

**CAMPBELLTOWN CITY COUNCIL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**  
*Our Fruitful Record: A history of Market Gardening in Campbelltown*

**Oral history interview with John Lomman**  
**recorded by Di Booker on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2017**  
**at Walkley Heights, South Australia**

**Interview OH 1130/2**

**Participants:**

**OH:** Di Booker

**DL:** John Lomman

OH: (Oral Historian) So thank you, John, for being involved with the Campbelltown Oral History Project, and, and also being willing to be interviewed.

JL: (John Lomman) Oh, it's a pleasure for me to do it.

OH: Okay! So just for ID purposes, this is an interview with John Lomman, recorded by Di Booker, on 24 November, at Walkley Heights. It is part of the Campbelltown City Council Oral History Project, *A fruitful record: A history of market gardeners in Campbelltown*.

So John, we'll just start with a few questions about you, about your family. So what's your full name?

JL: John Maxwell. Max, Max is my father's name.

OH: That's right.

JL: Lomman.

OH: Lomman.

JL: Yeah.

OH: So do you pronounce that *Lomman* or *Loman*?

JL: Either.

OH: Oh, okay [laughs].

JL: I've got a cousin ... Oh, I shouldn't ...

OH: No, no.

JL: I've got a cousin that won't take, take anything else but *Lomman*, so ...

OH: Right.

JL: Here in the Village I'm known as Lomman.

OH: So what's your date of birth?

JL: 26th July, 1931.

OH: Oh! Congratulations.

[Laughter]

OH: Yeah! So where were you born?

JL: I was born down at St Peter's in Adelaide and,

OH: At home or in hospital?

JL: No, hospital, yeah.

OH: Right, yeah.

JL: There's a small hospital there.

OH: Right, yeah.

JL: It's not there anymore.

OH: And what was the full name of your father?

JL: Alex Maxwell Thomas.

OH: Right! But he was known as Max?

JL: Max, yeah.

OH: Mm, mm. And when was he born, can you remember?

JL: Yes, he was born on the fourth of, the fourth of April 1909.

OH: Mm, good. Yes, yeah. And where was he born?

JL: At home I believe.

OH: Yes, usually was, wasn't it ...

JL: Yes.

OH: ... in those days, mmn.

JL: Because this is all being recorded, isn't it?

OH: Yes.

[John laughs]

JL: One of his brothers ... Grandpa went to work and when he come home the baby was in the, in the cot.

OH: Yeah, okay [laughs].

JL: Grandma had done it all.

[Laughter]

OH: As women did in those days.

JL: Yes.

OH: I'm sure that happened all the time. And what was his occupation?

JL: He was, ... he was walking down Schulz Road, and one of the Fry brothers said to him, *What are you doing? You should be at school, and Dad said, I'm 14 today and I'm going to work.*

[Laughter]

JL: And Mr Fry said to him, *You go down and see the boss down there, and they'll give you a job.*

OH: Right! And so that's where it all started?

JL: That's where ... the day he was 14.

OH: Yes.

JL: Yeah.

OH: Yeah, yes. But had the, the family been involved with market gardeners before then, had they?

JL: Grandpa.

OH: Yes, yes.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

OH: We'll come to that. And what about your mother, what was her name?

JL: She was Nellie Hunt.

OH: Right.

JL: That's her full name.

OH: Yes, right, yeah.

JL: And she was born in Uraidla.

OH: Uh huh.

JL: And they were on the land I believe.

OH: And when was she born, do you know?

JL: She was born on the 13<sup>th</sup> December, 19 and 8, 1908, yeah, a year before that.

OH: Right, yeah. And did she work before she got married or was she ...? In those days a lot of girls didn't work before they got married, they stayed at home and helped in the family.

JL: She had a small job in, um, Gawler Place in Adelaide.

OH: Right.

JL: I think she was a shorthand typist or something, yeah.

OH: So she used to come down from Uraidla every day?

JL: Yes.

OH: Wow, yes!

JL: It was a big thing in those days.

OH: Yes, it would have been.

JL: Yeah.

OH: Yes, yeah. Probably on ... Oh, I guess there was a bus or some sort, or a tram maybe?

JL: Oh yeah, yeah.

OH: She might have had, had several ways of getting there.

JL: Oh, I think it was all buses.

OH: Mm.

JL: Pretty well.

OH: Mm, yeah, yeah. Do you have any siblings, either brothers and sisters?

JL: Um, I've got, I've got two sisters, had two sisters, one of them died, she was an epileptic, and the other one, she lives at McLaren Vale, and she's, [laughs] she's 12 years younger than me.

OH: Right!

JL: So [laughs] she was a very late baby.

