

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

Oral history interview recorded with Jim Pierson
recorded by Di Booker on 18th January 2018
at Campbelltown, South Australia

Interview OH 1130/9

Participants:

OH: Interviewer

JP: Participant

OH: This is an interview with Jim Pierson, recorded by Di Booker on 18th January [2018] at Campbelltown. It is part of the Campbelltown City Council Oral History Project, “Our Fruitful Record, a History of Market Gardens in Campbelltown.”

So thank you very much, Jim, for agreeing to be part of this project, and look forward to hearing your story and we will talk about your involvement with the market gardens and also your family’s. So can we start by talking about the family?

JP: Well I guess my forefathers immigrated from Cambridgeshire, England, and my great, great grandfather was James Pierson who migrated from Cambridgeshire and set up property at “Reedbeds”, South Australia.

OH: Whereabouts is Reedbeds?

JP: It’s down Henley Beach way. And my great grandfather was Smith Pierson who lived in James Street, Campbelltown. And he was a councillor, I believe, in 1888.

OH: So one of the early councillors?

JP: A JP, I think, in (the) 1880s. And he and his wife had 12 children, one of which died, one of which was James Benjamin Pierson was my grandfather, and he established a property on Glynde Road. Now the family had an inheritance from England which enabled them all to buy a property and set up. And that’s where the history more or less started from. So my father was born on Glynde Road, Alfred James Smith Pierson.

OH: So when was he born?

JP: 1907. And my grandfather had a market garden on Glynde Road. My father, as a young man, went up to the Adelaide Hills, Carey Gulley, cleared land and established a property up there, which he grew all sorts of crops, fruit crops, vegetables, everything. One of the main problems up there was a very shortage of water, they spent a lot of money digging wells trying to find additional water. My grandfather died and my father ran his property in the Adelaide Hills at Carey Gully and also ran his mother's property, who it belonged to then, on Glynde Road. He did that for a number of years, and it got too much so he sold the property up in Carey Gully and worked for his mother. Well, those days when the parents died, the siblings never knew who was going to get what, it wasn't talked about. My father was left the property on Glynde Road, from where he then expanded. He bought the property next door, or had a property across the road, opposite the Lutheran church, and also had, they had five acres up the corner of Reid Avenue and Glynde Road.

OH: How many acres altogether?

JP: He had eight acres on Glynde Road, five acres up the corner of Reid Avenue and Glynde Road, and three and a half acres at the corner of Lewis Road and Glynde Road. So that's where he was operating from when I was born, and as a young person. So from there, it went on and gradually urban development came along and he thought he would expand, he bought a property in James Street, Campbelltown. Hence my great grandfather lived in James Street, so he bought a property off Wilton Brothers down the end of James Street, which was 14 acres of market garden, and he had another I think it was two-three acres across the road on the river where the sheds were situated. But he'd already sold off, then, the property on Reid Avenue and the property on Lewis Road. So he had eight acres on Glynde Road, and the 14 acres down at James Street (East Marden), where he operated there.

OH: Is that where the golf course is now?

JP: That's where the golf course is. The clubrooms was, that was our home, was built in the late 50's. I sort of spent my early childhood on Glynde Road, then my youth in James Street. So that's where we were from. Now, I was educated at Urrbrae Agricultural High School, I went there for three years.

OH: Let's just go back a step. So when were you born, Jim?

JP: 1943.

OH: And before you went to Urrbrae, did you go to local primary schools?

JP: Yes, I went to St Morris Primary School. Myself and my sisters went to St Morris Primary school, we rode our bikes there. For some reasons our parents didn't want us to go

to Payneham Primary School, for whatever reason, I do not know, but never mind, that's what happened. So that was background, my beginnings. Well then the situation arose where the proposed O-Bahn busway was going to be built and that was going to traverse diagonally through our property at James Street, Campbelltown. Which meant it would be inoperable. Dad was approached by the Government buyer, who wanted to acquire the property. In the meantime, knowing was going to happen, we'd bought a property in Virginia, 41 and a half acres, and I might add when I left school my father did not want me to come into the business. We had long arguments about it, and I was determined, and he was determined, but eventually for better or worse, I won out.

OH: Often it's the other way around isn't it, the father wants the son to come and the son doesn't?

JP: Yeah, yeah, but he'd been through the Depression, the Second World War, he'd been through extremely hard and difficult times, and he made a good living, and he worked very hard and was very successful. But anyhow, the long and the short of it was we bought the property at Virginia and began to develop that. In the meantime, the Government had acquired our property at James Street, with the exception of the home and the sheds.

