

Italian market gardeners oral history project

Interview with Roma Bordignon nee Zampin at her home at Kidman Park in South Australia, recorded by Madeleine Regan on 3 February 2017, for the Italian market gardeners oral history project.

Oral Historian (OH): Roma, thank you very much for agreeing to be in this interview.

Roma Bordignon (RB): Thank you

OH: Can we start with some details about you and your family background? What is your full name?

RB: Roma Jeanette Bordignon

OH: And can you tell me how you got those beautiful names, Roma Jeanette?

RB: Well, Roma was because of Rome and my father is Italian, and Jeanette was named after Jeanette McDonald who was a famous singer.

OH: And did you become a famous singer?

RB: [Laughter] No. I can't sing.

OH: Can you tell the names of your parents? We'll start with your mother.

RB: Amelia Katherine Zampin.

OH: And what was her family name?

RB: Shaw.

OH: Do you remember where she was born?

RB: I think it was Kalgoorlie but I'm not sure

OH: And which country did her parents come from?

RB: Ireland

OH: And your father, his name and place of birth?

RB: Silvano Primo Zampin

OH: Where was he born?

RB: In Italy, in Riese.

OH: And do you know what province that's in?

RB: Treviso.

OH: Right. And do you know how your parents met each other?

RB: They met in a cemetery. [Laughter]

OH: That's kind of unusual, isn't it?

RB: It is. Yeah, Mum was going to see her mother and he going to see his brother. So somehow or other they met.

OH: And was that your mother's grandmother? In the cemetery?

RB: Yes.

OH: Which cemetery was it?

RB: The one in Adelaide.

OH: The West Terrace cemetery?

RB: Yes.

OH: Do you know what work they were doing before they got married

RB: I don't know what Mum did but my Dad was ... working in the what do you call them ... munitions although I don't know if he was working there or he was working in the country

OH: I think you told me before, at Whyalla

RB: No, that was his brother

OH: Right. And the time you were born... Your date of birth?

RB: 19th June 1938.

OH: And at that time do you know what your parents were doing and where they were living?

RB: They were living in Lockleys and they had glasshouses and they grew vegetables.

OH: Right. And can you tell me about your family? You were in a large family.

RB: Yes, we had eight girls and one boy. And I was third.

OH: So you would have responsibilities as you were growing up.

RB: Definitely. I had to make my sisters' lunch in the morning and my other sister had to make her bed because she was younger than us. Yes. And once we made her a cheese sandwich because we got sick of making her lunch. [Laughter]

OH: And your own family? Your husband's name?

RB: Michele Tranquillo Bordignon

OH: And I'll ask you a bit later about how you met but how many children did you have?

RB: I had two

OH: You told me you've got quite a few grandchildren

RB: Oh yes. Seven grandchildren, I think it was eight no, great grandchildren. That's right.

OH: And I think you told me that you had...

RB: Nine grandchildren.

OH: Wow. I imagine they keep you busy.

RB: Yes they do but I love them.

OH: Yeah, I can imagine.

RB: Yes it's worth it.

OH: And we're going to talk about your parents and your father arriving in Australia. And we know that he arrived in ... quite early didn't he?

RB: yes, he came with most of the first lot of immigrants
OH: You know the year?
RB: Yes, 1928.
OH: And do you know why your father migrated to Australia?
RB: I can't tell you [whispered]
OH: That's alright
RB: He was more or less ... the war was coming and he came out before the war.
OH: Do you know if his family were well off in Riese?
RB: No, not really they were pretty poor
OH: So came from a background – what would his parents have done?
RB: I think they were also farmers. I think that what they grew, they grew for themselves.
OH: Right. Yeah. Do you know why he came to Adelaide?
RB: I've got no idea why he came to Adelaide, why he picked it but probably it was one of the best places he could come at the time
OH: He also had a brother didn't he?
RB: He had a brother called Peter. He was unfortunate. He got run down by a train on the Woodville Road at Woodville. And Dad was working at Whyalla at that time. So he came down to arrange the funeral and he stayed here in Adelaide.
OH: Right. Yeah. Do you know if your father had any other relatives here in Adelaide?
RB: Not until he brought out his two nephews. Peter and Lino.
OH: Right. And was that before or after the second world war?
RB: Well, probably. Yes.
OH: After? I'm going to turn to ask you about your growing up and some things you remembered. First of all I wanted to know who were your godparents?
RB: Isa [Elisabetta] Tonellato.
OH: And the godfather?
RB: Her [husband] Secondo Tonellato.
OH: Which is really interesting because they were a well-known family in the Veneto market gardening community.
RB: Yes, that's right.
OH: And how important were they to you when you were growing up.
RB: They were very good friends and we used to go a lot of places together like St Kilda and picnics and that sort of thing.
OH: And can you tell me what you remember about where they lived?
RB: Yes, they lived in a train. Off Frogmore Road, I think it was. Yes. Yes, she lived in a train. I was quite jealous of that. [Laughter]
OH: What do you remember about that train?

