

Italian market gardeners oral history project
Interview OH872/17 with Dino Piovesan
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Oral Historian (OH): Dino, could you start by telling me your full name?

Dino Piovesan (DP): Well, my name is Dino Luigi Piovesan.

OH: When were you born?

DP: I was born on 14 September 1936.

OH: Where were you born?

DP: Here in Adelaide, in Chatham Road, Keswick, a small private hospital in Keswick.

OH: Was there a significance of your names?

DP: Not really, no, not that I recall.

OH: And your parents, can you give me their full names and their dates of birth, if you know them?

DP: Mother's name was Anna Rosalia Zanatta, but I'm afraid I don't know her date of birth. My father's name was Angelo Sante Piovesan, and I don't know his date of birth either.

OH: Thank you. Where were your parents born?

DP: Both Mum and Dad were born in Ponzano in Italy. Ponzano is a small village not far from Treviso, about four or five kilometres out of Treviso. Treviso, in turn is about 30 kilometres or so inland from Venice.

OH: You have two siblings?

DP: My older brother, Nillo, unfortunately passed away only just recently, and my younger brother, Bruno.

OH: Where were you in the family?

DP: I'm in the middle.

OH: Right! And I think your brothers were quite, you were quite close in age?

DP: Definitely close in age, yes. There was only about 15 months difference between my older brother and myself, and about another 17 months difference between myself and my younger brother.

OH: Right! What about the name of your wife, and when did you marry?

- DP: Mary is my second wife. Unfortunately Glenice, my first wife, ended in divorce, and Mary's first husband died quite tragically of a heart attack some 26 years ago, in about 1981, and Mary and I have been married 25 years.
- OH: You have children?
- DP: I have two children from my first marriage, Mary has five children from hers, and we all get along as one nice, happy family, very much so.
- OH: Thank you. Thanks Dino. We're now going to talk about your family heritage, but first of all you might just give the information about your parents coming to Australia.
- DP: My father came in 1927 on his own, and my mother followed later, but my father and mother were married by proxy, mother was still in Italy, and Dad was out here, and they married by proxy. Mother came out in 1934.
- OH: So seven years after your father was here?
- DP: Yes.
- OH: Going back to say your mother's family, do you know much about your mother's family?
- DP: Not a great deal, just that she also came from Ponzano, from a fairly large family, poverty stricken, and quite happy to come to Australia to marry Dad. Apart from that there's not a great deal that comes to mind at the moment. She had two brothers, Uncle ... Gee whiz, I've even forgotten their names now, three brothers, but Mum was I think the last in the family, as I recall.
- OH: And did either of the brothers come to Australia?
- DP: No, none of the brothers ever came to Australia. I've been over there a couple of times and visited them while they were all still alive, and that was just great to see all of them, especially the Uncle Anselmo, who was a *carabiniere* [policeman] in Rome for many years. He had a lot of stories to tell, and I greatly enjoyed them.
- OH: So he was a policeman?
- DP: A policeman in Rome, yes, for many years. When I eventually went to see him, this was in '81, he had already retired and had, as I said, had a lot of stories to tell, and I listened intently.
- OH: What about your father's family, do you know about them?
- DP: Father's family is a fairly large family. He had a brother out here, Attilio.
- OH: Was he out here before your father came?
- DP: No, after, two or three years after. Another brother went to Venezuela in Caracas, in Venezuela, he's an older one, and another one remained in Italy, Giuseppe. So father out here was basically on his own for a while, and sadly he passed away in 1949 as well. After he passed away

mother had the three of us, we were three young children, and Dad's brother, Uncle Attilio, decided to come and help out with the family business and the market garden. And he carried on until basically I was a teenager, and my older brother, we were teenagers, and we were somehow able to carry on, on our own, with a lot of help from the neighbours.

- OH: We'll talk about market gardening a little later, but just going back to your parents, did they tell you, for example, your father? Did he tell you why he came to Australia, or did you know why?
- DP: All we knew is that even my mother, my father firstly was much poverty in Italy, and the trend was for the young ones to go overseas, and uncle went to Belgium, Uncle Mario, one of Dad's brothers went to Belgium; another one went to Venezuela, and Dad and his other brother, Attilio, came here. But it was the fact that there was a lot of poverty in Italy, and I can always remember my mother saying that they used to have polenta and figs for lunch because there was nothing else to eat when things were that bad.
- OH: In your father's family, all of those brothers going to different places, I wonder what that was like for the parents.
- DP: Well, in some ways the parents knew that if they were successful overseas, they would possibly benefit by them sending home a little bit of money for sustenance, and that is what my father I remember, and my uncle especially, not constantly sending money but doing their best to help them back home. The parcels that my mother used to make, coffee, old clothes that my father wouldn't wear, she would send them home by surface mail, it took about three months to get there, but they were greatly appreciated when they got there.
- OH: Isn't that interesting?
- DP: Yes it is, because we here took too many things for granted, even back then, and my mother was so appreciative because she knew that when she was sending those clothes and things back home, that they would be very much appreciated there. I quite remember that.
- OH: So you remember that from being a young boy?
- DP: Oh yes, definitely.
- OH: Do you remember either of your parents telling you about growing up and what it was like?
- DP: No, no, not so much their teenage years, just that there was a lot of hard work, and the wheat crops in the fields had to be harvested with a scythe, and that was hard work, I remember Dad saying that, not mechanically harvested in any way whatsoever, all cut by hand.
- OH: So would both of your parents have come from farming backgrounds?
- DP: Definitely, yes. The family ground, whatever hectares it may have been, was simply for family sustenance from one year to the next.
- OH: And that's all the kind of income that was coming into the family?

- DP: Correct, correct. I remember them saying that if they were lucky and they had one or two or three cows in the stable, a cow would have had a calf, and that would have been sold, and that would have been a little bit of extra money for the family. But other than that it was for the family sustenance from one year to the other, with wheat and maize, and of course the grapes and the wine.
- OH: So when your mother came, she obviously kept in touch with her family, and your father kept in touch with his family?
- DP: Oh yes. I remember very clearly as about a 10-year-old, doing my best to try and write a few words in Italian to Grandma and Grandfather back home, and I clearly remember that in the typical writing that a 10 or 11-year-old would write to grandparents back there.
- OH: And whose parents were they, your mother's or your father's?
- DP: Both, both, yes, both.
- OH: As you were growing up, did you speak Italian at home?
- DP: Oh yes, but it was mainly the dialect, the Treviso dialect, the Northern Italian dialect, and strange that you should mention that because I speak the dialect far better than I speak the Italian language.
- OH: It's like your first language really.
- DP: It was my first language, exactly, exactly.
- OH: We're going to talk about your childhood now and there's a question, *Do you have any first memories growing up?*
- DP: Well in the early years growing up, we would come home from school, and there was no such thing as doing your homework straight after you got home, especially in the summer months. It would be our job as kids to carry out the prunings, the leaves, of what Mum and Dad had pruned in the glasshouses, and once my older brother and I, because my younger brother was still a bit too young to do that, my older brother, Nillo, and myself, would be the ones to carry out the leaves. And eventually it was only after tea, as we call it, or after dinner as they say now, that we would have time to do our homework.
- OH: So working in the garden was important?
- DP: It was important, yes.
- OH: Can you tell me where you grew up?
- DP: I grew up initially in between Findon Road and Frogmore Road. That was up until I was about 12 to 13. Then we bought the property on Frogmore Road, and I believe it is still Number 24, Frogmore Road, which is where my teenage years were spent.
- OH: What did you call the suburb at that time?
- DP: It was still Findon; Kidman Park came into existence, at a guess, when I was about 12 or 13 years old. But there was no such thing as Kidman Park then, it was all Findon or St James Park, at the time.
- OH: What do you remember about your first home?

- DP: The first home was virtually shared with the Tonellato's next door. I can clearly remember it was, some say it was an old cow shed which was transformed into living quarters. I can't remember that correctly, but all I can remember is one dividing wall, brick wall, between ourselves and the Tonellato's. We were on one side and the Tonellato's were on the other, and we were just one happy family.
- OH: When you say there was just one dividing wall, what was your part of the house like?
- DP: Well that was the kitchen, and shall we say not a lounge, but a larger room for eating. Then there was the bedroom further to the north, and then as we three boys grew up, Dad built another room onto the existing sheds that were there. But it was only very primitive accommodation; electricity, yes, and running water and so forth, but not much more unfortunately.
- OH: Was there a stove in the house, or was it separate?
- DP: There was a wooden stove, yeah, Mum only had a wooden stove, and I can always remember the first refrigerator that Dad bought, a Wallace, second-hand, it wasn't new, a Wallace refrigerator, and I would have been about 13 years old, and Mum thought it was heaven.
- OH: Was that an electric fridge?
- DP: An electric fridge, yes.
- OH: Or run by electricity?
- DP: Yes, but the compartment in the fridge was taken up more by the motor and the compressor down below, rather than the food storage compartment up higher.
- OH: What would you have done prior to having the fridge, just kept things cool as much as you could?
- DP: The ice chest, it was the great thing in those days. The ice man would come, I don't know, every two or three days, and he would come in and put a big block of ice in the ice chest, and that somehow kept things reasonably cool provided it didn't get too hot.
- OH: What about surrounding the house, can you tell me what was around the house?
- DP: Well on our front door, let's call it the front door, there was a courtyard, a fairly big courtyard, that we as kids used to kick a football, to and from, and play cricket, but on the other side of the courtyard there was the Tonellato's railway wagon, which was their sleeping quarters. All of the Tonellato family slept in the railway wagon, but with the big courtyard in between it was always the place to play cricket or football.
- OH: And what was that surfaced?
- DP: Gravel surface, only gravel surface, very well compacted as I recall, but only gravel surface.