OH: So what year was that?

JP: That would have been in the 1960's, I can't tell you exactly what year it was. I would say it would have been in the early 1960's (was 4 July 1961). So that meant the demise of that property, where we did rent it back off the government for a number of years, but we found that it was just inoperable to run three properties at Glynde Road, James Street and Virginia. So Dad eventually sold the Glynde Road place. Prior to selling it, some time prior to that, the Hectorville Drive-In was built and they took a piece of Dad's land and they had that for many years, which they paid him rent for. But he eventually sold the whole property to the people who had the drive-in theatre. So it meant we had two properties, James Street and Virginia. We gradually developed Virginia and we gradually moved everything out there. We bought more lands subsequent to that, we bought another further 20 acres, another further 20 acres, so we had 80 acres out there where we grew potatoes initially and then we went on to grow potatoes and celery. Then we proceeded, because we had the spare land plus 20 acres of almond trees and then further to that we bought, with my two cousins, bought another 20 acres out there, which we planted, and another 20 acres of almonds. And by this time, our young trees, we harvested the first crop by hand, and it was just the advent of mechanical harvesting for almonds, and there were three other growers and myself, we all combined to buy pieces of equipment in order to mechanically harvest the almonds. We sub-contracted to each other, which meant that the hand harvesting was no longer taking place.

So we gradually expanded so when my father passed away and I think it was 1975, I'm pretty sure it was '75, I stopped growing potatoes, then to reassess my operation, and then went on just to grow celery and almonds. A year later my two cousins, Des and Jeff Kimber joined me, in the partnership. We went on to expand the celery production, and we planted more almonds until they decided to retire in 1998. Jeff decided to retire and I decided to dissolve the partnership at that point in time.

OH: Because the Kimber's also market-gardened in Campbelltown didn't they?

JP: Oh yes, they were originally in Athelstone and they lost their property when their grandmother passed away and it was left to their uncle who then wanted to dispose of the property, so they virtually had nowhere else to go. And I offered them an opportunity which they accepted, and we went on for 22 years together at Virginia.

OH: That's good. So getting back to Campbelltown, and this area, so what were the crops that you were growing here?

JP: Well Dad originally grew, as a child he grew mainly cauliflowers, it was all the winter crop. Then he grew carrots, he grew some lettuce at times, grew some pumpkins over the summer. But the principal crop was cauliflowers, as a small child, that was. And then when he brought the property at James Street from Wilton Brothers, he started to grow celery, they were growing celery, so he expanded into celery production both there and on the Glynde Road. But originally he grew cauliflowers. And again, when he brought the property at James street, we started to grow potatoes as well, and we grew sweet corn, so a mixture of things.

OH: So what was the soil like?

JP: Well James Street was river loam, I would say there'd be 60% of the soil was beautiful, rich loam, and the other was river silt, which wasn't very good soil. It grew certain things quite well but it wasn't good, the heavy river loam was really good, but the silty soil wasn't so good. It easy to work and everything like that, but it was just, it just wasn't as good a soil where we carted all sorts of animal manure on it, and all sorts to try and build it up. But it wasn't too bad really. But Glynde Road was red brown earth, which is heavy clay soil, very difficult to work.

OH: Especially when it's wet.

JP: Yes, absolutely. But it grew good produce. The problem on the Glynde Road was the water supply wasn't good, the water was very, very poor quality, but it didn't seem to affect the crops we grew because of the heavy soil, there wasn't a lot of water there.

OH: So did you drop bores?

JP: We had one bore on the Glynde Road. The property up at Reid Avenue had a pipeline from the Glynde Road, through the neighbour's properties to that property. Because those days, everything was trench irrigated. Down in James Street, we went to sprinkler irrigation as well as flood irrigation.

OH: So were you able to take water out of the river?

JP: No we didn't. We were one property back from the river, we had one bore down there and we had a very good well. The well never let us down, summer, winter, drought, flood, we could extract 5000 gallons an hour out of that well. So that was the mainstay of the irrigation down there.

OH: How often did you water? Was it once a day, once a week?