RB: Oh sometimes we used to go into there. They has a nice bedroom and everything and we'd play with Assunta, her daughter. Yes, that was nice.

OH: That would have been quite unusual.

RB: Yes, it was definitely. Yeah. But people lived in things that they could find at the time. Another lady was living in a caravan. So you know what you could get, you took. People didn't have anything.

OH: Mmnnn people didn't ...

RB: Yes, they didn't have anything .

OH: Did your godparents remember your birthday and things like that?

RB: They were lovely godparents.

OH: You've already said that your parents were living off Henley Beach Road when you were born.

RB: Yes

OH: Do you have any first memories?

RB: I remember when the Franciscan priests came up and lived in the house at the top of the hill and they were very good to us. They used to come and get Dad's wine

OH: So your Dad made wine?

RB: Yeah, And they'd take vegetables. Dad would give them vegetables and that. And they had a lovely Christmas Day like a Midnight Mass yes. And all the gardeners used to go around. It was lovely. Midnight.

OH: (10:20) That's a nice memory to have. What was your house like? I'd love you to described what your house looked like.

RB: It was very humbling. [laughter] Yes it was two rooms. And we had a wood stove which was good. And Dad had to put up canvas across the front of it for the girls to sleep in which was a bit cold. But ... yes, and he had the Holden's car boxes or crates or whatever they were that they used to pack up the Holden cars in and he bought some of them and he made a bathroom for us with it and a washroom.

OH: And was that separate from the other two rooms?

RB: No it was sort of on the side of the two rooms. Yes. They were separate but sort of stuck to it

OH: So the main two rooms would have been a kitchen and then was like a bedroom?

RB: Yes, we did have a lounge, a kitchen and Mum's bedroom and the kitchen and the bathroom. It was all in there.

OH: I'm interested to know how far back it was from Henley Beach Road.

RB: Oh, it would have been about 200 metres. It wasn't that far. But we had to sort of walk up and there was a little lane down the side. It was more further to catch the tram. [Laughter] But we had to walk to Lockleys because if we didn't walk to Lockleys we had to pay tuppence. If we caught it where we were, we only paid a penny. Oh no, the other way round.

OH: The other way round. So if you walked to Lockleys you paid less.

RB: We got it for a penny. And the other way we had to pay two pence.

OH: So how far were you from the bridge?
RB: Oh it was almost ... we were sort of on it , our backyard was almost on it.
OH: Was that the bridge that went, that connected Henley Beach Road?
RB: That's right. You went over the bridge to Henley Beach Road. Do you mean if the river went through?
OH: Yes. And you also had the river at the back of your land?
RB: Yes. That's right.
OH: And was there a swing bridge there? Or was that somewhere else?
RB: No. There was a proper bridge there. The swing bridge was up in the hills somewhere.
OH: Oh okay, we were looking at photos of that. Yeah.
RB: Yes
OH: Where did you go to school?
RB: St Joseph's and then we changed to Our Lady of Queen of Peace ¹ Yes, at Henley Beach.
OH: Oh okay, so first of all you went to Thebarton
RB: And the other one was closer so we went there.
OH: To Henley Beach? On Seaview Road?
RB: Yes.
OH: And how did you get to school?
RB: Tram.
OH: Right. So you went on the tram down to Henley Beach?
RB: Yes, at that time it was running.
OH: Right. Were you at Henley Beach for high school?
RB: Yes.
OH: Right. When did you leave school?
RB: Oh, I was only about 14 at the time.
OH: And who were your friends at school?
RB: Oh, gosh. That's a long time back. It was Connie Marchioro and the rest of them was Australian, I think. There were only a few Italians there.
OH: That's interesting.
RB: Yes, there wasn't that many, most of them were Australians.
OH: And did you think of yourself *then* as more Italian than Australian?

¹ Star of the Sea convent, Henley Beach

² St Patrick's hall, Grote Street in the city of Adelaide, next to St Patrick's Church

RB: Yes, yeah, that's right. I was sort of treated as ... I mean I had nice friends. They were all nice girls. But I was Italian. I was more or less Italian because Dad was Italian. Mum wasn't counted.

OH: Oh, okay. And when you left school, what did you do?

RB: I went to work at Brazzale's Mica factory.

OH: In the city?

RB: Yeah.

