh Square?

NC: Hindmarsh Square, no. We went to the Caon's at Cantina. There was another one, The Black Orchid, that belonged to the ---- anyhow, another lot. Then, of course we went to Norwood Town Hall every Saturday night for dancing and we went to a couple of the coffee lounges up there to have coffee at half time, yeah.

OH: Sounds like it was a pretty good social life?

NC: Oh we had a good time I mean when all our friends, when all the other people were getting married but we weren't and all that.

OH: And why was that?

NC: Because we were having a good time and we weren't meeting males. [laughs] We'd meet a lot of males but nothing that stuck, you know.

OH: (1:05:37) And how did you meet Lino?

NC: Lino I'd been told about him --- there's always people that want to match-make you. And I'd been told about him. He's always involved with the soccer. And you go to the soccer, you go to their dance. Yeah but how do I know how this guy is basically. And then we were at the Town hall one night, I was with Connie and her husband, her husband, Tony Legovich. And how else was there? Sunta was there, I'm not sure who I was with that night. And I don't know, I saw this bloke wander in and it suddenly dawned on me that I had seen him at all the other --- dances, you know and that's the thing that we actually met that he asked me to dance and we danced and it just went on from there.

OH: And when had he come to Australia?

NC: Oh, I should have thought --- 1951 or '52, I think.

OH: And he came by himself?

NC: Yes, he was, came by himself as a migrant and he went to Bonegilla Camp in Victoria. That wasn't a very nice place. He said the food was lousy. [laughs] They had to go off and shoot rabbits to cook their own rabbits so that they could have some food or food that they liked, put it that way. And then he said that he, they were promised but they never ever got a job so they protested. They even went to Sydney, walked around by Parliament House or somewhere, he was one of the group that protested. Eventually they found him a job, a lot of them got jobs, and they came over to Adelaide and he moved into Adelaide and stayed here ever since.

OH: Can you tell me where he came from?

NC: Yeah, Montebelluna.

OH: Which is actually not that far from where your parents came from.

NC: No, no they were all in that little block of area. [laughs] Yes.

OH: And how important do you think it was to your parents that you married an Italian?

NC: Probably, very important because they could talk to him in their own language and he wasn't one of those Australians, the riff raff, you know.

OH: So there was a feeling that Australians mightn't be that trustworthy or?

NC: Yes, yes.

OH: For their daughter?

NC: For their daughters. Yes. I think it was pretty important. And they were pleased.

OH: The fact that he came like, from the same province?

NC: Well, but then he lived the other side of town, didn't he so that? [laughs]

OH: How did your parents take that when you were...?

NC: Oh nothing, that was you know, by this stage they were pretty well --- clued up to things, I mean. So what the heck if he came from Norwood or didn't matter. He didn't have to be one of the local Lockleys boys.

OH: How old were you when you got married?

NC: '66, I was 25.

OH: And where did you marry?

NC: [laughs] I married at Sacred Heart Church at Hindmarsh and as I said to my kids, I don't know whether they'll remember, I was baptised there, First Communion, Confirmation, married.. I said now when I die, I should leave...

OH: From there?

NC: From there. Now, whether they remember or not, doesn't matter to me, afterwards I'm dead.

OH: No.

NC: But I mean, yeah.

OH: All those important milestones.

NC: Yeah, they were all there. Yeah.

OH: Yeah. And where did you have your reception?

NC: [laughs] It was then, I don't know what it's called now but it's the Bulgarian Hall on Tapleys Hill Road. I don't know what it's called now, I don't think it's the Bulgarian Hall, it's next to the, practically next to the Target's up there going that way on the right-hand side.

OH: How many people did you have?

NC: Oh 400. Every Tom, Dick and Harry. That happened because my brother, Lina had got married a few years earlier and they, Marisa was a very private, they were a very private little family and they didn't want a lot of people. And Dad, I think, was disappointed ... that he couldn't invite his friends. So when I got married and he said that I want this, that and the other, I said you could do what you like. So I finished up having 400 people.