- OH: What else, if you were looking at that house, what else would you have noticed at that time when you were growing up there?
- DP: Just a small veranda in front of the front door, and nothing that would stand out, nothing really.
- OH: No trees?
- DP: No. A bamboo hedge behind the railway carriage, which was the sleeping quarters for the Tonellato's, a big bamboo hedge.
- OH: And was that a windbreak or was it privacy?
- DP: No, that was a windbreak and also a boundary for the next door neighbour, who was named Jack Barnett, or John Barnett. In those days anybody with the name of John was automatically called Jack, so he was Jack Barnett, the neighbour, and the railway carriage was right on the border of the two properties.
- OH: Do you remember what Jack Barnett grew?
- DP: The same as us, basically potatoes and cauliflowers and cabbages, as I recall, mainly, on the other side of the bamboo hedge.
- OH: Going back to your family and growing up, you spoke a little about your responsibility in the glasshouses. What were your other jobs as a child growing up?
- DP: It was only when I got to about 18, 19, that my Uncle Attilio, when he came there to take over the property and help us out, that he wanted to get into the trucking business, and it was then that he wanted to set us up and try and explore the trucking business through a tip truck. He lent me the money, or lent Mum the money, to buy a tip truck so that he could virtually explore the business for his self-interest, which was not a selfish act on his part, none whatsoever, because he did help us out a lot, there's no question about that. And I did do a little bit of truck driving back in those days as well.
- OH: And as you were growing up, were there also things that you had to do inside the house as a child, or was your job mainly outside?
- DP: We as kids grew up with mother doing everything for us. I can always remember that when I was going out to a dance or somewhere, my clothes were always laid out on the bed, my shoes were always shined, and mother did it all.
- OH: So you were fortunate in that way. What happened in your family, and we'll talk about the market gardens later, but what happened in your family on weekends?
- DP: Weekends were the Sunday, always looked forward to the Sunday, Sunday morning Mass of course, as kids.
- OH: And where did you go to Mass?
- DP: Captain Cook Avenue, at Flinders Park.
- OH: Was that an Italian Mass?

- DP: No, it was Australian, back then everything was still in English. It's only in the later years that yes, with a greater influx of Italians into Australia, or Adelaide, that we had more Italian Masses, but back then it was still all English.
- OH: So your parents were quite religious?
- DP: Yes and no, Mum definitely, but Dad always on the fringes ... Dad remained on the fringes, and that was Dad.
- OH: Did he still go with you on the Sunday to Mass?
- DP: Occasionally, but not as much as Mum.
- OH: And if you went to Mass just with your Mum, how would you have got there?
- DP: Basically we would ride our pushbikes.
- OH: And your Mum too?
- DP: Mum would ride her pushbike as well, yes, our pushbikes to Mass, from Findon Road. We were still living on Findon Road then.
- OH: What do you remember after Mass that you did?
- DP: Whoever might come around as visiting. Some families might have come around and we would, with their kids or children the same age as ours, we would definitely get into games of some sort from then.
- OH: And were these local families who were living in the same area?
- DP: Yes, nearly always yes, because although we knew other Italian friends from further afield, like Marion and possibly in the city, it was mainly those that lived around us there.
- OH: Can you tell me the names of these families?
- DP: Oh, Johnny Marchioro and his brother, Romano; Frankie Ballestrin and his sister, Santina; Lino Ballestrin, his cousin, was more my age, and Guido Rebuli was another one, and there were others there as well.
- OH: So people living quite close, and your parents would have known their parents?
- DP: Oh yes, most definitely. I mentioned the Tonellato's earlier, and they were a big family too, but even the youngest one, the youngest two or three, were still five to six years older than us, so they had their own separate group of friends.
- OH: What would your parents have done as social life?
- DP: What I clearly remember is the evenings, the evenings that people would come around to see us of an evening. I do recall sometimes, and by then we had a truck, an old Bedford truck, that we would also go around to other people's homes, but it seemed as though Dad attracted everybody. He had friends everywhere, and they would come to our place, and Mum would make the coffee, and we would all have good, good fun ... even us kids.

- OH: When you say that your Dad attracted people, what was his personality like?
- DP: He was very much a fun-loving man, very much a fun-loving man. I don't know whether I should say this, but he always liked to get people drunk [laughs], he always liked to give them a little bit, that little bit extra wine, and perhaps something else. And he was just that fun-loving man that once they got a little bit going, he would relish in it all, and he was just very much a fun-loving guy.
- OH: How old was he when he died?
- DP: Dad was 42 years old when he died.
- OH: Very young.
- DP: Yes.
- OH: And how old were you, do you know?
- DP: I was 13 and going to school at Marist Brothers [school at Thebarton]. He died in March of 1949, and I knew that at that end of that year I would have had to stay home with my uncle, who came to look after the market garden, and that was my life essentially cut out for me there, from that point on. I always wanted to be a motor mechanic, and naturally if Dad still had have been around he may have steered me towards taking over the garden, but I always wanted to be a motor mechanic, but that never eventuated.
- OH: What made you interested in that?
- DP: Oh, I think it's the typical child interested in machinery, and I'll always remember the Bedford truck that we had. I'd do my best in changing the oil and changing the filter, or doing something to it, which was of interest to me, and yeah, just a child interested in mechanical things.
- OH: That's interesting, yeah. Going back to your Dad, I understand that your Dad also had been in the Northern Territory. Can you tell me a little about that?
- DP: Dad went up into the Mica Mines for a short time, to get some money, to earn a little bit better living, because the market garden was only just set up and wasn't producing much income.
- OH: Sorry to interrupt you, but would he have gone before he was married to your mother, or after?
- DP: Before he was married he worked in road making, at around Karoonda way, Karoonda, Lameroo, out that way, and he was employed by Mr Bernardi I believe. That was two or three or four years or more that Dad worked in road making, but then he did go up to the Northern Territory, I believe in Tennant Creek, into the Spotted Tiger Mine, I believe, and he was there for a short while as well earning extra money.
- OH: Do you know much about the Mica Mines and the life there?

- DP: Not as far as Dad's side of it is concerned. It was later when Dad's brother came and looked after the market garden that he had interests in the Last Chance Mine, just east of Alice Springs, and I remember having to write the addresses on the envelopes that they would write to their friends up at the Last Chance Mine. One I remember clearly, we had to go to Freeman Motors to buy a part for the Bedford truck that was up there, that had broken down, and with the telegram in my hand we went to Freeman Motors, and they knew exactly what we wanted, and they sent the part up to Alice Springs.
- OH: There's your mechanic's interest, yeah.
- DP: There you go.
- OH: Who were the friends up there?
- DP: Uncle's relations and other close Italian friends who simply got together to work the Last Chance Mine. One was Attilio Crespan, and Augusto Mattiazzo was a later one that went up there; Leandro Bortoletto was another one that went up there; Silvio Bandiera was also one that spent time there, and I can't quite remember too many others, but there were others as well.
- OH: Were they all Veneti?
- DP: Yes, they were all Veneti. We seemed to, uncle and Dad, all seemed to cling together, even though I must say that with the Northern Italians and the Southern Italians, there's always that little bit of a rift between them, but back in those days they were the best of friends. I can clearly recall that, that the Calabrese from down south and the Veneti from up north were the best of friends. They didn't have too many people or friends out here, and we didn't have, Dad didn't have, too many people here, friends here, so they were always the best of friends.
- OH: Do you think as a child growing up, that you had a sense of where your parents came from?
- DP: Only a superficial sense of where they came from, and this is going back to when I said earlier about writing the letters back. I tried to picture in my mind the surroundings that they may have been in when they used to speak of their evenings there, the winter evenings, the bitter winter evenings, that they would all go to the stable where the cows are because that's where they would feel the warmth of the cows, and I couldn't quite get my mind around that. Because here we are in a nice home, possibly heated or whatever, and the concept of going into a cowshed to stay warm ... I could not get my mind around that.
- OH: That's interesting, isn't it?
- DP: Yeah, it is, yes.
- OH: Like a child trying to think of that, yeah. That question about if you had a sense of where you came from, the people that you grew up with on Frogmore Road, you would have known that they ... or did you know ... that they came from the same sort of area that your parents came from?