OH: And your sisters were already working there?

RB: They all worked there? Yes.

OH: Milva and Bruna?

RB: Yes.

OH: And other girls that you knew?

RB: In the mica factory. Oh, they were all nice girls. Bruna Rossetto. And Elda Battaglia. Oh well, that was Bruna's sister. And oh gosh, I can't remember ... Letto. Maria Letto. There was a lot there and I can't remember their names.

OH: And it was a long time ago. Yeah.

RB: Yes, it is.

OH: Yeah. How long would you have worked there?

RB: I worked there almost until I got married.

OH: Right. Let's talk about that. How did you meet your husband?

RB: Well, one night I went to a dance and I danced with this very handsome man.

OH: And where was the dance?

RB: Up in the St Patrick's hall.² And about two or three days later I found out that he lived next door to me. I didn't know. It was very surprising. So did he get a surprise!

OH: And you know those dances that were at St Patricks? Who would have gone to them? Were they mainly for Italians? Or?

RB: Yes, there was all Italians there. And all single boys and single ladies. And it was a nice get together, you know, you met a lot of friends.

OH: And did they have a band?

RB: Yes. There was a man that played a piano accordion. I don't remember his name. And somebody else played on drums and another one played a violin. So it was quite nice. And it was all Italian music, you know, waltzes and tangos. It was really nice.

OH: And were your parents okay about you going?

RB: Yes, because the three of us went together so they were quite happy about it.

OH: What was the age difference between Milva and Bruna and you?

² St Patrick's hall, Grote Street in the city of Adelaide, next to St Patrick's Church

RB: Thirteen months between Milva and Bruna, and then I think there was three years and I think it went like that all the time.

OH: Yeah. So when you went to the dances, what kind of clothes would you wear?

RB: Just casual. Nothing special. Just something casual. It wasn't a haughty taughty thing. It was just for people you know. Normal people.

OH: So you met Michele. And what year did you marry?

RB: 1955.

OH: Right. And how old were you then?

RB: Oh about 18.

OH: Wow. So you were the third in the family to get married?

RB: Yes.

OH: And where did you marry?

RB: In the church at the top of ... the Franciscans

OH: At Lockleys? Like where you had lived?

RB: Yes.

OH: And by that time where were your family living?

RB: At that time they were living ... I think I got married in ... I think when Mum and Dad were in their new home that they bought.

OH: At Angley Avenue?

RB: Yes

OH: Maybe that's why you didn't know your neighbours so well.

RB: That's probably why. Yes. [Laughter]

OH: And what do you remember about your wedding?

RB: Oh it was a lovely wedding. Yes, had quite a big wedding. As Dad said, he was going to give his girls a nice wedding. So it was a nice wedding.

OH: And what about your dress?

RB: Oh it was lovely with a nice white veil.

OH: And where had you bought the dress?

RB: In the city somewhere. One of the big stores. I think it was Myers at the time. And we all wore the same veil from Milva down to the last one.

OH: Oh really?

RB: Yes. We kept that veil. And we all wore it

OH: Oh. How lovely. And did you have bridesmaids?

RB: Yes I had three bridesmaids and they were my sisters.

OH: Were they The older sisters or younger?

RB: Well, there was Bruna who was older and two younger. And I had two little ... one little flower girl and one little page-boy.

OH: And who were they?

RB: That was ... One was .. Angela .. no, it couldn't be Angela. It was ... I don't remember and it's my wedding.

OH: Well, it's a long time ago.

RB: Yes. I think Peter was the little page-boy

OH: Your brother?

RB: And who was the other one? It couldn't have been Cynthia. I don't remember. Isn't that terrible?

OH: Where did you have your reception?

RB: In George Street, there was, near the post office there, off the Taylors Road

OH: Oh, South Road there. I think your sisters had their receptions there too.

RB: Yes, that's right. The thing is in those days everyone catered for everybody. All the girls would get together that we knew and they would cater, they would set the tables and then we'd do it for them when they got married. So it was really nice. Everyone helps out.

OH: Yeah. Did you have a band at your wedding?

RB: Yes we had a band, an Italian band. And we had a man in charge like ...

OH: Like an MC?

RB: Yes, that's right we had one of them. It helps a lot, you know.

OH: And I imagine there would have been a lot of the *veneti* there?

RB: Yes, most of them, yes.

OH: Where did Michele come from in Italy?

RB: He came from Castelfranco.

OH: In the province of Treviso, not that far from Riese?

RB: That's right, yes.

OH: So how important was it to your parents that you married a man from the same area?

RB: They were very happy, yeah. We all, most of us married Italian. Except one, she married a Dutchman.