OH: Wow. And who were your bridesmaids?

NC: One was Connie Legovich, down here, over here. And one was Joyce, Joyce which she wasn't married then, she was still Zerella. And Adelaide was under flood. It rained, and it rained, and it rained ... cats and dogs.

OH: So it made it memorable, your wedding day?

NC: Dad, I think, well what was Dad saying? --- When you were born, a whirly wind, it was probably over 40, I think, when I was baptised, I think the whirly wind lifted up the glasses from the glasshouse, smashed them. He said, and I think there was something else in there but when I got married, you got Adelaide under flood. ⁹[laughter]

OH: So he held you responsible?

NC: Yes [laughter]

OH: (1:11:04) When your parents moved and had that house on Hartley Road, they still had the same amount of land?

NC: Yes, yes.

OH: Did they keep the old tin house?

NC: Yeah, the old tin house was there. I don't know how it came about, as I said this friend who lives just around the corner, how they were introduced to her and her husband but they needed a house to live in. I presume Dad rented it to them. They lived in that house for a number of years. So much so that when she got pregnant again, Mum and Dad were godparents to their daughter. They were a lovely couple. He was a bit ... anyhow.

OH: They were Italian?

NC: Yes, yes. They're Vicentini. She's from Verona and he was from Vicenza. Or was it the other way round? And when you say this house was built by the Housing Trust, so was theirs they put in an application for a Housing Trust home around the corner so of course when they got it they moved into that. And I don't remember the tin house coming down, but it must have.

OH: (1:12:27) When would your parents have finished working the market gardens?

NC: Oh? --- I was married in 1966, it was around about that time. I'm not sure how long after I got married because I remember thinking, Oh God, I can't get any free celery now. The smell of celery was beautiful, out there, all these acres of celery, the smell was beautiful. And I

⁹ In the editing process Norma added that it felt a bit strange at first to live on the other side of the city when she married but she gradually settled in. At the time, the only people she knew were her husband's friends.

remember thinking I'm not going to get any free celery any more. '66 or '67, maybe, I'm not sure.

OH: After that, what did your parents do like did they get the land subdivided?

NC: No, they, eventually sold the land to --- can't think of his name but anyway they subdivided it. Mum stayed at home and Dad went to work again for the Brighton Council, him and Ermenegildo next door. They had a friend they knew and he said because neither of them drove he said, but I'll pick you up, I'll take you to work. So...

OH: Neither your father nor Ermenegildo drove?

NC: No.

OH: So how did they get to market?

NC: Well, Isidoro or Frankie.

OH: Oh, isn't that interesting that they didn't drive?

NC: They never drove. I think Dad once said that he didn't drive, they had an old truck. That one, he could drive round the garden, it was alright. But when they got the new one, it was more powerful, he didn't like it, So he never drove.

OH: So who drove the new truck?

NC: It would have been Frankie. He'd drive it over there and pick up all the potatoes. Frankie was very much involved in their lives.

OH: What about your mother, she didn't drive?

NC: No, are you joking? [laughter]

OH: So your father and Ermenegildo worked for the Brighton Council?

NC: They went to work for the Brighton Council where this guy worked. They put, I don't know *zio* Gildo, but I don't know what he did but Dad, they put him in as a horticulturist, is that how you say it? With gardens and the parks and he'd cut the lawn on the Brighton oval. He liked that, the only thing he didn't like was one day a week, they had to pick up the rubbish bins. And he had to run and jump, it's not like now that they do everything manually er automated.

OH: Yeah.

NC: He had to run, pick up the rubbish bin and toss it. And that he didn't like. And he was getting on in life and running wasn't the best thing for him, I guess. But there you go. They did that for a few years, until I think actually until he retired. Yeah.

OH: (1:15:17) And did your Dad and Mum continued to have vegetables that they were growing?