[Laughter]

JL: Twelve years younger than me, and the elder sister she, she died. She married a gardener.

OH: Right.

JL: At Carey's Gully.

OH: Yeah! So it's in the blood.

JL: Yeah.

OH: So you were in the middle?

JL: No, I was the oldest.

OH: Oh, you were the oldest.

JL: I was the oldest, yes, yeah.

OH: Yeah. And John, your wife, when did you ... what was her name and when did you get married?

JL: Her name was Margaret Joan Pedlar and, and we were married in 1952.

OH: Right, yeah.

JL: Yeah. My mother and father went on a holiday and [laughs] met Margaret's parents and they became very friendly, and as my mother and father always were, they always ended up playing cards somewhere [laughs], and that's how I met Margaret through the ...

OH: So they were a matchmaker?

JL: Yes.

[Laughter]

OH: Yes, and you mentioned before that you had a very happy marriage?

JL: We did, yeah.

OH: Mm.

JL: We were married 49 and a half years, and would have been, last week it would have been 64 years.

OH: Wow, yes, congratulations, and now she's not here?

JL: Yes.

OH: Yes, mm. And how many children did you have, John?

JL: Geoff was the son, my son. He is now 63, 63 this year, yeah, and Jennifer, my daughter, lives at Gawler. She is 60 this year I believe, and then my wife and I adopted Sue.

OH: Right, yeah.

JL: She's ... we adopted her at three weeks old. Yes, I can't think of more than that [laughs].

OH: That's okay. So what are your first memories of Campbelltown and the Athelstone areas?

JL: My school days weren't very much. We had one teacher that taught five ... he taught from Grade 5 onwards.

OH: So where did you go to school?

JL: Athelstone.

OH: Oh yes.

JL: The school is still there.

OH: Yes.

JL: I think it's Heritage-listed. Grades 1, 2 and 3, and sometimes 4, were taught by one teacher, and the headmaster he taught the, the other grades, but he was a World War I gas victim, and we did not get a very good education. We learnt our arithmetic and spelling, and things like that, but English and things like that were very poor.

OH: Yes, yeah, yeah. And you mentioned when I met you before that you were thinking about going to take on an apprenticeship when you finished school?

JL: Yes. Dad's brother-in-law worked for a company in Adelaide who built pushbikes, and he got me my first job, and I only worked there 12 months. It was dirty work; it was cleaning up, welding, and all that sort of thing, it was ... and I left that. I was offered a job working for a plumber, and I was working there for, oh nearly seven months I think it was, and he approached me one night and said he'd like me to be apprenticed. The same night Dad was offered a garden of his own to, to work, and the first thing he did was ask me if I wanted to go with him, and I was 17 at the time, and yes, it was a decision that he wouldn't have done if it hadn't been ... I was always with him. I was either with him or my grandfather, my grandfather Samuel Lomman. He was, he was a worker – he never knew when to stop, that was the trouble [laughs].

OH: And what did he do?  
JL: He was a gardener.  
OH: He was a gardener.  
JL: He worked for the Fry's.  
OH: Oh, I see, yes.  
JL: Yes, yes, he worked for the Fry's.  
OH: So when your father was offered the property that was the first opportunity the family had to purchase this ...  
JL: Yes, yes.  
OH: Right, yes. So that was important then for him to have you alongside him?  
JL: Well it was, and he was a good gardener, um, he knew what he was talking about.  
OH: Yeah.  
JL: Yes.  
OH: Mm. So a change of direction for you?  
JL: Well it wasn't ... I gave them the regulation, I suppose it was three weeks, no, two weeks' notice or something in those days, and it was a mile to go to from where we lived on Maryvale Road, Athelstone. It was more than a mile. I used to ride me bike there every morning, learnt as much as I could.  
OH: So where was the, the land?  
JL: Do you know the Gorge cutting?  
OH: Yes, yeah.  
JL: Well on the top-side of that on the, going to go through the cutting, on the left-hand side towards the river.  
OH: Right. And how much land was there?  
JL: There was only 9½ acres there, but we eventually leased quite a bit.  
OH: Uh huh.  
OH: We leased another 20, no, and we leased another 10 acres, or 10½ acres actually, and brought it up to 20 acres, and then there was the land over by the quarry where this is.  
OH: We're looking at one of the photographs from your CD that was given to you for your birthday.  
JL: Yes. [laughs]  
OH: Yes. So this is the cutting?  
JL: Yes.  
OH: Yes.  
JL: And this was, as you can see in the photograph, the quarry in the background.  
OH: Mm, mm.

JL: And we leased that. There was, oh, I don't know, there was 30 acres there I think, but we didn't work it all, and there was no water on it, so that is all grown without water.

OH: Oh my goodness.