JP: Well it depends on the time of the year, you know, when you grew celery, when you first transplanted it out, you water every day and then every couple of days. Just depending on the weather. That was always a horrible job of mine, trench irrigating, because you had the water, you had to run it down the trenches, get it to the end of the rows and not to waste it, and you'd be standing there in the heat watering it. It was try to water everything up Saturday so you didn't have to do too much on Sundays. But it took a lot of time.

OH: So I guess the difference now with the property out at Virginia, you must have huge differences in the way you water?

JP: Everything's totally different. Now we've got 100 acres of almonds, they've got all permanent under-tree sprinklers, and the sprinklers are run by computers, the pumps start up of a night time.

OH: Somebody told me that you can turn them on and off from here?

JP: That's correct. I can run it from the computer at home, and we can see how much water the pumps are pumping, and they've got safety systems built in if they're over the flow rate or under the flow rate by 14%, it will shut down the system. We have soil moisture monitors, we can monitor the soil, the depth of the moisture in the soil, and the salinity in the soil. And we irrigate of a night time, we irrigate every three days, and so we're able to –

OH: So you can really admire people like your grandparents and yourself in the early days to be able to judge just what was needed by looking at the soil and how the crops were going rather than relying on technology?

JP: Well that's true, but it's like second nature to you, you just knew what to do. Now, to try and explain to somebody, it's very difficult because you grew up with it, you grew with it, and you do things without even thinking, because of your second nature to do what you've got to do. And of course, those days there were no herbicides, we had to hand-hoe the celery, cultivate the cauliflowers, and hoe the weeds and insecticides were dusted on, or in the celery's case we sprayed on, a little crawler tractor with a tank and a boom, we sprayed that. The fungicides were the main problem there. But it was a much simpler life, but it was a lot of hard work.

OH: Yes, and especially in hot weather, and the winter, when it's raining?

JP: Oh yes, yeah well, it didn't make any difference whether it was pouring rain or not, you went out and you had to cut your load for market, it had to be done, no matter what the weather.

OH: So did you employ other people to work in the gardens?

JP: Yes, when I left school, Dad had three men full-time and we had casual labour as well, we employed some Italian ladies to help, and on the weekends we always had three or four Italian immigrants, these are young guys that immigrated from Italy and it was their second job. Bearing in mind, a lot of those young people come out from Italy had to borrow money to get their fare to get to Australia, so their second job helped them establish themselves. And of course coming from Italy after the Second World War, money meant nothing to them, currency, that's why as soon as they got enough money, they always bought property. Because property was always there. These guys were very good, they worked well, we'd have three or four every Saturday and sometimes Sunday mornings to finish off what we had to do. And I used to have to work with them and I was sort of the pace-maker when we come to hoeing celery and that sort of thing. And I would stagger back home Saturday night absolutely exhausted, but you know, it was good, you know? And you'd never want to see your son work like a lot of us guys had to work those days.

OH: So did it leave you time for a social life?

JP: Eventually. Work was always first, you know? If you had any time for social life, that always had to come second.

OH: So what was happening in the community, what did you do?

JP: I never participated in sport, because at that time, when I was young we were starting Virginia so my spare time was out there on the weekends. So I never participated in sport. In fact once we started out there, I was an absolute stranger in my district for 20 years, you

sort of get in the car and go to work out there and come home, it was family and work, there was nothing in between. So you know, it was a different time.

OH: So for your father and your grandfather, what sort of things were happening in the community? I mean how did you meet girls?

JP: I used to go to the local Norwood Dance and different other things around the place of a night time. There was days at the Findon, the Fiesta Villa and different other venues. Used to go out of a night time, Norwood Dance was always very good of a Thursday night, well I could only go there of a summer time because during the winter I'd be going to market. You go there Saturday nights and so you know, you sort of went out on week nights, not week nights so much as weekends.

OH: But what sort of community involvement, then, did your parents have, where did they meet?

JP: Well I'm not quite sure really. I think probably my father met my mother through his cousin, but I'm not quite sure. Dad was very involved with horses, harness horses. He, over his lifetime, had a lot of very good horses, very successful horses.

OH: Where did he keep those?

JP: Well, he usually had trainers that kept them. And my earliest days, he always had a horse at home, but then with his business, he never had time to do much with them, so he had trainers train them. So that was his big thing, in the latter part of life he was a member of all the trotting clubs, the racing clubs, that was his life, he loved his horses.

OH: Most people who are involved with horses do, don't they?

JP: Yeah, yeah, they're very passionate about it.

OH: There's something about that relationship between man and horse.