NC: Oh, only in the back garden. In the back garden. Dad had a beautiful garden. I mean, he treated that back garden as a market garden. He'd dig the earth two or three times before you planted anything in that, you know. He'd put the manure in and dig it in, not like us and just plant things here and expect them to grow. No, you k now, he, they really looked after that. She still had her fowls, yeah, she had fowls, no turkeys or ducks, but we had fowls. Yeah.

OH: Yeah. So having all of that home produce was important?

NC: Yeah, still around.

OH: (1:15:55) Yeah. I was going to ask you about you know, the idea of your parents continuing customs from the Veneto and you know, you talked about killing the pig.

NC: The wine. I don't know what customs, they were the most important things. --- Don't know of any other custom really, as far as food was concerned, you know.

OH: And speaking dialect?

NC: Yeah, well that. Yeah. Speaking dialect, yeah. Don't know of anything else.

OH: (1:16:26) Did your parents have any friends who were not from the Veneto?

NC: Oh yeah. I mean they'd mix up with people like the Recchis, over there. They're from the Marche, are they? Various people around the place. Oh yeah, that's not a problem. They couldn't understand them properly if they talked in dialect but they all managed to get on.

OH: But do you think that that, you know, you've talked about the fact that this area with the market gardeners, that they did identify with each other? You know, they had a bond?

NC: I suppose, really. "How're your tomatoes?" Or "What's happened to mine." And you know, things like that, yeah. When Dad retired, I think that's when he'd go to Church more often, so on the Sunday after Church, they'd all congregate outside the Church and they'd talk, you know, so that was starting to be a big thing then. But I think they mixed ... And that's when they'd mix with a lot of Australians from the Church, you know.¹⁰

OH: (1:17:31) I have that sense that, you know you talk, about the weddings and everybody was invited and like there would have been the families, you know, from around ...

NC: You just don't take husband and wife, you took half a dozen kids. You know, these days, you don't do that. It's got to be the close family who has the kids and the rest and then you skip them, you don't invite everybody.

OH: All the families were invited. And maybe it was because the community was small?

NC: Yeah, maybe. But 400 people?

OH: Yeah, that's a lot, isn't it?

NC: It's a lot. --- Yeah but anyhow, that's alright.

OH: Did you go to any weddings in Centennial Hall?

NC: I went to a couple. I think, one was, if I remember right, I don't know whether it's true or not. But they said there was 1,000 people there. Probably it was. But I went to one or two there. That particular one, oh gee, 1,000, that's a lot of people.

OH: It's huge. [laughter]

OH: (1:18:38) And what about being bridesmaid for other people?

NC: I was bridesmaid for the Valentinis, Ada and Amadio. I was bridesmaid for another couple.--- I had a horrible dress, but never mind. I think that was the only two, to be honest.

OH: Was it important to be asked to be a bridesmaid?

NC: Not really, I didn't care.

OH: Did they have the same role, you know you were talking about the best man?

¹⁰ When she edited the transcript Norma added that her parents attended the Catholic Church on Captain Cook Avenue at Flinders Park. The priests were English-speaking but in time, Italian priests arrived.

NC: Well, I ... yes, With Ada and Amadio, of course, I was maid of honour I was not the first. So the first couple, they would be the godparents, I was... you know. The other couple? Did I --- was I godmother to their son? Gee, I can't remember. I don't remember, I could have been. It's a terrible long time ago.

OH: (1:19:39) Yeah. The visit to Italy, what do you remember most apart from those experiences of observing the way that people lived so differently? What about meeting the relatives?

NC: It was nice to meet all the relatives. It was great actually because over here although we were all great together, the Ballestrins, this was Mum's side of the family. And she had, as I said about seven or eight brothers and sisters and then I met most of them. And it was great. And the fact that I met my grandmother and grandfather, that that was beautiful. My grandfather wa a lovely man. He was ruled by the woman, but he was a great guy.

OH: And it must have been so wonderful for them?