JL: Yes.

OH: Yeah. We'll come to the water in a minute.

JL: Yes.

OH: Yes. So when that ... You didn't buy any other land, that was ...?

JL: We didn't buy any other. We had one property offered us, they wanted ... Because Dad had a mortgage of £2,000.

OH: Yes. [laughs]

JL: He never had a mortgage in his, mortgage in his life, but not, not to that extent.

OH: No. Yeah.

JL: But we had a property offered to us on the other side of the river for £16,000, which today would be worth a million dollars.

OH: Yeah.

[Laughter]

OH: What kind of soil was in the land?

JL: Now this is ... The Torrens runs through, from the gorge right through to the river mouth at ... and on that there's a lot of river flats, pure sand, beautiful soil, that's been washed down over the centuries, and it was very, very ... That was on the northern side of the, the river.

OH: Uh huh.

JL: On the southern side of the river where we lived was all black mud, Bay of Biscay, which was very difficult to work, but it was ... it took very, very small amount of feed to grow stuff. It was, it was exceptionally good, whereas the sandy flats did tend to take more fertilizers and things to manage it.

OH: So probably not quite as effective in, cost effective in some respects?

JL: Oh look, that didn't come into it really.

OH: No?

JL: No, no. Fertilizers were fairly cheap.

OH: Yes. So I noticed you've made some notes about the soil. So is there anything else you'd like to talk about in, in regard to the, the soil itself?

JL: The soil itself, well, the Bay of Biscay, like I said, was very, very difficult to work. As soon as it rained it stuck to your boots, but sandy flats ... We went to an open day when they demonstrated these big, new sprinklers.

OH: Uh huh.

JL: And it was raining cats and dogs.

[Laughter]

JL: And it was on the, it was on the place called “Beefacres”.

OH: Oh yes.

JL: Alongside of where the Paradise, Darley Road Bridge runs across the Torrens.

OH: Yes.

JL: And it was one of the bigger properties, and the water just soaked away. It was ... they were watering carrots.

OH: Mm.

JL: And this particular day, and it was, just amazed us because we couldn't even walk on our land.

OH: No.

JL: It was in the middle of the winter.

OH: Yes.

JL: Yeah, they were watering carrots.

[Laughter]

OH: Oh yes, that does make a difference even in the gardens we have today, doesn't it?.

JL: Yes, it does, yeah.

OH: Yeah.

JL: But the soils, the soils were deposited by the, the natural flood of the river over many, many centuries, was really beautiful stuff, yeah. It started at ... Am I allowed to mention names?

OH: Yes.

JL: Yeah. It started at the top end. Skinner's owned the, the property on the northern side of the river, up there, and that was a very big flat, and then on the corner it was, Taylors owned that, then Larsen's. Then on the other side of the river, Wicks's owned a big property there.

OH: Mm.

JL: Wicks's estate. In fact most of it is still not ... It's on the river and I can't be built on.

OH: No.

JL: Even today with the control of the reservoir up the top, it would still flood at some time or other.

OH: Yes, yeah. So did you have many floods before the dams were built?

JL: Before Kangaroo Creek was built, yes, we did have a few floods, and we lost onions at different times on a little bit of flat country we did have, but I used to love the floods.

[Laughter]

JL: It was magnificent to see them, you know.



OH: I can imagine, yes.

JL: Yeah, because the Torrens, everybody laughs about the Torrens being a river but it really is [laughs] a river [laughs].

OH: Did you, when your father first bought the land, did you have to clear it at all?

JL: No, no, it was all cleared.

OH: It was all cleared.

JL: It was all cleared. That was something I was going to ... I've got down here. The gardeners in our area in particular, they'd have half-acre patches, and a little patch of cauliflowers here and a little patch of cauliflowers there, and, and a few onions coming on for the summer, and things like that, and when we moved in – we had three horses – and we turned the whole place into one garden.

OH: Right.

JL: We had, well in the nine acres we had basically three, three-acre blocks, which we used.

OH: Right, yeah.

JL: When we got our first tractor in 1952 the little blocks of land were useless.

OH: Yes, yes.

JL: You know, by the time you drive off you'd have to turn around and come back again, and it was useless, so therefore we turned the whole place into (one).

OH: Mm, mm, mm. Did you, did you or your father employ other people to work with you?

JL: No, we didn't and that was regular but during the 1950s, '51s, '52s, there was a lot of Italians came out to Australia, and they got jobs working at Holden's and just about everywhere you could think of, and they were looking for jobs Saturday morning, and they'd come up, all up the Gorge Road on Saturday mornings. We had 16 there one morning, and we used to catch up with the work that was behind like hoeing or whatever was required, if we were cutting off onions, or something like that. It was all done with hands in those days and onion cutting was done in contract work, two shillings a box, a crate [laughs].