JP: You know, as a small child, Dad always had horses at home, we had the draught horse, Clydesdale, for working the market garden. Dad bought a little ransom crawler tractor, that came in the gate one day, and the horse went out the gate at the end of the week, because that replaced the horse.

OH: So what year was that, or round about?

JP: In the early 1950's, about 1952 or 3 I think. But it would have been about then, because I think I was driving it when I was 8 years old, I used to sit on it and drive it and

harrow the ground and roll the ground, in preparation for it to be drilled out and trenches to plant the celery etc.

OH: So it was just a small tractor?

JP: Well we had a bigger tractor that did the ploughing, all the heavy work, but this was a small tractor to do all the, cultivated between the crop rows.

OH: Manoeuvred well?

JP: Yeah, which I've got photos of. We had a number of those over the years. But that eliminated the horse.

OH: So when you were planting, did you have some mechanism for planting out?

JP: Yes it was called a trowel and a finger and bend your back. Because when Dad was growing cauliflowers, they always saved their seed, they had their different varieties, all the growers had their different varieties that come in different times of the year. They used to save the seed, select the particular selection, and save the seed and they grew the seedlings in seedbeds, then transplanted them out. We used to run the water down trenches for the cauliflowers, so you used to use a trowel just to pull the wet soil apart and drop the plant in. It was all flood irrigation. Then with celery we used to run the water down the trenches. We, again, used to grow our own seedlings, you'd select them out of the seed bed, and leave the weaker plants and feed the best plants, and you'd transplant, you'd cut the tips of the tap root off and cut the tops off, and then you'd finger plant them in the mud.

So it's been head down and backside up and you know, you'd start planting celery in December, late December and you plant right through until early April, you'd plant every week so you'd have a continuity of supply come in when you started to harvest every week. So it's very, very important to get your planting done so you had that continuity of supply.

OH: So were there spreadsheets around the kitchen table where you organised the year to work out when things were happening or was it just intuition?

JP: No, it was all in the head, it was all intuition. The only books they had was a book to know when to plant the seed beds, always had a date when they planted the seed beds, for different varieties, and that was always kept in the seed box, which was a steel trunk where they used to keep all the seed in hessian bags. So I went through the stage in my early days, we used to select our particular heads of celery and save them for seed, and collect the seed. In latter times, you just bought the commercial seed, hybrid seed etc, but again, back in the early days, growers had their own varieties and they would jealously guard those varieties and that was there.

OH: I'm amazed at the amount of, how Campbelltown became known as the celery centre, and you know, just how much celery for example, was grown there.

JP: Well in my early days, they used to send train-loads of celery to Melbourne, then later it used to go Sydney, they used to send it in ice-cars, the celery would go down to the cold stores and be pre-cooled, be stacked in cars which were rail cars, stacked up with ice in the ends to keep it cool. That was the early days, when it used to go to Sydney. But Melbourne, we used to go down to, we used to go at least twice a week to Melbourne. We used to send, to send up to a trainload to Melbourne. But what happened, eventually the growers in Melbourne got hold of some of the varieties and gradually started to grow it and started to persevere with it. And the climatic difference over there enabled them, eventually, to grow all year round. They tolerated a lot of losses in the early summer, late spring, when it used to bolt and go to seed. They tolerated that and they persevered and persevered and eventually developed varieties where they could grow all year around. So there's practically no celery grown here in South Australia now, very small amount. The biggest growers in Australia are in Melbourne.

OH: Really? But using the ancestors, the seeds that came from here.

JP: Well to start with, but nowadays, they save some of their own, but there's a lot of imported seed, hybrid varieties now, that are grown now, but they've got a huge market in Victoria in itself, and Sydney and Canberra, which is not too distant. These days the cost of freighting is a very, very big drawback, and plus the fact that, because of our climatic conditions, it's difficult to grow all year round here in this state.

OH: So where did you sell the crops, Jim? Did you go into the East End Market?