NC: Well, I assume so because ... No, they were great. Grandfather. Usually we were always out on the road from Monday to Saturday, Sunday we always stayed home with them so Mum would catch up with her parents. And we lived in the house with my uncle and auntie and two boys and we'd send the youngest boy down the road to the *osteria* to buy some beer, you know, and my grandfather thought that was nice. He loved his bottle of beer. We'd sit around the table on a Sunday afternoon and chitter chatter, you know. Dad, I would drive him over to Vallà so that he could spend time with his brother. And of course his brother was under the thumb and Dad said, I didn't see him often which was a shame. But I drove him over there every Sunday.

OH: And do you have a sense of what your parents would have come from? You know, their lives?

NC: Well, they still lived like that.

OH: (1:21:32) Would you have called them *contadini*¹¹, the families?

NC: *Contadini*, yes, *contadini*, of course, Oh yes. My grandparents there in Salvarosa, my uncle, that year worked in the factory. My auntie, she'd go off to the factory and work four or five hours a day, sewing and she'd bring home ... She worked somewhere that made those plastic raincoats and she'd bring home all the belts to sew. And she'd sit at the machine ... It was alright while we there because Mum would do the cooking, and then we'd help her turn them inside out and get them ready for the next day and next day she take them back and bring home some more. Yeah, it was ... every family that we visited, they were all in the same boat. Things changed after that, you know--- It was ... I found it very ... my mother used to tell me about these things but I didn't believe her. But it was true.

OH: And so your mother's family like, would they have had land?

NC: No, they had a piece of land out the back of the house but I don't think that was ... No because two brothers came here and one went to Belgium and one stayed there, he was the one who worked in the factory. And then there was one, two, three sisters, they all got married and moved out. I don't think they had anybody working the land there. Mum came to Australia so ...

OH: And your father's family, did they have land?

¹¹ Contadini is the Italian word for farmer, peasant farmer

NC: To be honest, I don't know, I know that they had pigs. [laughter]

OH: That would have been handy for the salami.

NC: Yes. [laughs] I don't really what he had. I learned more about my mother's family than I did about Dad's. But when I got over there and met all Dad's sisters, they were lovely women. They were like Dad, just a woman's version. They were lovely people.

OH: I'm wondering how it was that your father and two cousins who came here, came to...

NC: Australia.

OH: To decide to be *contadini* here.

NC: --- Maybe that was what don't know, to be honest because they all lived in the same house in Italy. The Ballestrins all lived in the same house. And Dad used to say, this is where I slept. It had about five or six doors, no window. I said, but ... Well he said one door one to the other room, the other ... They slept in this [laughs] open space. They all lived together.

OH: So there would have been kids from different families...?

NC: Well, the two Ballestrin families, yes, Dad's side of it and the others came here. SO they might have made up their minds together. Let's all go over to Australia, let's do something. I don't know. That much, I don't know.

OH: And your father at 16, if there weren't any prospects for him?

NC: He was the youngest of the three that came out here I don't know what prompted all of that.

OH: It's a really interesting story, isn't it? And what ...

NC: I mean, what child of 16 to leave their country and come over to somewhere strange. I mean 16 they're already grown u you might say. But not those people. To leave their families and come to a strange land. I don't know. I think it's amazing.

OH: And the fact that he had the two older cousins probably made it easier for his parents to allow him to go.

NC: Maybe, yes, maybe.

OH: I just think it's just a big story.

NC: Yeah, it is. And I remember him saying how he worked in various places here. But I always remember him saying how he'd have a loaf and fill it up with cherries. They had so many cherries, they were cherry picking up in the hills. And he had so many cherries, [laughs] he probably had diarrhoea and he get a loaf of bread and stuff himself up with bread. They were young and they were hungry.

OH: And having to fend for themselves?

NC: Yeah, he had a lot of tales like that. I'm sorry I didn't listen more closely.

OH: So you know how many people say that? Many.

NC: There are so many stories to tell.

OH: (1:26:22) I wanted to ask about your involvement with the *Trevisani nel Mondo*. How did you become involved with them?