OH: That's interesting that you all married ...

RB: Yes, all of us. Yes

OH: And did Michele have relatives here?

RB: Yes, he had a sister here, Mrs Brazzalotto. She lived at Salisbury. Assunta Brazzalotto. Yeah.

OH: And was she here before your husband came?

RB: Yes. Yes. She was in the house up from us. And he called him out here actually. She said she was very lonely. So she needed someone from the family. So he lived with her.

OH: Right. But then he must have moved to Angley Avenue at Findon?

RB: Yes, that's right. Yes.

OH: And what was he doing? What work was he doing?

RB: He was working at Holden's. He got a job almost straight away, yes. That's when they were paying people to get people to work there. They needed them

OH: Yeah. And so you must have known each other not for very long?

RB: Oh about 18 months, I think. I was only young when I... And then he lied to me. He said he was six years older than me and he was nearly ten. [laughter]

OH: Oh really?

RB: And I didn't know that.

OH: Did your parents know that?

RB: No. I don't think so.

OH: Would it have made a difference?

RB: I don't think so. He was still the same man.

OH: Yeah. Yeah. Talking about your family, you know your parents. Did your parents ... did your father keep in touch with his family in Italy?

RB: Yes.

OH: And how would he have done that?

RB: He rang, not rang. He sent letters and they'd write back. Yeah.

OH: Did your father have other relatives here apart from Peter who had died much earlier?

RB: No. He just had the friends, the gardeners, they all talked about their tomatoes.

OH: What about Nico Zampin?

RB: Oh he came later. Yes, that's right. He came later. And then he brought his wife.

OH: Was he a brother?

RB: Yes.

OH: So Nico was younger than your father?

RB: Yes.

OH: Can you remember who he came with?

RB: No. His wife came after him but no I can't remember who he came with or the boat or anything.

OH: That's fine. They had children?

RB: Yes, they had three children. And I don't know their names.

OH: And I think they didn't stay here?

RB: Yes, they went back. And Terry, which is Teresina the oldest child, she stayed here and she got married. Yes, that's right

OH: Yeah. What language did you speak at home with your Mum and Dad?

RB: English because he wanted to learn to speak English so that he could speak to people and learning English was much better because if they spoke their own language, other people didn't like it, you know.

OH: I think that you told me that it might have been a bit tough for your mother at times.

RB: Yes. It was.

OH: Can you explain that?

RB: Well, she married an Italian. And, need I say it? She was called a 'dago's tart' you know. We were all 'dago kids'.

OH: Who would have called her a 'dago tart'?

RB: The Australians, yes. Maybe more likely strangers, you know, that she'd meet. Yes, it was pretty tough on her.

OH: How would have that affected her, do you think?

RB: I don't think she used to take any notice of it. It was just one of those things, you know. She wouldn't have married him if she was going to worry about that, you know.

OH: How did her parents feel about her marrying an Italian?

RB: They were not happy. Nanna didn't like ... but she always looked after the kids, you know I mean she helped Mum out a lot. But she'd always look after us we'd go every Sunday and she'd give us a cup of tea and give us her cake that she'd made which was terrible. [laughter] It was nothing like Mum's. But she was very good to us. Yeah. We'd stay with her sometimes. Yeah.

OH: Oh. Was your Mum a good cook?

RB: Yes, she was. She started getting recipes from the Italians. She made her pasta and all the things they'd made. She did like cooking. We had a wood stove which took a long time but still she made lovely things in the oven.

OH: Did she make her own pasta?

RB: No. She used to buy that. But she used to make the *sugo*. That's right.

OH: What kinds of things were important to your parents as the family was growing up, do you think?

RB: I think they worried about our schooling, and our marriage, who we would marry, and that. But we were good kids, you know. And I think they worried about money at times but ... having so many of us. And we had plenty to eat so we got nothing to worry about, you know

OH: One of the advantages of being in a vegetable garden?

RB: And we had chickens, same as everybody else. All the Italians had their chickens and their ducks and pigeons.

OH: Pigeons?

RB: Yeah, we had a few pigeons.

OH: And were they for eating? Okay.

RB: Yes, everything that was there was for eating.

OH: And what about fruit trees? Did you have fruit trees?

RB: Oh yes. We had a famous mulberry tree. We used to climb it, you know. We had a swing underneath and one day we was pushing our sister and the bell fell on her head because we had a bell tied up to the top and it used to ring. And that was Christina. No, she was alright.

OH: And what were the mulberries like?

RB: Oh they were beautiful. We'd get up the tree and eat them. They used to stain our clothes. [Laughter]

OH: I bet your mother wasn't happy about that.

RB: No she wasn't.