JP: Yes. I was sent in there when I was 18, my father said to me, I've been doing for 30 years, you're doing it. It's not a matter of will you do it, you're doing it, and you will do this and that, and everything else. So strict guidelines, and my instructions were never to cut the price, because those days, believe it or not, different commodity groups had price fixing committees, and they had a committee, and the [South Australian] Fruitgrowers' and Market Gardeners' Association had these various price-fixing committees, and the growers would get together and organise what prices they charge for the produce, and that's what they stuck by, and you knew if someone cut the price, the word would get around quickly, and it worked very well. But it started to break down as more and more of the ethnic growers came into the market, they tended to be panic sellers, they had to shift their load no matter what, and it tended to break it down. Of course now it's illegal to have such a thing. But all the growers had their customers, because those days when I first went to market, there was a lot of hawkers, they used to call them, they were retailers that go to door to door, just like shop keepers, and all the country towns had fruit and veg shops, and this is before the

Woolworths and the Coles and the supermarkets came in. Some of those country towns had very, very big operations in the fruit and veg shops there. And they were very good customers to have too, because they'd, in most cases, only buy the quality produce and it worked very well. But with the advent of the supermarkets, it started to begin the demise of the growers, as I see it, because the pressure's back on the growers.

OH: And to cut the prices as well, probably.

JP: Well yeah, they always pressurised, because they were big buyers and wanted to buy better etc., etc., but the case is such now that I believe that supermarkets only really want to deal with the big operators, the smaller growers, the rats and mice so to speak, they don't want to be bothered with. They either deal with merchants or agents that handle big quantities of produce that supply all year around, or bigger growers that supply all year round. And so this is where it's at, I believe.

OH: Times move on, don't they?

JP: Yes.

OH: So did you have any specific contracts with manufacturers?

JP: No, never.

OH: So you just sold through the markets?

JP: Yes, and we always tried to sell to as many customers, whether they were very small, big, or everywhere in-between. It was always better to have a full book of customers because if you lose one or two you haven't lost much, but if you're dealing with two or three big ones, you lose one, it's a big hit.

OH: I don't know if you've got photos, but I've seen photos of trucks of cauliflowers with thousands of cauliflowers.

JP: I've got them, yeah.

OH: I don't know, how did they stay on the back of the truck?

JP: Not a problem. I could stack a load.

OH: And how long would it take to stack a load?

JP: Oh well, those days, cauliflowers grew, and of course, you used to go through and cut what were called the fit cauliflowers, the ones that were ready, they weren't all ready at the same time. Today the hybrid varieties tend to come ready all at once, but those days, you'd have to cut through maybe two, three or four times, and you carry them out to the end where you had a track, where you could stack them up, and get in there with a truck to load them up. That's how it was done. It wouldn't matter if it was pouring with rain, you're bogged up to your knees, you still had to cut the load and get them out and get them loaded up.

OH: The market didn't stop did it?

JP: The market didn't stop.

OH: And so I guess it seems as though from what you're saying that the market itself was a fairly close community of growers?

JP: It was, because the growers that used to attend the market, and I'm going back as a child, it was like a meeting place of growers, as well as your customers and everything, and in the days of the market, when I went there, it was very controlled, all the growers had their stands within the market. We had a stand in the market, which we paid rent for, and you had to be in the market by a certain time, and you weren't allowed to touch your load until 7.00, the siren went. Prior to that, you'd be in there and you'd see all your customers, they'd do all their ordering and buying, and some would pay for it as they ordered, others would pay for it when they collected it or you delivered it to their trucks, or had it delivered to their trucks. Some would run an account, so it was a whole mixture of things happening. And 7.00 when the siren went, it was all hell broke loose, the trucks would all come down out the lofts, the hand trucks, the green grocers, and truckies we'd call them, you'd pay somebody to deliver your produce to the various retailers or wherever, all hell would break loose, and it would be absolutely bedlam for a couple of hours.

OH: So what happened when the market closed? Where did you go after that?

JP: Well I'd finished going to market prior to it closing, so I'd stopped going. At the time we were growing celery and going to market, I spent years semi-conscious, just so dog tired, and we had the opportunity, a large grower of celery, they'd stopped growing and we had the opportunity to fill that gap, and exporting to Sydney. And I stopped growing (going to the market) then and we started to send it, all our produce to Sydney. We still had one or two local customers, but they used to come to the farm and pick it up. But that was a big relief for me, but the other thing I found, I spent about 20 hours a week in marketing, delivering, running into the market, and I said to my father at the time, look I have more time, we'll be able to grow more. And he said look, he said make sure whatever you grow you can manage it, don't try and grow too much, and the difference being home, working with the men was just unbelievably better, the productivity was better. Not that the men were bludging, don't

get me wrong, they worked well, it's just that you're with them, and you started to have time to think because you weren't so dog tired, and you can think and plan and get a strategy on what you were doing. Then we exported to Sydney for a number of years, and then in the latter part, we had merchants here that were supplying, one was supplying Coles and one supplying Woolworths, they sought produce from us, and we supplied them, and also supplied Sydney, so we had those three arms operating. But that worked very well, trying to balance it all out, so we never let anyone down, it was sometimes a bit difficult when things got a bit short.