NC: Well,--- it was Lino who was involved with it, more than me. But my closest friends up at the other side of town, Mario Montin, He is, he wasn't at that time, but he is President now but he said to Lino: "Why don't you, you know, come and join us, you get a monthly publication?" He says it's so much a year for membership. I don't know, it's like one of those things that you like joining a footy club, you become a member. And he joined up. And he was just a member. But then --- he got voted in as Committee member so that's when I got involved. Because before we used to go, not that I remember too many of them, we used to go to the picnics, just sit and have enjoyment. But once you join a Committee member, the wives or wherever the partners all join in and do the work. So once Lino became the Committee member, I joined in to help him out or help the women out. But he was a member there, a Committee member for 25, 26 years almost before he died.

OH: Wow, a long time.

NC: Yes.

OH: And what do you think was, has been important for, about the *Trevisani nel Mondo*?

NC: I just think it brings back their memories, their traditions from back when they grew up, and what they used to do over there. I don't know. They just used to, you know, say we'd have a picnic. You'd have sausages come into it, the pork sausages, and they have the radicchio, you've got to have radicchio, that's Trevisani food, you know. And then they'd join it up with a bit of potatoes and tomatoes. But --- I don't know. There's a good gang of people, a lot of oldies. The young people don't seem to get involved which is a pity.

OH: So it would be mainly be people after the War?

NC: Oh yes, yes.

OH: And that sort of ties them back?

NC: Oh, sorry, after the War, yes. You've got ties to back there. I don't know, you know, I ... Lino had all the photographs there taken over the 25, 26 years, or the ones we had anyhow. And I went through them one day. And you should have seen some of the people, they were so young, so good looking and now you look at them, Oh God, he's old. [laughter]

OH: Yes, it's surprising.

NC: Yes, surprising how you get old. But yeah. He was involved and he was, as they said, he was a good Committee member, he'd listen to what he was told and do the right thing because he was particular on that. And as I said, I got involved because being the partner, I had to help out with the women. And so we'd clean and wash all the radicchio and cook the potatoes and peel the potatoes and tomatoes and set up everything for the picnics. There were two picnics, and there's two or three lunches inside and sometimes and again, help them out there, the same thing, I'd wait on table. I didn't like working in the kitchen afterwards as there was one or two women, I got on with them but I preferred outside. And I'd set up the tables with a gang with some of the other partners, men, they'd help me. And then I'd wait on table. It was good fun. It was hard work, it was a bit tiring but, you know, in the end we'd all sit round in a group and have a glass of beer and have a chit chat and think of all the profit we've made. [laughter].

OH: (1:30:23) In your parent's generation, something like the *Trevisani nel Mondo* didn't really exits did it?

NC: I don't think so.

OH: What about the Veneto Club?

NC: Well, Dad was a foundation member of the Veneto Club. But I mean it was only in name, he never went there very often. But though --- Maybe he did, maybe he used to ride his bike over there. I know they went to the Findon hotel, ride their bikes to the Findon hotel for a drink. I don't know whether he went that far to the Veneto Club, I'm not sure. He wasn't involved, he was a foundation member, I don't think, Dad died in 1989, I think it was --- The Trevisani would have been around --- Hang on. I don't know. But Mum always used to go to the picnics, most picnics because she'd have friends here who would take her, you know. I couldn't take so she had a few friends here like this lady around the corner and she'd always come to the picnics and things, you know. It was good, a good outing for the oldies.

OH: (1:31:35) I was thinking about that first generation, you know like your father, uncles, the others like the Piovesan's, Tonellato, Berno, like the opportunities that they had to get together was probably between themselves you know, like at the weddings.

NC: Yeah and might be a similar thing to the Trevisani, you know...

OH: They did it themselves.

NC: They did it themselves, they had the barrel of beer every Sunday afternoon at Frankie's place. And all paid so much for the barrel, you know, how many were there, so much a head. And they had the beer and us kids would get together and play, you know.