OH: Yeah. And, and, so that brings us – you mentioned onions – so what other vegetables did, did you grow?

JL: Well when we started off, I, I've counted it several times, I think we had about nine different things. There was carrots and parsnips and beetroot, they were the bunch, and then we grew a lot of tomatoes, and in the winter we had the caulis and cabbage, and we used to grow a lot of red cabbage.

OH: Oh yeah.

JL: For John Wiper's pickle factory. We used to have a contract every year for that, and basically nine or ten different things we used to grow.

OH: Yes.

JL: And then as you worked, as we got ... We didn't grow any bunch, like carrots.

OH: Yes, alright.

JL: None of that, because it's too labour intensive for two people to run.

OH: Yes, yes.

JL: You had to have things that two people could run easily, you know.

OH: So what was really the main crop then?

JL: The main crop then was onions, and we used to grow a lot of potatoes, caulis and cabbage.

OH: Right, yes.

JL: Caulis and cabbage in winter time, onions, onions and tomatoes, we grew a lot of tomatoes. We had 10,000 stakes at one stage.

OH: Oh my goodness.

JL: Yes. We used to get quite a bit of casual labour to tie that up.

OH: I was going to say, *Who tied them up?*

[Laughter]

OH: Yeah.

JL: Yes. Yeah, that was ...

OH: So one of the things that you did mention before, it was a fascinating story about how you used to be in charge of the water.

JL: Yes. I used to, um ... Can I go back a bit further?

OH: Yes, yes.

JL: When they discovered Athelstone, they learnt that the soil was good and the water was good, and the water ran all the year.

OH: Uh huh.

JL: From springs up where the corkscrew is and just different streams that ran in it. There was always a little stream of water, not, not enough to ...

OH: No.

JL: And when they built the Gorge Weir to supply water to the Hope Valley Reservoir, they cut off that stream of water.

OH: Right.

JL: And they used to give us an allocation of water every week in the extreme time of the year, with the hot summers, and that water used to come from past Skinners', Larsen's, Wicks's, and by the time it got to our place it was water that was, was released at 9 o'clock in the morning, got to our place about half-past five or six Saturday, Friday afternoon. It was always let go Friday mornings, and we used to start the pump as soon as there was enough water to cover the pump, and then I would start watering, and I'd water around the clock until we had watered everything.

OH: Mm.

JL: This is how we found out and knew that by watering once a week was adequate.

OH: Mm, it's amazing.

JL: By watering, a good, good drink, an hour, hour and a quarter, once a week was adequate to grow what we needed to grow.

OH: So how did you actually do the watering? Was it just turning the taps for the ( )?

JL: Oh look, in the early days it was running down drains and ...

OH: Right, mm.

JL: But as we got money we bought sprinklers and I wanted another kind of (more) sprinklers once, and Dad said, *You'd better go and get one*, and he said, *You'll have to pay for it yourself because there's no money in the kitty* [laughs] and I said, *Oh yeah*. Anyhow they eventually paid me for work, but I went and got what I wanted. It was fluming aluminium piping.

OH: Oh yeah.

JL: And they were in 20ft lengths, and you shifted them one at a time.

OH: Oh, okay. So it was pretty hard work for you, shifting all those ...

JL: Oh, it wasn't hard work, it was the mud was the problem, you know.

OH: Yeah.

JL: Rubber boots were always choker block, you'd lift them, and there was a kilo of mud every time you lifted your foot, yeah.

OH: Yeah, yeah.

JL: But we were on a side of a hill, on a slope, and we couldn't use the modern wheel-type sprinklers they use out at Virginia. We were not able to use them because it was too, too, too much of a slope.

OH: Yes, yeah. You would have been rescuing the sprinklers all the time.

JL: Yeah, and Friday afternoons I used to spend a lot of my time setting up the sprinklers for the night.

OH: Uh huh.

JL: As soon as the water came down I'd run 'em for an hour, switch 'em off and turn the next line on, and generally I'd have enough to go ... I'd just go back in the shed and set the alarm and go to sleep.

[Laughter]

JL: Generally I had enough to keep me going until, you know, 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

OH: In the morning.

JL: 4 o'clock in the morning, and then I'd start shifting and, and shifting all day until the watering was done.

OH: So how many days did it take to do the watering?

JL: Oh look, if I started Friday afternoon, half-past six, half-past seven, whenever there was enough water there, by Sunday afternoon it was just about all done, yeah, yeah.

OH: Yeah. And so when the water came down from the reservoir, did it just, it just came down and filled up your ...?

JL: Filled up our pool.

OH: Yes, yeah.