- DP: Very much so, very much so, and they also experienced poverty as well. Frank Ballestrin's Dad and one of his uncles I think, they all were in a very much the same situation, poverty-wise.
- OH: When did you move from the other side of, the eastern side of Frogmore Road, to the western side?
- DP: We moved there after Dad died. A lot of friends that knew Dad came to help us build a house on Frogmore Road, and that was about two to three years after Dad died. That was when we, Mum had the house built on Frogmore Road, but it was all done mainly by voluntary labour, a lot of it by voluntary labour, and on weekends only.
- OH: And when would that have been, what sort of year do you think?
- DP: 1951-52.
- OH: The land that you had been living on and your parents had the glasshouses on the eastern side of Frogmore Road, who owned that land?
- DP: That was owned by Mrs Bush at the time, because when the existing land owners eventually bought there where Dad declined to buy there in preference to going to what is now Kidman Park, on Frogmore Road, the name Mrs Bush was constantly mentioned. And I feel that they bought from this Mrs Bush.
- OH: The first house was on leased land?
- DP: Yes.
- OH: And then when you moved across to Frogmore Road West, it was land that was bought?
- DP: We bought that land, yes, and that's where Mum eventually built the family home after Dad died.
- OH: Right, right. Just going back, a couple of questions about your childhood and then we'll talk about going to school. What sort of games did you play with your friends and your brothers?
- DP: Alleys, which is marbles; marbles was the big thing then. If you had a nice, shiny bottler, or a cat's eye, they were treasured marbles, and you really took care of them, and you didn't play too many games where it was a sudden death play-off and you lost some. You did not do that.
- OH: So you were pretty careful?
- DP: We played friendly games with the marbles, and of course the football, if we were lucky enough to get a football from somewhere. I'll never forget the first football that I ever owned was when I was going to Marist Brothers. There was a raffle for those who sold the most tickets. There was a football offering, a free football, by Brother Beckett, to the person who sold the most raffle tickets. Fortunately I happened to be the one that got that football, and that was a prized possession.
- OH: How old would you have been then?
- DP: Thirteen.

- OH: So you remember it very well?
- DP: Oh yes, definitely.
- OH: Do you remember other things that you would have done as a child? Do you remember having activities away from Frogmore Road with the family?
- DP: No, no. In those days we didn't venture very far. There was no such thing as the weekend excursion, or sleeping overnight somewhere else just for the sake of going away. No, that was all out at the time.
- OH: And why was that?
- DP: The money side of things, the petrol, it would cost a lot to get us to wherever that may have been, say 100 kilometres away, or 100 miles away to the Riverland, to Loxton, or somewhere like that. No, no, those trips were never mentioned, although I do remember one, and this took place when Dad was still alive, and it was in Johnny Marchioro's father's truck. Dad was driving because Mr Vittorio Marchioro didn't like to go through the Hills, and Dad drove the truck up through Mount Lofty, up through the Tailem Bend. There was about another dozen of us on the back of the truck, and we did spend the day at Tailem Bend; got away early in the morning, very early in the morning, and we went to Mr Brion's home, Narciso Brion's home, at Jervois, which is just this side of Tailem Bend, I believe, and a nice day had by all, definitely.
- OH: What would Narciso Brion have been doing at Jervois?
- DP: He was a dairy farmer, and along there, there were a lot of other, not a lot of other, but several other Veneti from the Veneto Region, I can't remember their names, but anyway they were dairy farmers as well. They would sell their milk to the Jervois Cooperative Milk Factory, which was in Jervois, and they would make cheese mainly, and supply milk to Amscol I believe, at the time.
- OH: What about other things in your family? Did you ever go to the beach?
- DP: Oh yes, very much so, Henley Beach, Henley Beach, and that's where Mum liked to go, because in the very hot weather Dad would drive us down in the Bedford truck, and Mum would simply sit under the jetty, and we kids would do our thing as much as we could in the sand and the surf.
- OH: And you'd stay there for a long time?
- DP: Oh yes. Dad would pick us up later in the day, the later the better on the very hot days, and I can remember Mum saying, *Stay under the jetty, stay under the jetty away from the sun or you'll get sunburn.* Many a times I can remember, oh, getting severely sunburnt and suffering for it.
- OH: Were there other families there at the time?
- DP: Yes, yes. Mrs Tonellato, I can remember her coming there occasionally as well. Mrs Ballestrin, Frank Ballestrin's mother, would also be there,

and there was another, Maria Ballestrin. No, usually there were three or four families that met there on the very hot days.

- OH: Going back to your family, I'm just wondering did you have any animals that were part of household life?
- DP: Nigger [laughs], he was a little black Fox Terrier, and Nigger, I can clearly remember him. He was a good little dog, a little Fox Terrier, and we had him for quite a few years, but no other cats. Oh, we had Mary, she was the cow, the jersey cow, and it was my brother's job and myself, Nillo on one side of Mary and me on the other side, to milk the cow of a night time. I clearly remember that, the jersey cow.
- OH: What was the milk used for in your family?
- DP: Only for drinking, never made cheese or butter or anything like that at all, no, nothing like that at all. Then we had the draught horse, Jack. He was a good draught horse, not behind the plough but in front of the plough he was a very good, strong horse. Jack eventually died of colic, and was taken away by the abattoirs. I'm trying to think of the next one that we bought, that Dad bought, and I just cannot remember the horse's name.
- OH: Horses would have been important?
- DP: Very much so, very much so. They did the hard work in pulling the scarifier through the potatoes and the beans, and the various crops that we had outside. In the glasshouses everything was done manually, as in fork digging and so on, but outside the horse was a very valuable asset.
- OH: A few more questions about your growing up. *How were birthdays celebrated in your family?*
- DP: Well they came and went, simply because again the money side of things. Alright, I can remember, I must have been 13 years old, and my older brother got a watch, a gold watch was the in thing, when he was confirmed, and I must have put on such a big turn that my mother said to me, *I'll buy you one on your birthday*, and I've still got that watch now. I've had it repaired and looked after. It still winds up, it still keeps time, and that's my treasured possession.
- OH: How beautiful. You must have felt very pleased?
- DP: Very pleased indeed.
- OH: What about Holy Communion and Confirmations?
- DP: Yes, yes, they were a big thing in those days, Holy Communion and Confirmation. And my sponsor was Gino Berno, then the Mattiazzo's from the city, and the Stocco's from the city, and they were *compare* and *comare*, which means sponsors in Italian. Now whether my father or mother sponsored their kids, or they sponsored us, there was always, everybody was a *compare* and *comare*, for one reason or another.
- OH: Can you explain the importance of that relationship?
- DP: As far as the Italian community is concerned, that is a very important relationship, because if you ask someone to be a *compare* for you, a

sponsor for your child, that person, that family has special significance after that, and they remain friends forever, shall we say. There was not so much of a bond but a special relationship between those who were *compare* and *comare*, for one reason or another.

- OH: So did you have three sets of sponsors? You had the Stocco ...
- DP: The Berno.
- OH: Berno, and Mattiazzo.
- DP: And Mattiazzo, yeah, Emilio Mattiazzo, who had a butcher shop in Currie Street, on the corner of Gray Street and Currie Street.
- OH: Were they sponsors just for you or for your brothers as well?
- DP: I cannot remember exactly who they were sponsors for, but Mr Mattiazzo had two children my age, or my brother's age, and therefore they would have countermanded one and the other to be sponsors for one and the other. But I can't remember precisely who was my sponsor, although I knew that when I was confirmed, Gino Berno was my sponsor, because by then my *santolo*, there's another word that comes into it, he was my *santolo*, and every time you saw him you would address him as *Santolo*, because he was somebody special.
- OH: And *Santolo*, what would be the ...?
- DP: *Santolo Gino*.
- OH: And what's the equivalent in English?
- DP: Gee whiz!!
- OH: Is it godfather?
- DP: Godfather, yes, definitely.
- OH: *Santolo*.
- DP: Yes, yes, but in English you don't say, *Oh, Godfather Gino and Godfather this*, you just don't say that, but then the word *santolo* meant more than the name itself. He was the person to be respected, the *Santolo*.
- OH: And a special relationship for you?
- DP: Oh yes, definitely.
- OH: Would you have received gifts from him, or was it more like just knowing that he was special?
- DP: No, no. At the time I was confirmed I would have received a gift from him, yes, yes. I can't remember what it was at this point in time, but yeah, there were gifts in those special occasions like that.
- OH: Do you remember your first Holy Communion?
- DP: Not precisely, no I can't.
- OH: Confirmation?
- DP: Yes, because we were told that when we get to go to St Patrick's Church, the Bishop smacks us on the face. This is the elders getting to

us, to try and say, *Oh yes, you'll go to church, and when you get confirmed the Bishop will smack you on the face with two fingers.* Of course when we got there it was just a mere, gentle tap on the side of the face. I can definitely remember that one, my Confirmation.

OH: Would you have had a party?

DP: No, just a get-together, just a get-together with our sponsors, and a little bit of beer and wine, but nothing extravagant in any way, no.

OH: And you would have had new clothes?

DP: Oh yes, definitely, definitely, a new suit, all made in melange was the go in those days, a melange suit.

OH: And was that made especially for you?

DP: No, Mum would have bought that from John Martin's. I used to go shopping with Mum to John Martin's in those days mainly, and she would have bought it, but Mum was always a good sewer, if anything needed altering she would have altered it.

OH: What about shopping, how did your family manage food and things like that? Were there shops or ...?

DP: Well, Mum always used to say jokingly, *You don't need to speak English to spend money. All you need is money,* and that was Mum's way of looking at it. But we would occasionally go with her and occasionally stay home from school when she had to do some shopping in John Martin's or Myer's, or things like that. That was clothing shopping, shoes, and they were a big thing for us as well. As far as groceries were concerned, it was Mr and Mrs Rossetto, again on the corner of Gray Street and Hindley Street, who had a grocery store there, who used to deliver out to Lockleys, and this was ... I can only barely remember Mr Rossetto who then died, and Oscar Mattiazzo then took over from this uncle and auntie, and he would have been the one that delivered the groceries to us.