OH: So your children, are they involved?

JP: My son is. My son left school and he didn't want to do anything for a year, he'd had school, he went to St Peter's College from the Year 5 through to the end. And he was mates with skateboarders and created havoc around the place on his skateboard, and of course he needed to earn some pocket money, so he'd come out to work two or three days a week, and just earn some pocket money. So after one year I said to him: "Look, this is not much good to you, it's not much good to me, I'll tell you what I'd do, if you're interested, you can have a job full time, starting February next year." I said: "You'll be under no obligation, if you can find something better to do, to go. But if you stay, you'll have a car, and that'll be yours, you'll be on a salary, you won't get paid overtime, remember we go to work, we've got to get our work done before we go home. No overtime, no nothing, that's the situation." So I said to him, and so he said: "Oh, I may as well." So he stayed, so eventually I said when my cousins in the partnership dissolve, I immediately made him 50% share of the business. So that's where he's at today. So it's entirely up to him, I'm only there for him in this day and age.

OH: So are his children likely to continue?

JP: No, he's not married, not yet unfortunately.

OH: I think that's always a problem isn't it, with family businesses, is that inheritance, you know, knowing who the succession is going to, what's going to happen to it.

JP: Yeah well, you know, I've got no control over that, my children know exactly what happens to me, who gets what, they know exactly what's situated there. So you know, what he does, that's entirely up to him because if he wasn't interested and wasn't there, I wouldn't be there. I don't need to be there.

OH: No, no. So you haven't really retired, Jim?

JP: No, well, I'll only retire when he sacks me, or he buries me, or I can't do it.

OH: Probably the latter might be coming first.

JP: Well that's possible too.

OH: When you just can't do it anymore.

JP: But you know, one has to do something, some people, well, a lot of people retire, can't wait to retire because they've got a whole lot of things they want to do, and do it, which is great. I guess I'm not quite in that situation. So I've got my other hobbies, so it's alright.

OH: That's good. So when we met before, you mentioned that there was a bit of, well quite a bit of angst about the sale of the land to the Government back in the 60's and 70's?

JP: Yes, well, at the time we knew they were going to want the property, because the O-Bahn was going to come diagonally through. My father's solicitor was Sir Keith Wilson, and he consulted with Sir Keith (who) said: "Whatever you do, refer them to me. Wait until they come knocking on the door", which happened. Anyhow, my father just referred the lands buyer, or the Government buyer to his solicitor, to Sir Keith Wilson. So anyhow, they were in negotiation over the price they were going to pay for the property, and a friend of Dad's had just sold nearby and Dad asked him what he got for his land, and that particular time, he just got the highest price of any land sold in the area. Dad rang up the solicitor and they were in negotiations, and the Government buyer who was wanting to pay substantially less, and Dad said: "Well, so and so just sold his land for this amount, that's what we require." And: "Oh yes, that's correct", and just paid the money, which at that time was a lot of money. And it was just at the end of a real estate boom, we had booms and busts those days, and it was right at the end, and after that, everything went quiet.

But I can remember quite clearly when growers in Campbelltown on 10-acre properties were selling out for I think it was £2,000 an acre, £20,000 (in total) my mother saying to my father, those lucky people, all that money, you know? Which seemed a fortune. And I was old enough to recollect some of those growers retired, within a very few years, they never had enough money to live on. Some of the wise people invested in flats or something, they weren't so bad. Some of these other people had to go and get part-time jobs to live. I never, ever forgot that. And money devalues if you don't invest it correctly, it devalues. So you know, that's happened with my family too. So that was, you know, but gradually, as you know, all of Campbelltown, Athelstone, were all market gardens, was sold up. Because you know, people got older and they just wanted to get out, and it's an opportunity to sell out. Some of us were too stupid and kept on going.

OH: I don't think so. So it is a huge change for this area, when you think about it, and just in the space of our lifetime.

JP: Oh, absolutely. Like I can remember as a boy riding all over the district, to Highbury, to Athelstone, Norwood, all over the place, we used to ride our bikes everywhere. And we were just, you just run free, you know, it was so different. And it seemed that, my parents always had two cows at home for the family, Dad used to have to milk them or one of his employees milked them when he went to market. And Mum used to separate the milk for the cream, used to take the cream to Farmers Union, you know? And the household was almost self-sustaining to a degree.