JL: Then moved on and filled up the next one. It got down as far as the Paradise Bridge.

OH: Well okay!

JL: Well that's where we believed it got to because we had people down there, a big property alongside the bridge, the Paradise Bridge. Their name was Schulz I think, and they used to grow citrus and fruit trees and things, yeah, so the water got down to the Paradise Bridge as far as we knew, yeah.

OH: So that went on every weekend in summer?

JL: In the summer, yes, yes, it was ... My Auntie's, my father's sister, her husband worked for the Water Works, and he lived in a little Water Works cottage just as you go into the gorge.

OH: Oh okay.

JL: He lived in that cottage and he used to control the water from the ... and part of his job was to walk up all the gullies looking for dead sheep and cattle, and anything that was, shouldn't be in the water course, and that was one of his jobs, and he also released the water on Friday afternoons.

OH: Yeah, yeah.

JL: Yeah.

OH: A very important job.

JL: Yeah.

OH: Yes, yes. Did you have any other things that you wanted to talk about the water?

JL: About the water?

OH: Mm.

JL: No, I was ... the gorge weir was built specifically to fill the Hope Valley Reservoir.

OH: Mm.

JL: And when ... actually the first reservoir was Thorndon Park.

OH: That's right.

JL: And they could fill Thorndon Park from the Hope Valley Reservoir, there was a pipeline joining the two.

OH: Mm.

JL: And that was the ... they used to have an open aqueduct..

OH: Yes.

JL: They don't have that anymore, they just recently, the last five or six years they put down a pipeline, pipeline all the way down.

OH: Mm.

JL: But Thorndon Park is finished.

OH: Yes.

JL: They don't have any water there, and there's one thing that should have been Heritage listed – it's too late now, it's gone – but on the bottom side of the Thorndon Park Reservoir was a horse trough. It was seven or eight feet long.

OH: Yeah.

JL: And you know Athelstone is ten, ten mile from the city.

OH: Yeah.

JL: I think, from the GPO to the Athelstone Post Office is just on 10 mile I think it was, in those days, still the same, and that water trough was vital, because by the time the horses got, got home from there, they wanted a drink, and so did I when I used to go to school.

[Laughter]

JL: Yes.

OH: So I wonder where it is, somebody's garden perhaps, yeah.

JL: Beg your pardon?

OH: I wonder where it is, is it in ...

JL: Oh no, no, no, it was just in the story, yeah.

OH: Yeah. So you've mentioned some of the other families, and I was interested that you also mentioned that you grew tomatoes, because we always think these days that tomatoes grow in glasshouses.

JL: Yes.

OH: So did you use ...?

JL: We used to grow a lot of tomatoes.

OH: And did you use glasshouses or?

JL: No, no, it was all open.

OH: Open, yeah.

JL: Yes, yes. We had our little packing shed where we used to come in and tomatoes would be all graded, hand graded. My mother used to do a lot of it, and she used to do what they used to call, *row and grade*. That means put them in rows and grade them, and we used to sell a lot on the old Ghan. We used to go to Alice Springs, and they used to load the trucks and they'd go to Darwin.

OH: Mmnn

JL: And we had a regular trade with all our tomatoes, and they were picked very, very green.

OH: Oh.

JL: Yeah, picked green and they used to ripen on the way.

OH: Mm.

JL: Yeah, they'd be ready, almost ready to eat when they got there, because in those days I think it was about four days to get to Darwin.

OH: Yes, yeah.

JL: And by the time they were offloaded in Alice Springs.

OH: Yes. And so most of your vegetables they would have gone into East End Market?

JL: Yes, all of them, yeah.

OH: So were you, did you have responsibility for that?

JL: We started gardening in 1947 and in 1950 – I'm not accurate on these dates or anything – in 1953 we were carrying, we were marketing potatoes and onions, and Dad came home from market one night and called in to the doctors because he wasn't, he had a pain, and he came home and he said – and there was a load, half load of Monday's market, this is on a Friday – and he said, *The doctor's going to operate on it this afternoon.* He said, *I'm badly ruptured.*

OH: Oh!

JL: So, *You'll have to go to market*, and I didn't know anybody. I knew where our stand was, that's all I knew, and that's how I started going to market. I was very nervous. I could drive, I had a driver's license and everything, and I could drive, but I'd never driven that far before.

OH: [laughs]

JL: And not in the truck, and when I got in the market Dad had, Dad had, Dad had made arrangements. He'd rang up three or four greengrocers and there they were.

OH: Oh wonderful, yes, yeah.

JL: Yeah, yeah. They helped me, they guided me, they introduced Dad's customers to me, and actually on the next market day, which was the coming Friday, I was looking forward to going to market.