OH: Where did your mother shop, you know, say, for food?

RB: There was a shop on the corner of Torrens Avenue. It was a deli as well as a grocery store. So she used to ... And Dad used to buy what was it ... on the corner of Morphett Road, it was ... I think he was Greek ...

OH: Star? Star Grocery?

RB: Yes, that's right. Yes, Dad used to go in and put in an order after he'd been to the market. We'd send the order in and when he came back from the market, he'd pick it up. It was quite hefty bag. And then we used to go to Murray Bridge for our cheese. There were Italians up there who used to make cheese.

OH: Do you remember the names of those people?

RB: No.

OH: Was one, Brion?

RB: Yes, That's right. He used to make lovely cheese. Dad would bring back home in these forms.

OH: How nice. And what about meat?

RB: Dad used to go to the Italian I think his name was Mattiazzo.³

OH: In Currie Street?

RB: Yes that's right. We never wanted for anything.

OH: And what clothes and things like that? Where would your mother have bought clothes?

RB: Well, Mum had a cousin and she had a clothes shop up at Thebarton and when the clothes would come in, she would tell Mum and Mum would go up and buy something for each of us and she used to give them at cost price for us. She was very good. At Christmas she used to give us clothes or a pair of pyjamas. That was nice.

OH: That would have been a special thing?

RB: It was. Yeah.

OH: What do you remember about going into the city when you were a child?

RB: We never did that very much. I do remember the tram going down the Mall ...

³ Emilio Mattiazzo was the butcher that many of the *veneti* patronized. He had emigrated from Bigolino like the Rebuli's

OH: Yes, down Rundle Street.

RB: Yes, that's right. Yes. Oh, Mum used to go every Endowment day and she'd take one of the kids with her or two of us and she used to buy us something each then too. That was a help too.

OH: And what about your parents' social life? Who were the people they would have spent time with?

RB: Oh, much of their time was spent with most of the *veneti* around here. They'd get together and play cards and sometimes they'd have a dance in the shed and one was knocking the bucket, you know, a drum. And someone always had an accordion

OH: Yeah. So can you tell me the names of those people.

RB: Ballestrin, Zalunardo, there was quite a few of them ...

OH: Tonellato?

RB: Tonellato. Who else were there? They were the ones who came out first more or less ... Pasin. Oh, can't remember others. There were quite a few of them... Lui Tonellato. There were quite a few of them. They'd play cards at one house, at each other's house each week. One different one. Yes.

OH: Was that the men?

RB: The men. Sometimes the women came too. It depended where we went. Most of the women came. Oh, Maria Ballestrin used to come and her husband, and they'd play cards. We'd sit there and talk or Mum would. You know.

OH: Did kids come as well?

RB: Yes. We'd go outside and play in the dark or get out in the kitchen and tell stories. Yes, it was good.

OH: And when you had parties in sheds, whose places would they have been at?

RB: It was mainly Santin. He had a nice big shed. Mainly it was there.

OH: On Frogmore Road?

RB: Yes. That's right.

OH: Do you remember the Berno family? Did you ever go there?

RB: Yes, we did. We had parties there too. Yes, we did. You remember more than me.

OH: There were quite a number of those families, weren't they?

RB: Yes there was. They were always together. They were always friends. And *Barella*. They used to love *Barella*.

OH: What's *Barella*?

RB: Hitting balls along. Bowls... The *Barella* was the one where they threw the ball in the air and it had to hit what they called the pins at the end. If they ... My husband was good at it

OH: It's different from *bocce*?

RB: Yes, *bocce* is sort of tossing the balls. But this one here is tossing the balls in the air. It's supposed to come down on a pin and they'd get points for it. That was interesting.

OH: And did men only play that or was it women as well?

RB: No, my sister, Angela used to play it with the ladies. Yeah, they used to go to Melbourne and all playing that – the boys and girls.

OH: Really? That's interesting. Yeah. Who did your parents visit regularly?

RB: Oh, Vic Marchioro and Tonellato's. Oh they used to visit everybody. There was another lady she used to visit. But I can't remember. It's so long ago, you know.

OH: I think you're doing really well with your memory. What kinds of occasions were important for your family?

RB: Oh weddings and getting together to go to St Kilda to catch crabs. And when they caught them they'd come over to someone's place, we used to take it in turns and they'd boil up the crabs and they'd all sit there and eat them with homemade wine.

OH: oh. Wonderful.

RB: It was great.

OH: Yeah. Did your family go to church regularly?

RB: No not really. Yeah. We used, the girls used to. So we used to go to the Franciscan Church.

OH: That's the one on Henley Beach ...?