OH: And that would have been how your parents got the dry foods?

DP: The dry foods and that, but the meat and that, Dad used to go to the East End Market to sell the produce – that was at the very end of Currie Street and Grenfell Street – and on his way home he would stop at Mattiazzo's, the butchers, to buy the meat.

OH: So ... a busy life for your parents?

DP: Oh yes, very much so.

OH: Dino, we're going to talk about you going to school. When would you have started school?

DP: I started school when I was five years old, and I very clearly can remember my first day at school [laughs], very clearly. I cried, I must have cried, because we went with Rosina, Rosina Santin, who was still Rosina Tonellato and not married. She went to school there after having come out to Australia as a teenager, so she went to school to Underdale Primary (School), which later became Flinders Park

Primary (School), but in those days it was still called Underdale Primary, and Rosina took us there, myself and my older brother – I think we both went together – and yes, we were left there all alone, shall we say, for the first day at school. I clearly remember that one.

- OH: So would Nillo have had the first day with you, or would he have gone earlier?
- DP: That's a bit of a blur. Being older than me I think he would have started earlier, yes, because I can't quite remember him being too much around me on my first day.
- OH: And how would you have got there?
- DP: Dad would have taken us there in the truck the first time, and other times as well Dad would have taken us in the truck, or someone would have donkeyed us on the crossbar of the bicycle, and after that we had our own bicycles.
- OH: Because it would have been a considerable distance?
- DP: Yes, from Findon Road to Holbrooks Road essentially is, I don't know, two kilometres, three kilometres, something like that.
- OH: And what did you think about school after the first day [laughs]?
- DP: Miss O'Connell, she was a good teacher, a very strict teacher. I'll always remember she used to drive her Model T Ford to school, or her Model A, I'm not sure. We were kids playing in the school yard, and we could see Miss O'Connell coming, and we would all scatter, because she would come in reasonably fast, but she knew that we kids would scatter and she had her parking spot by the wall, by the school, every time. She was a woman of discipline, and that's what she did every day.
- OH: How old would she have been, do you think?
- DP: Well our kids' perception is totally different. To us she was an old woman, she was probably about 38 or 40.
- [Laughter]
- DP: But to us kids she was an older woman.
- OH: What other things do you remember about your primary school years?
- DP: Mr (Wilf) Maeder was a very good teacher. Mr Maeder taught us ... I'll go back to Mr McAvenna and Miss Tomkin; Miss Tomkin in Grade 2 and 3, and then McAvenna was the music teacher, he was great. Eventually we got into Grade 6. Mr Maeder lived on Holbrooks Road, up near Henley Beach Road, and one year he knew that my father grew tomatoes, and he asked me if I would ask Dad if he could take him some tomatoes for sauce, at the end of the year, in December when the crop was finished. I said to Dad, he said, *Yes, no problems*. When we went there, I can remember Dad took him about 60 kilos of ripe tomatoes [laughs]. Mr Maeder must have given sauce tomatoes to all his neighbours in the street [laughs].
- OH: Was that an Italian name?

- DP: No, Maeder is German, Wilf Maeder, and he only died about five or six years ago. I used to call on him quite regularly, he lived on Holbrooks Road. He used to ride his pushbike to school, and it was only in later years that he bought himself a car. His wife passed away. We used to have a good chat, and this is going back only about ten years ago, something like that.
- OH: It's interesting that you kept in touch with him?
- DP: Mr Maeder.
- OH: Did he have an influence on you?
- DP: No, only because I remember that episode of the sauce tomatoes. Oh yes, he was our leatherwork teacher, and when he saw that my father brought him all those tomatoes he said, *Dino, whenever you want leather come and see me for all your leatherwork, and you can have it for nothing.* [laughs] I remember that.
- OH: So you were taught leatherwork at school?
- DP: Leatherwork by Wilf Maeder, yeah.
- OH: What did you make when you worked with leather?
- DP: A wallet, a belt, simple things, very simple things, where you would use a punch to punch the holes, and then what we called thonging similar to a very thin wire. You would thread it through the holes and you would make a wallet or a purse, a single-sided, two-sided purse, just simple things, very simple things.
- OH: And music, what kind of music did you learn?
- DP: Nothing at all, nothing at all. No, very briefly my younger brother, Bruno's piano accordion, but no, no, that would not come into it. No, no, I was never really that musically minded.
- OH: But at school you were taught music?
- DP: Oh yes, definitely.
- OH: And what were you taught?
- DP: The fife, sorry, the fife, I'm forgetting. My younger brother and myself learnt the fife, and we were in the fife band. One year we had to go to Kapunda I think it was, on a school excursion. There were other schools involved, it was a competition, and Underdale Primary School had a place in the competition. Unfortunately we didn't get a prize, but we did go to Kapunda in the fife band.
- OH: That would have been a big trip in those days?
- DP: In those days Mr Jarman, Mr Jarman, I forget his first name, but he had another similar truck, and he lived not very far from the school. Again, everybody on the back of the truck, about 20 or 30 people on the back of the truck, sitting on whatever they could on the back of the truck. My mother came, and Mrs Nunn, Mr and Mrs Nunn. My mother didn't know where to go or what to do, and we kids were in the band and we could not tell Mum where to go, so Mrs Nunn and Mr Nunn looked

after Mum the whole day, and she was forever grateful, forever grateful.

- OH: That's lovely. Dino. Going back to starting school, if you'd been speaking dialect at home, did you know any English?
- DP: Oh yes, because the next-door neighbours, the Tonellato's, there were three there that had gone to school, they were five or six or seven years older than us, and between us and them it was always English, never dialect. Only with Mum and Dad it was always dialect, but with Nino and Nano, or Lino and Orlando, and Albert, it was always English. So as far as English is concerned we had picked that up before we even went to school.
- OH: Do you think for your parents it was important that you had education?
- DP: Dad never really stressed that. I can't actually remember Dad stressing that, *You must go to school, you must get an education*, and this and that. Things were left more or less to just go with the flow in those years. Mum, she never ever pressed education, because as far as they were concerned, it meant going to the city, the city was a long way away, extra money and so forth and so on, catching the tram, college uniforms and so on. Things were still pretty tight in those days.
- OH: You finished Year 7 at Underdale, and then?
- DP: And then I went to Marist Brothers at Thebarton. My first year there was with Brother Donald, yeah, Brother Donald, and it was in Brother Donald's class that my Dad died. That was in 1949. From there I went on to Brother Beckett's class, which was second year, and that was when I knew that I was going to stay home in the garden. I'll always remember that one time I was on my own, I'd turned 16, I had my driver's licence. I knew that the Brothers, Brother Donald and all the Brothers, lived in George Street, not very far from the school, and I was determined – I can't remember whether it was by design or by default – but I had a half-case of tomatoes left over, and I knew that I was going to take it to the Brothers. It so happened that I knew where to go, and I walked in and Brother Beckett took it off me. His eyes glowed and he said, *Thank you very much, thank you very much*.
- OH: That seems like you would have had a good memory of being at school at the Marist Brothers?
- DP: Oh yes, yes, very much so, yes. I never participated much in sport, although there were the sports days that we used to go away from Marist Brothers because there wasn't an oval there, but we used to go near the Park Lands where the circuses used to set up there, opposite Coca-Cola, and it was in there that we had our sports day.
- OH: And that seems like it's a good moment to finish this part of the interview. Thank you, Dino.
- DP: Okay.

Second interview with Dino Piovesan
recorded by Madeleine Regan

23 September 2011
at his home in Lockleys, South Australia

for the Italian Market Gardeners' Oral History Project

Oral Historian (OH): Dino, we were talking about your school years, and about Marist Brothers.

Dino Piovesan (DP): Yes.

OH: Are there any other memories that you have about your school years there?

DP: No, not really. The school years back in those days was a very practical affair. In other words there was the woodworking and the sheet metalworking, which was part of the school curriculum. Brother Beckett took us for woodworking, simple woodworking, no mechanical lathe work or anything like that. And Brother Donald took us for sheet metalwork, and once again soldering and small objects, but definitely getting used to metalwork, sheet metalwork.

OH: And did you do that on the school property?

DP: Oh yes, there was, there was the rooms at the back of the school yard, a long building as I recall. Half of it was for woodworking and the other half was for sheet metalworking.

OH: Were they the subjects that you enjoyed most?

DP: Yes, they were. Sheet metalworking more so than woodworking, because there seemed to be the steel side of things associated with possibly the mechanical side of things.

OH: Did you have friends there at school that you remember?

DP: Les Walton was a lad that I remember a lot and used to talk a lot; Barry Graham was another one that I used to sit next to, and others that don't come to mind, but I generally got on with all the kids at school.

OH: How did you get to Marist Brothers, Thebarton, from your home?

DP: By pushbike. Myself and my brother, Nillo, used our pushbikes, and I can remember one particular time when we were expected to be at Holy Mass at about 7.30 in the morning, I think. We knew we had to get up early, we knew that it was a long haul there on a pushbike, and I can always remember that one that my brother, Nillo, and I, really were

struggling to get there in time for the beginning of the Mass, the morning Mass.