[Laughter]

OH: Yeah. Oh that's wonderful, isn't it?

JL: So I got thrown in at the deep end.

OH: Yes, yes, but obviously with a wonderful guardian angel, your father, looking after you.

JL: Yes, well it's all he could do, he rang up, because I didn't have a phone or anything, and Dad was, Dad and Mum had a phone and, and it was years before I ever got a phone.

OH: Mm, mm.

JL: And then when I started going to market, well you had to have a phone for night orders and things like that.

OH: Yeah, yeah. So talking about your father then, I believe he was quite inventive and really a bit of a scientist or agronomist?

JL: He was as far as ... mechanically he didn't know how to put two screws together, but gardening, he was, he was brilliant, he really was, and he had a cauliflower given to him, his brother gave it to him, seed of a cauliflower, and his brother said, *Look*, he said, *it's getting fairly old, they, they ...* Growing seed where there's other things like cabbages or cauliflowers in flower was very dangerous. The seeds you grew could turn out to be like broccoli, or anything but a cauliflower, and he had, he told Dad this, he said, *Look*, he said, *this seed, it would be lovely if you could improve it*, and Dad said, *Oh righto, here goes*. So he planted the first seed there and, and he took, I believe it was about 20 plants, up to Mannum. He had a friend up there, Ken Mercer his name was, he was a greengrocer, and he planted these cauliflowers, and as they grew, Dad would go up every five or six weeks and see how they were going, and he'd pull out some that were not much good he reckoned, and you'd end up with perhaps ten, and he'd say that ... We'd come home and he'd grow that seed, and from that seed he'd take 20 more, and he did that for three years, and it was grown up at the river where there was no cross-pollinisation or anything like that, and it became famous. In fact, in Europe today – oh, I don't know about today, I'm going back 20 years ago now – it is known as Y66, its code name.

OH: [laughs] That was a lovely story.

JL: Yeah, yes. I could tell you little stories about that too. I had a man came here to, do you remember when they changed all the electricity bulbs?

OH: Yes, mm.

JL: The government subsidized it all or paid for it all, or something. A man came here one day and he changed my 22 globes over to the new modern ones, and the cheaper ones to run, and all the rest of it, and he said, *What's your name here?* and I told him – he was filling out the form – he, he said, *Lomman*, he said, *Oh*, he said, *I knew a Max Lomman*. I said, *That was my father*. *Oh*, he said, *he grew a cauliflower that, that we knew a lot about*, and he said, *It was really good*. So I felt like a million dollars.

OH: That's amazing, isn't it?

JL: Yes.

OH: That someone who just comes to the house knows about it.

JL: Knew about my Dad, yes.

OH: Mm, that's right, mm, yeah.

JL: Yes.

OH: So what else have you got on your list, John?

JL: On my list?

OH: Yes.

JL: Well I've got things like – we've done the water and the land – and, and I've got things like the Institute in Athelstone. It was, because looking at it from a very young point of view, it was, everybody seemed to be friendly and happy with ... You never heard of any rows or fights, or anything like that, and the churches meant a lot, there was two

churches in Athelstone, they meant a lot. They used to ... the top end church was the Gorge Church they called it. They had their congregation and we had our congregation down at, just quite close to where the Athelstone Shopping Centre is today – that's where it used to be – and came middle of January, early February, we'd have a picnic, and the two churches used to combine, and they used to load the trucks up, trucks, with boards across for everybody to sit in the back of a truck. You couldn't see them going in the road like that today.

[Laughter]

JL: Twenty people or more, all sitting in the back of truck. We'd go down to Brighton, or Henley Beach, or Glenelg, and we'd spend the day down there having a picnic, so the community was fairly, from my eyes, was very combined and, and ...

OH: Close, I guess you could say.

JL: Close.

OH: Yes.

JL: That's was the, where I was meaning, thinking in the first place.

OH: Yes, yes.

JL: And then there was the, the school was ... we only had the one grading there, we only went to grade 7, and, because everybody went to that school in those days, and that was a big thing, you know, they'd have the school fetes and, and the women used to do the usual things, running things, you know.

OH: So there were fairs and fetes and things like that, yes.

JL: Yes, and then there was the institute which, you know, I don't know how often the dances were, but I learnt to dance there, such as my dancing was, but [laughs] ...

OH: Did they have other ... Did they ever show films and pictures at the institute?

JL: No.

OH: No. They did down at Magill but perhaps Athelstone might have been a bit smaller.

JL: Oh look, it was, there wasn't the population there would have been around Magill, no.

OH: Mm, mm. So it was mainly the dancing?

JL: Mainly dancing, and I think they used to have indoor bowls there.

OH: Uh huh.