RB: Yes. The one on Henley Beach. They've built another one now. We used to go in the house and they had one room there because there weren't that many at that time. But they had three Masses so you'd pick which one you wanted to.

OH: That's in that big old house?

RB: Yes. It's a lovely house actually. It's got a tower on the top.

OH: And I think we saw a photo of it?

RB: Yes.

OH: One of your lovely photos?

RB: Yes.

OH: I thought we'd talk about the market gardens, and you've said it was quite a long way in from Henley Beach Road. We talked earlier about the ownership of that land and I thought that's was interesting.

RB: Yes. It was Dring who owned our part. And then I think we paid rent to Giacomelli, Enrico Giacomelli.

OH: Enrico. Was he a Veneto?

RB: I think so, yes.

OH: And do you remember, like, was there a lot of land?

RB: There was a lot of land because it stretched from where we were to the Frogmore Road. So there was quite a lot of glasshouses on that.

OH: So it went to the River really?

RB: From the River to the Frogmore Road, is it Frogmore Road there?

OH: Over the side of the River?

RB: No, not on the other side of the road ...

OH: On the airport side of the River?

RB: No, going down to Rowells Road.

OH: Oh, okay.

RB: Yes.

OH: Right. And do you remember how many glasshouses there would have been?

RB: There was a lot. No, I can't remember that because they all went along in lines and Giacomelli had his the other way. Yes, there was a lot there. Plus then there was the outside of that, you know they had a lot of glasshouses, and they would have potatoes and turnips and that, in the rest... and watermelons in the rest of the ground that was there.

OH: Right. So in the glasshouses, you were telling me earlier what was grown in there.

RB: Yes, they used to grow tomatoes, and then stick beans and French beans which sort of gave them three crops. Yeah.

OH: And outside, so potatoes, turnips ...?

RB: Carrots, watermelons, all the root crops. Sweet melons and watermelons. No one had sweet melons and watermelons like my Dad. [Laughter]

OH: He must have watered them. And do you remember where they sold the vegetables?

RB: In the Adelaide market. But sometimes there was a man at Port Adelaide that would pick up the tomatoes for the market he had at Port Adelaide. When Dad had nice tomatoes, he'd come around and get them for the market

OH: Did you ever go to market with your Dad?

RB: No 'cos he used to go about four o'clock in the morning because he had a horse and cart and they had to get their place otherwise ... in the market you know 'cos they'd miss out on the market and they'd get the bad spots. You know.

OH: So it was important to get there early?

RB: Oh yes.

OH: Did your Mum help in the garden too?

RB: Oh yes, yes, she did. We all had to help because it was a big garden.

OH: I was going to ask you, what were your jobs, as a kid growing up?

RB: Picking tomatoes and beans and helping Dad out when we went home from school. Weighing the beans and eating them, the raw beans. And Dad said don't do that you're eating all my profits!

OH: You had a shed for doing the packing and sorting?

RB: Yes.

OH: So who would have done the sorting of tomatoes?

RB: Dad did that and we'd get the strings all ready for him to ... what was it for? We had to cut strings... I think it was for the bunches of things that he had yes, that's right ... when he had tomatoes and turnips and things they had to put so many in bunches. So that's what we used to do.

OH: And were there days that were busier than others?

RB: Probably yes. I think so because sometimes we used to finish very late in the dark, you know, just weighing out the beans and things after, and giving them a bit of wash, you know. Yes, and load the truck up. Because he had truck later but he had the horse and cart first. We had a cow and a horse.

OH: So was the cow for milking?

RB: Yes. Mum used to make those *casarta* cheeses. They were beautiful

OH: How gorgeous. So all of you, as you were growing up, those older ones, you know, you would have the jobs before school sometimes?

RB: Yes, before school and when we came home from school.

OH: It must have been tiring?

RB: It was. Yeah. So... but it had to be done, you know. Dad said: "When you come home from school, come straight over here." And we would! [Laughter]

OH: And one of your neighbours there, was obviously Giacomelli. Were there other market gardeners close?

RB: Not that I can recall. There was just Giacomelli.

OH: And what did Giacomelli grow?

RB: More or less the same as us.

OH: Do you remember, you know, you talked about the other Veneti market gardeners. Did they help each other out in the gardens or was it people mainly doing their own?

RB: Doing their own garden. But there were some like some like, say somebody that'd come from Italy that they'd sponsored out because they had to be sponsored. They'd occasionally help in the garden as well. They were all good and they'd always would pay them, you know, which was good. But there was quite a few of them who'd help out if there was too much to do.

OH: Yeah. Like some of the busy times?

RB: Yes.

OH: I wanted to ask you about what you remember about the War years.