- OH: About how long would it have taken to get to school on the bike?
- DP: Oh gee, I really don't know, 20 minutes, 25 minutes, on bike, pedalling hard, down Carlton Parade, I'll never forget that. Carlton Parade went right through from Holbrooks Road virtually to South Road, and that's where the Queen of Angels Church was, well still is, on South Road.
- OH: On that trip from home to school, what would you have seen?
- DP: Going through Torrensville there were nearly always houses there. There were some glasshouses but closer to the river going there, but it was, when we were riding our pushbikes to Underdale, we would go through paddocks, and dairy cows to the left and to the right, and glasshouses, the Jarman brothers, and that was more the rural setting in our earlier years when we went to Underdale, but going to Marist Brothers there was quite built-up areas that we went through.
- OH: You said that you weren't that interested in sport. Was that an issue at an all-boys' school?
- DP: No, not really, you participated on a voluntary basis. I remember being in the running team, and no basketball in those ... but the cricket team, yeah, but I was never a good batsman and never a good bowler. I don't know why I didn't take to sport too much, I don't know why.
- OH: What about soccer?
- DP: Soccer wasn't the big thing in our days. No, I don't think we had a soccer ball even. No, there was only the football at both primary school at Underdale, and at Marist Brothers, the football.
- OH: Were there many other Italo-Australian boys at Marist Brothers?
- DP: Not very many at all. I can remember Egidio Ballestrin being in a grade below us, Frank Ballestrin, and Lino Ballestrin went to Christian Brothers' (College) in the city, so he chose, or his parents chose him to go to that other school. But at Marist Brothers they didn't stand out, Italo-Italians just did not stand out, mainly all Australian kids.
- OH: The friends that you talked about, would you have gone to their houses, that kind of social thing out of school?
- DP: Only if Dad needed to go there for some reason or other, to borrow something, or for him to say hello, I would go with Dad, but other than that the Sunday afternoons on our pushbikes, we kids would get around from one home to the other.
- OH: Would you have gone to any Anglo-Australian people's houses?
- DP: No, no, I can distinctly remember that. Although Dad got on with everybody, no, we did not go to our other classmates', Australians', homes, no.
- OH: Would they have come to your house?

- DP: I'm trying to think who may have. Oh, Bob Turner, Bobbie Turner, yes. Bob Turner came to our place once, he was the younger brother of Reg Turner and Bruce Turner, and he came there once. I can't remember what for, but I remember Bobbie Turner coming once.
- OH: Did your family have a radio?
- DP: Yes, a Mullard, a Mullard, I'll never forget it, and it was a Mr Rix who was the salesman at Harris Scarfe's. Dad and I went in to buy the radio and Mr Rix, it's a name that I just remember, and they came home, Harris Scarfe's, and set it up on top of the old ice chest. By then we'd had our Wallace refrigerator, and the Wallace ice chest seemed to be a suitable height to put the Mullard radio on top, and that was a rather large, cumbersome radio, but nevertheless it was a good one.
- OH: Would the radio have been important in your family?
- DP: Oh yes, as far as we kids were concerned. There was one serial that we just could not miss, *When a girl marries*, *When a girl marries* and to a lesser extent, *Courtship and marriage*. *Courtship and marriage* came on from 7 o'clock to 7.15pm, and *When a girl marries* came on from 7.15pm-7.30pm, yes, and there was Harry Davis and Joan Davis. I remember that serial.
- OH: How old would you have been when the radio came into the house?
- DP: Okay. Dad was still alive, and I would have been about 13. Prior to that the neighbours had a little one, only a very little ... I can't remember the name of it, but they used to have to crowd around the little radio to hear it, and for us kids, we were more or less always excluded from that. But once we got our Mullard that was it, we enjoyed it so much. On a Sunday morning ... on a Sunday morning at 9 o'clock or 10 o'clock, I can't remember ... was *Tenor time*, and *Tenor time* I think went for a half an hour or one hour, I don't know, and there was always these Italian tenors singing on a Sunday morning, *Tenor time*.
- OH: And who would listen to that?
- DP: Oh, Mum and Dad. Beniamino Giglio, Enrico Caruso, and others, Joseph Schmidt I think was the German tenor, but Mum and Dad would always, always tune into that.
- OH: So music was important?
- DP: Oh yes, yes, especially the Italian music and the Italian songs that they remembered.
- OH: The transport that your family had, you told me earlier there was a Bedford truck?
- DP: Uh huh.
- OH: Any other transport apart from the bikes?
- DP: No, it was only the Bedford truck. Whenever we went out Mum and the three of us, and Dad, was in the Bedford truck. There were not too many night-time excursions because we kids would fall asleep too easily, but the odd one or two, yes, but it was only the Bedford truck.

- OH: I was going to ask you about the War, Dino. Do you remember anything about the War years?
- DP: I can remember Dad receiving letters from Italy and saying how the partisans and the fascists used to fight one another. Apparently the fascists were with Hitler, or Germany, and the partisans were against them, and Dad, I can't remember the name, but he would mention a name or two that had been killed in such conflicts between the partisans and the fascists.
- OH: And these would be names of people that he knew?
- DP: That he knew, definitely, definitely, yep.
- OH: What about the War here, do you remember anything about life here?
- DP: Because Dad had the Bedford truck it was virtually commandeered, and occasionally myself or my older brother, we went separately, and Dad was asked to report to the Woodville Fire Station to do fire drill. A fireman would sit in the cab alongside me, and he would direct Dad to whatever fire drill they had to do, and that was because he owned the truck, and if it were needed for wartime experiences. But that was the way it was then.
- OH: Were your father and your mother naturalised before the War?
- DP: No. Oh my goodness! Dad became naturalised, no, no, Dad became naturalised I think a couple of months after I was born, yes, yes, I do ...
- OH: And you were born in '36.
- DP: In '36, September '36. Dad became naturalised not long after that.
- OH: Do you know about other Italians who may have been affected by the War here in Adelaide?
- DP: Yeah, there were other Italians who didn't own anything, shall we say, and were workers. Well they had to go to work for the manpower, that's what I can remember them say, the manpower, and Loveday was a big place that they – I think it was clearing scrub up at Loveday, up in the Riverland – and a lot of them were up there. Some were at Dry Creek, I remember the word Dry Creek being mentioned, where there was works going on there as well.
- OH: Do you remember anything at school during the War? Was there anything that you were told about?
- DP: No. Amongst us kids it was mainly the Japanese. In the latter stages it was the kids' talk that I used to hear, was from the kids, their uncles or their relatives or somebody, were fighting the Japanese, but that's about all I can remember. I can't remember Pearl Harbor. I can remember *VP Day*, *Victory in the Pacific Day*, because Nano Tonellato, alongside their wall, somehow he got hold of some green paint, and in two big letters he put up, *VP*. That was on the day that victory in peace came to the Pacific. I'll always remember that one.
- OH: So it must have been a big kind of occasion for people?

- DP: Oh yes, oh yes, definitely, yes, yep. My father used to say to my mother, *We are in a lucky country here, because they don't make war here in Australia*, and he would remember the wars, the conflicts, in Europe for example. My mother, I can remember my mother saying that.
- OH: Just one other question about the radio. Did your parents listen to Italian radio?
- DP: No, because then there was no Italian radio stations here in Adelaide, and Italian radio was virtually non-existent. No, I can't remember them ever listening to anything in Italian.
- OH: Because I was wondering if they listened to radio that came from Italy.
- DP: The radio sets in those days, you had to have a very high antenna to be able to receive anything, I think what they called shortwave. The Tonellato boys used to talk about shortwave, but they used to say, *Oh, we haven't got a high enough antenna*. Well, Dad was never capable or interested in putting up a high antenna to receive anything, so it was only local radio, 5DN, 5KA, 5AD, that we used to listen to.
- OH: Did you ever experience any racism because of your family being Italian?
- DP: No, no, not even in Underdale when we were kids going to school there. No, we as kids all got on so well together. No, I can never remember an incident that may have been racist orientated.
- OH: Well that's a good thing to remember.
- DP: Yes, definitely.
- OH: We are going to talk now about the market gardens and your family. What do you remember about the market gardens as you were growing up?
- DP: Basically the market garden that I remember mostly was on Frogmore Road at Kidman Park, and it was there that we had the 12 glasshouses, and other land there, that we grew potatoes and beans, but it was mainly on Frogmore Road that I do remember working the glasshouses.
- OH: And is this when you were living on the eastern side of Frogmore Road?
- DP: Yes.
- OH: So how much land would your parents have had there, roughly?
- DP: On the western side ...
- OH: On Frogmore ... sorry.
- DP: On the eastern side of Frogmore Road we were leasing, only leasing, land there, and that would have been about two acres, three acres, of land. Once we moved and bought on the western side of Frogmore Road, that was about two and a half to three acres again.
- OH: On the eastern side where you were leasing, did you have glasshouses?