JL: But I didn't know about it, and there was a library there, which was opened every Friday night or something, I'm not just sure, but my father, he was the caretaker there for several years, quite a few years, when I, in my early days, yeah, and then there was the football club. Well there's ... the Athelstone Football Club, there's the Campbelltown Glen Roy oval.

OH: Did you play football?

JL: No, I didn't, never played anything [laughs].

OH: You were too busy in the garden?



JL: Yeah, and we used to play, oh, Hope Valley was, they were very, very, the two teams were very opposed to each other, you know [laughs], and then getting onto the tennis, we were fairly strong with tennis. My father had several cups and things.

OH: Oh!

JL: And we used to play against Paracombe, Campbelltown, Campbelltown Church, and Tea Tree Gully. It was a circuit.

OH: Yes, yeah.

JL: And they used to, used to play tennis.

OH: So was there a cup at the end of it, a trophy of some sort?

JL: I'm not sure, I don't know, no.

OH: One of Max's caulis?

JL: No, no, it was ... I didn't know a great deal about it because I wasn't encouraged to play tennis or anything.

OH: Right, yeah.

JL: And I really wasn't interested.

OH: No.

JL: I had a rifle when I was 12 years old, and Dad taught me the security and the safety and everything. It seems young today to have had a rifle but I'd often bring home a couple of rabbits.

OH: Yes, I was going to say did you have many rabbits and things in the garden?

JL: No, not the garden.

OH: No.

JL: No, no, in the hills around the, yeah, the hills and that. Getting back to the water, can we go back?

OH: Yes.

JL: Apart from the river, there was a lot of bores, and I know where quite a few of the, the good bores were and some of the waters, but there was one on the other side of the river from Paradise Bridge there, and the water was that, it used to run up over the top of the pump.

OH: Goodness.

JL: There was a spring in it and it used to come up over the top.

OH: And it was good water?

JL: It was good water, yes.

OH: Yeah, mm.

JL: And one of the best waters was at the base of the Sugar Loaf.

OH: Right.

JL: Do you know the Sugar Loaf? There was one there, Jack Hutchinson put that down, and it wasn't very deep, there's houses over the top of it now, and that supplied, he had a big garden, and that supplied the garden there.

OH: Mm, yeah. They're very important, aren't they, the bores?

JL: Yes, and that was another source of water, yes. I thought I'd mention that. And then there's the ... I don't think there's a great deal more I can tell you about the people of Athelstone. My grandmother, she used to go to the abattoirs once a month, you know, the horses, horse and buggy, or whatever you call it ...

OH: Yeah.

JL: And she'd go around to the different growers and they'd have, they might have a little pig or two, little pig, piglets, they didn't want or something, and she'd take them out to the abattoirs, and she had a little business.

OH: OK, yeah.

JL: I think she used to get about two shillings an animal or something like that, but there wasn't, the money was not like it is today.

OH: No, no. When ... What, what were some of the real challenges that you had in the garden, you know, obviously keeping up the water in summertime, and making sure that, you know, the ...

JL: That was hard.

OH: Weather is really something that's, you know, you can't control.

JL: You can't control that. Mum and Dad would go down the garden Sunday afternoon, just go for a wander down the garden, and Dad would be looking around and he'd see something and he'd tell me next, on the Monday morning. He'd say, *Take a bucket of sulphate of ammonia and do that little patch in the corner there, it's starting to look a bit yellow.*

[Laughter]

JL: Little things he noticed about tomatoes and things that I wouldn't have.

OH: No.

JL: I learnt from it but I wouldn't have never known myself, no.

OH: He obviously had a real eye for it?

JL: Yes, he did, yes, he did.

OH: Yes, it was innate, he just knew, yes, yeah.

JL: 1952 or '53 we bought our first Ferguson tractor.

OH: Right.

JL: And this was when we started making the patches bigger.

OH: Yep.

JL: Turning three small patches into one big one, and things like that.

OH: Yes, yeah.

JL: We had, we had two tractors eventually. Dad wasn't a tractor driver, he ...

OH: He preferred the horses?

JL: Yeah.

[Laughter]

OH: Steadier and easier to control perhaps?

JL: Yes.

OH: Yes, yeah.

JL: I worked in the gardens, on the Fry's when I was eight. Saturday mornings they had, you know, to lead horses through cauliflowers and tomatoes and beans. You had a man led the horse through, led by the bridle through.

OH: Yes, yeah.

JL: And Ray Fry, he owned the biggest garden down there. He asked Dad if I'd lead the horse, and Dad said, *He's not tall enough to lead the horse*. He said, *But he can lead him off the top*. They used to jack me up and put me on the back of the horse, and I'd steer the horse through the, whatever was, we were doing, scarifying, or whatever we were doing, and I was eight years old.