OH: So it's kind of like a similar idea, it drew people together

NC: But this was formed in Italy, the foundation was in Italy --- so it was a proper thing, if you want to say. The other was just a friendly thing.

OH: And because there were the first ones, really, that's how they made their community?

NC: Yeah, matter of fact this weekend, tomorrow or Friday, there's a week, a busload, well, they're going to fly to Canberra. Every three years, they have a reunion so all of Australia go to a particular city. This year it's in Canberra and they catch up on things and talk about what they want to do and it's really quite interesting. If Lino had been alive we probably would have gone not that I was that interested because they're going to Canberra, they're going to Jindabyne, all the places I've already seen but had he been alive we probably would have gone along for the fun of it, you know. But yeah, you catch up on all these people, from all parts of Australia.

OH: (1:33:33) yeah. So you do you feel like you have a connection with the Trevisani?

NC: Yes, I do. --- After Lino died, the Secretary, Mr Cavallin, I don't know if you know him or not and his wife, Candida, she said to me: "Do you want to be a part of the Trevisani?" Well, I said: "I feel as if I could. I feel as if Lino would like me to." So when they had their general meeting in January, February, they voted in the new Committee members because out of the 16, five or six go out, the others remain. So they've got to vote in more. And this is where it got a bit emotional for me because they said we have to have somebody to replace Lino. And they wanted another man. They didn't need any more women. So I didn't put my name to be voted in at all. But they couldn't get a man to replace him. So I don't know what then happened. But they didn't want any more women. So I thought, oh well. They've got, I don't know, six, seven, eight women, you know. But they do need the men because the men do a lot of the hard work, the barbie and shifting this and shifting that. But I would have liked to but now that I'm out of it altogether, I don't know, it doesn't seem to matter so much any more.

OH: Will you still go to picnics?

NC: Oh, yes, I attend all their functions, oh yes.

OH: Yes.

NC: Oh yes. yeah. It's not a question of that, if I can, I go.

OH: Yes.

NC: And now I can sit under the tree like everybody else.

OH: And you don't have to do the work. [laughter]

NC: I don't have to do the work.

OH: I think that's really good.

OH: (1:35:26) So if you have an idea of yourself and you describe yourself, like would you describe as Australian, as Veneta, as Trevisana or?

NC: Well, once upon a time, I'd say I'm Australian, definitely Australian. If somebody asks me, I say I'm Australian but I have Italian parents. I've changed a bit.

OH: Why have you changed?

NC: Maybe I'm older --- maybe the world is different. I like being part of the Trevisani, proud of it, I suppose. I don't know. And when Lino died, Paul said, Mum, we should get the Trevisani flag. Dad would like that. Yes, he would. They have a proper emblem. The country with Adelaide on it. So I rang Cavallin, Guido Cavallin. Yes, Norma, I have the flag here, I'll put it in the Church. Yes, I feel --- I'm not so much Australian now, but I'm half and half.

OH: That's really interesting, isn't it?

NC: Yeah.

OH: And I guess the fact that you married...?

NC: Married an Italian, yes. That didn't worry me that I married an Italian, it never did, you know.

OH: No but I think that perhaps that it reinforced ...

NC: Maybe, maybe.

OH: That sense...?

NC: Yes, sense, maybe maybe. But as I said, once upon a time, I'd say I'm Australian and then I'd come out and say my parents were Italian. But now yeah, I'm Italian, yeah, I'm Australian, yeah, I'm half and half, yeah I'm part of this, I'm part of the Italian group. Maybe I'm not ashamed.

OH: Would that have been a factor, that you might have felt ashamed?

NC: Probably, when I was young I might have felt ashamed.

OH: Why?

NC: Italians, they were wogs. Don't know. Parents for instance, never dressed up like an Australian woman, lots of little things like that, oh gee. I would have been ashamed. I went to school and had my ears pierced.

OH: And that was different?