- DP: Only two, two or three, that was in the ... Only two because on the western side of Frogmore Road we were leasing the land there, and that's where we had about ten glasshouses.
- OH: Oh, so you had both pieces of land?
- DP: Yes, but we were in the interim of moving from one side of Frogmore Road to the other, it was right in that in between.
- OH: So the two glasshouses on the eastern side near the Tonellato's had tomatoes?
- DP: Yes.
- OH: And beans?
- DP: And beans usually, yes.
- OH: And did you have any outside vegetables as well?
- DP: An acre or two of beans. I can remember Dad using the horse to scarify the beans and to till the rows of the beans, and we as kids, it was our job to water the beans. In other words the bore, it came through an open channel, one of us at one end and the other one at the other, would determine when each row had to be blocked off with a couple of shovel full's of dirt, and another two opened up, and that was the job of myself and my older brother, Nillo.
- OH: How old would you have been at that stage doing that?
- DP: Thirteen, because Dad was still alive, 12 and 13. There's no such thing, when things needed to be done on the land and help out, you forget about going playing with other kids. You just had to be there and help out, to just help out.
- OH: You mentioned about the bore, who would have sunk the bore?
- DP: That would have been a bore, I can remember looking down into the bore, it would have been dug by hand, down to the highest water level, shall we say, it would have been about ten metres, eight or nine metres. The water quality was reasonably good, but it was good enough to water the beans and the tomatoes in the glasshouses.
- OH: Would your father have sunk that, Dino?
- DP: No, no, that was already there. I cannot remember that being sunk, and I don't know, perhaps a Mrs Bush or the earlier settlers that were there sunk the bore, but Mr Tonellato himself did not sink that bore, no, it was there.
- OH: So while your Dad had the two, and your Mum, had the two glasshouses and open land with the beans, were the Tonellato's growing similar crops?
- DP: Oh yes, they had, oh, onions, sweet potatoes, glasshouses, something like 12 or 14 glasshouses there, and they grew beans as well, onions, beetroot, swedes. They were, because of the three sons that were there with Mr Tonellato, they had a much bigger business going.
- OH: What about your Mum, did she work in the garden as well?

- DP: Mum worked just as much as any, anybody else. Yes, back home in Italy she knew that if there was work to be done in the fields, they just had to be there, and it was Mum's second nature to, to come here to Australia and adapt herself to the work that was needed to be done here. Every pair of hands that helped out in the garden meant that it was something else that got done, and there was plenty of things to do, pruning the tomatoes, and they were, each one, each glasshouse had to be laboriously pruned, and it took time, it took a lot of time.
- OH: And you remember doing that as a young person?
- DP: Oh yes, definitely. Like I said on the earlier interview, it was the job of my older brother and myself to carry out the pruning of those leaves. When Dad and Mum would prune through the day, they would put the prunings, the leaves would be put in heaps along each row, and Nil and I, or Nillo and I, would go along and carry them out after school.
- OH: And where would you put them?
- DP: In a heap just out the outside, and they would eventually rot down or be burnt, or something of that nature.
- OH: So you were working the land on the eastern side, and also on the other side?
- DP: Correct, yes.
- OH: Did you say that you had 12, your family had, 12 glasshouses on the other side of Frogmore Road?
- DP: Which included the two from the eastern side.
- OH: So they were moved across when you moved?
- DP: That's right, correct, correct, they were moved across, and in total we had the 12 there on the western side.
- OH: Where did your father, when he was alive, sell the vegetables?
- DP: At the East End Market in Grenfell Street, right up the very end on the corner of Grenfell Street and East Terrace, and yes, I can remember getting up early. He would only ever take one of us at a time, and it was either myself or my older brother, or my younger brother, but only one at a time, getting up early at ...
- OH: How early?
- DP: Oh, 3.30am, 4 o'clock, still half asleep, but it was a, it was a certain atmosphere all of its own. The early morning there, not too many lights on to begin with, and the greengrocers would come around and place their order. When I got a little bit older I remember writing their names down, because Dad and uncle couldn't spell English names, it was good, especially in those younger days. Yeah, I can remember the, the early mornings at the market for sure.
- OH: Did you father sell to merchants?
- DP: No, mainly to greengrocers. In those days there was no such things as supermarkets, there was only the greengrocers who had the individual

greengrocer shop, here, there and everywhere, and all of those would congregate mainly on a Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, but Tuesdays and Thursdays were all off days. They would all come there, buy or order to begin, order, but they would be there early, 5 o'clock, 5.30 am, go around, place their orders with the various growers, and I think it was 7 o'clock the siren rang, and then there was helter skelter, everybody came to pick up all their produce that they'd ordered.

OH: Why did they have to order it before? Why couldn't they have just sold it when they ordered?

DP: Those were the rules, unfortunately, and it didn't go down too well with too many growers and greengrocers alike, because they wanted, once they'd finished they wanted to get home early as well, so that didn't go down too well, but those were the rules. You heard the siren go and then everybody clambered to get their orders into their vehicles, and then off home to the shop.

OH: So somebody like a grower like your Dad would have maybe had orders from a few different greengrocers?

DP: Oh yes.

OH: And would he have then put that aside, like so, *This will be for Mr Smith. This will be for ...?*

DP: Yes, definitely, definitely, oh yes, yep. Two cases of tomatoes, one dozen pounds of beans, and so forth and so on, for Mr Smith ... And oh yes, that was the way it was. And Mr Smith knew that once he'd ordered them, even if he was a little bit late coming to pick them up, they would be kept for him because they were on order.

OH: Interesting system.

DP: Yes! That's how it was then.

OH: Was it special as a child to go to the market?

DP: Very much so, very much so.

OH: What was special about it?

DP: It was something different, something totally different. I always can remember my first or second time there, the early-morning atmosphere which we were never used to, you'd always sleep in, but the early-morning atmosphere and the other people that you talked with, it was just that there was something magic about it, that atmosphere, and it was something that I clearly remember, clearly.

OH: What time would you have got home? If you left home to go there at 3.30 am, what time would you have arrived home?

DP: 10 o'clock, 10.30 am, because at 7 o'clock, shall we say, more or less everybody came to pick up what they'd ordered. Then there were the others that had to pick up other produce and then were late getting to us, so you were obliged to just wait around for the others, until everybody that ordered came to pick up their produce. So it was about 10 o'clock or 10.30am by the time we got home.

- OH: In your case did you ever have breakfast in there with your Dad?
- DP: Sometimes, yes, we'd go around to Ruby's (Café), Ruby's in Rundle Street, she was just around the corner, it was a café. I can't remember her surname because everybody called her Ruby, and there was the bacon and eggs, mainly bacon and eggs, or sausages and eggs, sorry, and that was the one big thing, the breakfast around the corner at Ruby's in Rundle Street.
- OH: Was that where other Italians would go as well?
- DP: Albert Berno, Bert Berno we called him there, Carlo Zecchin, Silvano Zampin, yes, yes ... they, they would go there ... Lui Tonellato.
- OH: And noisy?
- DP: Oh yes, definitely, because it was only a small café, a very small one, and everybody somehow had something to talk about, the price that they got for a certain box of tomatoes, and so forth and so on. So it was noisy, it was, I remember it.
- OH: As a child were you involved in the conversations?
- DP: No, I liked to listen, I liked to listen. No, I can't remember making too many comments at all but I was a good listener in those days.
- OH: Were other children there?
- DP: No, ... There was, other children would go on a similar basis to when we went, but it was never coincidental that we met others there, Frank Ballestrin, or Lino no, no, it wasn't.
- OH: Would you go to actually help your Dad or was it a bit of an outing?
- DP: No, no, help Dad, because the tray of the truck was a long one. Dad would stand at the back of the truck and receive the money for the half-case of tomatoes, or for the dozen beans, and I would be up on top of the truck dragging the half-cases of tomatoes from the front of the truck to the back of the truck. I can remember that, being on top of the truck nearly all the time.
- OH: And obviously working?
- DP: Oh yes, yes.
- OH: How high would the boxes have been stacked on the truck?
- DP: Not, not very, never more than two tiers – one on the tray of the truck and then a layer on top – because on a 12-foot tray, 12ft x 6ft, you can fit a lot of boxes of tomatoes, and therefore 10 glasshouses or 12 glasshouses didn't produce quite so many in any one picking, so therefore that was never really an issue. When the beans came into it, or the potatoes came into it, then it was a little bit more cramped for space, but no, it was never really a big issue.
- OH: Were the potatoes and the beans also in boxes, or how were they sold?
- DP: To begin with they were in boxes, they were washed. I remember to get a better price for them, if we washed them ...