RB: Mnnn.

OH: You were telling me earlier a memory of the War years.

RB: The war. Yes. We had the American soldiers back in what we called the 'sand pits'.

OH: And that was close to the River?

RB: Yes, it was between our house and the River. Yes. And they pitched their tents. They was very well hidden under big pine trees. They had a cooking kitchen under the ground. They'd actually built ... taken the ground out and they had a wood fire

there and they had it in the middle of a thorn bush so that it was out of view. And we had a cocky which they would go and feed their left over meat that they didn't like which was soup meat.

OH: What was it?

RB: Soup meat. They used to make soup and they wouldn't eat the soup meat. So we had a cocky and they used to feed our cocky. And one day Mum went out and she seen them feeding the cocky and she said don't feed the cocky with that. She said: "I can feed my kids with that." So they'd give us the meat and we'd give them vegetables and sometimes we would get some butter and for the butter which was very ... not too much of butter around, and they'd give us butter and Mum used to sew pockets that they broke on their uniforms or buttons to be put on or something...

OH: So she helped out the soldiers?

RB: Yes. So that was good. They never paid but they used to get this butter for her. "Don't tell anybody". [Laughter] But that was a real treat for us, you know.

OH: Yeah. How interesting. Was the only way that they got to that land through the driveway where your house was?

RB: Yes, that's right. The driveway up the side of the church on the Henley Beach Road, they went right through there and then down our little lane to get to the back of where these tents were. They called them "dugouts".

OH: It's really interesting isn't it? Like that's kind of history we don't know very much about.

RB: I don't think many people knew. And that's what it was supposed to be, you know. Nobody knew where they were. And they were very well hidden.

OH: Were they quiet?

RB: Yes. We had no problems with them, they just went about their business and if they seen us ... Oh, they'd give us chewy, all the time, chewing gum.

OH: What did your parents think of that?

RB: Oh, well we never got very many. Mum used to say stop chewing that chewy. where did you get it from? Oh the soldiers ... "Now don't go too far up there," she used to say. But they were really nice. Yes.

The kitchen that they dug out they was going to fill it in. And Dad went up there and then he said are you going to fill that in? They said yes. He said don't I can use that for my cellar. And he did. He had all his wine down there. And it stayed nice. Oh dear!

46:15

OH: And your Dad made wine every year?

RB: Yes, they made their own wine.

OH: Do you know where he got the grapes from?

RB: Up in the hills somewhere. I don't know ... Or there was a vineyard I think it was Serafin that had it. Now, I don't know if he used to get them from them or up in the hills somewhere.

OH: And did other people help make the wine?
RB: We did.
OH: Oh okay.
RB: We used to get into the big bucket or whatever it was and we'd go with our feet and we'd dance the *Tarantella*. [Laughter]
OH: That's gorgeous.
RB: And he'd say: "Come on girls. Hurry up! We've got to make this wine, you know." So we'd dance faster.
OH: And that was every year?
RB: That was, every year. Yes.
OH: Did your Mum and Dad also kill the pig?
RB: Yes, every year we used to do that with one of the families, the Bernos or whoever wanted to make it. Yes. They made that. The *musettes* and everything.
OH: The musettes?
RB: Yeah. They were nice. And of course, you had all the bones and things. They never threw anything away, you know, because it was too dear.
And the Lockleys policeman at the time, he used to come up to see Gerry as they called Dad. And he'd say: "How you're going Gerry? Have you made the wine yet?" And he'd say: "Yeah. Would you like a taste?" So he'd sit down and drink it. He only come up to see him for a drink. Yeah.
OH: That's very casual.
RB: Mmnn. He was very nice. Yeah. So Dad didn't mind, you know, as long as he was good. He used to sit down and have a few things to chat about.
And then we got a possum in our garden. You wasn't allowed to kill possums at that time. There were ... I don't know if you can kill them now even. But he would get in and eat Dad's tomatoes so he went down to the policeman and told him and he shot it for him. So that was good. They had to have a licence for it. So that's what he did for him so it wouldn't ruin his tomatoes. [Laughter]
OH: The possum probably thought it was great.
RB: I was remembering these things as I talk, you know. They're just so funny, you know.
OH: Yeah, different things that you can remember.
RB: Yeah, that you remember.
OH: Yeah. I wanted to ask did your parents go to Italy?
RB: Mmnn. I don't remember the year but Mum and Dad went and she had a lovely time. She met all Dad's parents and they got on very well together. And Dad's mum used to shine his car up for him. She was lovely.
OH: Did your parents take a car over?