OH: So there were chickens as well?

JP: Yes, yes, yeah, and my mother always had help in the house, twice a week, because my Dad's mother lived with us until she passed away. Mum always had help in the house twice a week to clean and do the washing. So you know, my childhood, we were fairly affluent, the fact that we had a car, we had a telephone, we had a fridge, and when I'm talking, I'm talking the late 40's, and you had neighbours that never had a car, they had the ice-man come, they never had a washing machine, we were just that much better off in that situation. But the sad part about those days, the most terrible part was there was the day of death duties, and I know that when my grandfather died, they were fortunate enough to have enough money to pay the death duties and retain the property. And when my grandmother died, they were able to have enough money to pay the death duties to retain the property. And they're the most shocking taxes that anyone can ever have. Because I know at the time they were bought in, and the fact was to redistribute the wealth. The wealth gets redistributed naturally, as the families grow, get to the third generation, and it goes. So for anyone on the land where they have a high capital input in their property to maintain their livelihood, it's the most shocking tax of all taxes.

OH: Yes, well it's good that it's no longer with us.

JP: Well, we hope it will never come back, but who knows?

OH: People in Britain still seem to have to struggle with it.

JP: Yes, yeah. And in the US too in the past, yes.

OH: Is there anything else that you want to add to the interview at all? I've come to the end of my questions, but you might have some.

JP: No, well I can remember as a small child, what is now the Campbelltown Oval was the Glenroy Oval, Dad was on a committee, a progress committee and a group of local growers used to meet down there to organise the trotting track and enhance the facilities down there. They used to have a Show once a year which was magic, you know, all the growers used to exhibit, have an exhibition of their produce, it all used to be judged, they had trotting, they

had all horses in action, all the local growers used to get together on the progress committee and organise it all, and it was a huge event in Campbelltown. All the machinery sales people had their little displays of tractors etc.

OH: So it was like a mini Adelaide Show?

JP: It was, it was.

OH: A regional Adelaide Show I suppose, really.

JP: Yeah, it was a mini Adelaide Show, and it used to be one Saturday a year.

OH: What time of the year?

JP: Look, it was in the spring as far as I can tell.

OH: September or something, when the weather was better?

JP: Yeah it was in the springtime, because it wouldn't have been in the summer, I'm pretty sure it was in the spring.

OH: But probably at a time when you guys weren't so busy? If there was ever such a time.

JP: No, I think everyone was busy, but it was a big event and everyone made the effort. It was very much a community event.

OH: So when did that stop?

JP: Look, I can't tell you the date that stopped.

OH: I'll have to do some research on that.

JP: Yeah, I'm not sure, but at the time it was a very big event.

OH: So were there other community events like that?

JP: No, no, not that I know of.

OH: I remember reading in the newspapers, the really old newspapers, that there used to be a parade, but I think that was going back to the –

JP: I've got photos of that. So that would be back in the early 1900's, yeah. That was in town, that was at the market.

OH: But run by the people from this area?

JP: Yeah, the boys from Payneham. Yeah, because they were all market gardeners, all the whole area right around, were market gardens. So I can remember Dad had friends over at Firle, had big operations over there, in their day. It was a real community.

OH: Well when you look around at the community and I catch the bus that goes down into town through the Firle area, I mean the houses are all similar age, the ones that are left, and you know, so you can see that there was obviously development at certain times.

JP: Where the K-Mart is there used to be a market garden there, the chap used to grow cauliflowers there, and right opposite, where Domino's Pizza is, and that land between there and the other road, there was people from the Adelaide Hills had that property called Richardson's, and they used to grow swedes there every year, they used to plant them and they'd have one big sprinkler, just to water them a bit, and they virtually grow wild. They used to come and grow them there every year over the winter.

OH: You had the land where the shops are now on Glynburn Road?