- OH: The potatoes?
- DP: Which was a devil of a job, the potatoes. They were in bushel, what they called a bushel box, which was roughly 50 kilos I'd say, 40 or 50 kilos. Once they were washed you have got a better price for them simply because you put the time and effort into washing them, and that's what I recall, but then through the Potato Board, the South Australian Potato Board, they received them in bags, 50 kilogram bags.
- OH: So your father would have had to have packed them?
- DP: Yes, into a bag, and then sewed them up similar to the wheat farmers when they would sew their bags of wheat, all by hand, yep.
- OH: Where would your father have got seed for tomatoes, beans, and the potatoes?
- DP: The tomatoes were always our own seed. I remember Mum selecting them at the end of the year, the best ones, the biggest ones, the firmest ones, she would always select the best ones for the seed for the next year. Beans were always, Dwarfs were the main ones that we grew, and they were the Acme. The Acme seed was the one that was a very popular one. Potatoes, Sebagos were a good one, Kennabeck was another one. I can't remember anymore.
- OH: And where would you have got them, the seed?
- DP: The seed was either from one of the merchants at the market, George Potts. George Potts was a merchant there and we could buy seed off of him, but later on we would go to Echunga to buy them directly from the grower, Ken Lowe was at Echunga.
- OH: And I wonder how your father would have known about Ken Lowe at Echunga.
- DP: From the market, Dad was the person who got to know everybody. He got to know everybody and everybody knew him, he was that sort of a man, he really was. His English to me was broken, no doubt, but as a kid I thought he spoke very well, and to others I don't know how much they understood him, but to me he spoke very well in English, and just picked it up like that. He never went to school or anything like that.
- OH: So the market was a big thing. Did you say three days a week?
- DP: Monday, Wednesdays, and Fridays, yes, were the main days, so naturally the Saturday and the Sunday you would pick the tomatoes and sort the tomatoes, and pick the beans, ready for the Monday market. Okay, then perhaps we would skip the Wednesday market and by then you'd have more beans to pick, and more tomatoes to pick, for the Friday market, but the Sunday, the Sunday morning and the Saturday afternoon, were taken up in getting the produce ready for the Monday morning market.
- OH: So it wasn't like you had a really relaxing weekend?
- DP: No, in season, no, it was all hands on to help out with the produce.

- OH: And Dino, the season, can you tell me a little bit about that, when the seasons were for the vegetables?
- DP: Yes. Because we grew the tomatoes in the glasshouses they were earlier ripening, and therefore we would plant them out, sow them and plant them out in late-March. And of course, they would go through the early winter months, end of March, April, May, June, July, and about late-August, mid-August, beginning of September, we would start picking tomatoes. A lot of them went to Melbourne because the ideal growing conditions were here in Adelaide, temperature wise, and a lot of them went to Melbourne although Dad was never interested in sending boxed tomatoes to Melbourne, and having to rely on the merchants there to get a good price for your produce, and then sent you back a fair return. He always sold our produce here.
- OH: And a more certain kind of sale and price?
- DP: A more positive way of going about it, yes.
- OH: I imagine relationships built with greengrocers?
- DP: Definitely, definitely, yes, oh yes.
- OH: Was there continuity of the whole year for growing if you had those three crops?
- DP: Unfortunately no, because there was always that off-season then. And that would finish in December, the main growing season. January, February and March, he would put in the beans, the Acme beans, the Dwarf beans, and not much else.
- OH: And the Dwarf beans, how high did they grow?
- DP: They would only grow to about what we called two feet high, which is roughly, I don't know how many centimetres to be perfectly honest.
- OH: Like the outside beans, how close would you plant them?
- DP: Okay. They were planted about two feet apart because the horse had to walk down the row, and that would pull the scarifier which would be used to scarifying the weeds, and always to till the beans. They had to be tilled with a mull board at the back of the scarifier, and the horse would walk slow enough, or fast enough, whichever, slow enough, to be able to do that job, otherwise it would have had to be done by hand and with a hoe, which was backbreaking work, but the horse came in very handy with the scarifier in those days.
- OH: What do you remember about the soil?
- DP: The soil was alluvial soil, I class it now as alluvial soil, because I know what alluvial soil is, but back then it was ideal soil for growing, on the banks of the Torrens, shall we say, where it used to flood many years ago, but it was a very rich, very friable soil. That's what I remember about it, in both the eastern side of Frogmore Road and the western side of Frogmore Road, good soil.
- OH: Do you remember any flooding occurring?

- DP: No, but Mr Tonellato, he remembered, and I can remember him talking about it. He can remember walking around where we were there on the eastern side of Frogmore Road, waist high, the water was waist high, and I used to think, *What used to happen to the crops?* Everything was destroyed, everything was destroyed. Eventually they dug out the Breakout Creek from the Henley Beach Road jetty, out towards the sea at West Beach, but that came after Mr Tonellato came here.
- OH: But your father must have been there around the same time as Mr Tonellato.
- DP: About the same time, and it's a little bit of a blur for me there because I can never remember my father talking about the floods, but Mr Tonellato, yes, so he did get there a little bit before Dad did, but we're only talking about a year or two, or something of that nature.
- OH: And some years the floods must have been really bad, yeah.
- DP: Some years, and other years it probably didn't flood, sort of thing.
- OH: What was your relationship like with say the adults, like Mr Tonellato and Mrs Tonellato? What did you call them?
- DP: *Zio* and *zia*. Even though they weren't uncle and auntie, but it was the respect to call them *zio and zia*, uncle and auntie, and we all got on well because it was just one happy family living next door to one another. The boys, the Tonellato's, were a happy-go-loving family and Dad got on well with everybody, with everybody.
- OH: Would the Tonellato children have called your parents *zio* and *zia*?
- DP: Not that I recall, no. They were more or less old enough to not even call them by name, because there was no such thing as calling an elder by his or her name, but I never heard them calling them *Zio Angelo* or *Zia*. No, I can't recall.
- OH: Were the Tonellato boys interested in you boys, even though they were older?
- DP: Yes, but it was Lino Tonellato, he was the mechanic. I more or less modelled myself on him I think from a very early age. He was always interested in the mechanics of things, and whenever he was working on a rotary hoe or something that was mechanically orientated, I would be there alongside him, so I think that's where I got my mechanic's instinct from.
- OH: That's interesting. So he would have taught you things?
- DP: Exactly, yeah, definitely, yep.
- OH: What about the mothers, did they get on well together?
- DP: Definitely, my mother and Elisabetta, *Zia Elisa*, next door. They were too busy to have too much to say to one another, always busy. I can remember Mrs Tonellato, she had five kids, always washed by hands, and then suddenly they decided to buy her a washing machine, and it was an old Simpson wringer washing machine. They brought it home and she put the washing in, and she wasn't impressed because it wasn't

washing as well as she could wash it in the bathtub. Lino picked up something out of the tub and put it through the wringer, and because he had greasy hands, the imprint still stayed on the clothes as they went through the wringer. I'll never forget that.

- OH: And what was her reaction?
- DP: That didn't impress Mrs Tonellato at all, but eventually I believe that she got used to the idea of the Simpson wringer-type washing machine and yeah, I can remember her using it quite a bit.
- OH: You showed me a photo of the Renault car.
- DP: The Renault car.
- OH: Would that have been ... and that belonged to Mr Tonellato.
- DP: Correct, yes.
- OH: Would it have been unusual to have had a European car?
- DP: Oh, well then the Holden's weren't around, everything was imported back then, mainly from Britain. There was the Austin's, and those sort of things from Great Britain, but the Holden's weren't around, and anything that was imported, and the Renault was an imported one.
- OH: Would it have been common to have seen Renaults around?
- DP: I can remember seeing two or three of them but not very ... more Austin's than anything else, British, being British.
- OH: Any other memories that you would have about the market gardening life in your family?
- DP: No, just having to get up early of a morning, and naturally as a young man you'd sometimes stay out late because the guys had come around and we'd have a late evening [laughs]. I remember on one or two occasions, not too many, sleeping through the alarm and getting to market late, and that was a real no, no, because everybody was there. You sometimes missed out on a spot that you would normally park in, the clients would not know where you were. Someone told me, and it proved to be a very good idea, so that if you put your alarm clock in a little aluminium billycan, it would make such a noise that you couldn't help but hear it. The little billycan, as we used to call them, was a little, was a metal container that you'd put out for the milkman, the milkman would put the milk in the little billycan, and sure enough the billycan turned on its side with the alarm clock inside, it used to make one big racket.
- [Laughter]
- OH: Certainly got you up out of the bed, yeah.
- DP: Exactly, exactly.
- OH: So when you left school at the end of second year, high school, you knew that you were going to be going to work in the garden?
- DP: That's right.

- OH: Because by this time your Dad had died?
- DP: That's right, yes.
- OH: Had *zio Attilio* come by then?
- DP: He was there, he was there, right from the moment Dad died he was there, up until the time that he saw that I was able ... because I was in *zio Attilio's* footsteps all the time. Whenever we went to the market, I was there with him, and this is when I was going quite regularly, sometimes having to get a ride from the market to school with Oscar Mattiazzo, who then had a shop on Torrens Road, but that's another story. But Uncle Attilio was there right from the word go that Dad died, and stayed there until I, about a year after I got my licence. Basically he saw that I was doing everything with him anyway, following in his footsteps, and he believed that I was okay to take over, but he lived on the property right next door to us, and it was never that he went away in any way whatsoever. He was always there lending a hand, or offering advice, and so forth and so on.
- OH: Because your father died very suddenly, didn't he?
- DP: That's right, that's right.
- OH: It must have been difficult because I imagine, like he died in March.
- DP: March.
- OH: And there must have been vegetables kind of ...?
- DP: That's right, the tomatoes were due to be planted in the glasshouses, and that meant then a whole year beginning, a whole season beginning, but that was when uncle came down, Uncle Attilio and Auntie Claudia.
- OH: So he was married by that time?
- DP: He was married. No, they didn't ... No, he wasn't, no he wasn't. Yes, he was, because I remember that Edda came to Australia, the youngest daughter, or the only daughter, came to Australia, and she was about 12 months old, and yes, Auntie Claudia was there as well with Edda. They lived, initially we were on the eastern side of Frogmore Road, and they had the room that we were in, which was already put up by a carpenter, Alessandro Laio, and they lived in there, and we made do with what we had there, but eventually Uncle Attilio built his small house next door to our property on Frogmore Road, and therefore he and auntie lived there. There were no fences that divided the two properties, and we were intermingling all the time from one property to the next.
- OH: This is on the western side of Frogmore Road, and the house that the community helped your family to build?
- DP: Correct, correct.
- OH: That must have been a very strong statement about the importance of your father and your mother, and supporting the family?
- DP: Mr Guido Battaglia he lived in ... he was a cement worker with Albert del Fabbro in Hutt Street, around towards that way. He was a cement

worker all his life, cement worker, bricklayer, you name it, he did it, and he and Dad were the best of friends. Even when there was olive time or the wine making time, Mr Battaglia would come down and Dad would go with the truck to get his grapes. They would crush them, and Dad would store them in our cellar. They were just the best of friends, and when Dad died Mr Battaglia, Guido Battaglia took it upon himself to organise just about everything that needed to be organised to build the house. Naturally I can remember going with my uncle to the various hardware stores to buy doors, to buy whatever was needed that the bricklayer said, *Oh, you've got to get this and you've got to get that for the next weekend*, so a lot of time was spent with me and my uncle doing that.