RB: No, they bought one over there and brought it back on the ship. Here. Yeah Yes, they went around and said if they had to hire a car. And they weren't that dear at the time. And it wasn't a Fiat.

OH: What was it?

RB: It was a German car but I can't tell you the name of it.

OH: And did it have the driving wheel on the left-hand side?

RB: Yes, they did. But I think they changed it over before they got here. So that was good. It was a nice car too.

OH: Yeah. Did your Mum speak Veneto dialect?

RB: No. She understood everything but she didn't speak it. And I'm the same because we never spoke Italian when we were home because Dad wanted to learn to speak English. So he did, and we didn't.

OH: And yet you kind of thought of yourself as Italian?

RB: Yes.

OH: Which is interesting.

RB: Yes, well I was always with Italians. And the kids and that. We all played together like normal. So there was no animosity or anything. We just all got on well.

OH: Yeah. And you would have had more Italian friends than Australians?

RB: Yes, definitely. Yeah.

OH: Did you ... When you were on Henley Beach Road, did kids come around?

RB: No, only when they came with their mothers and fathers. This is the Italian ones. But the Australians, no.

OH: And also I was thinking you would have been pretty busy as a kid – all of you as kids with your jobs?

RB: Yes. We didn't have much time to play. We was always working.

OH: Yeah. Tough.

RB: It was tough but it had to be done, you know.

OH: And I guess if you knew other market gardening families, it wouldn't have been that unusual?

RB: That was normal to us. Yes.

OH: Yeah. What people did. When your parents moved to Findon, what do you remember about that?

RB: I remember taking all the glasshouses down and putting the glasses in boxes and helping to load up on the truck. We had to make so many trips, you know. And they were heavy. But we had to do it. So ... and then put them back together. That was worse. [Laughter]

OH: It must have been a huge job?

RB: It was. Yeah.

OH: How much land did your parents have at Angley Avenue, Findon?

RB: Well, it went down from ... I can't exactly tell you the acres but it came from Angley Avenue almost down to the Grange Road, yes. There was a dump there and on the other side of that was the Grange Road. So it was quite a bit. Who had it before? Lasscocks had it before. On the other side they had it. And then this was a house on the block. Yes, Lasscocks was on the other side and it had this big dump at the back, so. It was good.

OH: How important was it for your parents to have had that?

RB: Oh they just thought they was it. Yes. It was nice. He had his own land and his own house so ...

OH: And for your Mum too?

RB: Yes.

OH: Did they grow the same kinds of things?

RB: Yes, they grew the same things. Yes. Our cow wasn't with us anymore nor was the horse. But we were lucky because we had the milkman just up the road. Thanes milkman. We'd just down and get our milk.

OH: That was handy.

RB: Yes, it was.

OH: When you and Michele married where did you live?

RB: I lived in the side of a little shed just off Grange Road. That was when Mabel, another lady, she was going into a new house. We found out so we went into that. It was nice and tidy and everything and a big block in front.

Michael had vegetables and chillies and all that he ate. We had to lock the door when we went away because people would come in and pinch them. [laughter] But it was good. But the little house we had was a shed but they had converted it into three rooms and a kitchen. And it was quite good. They were two houses like that. We thought we were lucky to have it, you know. We didn't have to pay rent anywhere or anything.

OH: How long did you stay there?

RB: We built our house that we had on Airdrie Avenue in the front because it was so big. There were two houses on the block and another man come and he said "I'm getting married, would you let out your house at the back." So we said: "Sure." There was plenty of room. So that helped us a bit. And they liked it too. It was like we were, happy, to get somewhere to live by ourselves.

OH: Yes, that would have been really important.

RB: Yes.

OH: And have you been to Italy?

RB: Yes, I have, went through Switzerland and everywhere. I lived with Michael's sister. It was pretty good, it was lovely actually. People over there are nice. His sisters were nice.

OH: Yes. We're really at the end of our interview. You've given lots of information. I just wanted to ask you how you feel about your Italian heritage.

RB: I love it ... it's given me two different nationalities and two different things you know ... like Mum used to cook different and Dad used to show her how to cook something else. Mum used to make curry and Dad didn't like it. [Laughter]

OH: So if somebody asked you where you come from or what your family heritage is, what would you say?

RB: Italian. I'd just say if they sort of went on a bit more, I'd say well Mum was Irish and she was born here though. They'd say "Oh?" It was quite a surprise. Yes, that was back in the times when it was hard for Mum, very hard you know. So that's why she more or less... The Italians accepted her better than the Australians.

OH: That's really interesting and a really interesting place to end our interview. Thank you very much, Roma, for the time and also for those great memories and contributing to the Italian market gardeners project. Thank you very much.

RB: It was a pleasure.