JP: Yes. It's right opposite where Sprint Auto Electrical is, in there. Yeah, I've got a picture of the home there. We had the land there and across the corner on Lewis Road, this triangular piece that was there, opposite the Lutheran Church, on Lewis Road, we had that land. Then up the road, on the corner of Reed Avenue and Glynde Road, there was five acres up there too. That's where when I was a boy that's the property Dad had. And of course then up to Glynde Road there was the Ryan's had a peach orchard, the Elliot's had a peach orchard, and up on the main road here, of course a tram went up to Paradise, up the top there was old Mick Daley who was the mayor of Campbelltown had a peach orchard, the Campbelltown Police Station was just up on the hill there where I got my driver's licence. And down here where the community centre is, ARC, there was market gardens in there. And down James Street, of course we were down there, the Shepherd's were down there, and we were down there, Frisbee Smith's, Amadio's were down through this area, old Giovanni Amadio. He was a character.

OH: They named the street after him?

JP: Yeah, well yeah, that's right, yeah, because I knew him as a lad.

OH: So talking about fruit, because most of the people, I think, we're interviewing, seemed to have been more in the vegetable growing area, so obviously the peaches grew well around here?

JP: Yes, they did, they did. Mr Amadio grew very good peaches. My grandfather used to grow oranges in James Street apparently, so I see in one of the previous books.

OH: Actually I think I saw in an old newspaper, something about apricots as well.

JP: More than likely, yeah, they would have grown apricots, I would think. Dad, when he was in the Adelaide Hills, he grew most everything up there, he's grown in his lifetime, he grew everything conceivable, even tobacco. During the Depression, they made money out of growing gladioli flowers. And I can still remember as a small child, they used to grow them in the hills and bring them down and store them in the cellar in buckets of water, because it was cool. And he used to take them to market and of course, all hell used to break loose after market, all these buckets of water without flowers, and people would get drenched, you know, they'd walk past and grab a bucket of water. But you know, I'm going back to my very small childhood, and you can just vaguely remember all those things.

OH: They would have been heavy.

JP: They were kerosene tins actually, you know a square four-gallon tins and you always had a certain amount of water in the bottom for the flowers to sit in.

OH: But just one sprig of gladioli's, it is a very heavy flower.

JP: Oh yeah, beautiful flowers, yeah, beautiful flowers, because they used to pick them when they just started. And of course, by keeping them in the cellar, it kept them in a controlled environment, so to speak, cooler down there, because there's no cold stores or cool rooms in those days. So it was all different. And of course, when you go to the market your Dad had a lot of different customers, there were all sorts of characters you dealt with. Oh, there was some larrikins too, you know? It was a hilarious area to be involved in. But people had personalities, you know, and you had that rapport with a lot of different people which today you don't seem to have.

OH: Well I guess it wasn't just a grower/client relationship that you had with those people either, it was much closer probably?

JP: Oh yes, yes. And of course you've got to remember too, a lot of those guys come out of the World War II, they come through the Depression, they come through shocking times. But of course, you know they made the most of life, as best they could.

OH: I think we're lucky in our generation, the times we've had. Much easier to live in.

JP: Oh yes, you know, we've had a free ride so to speak, compared to those guys, you know? I can remember my Dad saying in the Depression, like he was in the Adelaide Hills, and he said it was terrible, he said you'd drive your men like slaves, he said I never, ever put off men during the winter, I always kept them employed, but he said you had to work so damned hard and hope the hell you had enough money at the end of week to buy a packet of tobacco. The men always got paid, but it was terrible. He said you'd go to market and he used to have a guy running around trying to sell to help him, because they had to grab every sale they could get, and it was just very, very hard.

OH: And a lot of men on the road, getting work for all over the place?

JP: Well, I can remember too, people would come in and see whether they could chop some wood to earn some money. And then rabbitos used to come to sell some rabbits, yeah, I can just vaguely remember that. And the guys would come down from the river, they'd been fishing to sell some fish, the hawkers would come around with Rawleigh's products on their motorbike and side-car, and that's how they all managed to get a living.

OH: My mother didn't see her father for a couple of years during the Depression because he was on the road trying to get work. So it had an effect on everybody, didn't it?

JP: Well that's right, my mother's brothers went over on the west coast rabbiting, trying to exist, you know? But it made better people out of them at the end of the day.

OH: More resilient.

JP: Oh yeah, tough people, yeah.

OH: Well I think, unless you've got something else you'd like to contribute to this interview, but we can call it a day.

JP: Yeah, that's fine.

OH: And thank you very much, Jim.

JP: Yeah I think probably some photographs here I've got, will fill in a few gaps.

OH: Yeah, we'll go through those, and yeah, we'll do that. So thank you very much, Jim, for giving up your time today.

JP: I hope it's of some use anyhow.

OH: I think it's been good, thank you very much.