OH: On top of the garden?

DP: Exactly, yeah.

OH: What was Nillo doing at this time?

DP: He was working for Oscar Mattiazzo, he had a fulltime job there working for Oscar Mattiazzo on Torrens Road. I think he worked for Oscar and Virginia Santin. Oscar married Virginia Santin and they bought the shop on Torrens Road, and Nillo worked for them for about 12 years.

OH: How did it happen that Nillo went and worked away from the family, and that you worked in the gardens?

DP: Even though he was the eldest and purportedly should have been the one that should have stayed home, being older than me, it was just the way things happened. He was the eldest one and the first one to get a job, and therefore he settled into that job, he settled into that job, and that was money coming in for Mum to carry on. Therefore I was the one designated to be, to carry on in the garden.

OH: And your uncle was helping you learn the trade?

DP: Oh yes, oh yes. I would not have known what to do, even though ... no it was uncle that knew just what to do.

OH: Had he had a background in farming or gardening?

DP: Only in Italy, only in Italy, there was very much rural work there, but out here he worked more in the mica mines, in the Alice Springs area, the Last Chance Mine east of Alice Springs in the Harts Range. He made a lot of money in the mica mines, but then when Dad died he knew that he just had to come down and help Mum.

OH: The two glasshouses that your family had on the eastern side of Frogmore Road, they were moved across?

DP: Correct, yes.

OH: Do you remember that process?

DP: Oh yes, yes, yes.

OH: Can you tell me about that?

- DP: Yeah, but it wasn't only the moving of those two glasshouses, because back in those days the tomatoes would get diseases, okay, and then there was no chemicals to rid the soil of diseases like we have nowadays – you get chemical fumigants and so on that you can rid the diseases in the soil. So therefore when they were there for a year or two, and the soil became so disease-ridden that you wouldn't get a viable crop out of them, they had to be shifted. So they would just be shifted post, pane of glass by pane of glass, and it had to be done in the hottest months of the year, after the last crops were out, in January and February. Again I can remember as kids we dearly would have loved to go to the beach, but sometimes there just had to be glasshouses that had to be shifted. The glasses were that hot, you'd pick up two or three glasses at a time and you would almost drop them because they would be sitting in the sun, and really so hot that they were hard to handle.
- OH: Did you have gloves?
- DP: No, because even in those days we kids, I can't say we would have had calluses on our hands, but they were certainly roughened up to, to accommodate us for anything like that.
- OH: Wow! What was the process, like how many people would have been involved in the dismantling of the glasshouses?
- DP: Oh, us three kids and about another two adults or three adults, and that was an art in itself in getting everything square, and making sure that everything was perfectly square, otherwise the glasses would not fit properly. The way that was done was a unique and very simple sort of a way. The pane of glass, which was a square, was used as a set square to make sure that the line of posts, both one way and the other, were in a perfect square. That was a simple yet ingenious way of doing it. My uncle, my uncle used to do it.
- OH: Can you remember the dimensions of the glasshouses?
- DP: Yeah, they were 112 feet long and about 15 feet wide, as I recall, but 112 feet long.
- OH: Was there a reason that they were 112 feet long?
- DP: Because the glasses came from Belgium at the time, and they were 14 x 16, 14 inches by 16 inches, the panes of glass, and somehow or other somebody worked it out that if you made a glasshouse 112 feet long, it would be a nice, long glasshouse to fit in a normal sized property, and that's the way they evolved.
- OH: And it was like a standard?
- DP: A standard, very much a standard.
- OH: And the width was?
- DP: About 15 feet wide, something like that.
- OH: So how many rows would you have got in there?
- DP: To begin with they always used to put seven rows, they would make the most of this glasshouse in seven rows, but then someone decided

that if you put one less, they were less over, less crowded, and you would get a better crop out of them, so some went to six rows after that, after that, but it was the low glasshouses. They were only about two panes high, they were only about, 16 and 16 is 32 inches high, and when you had to prune or take out the leaves in that row, in that row, you knew you just had to bend down all the way out because otherwise you would hit your head on the glass. From there they went to three panes high, and we had about, one, two, three, four, five, about six or seven, three panes high, which meant another 16 inches on top of the 32, which made them more comfortable to work in.

- OH: When you went over to the western side of Frogmore Road, your family would have had to have bought more glasshouses?
- DP: Yes, yes, Dad bought more.
- OH: Did you buy them new or were they second-hand?
- DP: No, they were second-hand, they were definitely second-hand, but I remember Dad saying that once he got established ... It was, it was making good money, provided you put the hard work into it, it was good money because they were a winter crop, there was nothing else available in the winter, Queensland and those areas had not evolved then. I can remember Dad saying to Mum, *We can make enough money to buy a new glasshouse every two years*, and I think then a new glasshouse cost £100, I vaguely remember £100 being mentioned every two years. He thought we would be able to buy one every two years, and likewise in the second Bedford truck that we bought, which Dad bought about two months before he died, was brand new, that was a brand new Bedford truck. The earlier one that I spoke of was also a Bedford truck, but much earlier model, and we sold that to Lui Tonellato, but the second one he took delivery of in about January, and in March he died, but that was a brand new truck, Bedford truck.
- OH: And that suggests that he would have been doing quite well?
- DP: Quite well. Once we got established with the 10 or 12 glasshouses like that, provided you put the hard work into it, off-season tomatoes, it was quite good work, quite good profit.
- OH: What do you remember about winters and the tomatoes?
- DP: Winters, in a peculiar sort of a way I liked to be in the glasshouse listening to the rain pelting down onto the glasses. I don't know, there was something unique about it I guess. It was winter, it was cold, and the rain was coming down, and we would be in there pruning or not necessarily taking the leaves out, but helping Mum and Dad to prune, and the rain would be coming down on the glasses. I can distinctly remember that, very much so.
- OH: What about frosts and things like that?
- DP: Frosts were always, not always a problem, but they were a problem, and naturally sometimes the frosts would be more severe than others. If a severe frost came, that would prevent the tomatoes from setting fruit properly, and there was nothing really that they could do about it,

nothing. Some tried burning oil in pots outside the glasshouses to try and create a cloud of smoke, so that the frost wouldn't settle, but with limited success, only limited.

- OH: Would that mean that, supposing it was a severe frost, that all the tomatoes would be lost?
- DP: No, no, it was very selective. Frost can be very selective, and some people would suffer more than others, but you wouldn't, wouldn't wipe out the whole crop because it was protected a little bit by the glass, but to a degree the setting of the fruit was affected, and you would get a reduced fruit setting when the frost came.
- OH: So it was one of the challenges for the work?
- DP: It was a significant challenge, yes, and I'll always remember in September, August and September, that was about when the frosts came.
- OH: That's interesting, isn't it, because it's late?
- DP: That's right, that's right.
- OH: In a winter.
- DP: Yeah.
- OH: In the work that you were doing, you would have had pretty long days, I imagine?
- DP: Oh yes, yes. The hours never came into it. You knew that you had to get up early to do work, you got up early, and whatever time it meant that you finished, it didn't matter if it was ten hours or eight hours, or whatever, the hours just never came into but ...
- OH: You just got on with it?
- DP: But we tried, in the summertime was the worst of it all because we had to be there at quarter past seven to listen to *When a girl marries*.
- OH: Was that quarter past seven in the morning?
- DP: No, I mean the evening, in the evening, but in the months, I can still remember it being so light. It was only in the winter time that it was dark and it was no problems at all getting inside and listening to the serial, because it was the Tonellato's who were older than us that were very interested in that, and we more or less followed them, but in the summertime it was still quite light, and we were struggling to get in to hear *When a girl marries*, because there was always the cow to be milked and watered, and she had to be, she had to be watered.
- OH: So life was very busy?
- DP: Oh yes, yep.
- OH: Thank you, Dino, we've come to the end of this card, and we'll start again with the next part another time, so thank you very much.
- DP: OK, thank you.