NC: That was different and I didn't like that, you know. So, I don't know, over the years as you get older, you get more mellow, I suppose.

OH: And also, I think it's about the richness of your family life...?

NC: Well, I've been to Italy and seen the poor sight of it but I've seen so much of the nice country. I've been to so many of the cities over there. I was over there nine months and we travelled as much as we could. Yeah, those days, yeah. We went over on a boat.

OH: This is with your parents?

NC: Yes, on the *Himalaya* and we dropped off in Naples and we went up north and then we were due to come back on the new, newly built *Marconi* and it was due to sail, end of September so that's why had booked on that to come home but it wasn't ready and it didn't leave till mid-November. So we had extra time over there.

OH: So what happened to the garden?

NC: Oh, Gildo was working it. That was s the whole thing, Dad had made plans to come back that to help.

OH: Summer? Harvest?

NC: Yes, and we came back on the *Marconi* in November. And we went everywhere and I went to various places where Dad's relations were living and we caught with all of them and it was really, it was a lovely country, it is a lovely country.

OH: And for you to have had really good connections with your parents you know, families?

NC: Yeah, yeah.

OH: It would have given you a strong?

NC: Yeah, cousins all my age. Now they've been married and some have died but at that time we were all young and it was nice. Yeah.

OH: (1:39:49) Just going back to that sense you know, feeling Australian or feeling Italian, when you were in that social group, nearly all those girls were Italian or from Italian families.

NC: Whereabouts here?

OH: Yeah, when you were...?

NC: Yes, my friends most of them here were all Italians. Yeah. Funny how we stuck together.

OH: It is. It's really interesting.

NC: And Joyce and Mary Zerella, they're Calabrese or Napoletani. Mary Palazzo, she's from the south. Pam, the cousin, well her mother died recently and she was from Isola d'Elba but her father was Napoletano. We were all a mixture there. But it was good fun, all of those girls.

OH: So you think there would have been more of a sense of understanding each other?

NC: May, yeah, maybe especially when it came to coming home on Saturday nights and we had to be home early. There was Pam, she had to be the first home, she had to be home by midnight otherwise her father, he'd be waiting for her. So yes, we knew what it meant, you know. So she was home first. And Sunta, [laughs] she was home last. They didn't say anything to her so we let her go home last. It's funny.

OH: Sounds like it was fun too.

NC: It was fun, you know, we didn't --- like they have now, we didn't do drugs, we didn't do anything stupid like that. We're just having good fun.

OH: Barossa Pearl?

NC: Barossa Pearl, oh yes.

OH: Well, Norma, we're really coming to the end of the interview but I'm wondering if there's anything you would like to say about your life and your parents, the market gardens, you know being from the Veneto.

NC: Nothing except the market gardens were a hard job of the parents to have to do. And I think I've said practically... I think I've done alright.

OH: I think you've done brilliantly. Your fear, I think your fears about your memory not being good enough, they are not really true

NC: Well, I didn't know what you would ask me to start with. But, you know, I don't think I have anything to add.

OH: Maybe I'm thinking of one last question as you saying about the hard work in the market gardens. What do you think now about what each of your parents did at the age that they were? What conclusions can you draw about the choices they made, I guess?

NC: I don't know, it must have been alright for them, you know, as Mum said originally, she wasn't going anywhere, she lived the life she chose. She said I had no desire to go anywhere else and she always worked the market garden and Dad also. And I'm going to tell you this --- Mum died when she was 91. And she'd never had a back ache.¹²

[sound of doorbell]

OH: Oh, I'm just going to stop this. But I think we've had a terrific interview so thank you very much Norma.

NC: No that's alright.

OH: I really appreciate your time.

NC: No that's okay.

[sound of doorbell again]

OH: And all the wonderful information that you have given.

NC: It's alright, she's coming.

¹² In the editing process Norma added that she had gone to Italy with her parents and brother, Louis in 1963 – 27 years after her parents had last been there. Her parents went again, in about 1979.