OH: Laughs

[Laughter]

JL: Eventually I, I got taller and I could reach the horse's bit and I, I'd lead the horse through the rows but when I was small I couldn't.

[Laughter]

OH: Eight-year-olds are not usually very tall, are they, no. So when did you finish up, when did you retire from your gardens?

JL: Dad had a heart attack and I think it was connected to Mum's death. Mum died in, just before Christmas in 1970 and Dad was never the same, and within six months of that time, or nine months of that time, he'd had this heart attack and he couldn't do anything very much.

OH: Mm, mm.

JL: And I got offered a job, and I just walked out of the garden. The government bought it all. We were told it was going to be golf courses and recreation areas, and all this sort of thing, and people were getting, they were getting more, almost double for a block of land than what we got for an acre.

OH: Mm, mm.

JL: It was totally unfair. In fact there was a big meeting about it – this can be cut out if you need to – there was a big meeting at the Institute, and all the gardeners all along the river, they protested, but the government, they didn't listen to us.

OH: No.

JL: No.

OH: In the name of progress, yeah, yeah.

JL: Yeah.

OH: So, well I guess, you know, one of the questions I was going to say was about the changes that you've noticed in the way the land is being used, but you've really answered that with your comments about the sale of the land. Now the population of Adelaide has increased so much.

JL: Yes, yeah.

OH: I mean this is a wonderful area close to the city, and I guess it is a shame that it isn't ...

JL: Yes. Well, see the tram used to come out to Paradise.

OH: Yes, yeah.

JL: And see that was only less than three miles from where we lived.

OH: Mm.

JL: In fact I walked it quite a few times.

OH: Yes.

JL: 11 o'clock at night, Saturday nights, sometimes.

[Laughter]

OH: As you did in those days.

JL: Yes, we'd go to the pictures in the city and, you know, catch a tram, ride a pushbike, or walk.

[Laughter]

OH: As long as you didn't miss the last tram.

JL: That was right, yeah.

OH: So is there anything else you'd like to add?

JL: I don't think so. I just made a few notes that I thought might, might help us.

OH: Yes.

JL: But it's grown now, people would never realize what happened in those early days.

OH: No. Well that's one of the reasons we wanted to speak to people, yeah.

JL: I remember when I was a kid, I don't know what I counted – 26 houses or something, and that wasn't all around the shopping centre either.

OH: No.

JL: It was quite a way out, you know.

OH: Yes.

JL: But, yes, we ... During the war we lived in Maryvale Road, and right opposite, diagonally opposite our corner was a military camp, and that area from there back to Montacute Road was, I believe there was Colonel Fox.

OH: Right, yeah.

JL: A lease it was on, it was 100-year lease or what it was, 99-year lease or whatever they call it and, and until, up until that stage, 1944-45, it was practically undeveloped, and Hickinbotham moved in, and it gradually just, the township grew.

OH: Yeah, yes, yeah.

JL: Yeah, I remember a lot of it although I moved out of Maryvale Road when I was 17, and you'd go down the road and you'd see a new house going up,[laughs] or something. Right opposite the institute there's a vacant block, and that was my grandfather's. It's still vacant today, never been built on.

OH: Right, yes.

JL: So he was, he always had strawberries or something growing, all the year round. He used to grow onions and little patches of stuff, you know.

OH: Yes, yeah.

JL: But it was in his blood.

OH: Yes, yeah, came down in, into your father's blood as well, and yours. John, you mentioned that when you finished work though that you actually did go and work in the East End Market.

JL: I worked for the (H.L.) Banana Agency for 19½ years. My wife had leukaemia, and the boss came to me one day and he said, *We want you to finish up, go home and look after your wife*, and his final sentence was, *When it's all over, come back*. So I thought that was good really.

[Laughter]

OH: That's a very good reference, isn't it?

JL: Yes it is, yes. I never went back because Marg lived for another six years.

OH: Oh well that's good, mm.

JL: Yes, yeah.

OH: It would be pretty hard work too, as you get older, hard work lifting the boxes around.

JL: Yeah, yes.

OH: Well thank you very much, John, for contributing to the market garden project and, you know, it's been fascinating talking to you, and I hope that when we come to do the final exhibition that you'll be able to come along and be a star of the show.

[Laughter]

JL: I don't know about a star but I'm just, I really am pleased that I've had the opportunity. My father's sister said to me once, *We have that much knowledge between us* – this is when there was nobody left – *We should write a book*. We didn't.

OH: Well maybe this is the first part of it.

JL: Yes [laughs].

OH: Right! So thank you, John, thank you very much.

JL: Thanks very much for the opportunity.