

CAMPBELLTOWN CITY COUNCIL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

A Fruitful Record – A History of Market Gardeners in Campbelltown

Oral history with Maria Mateucci recorded by Maria Crisci on 13 December 2017

at Paradise, South Australia

Interview OH 1130/4

Also present is Armando Matteucci (Maria's husband)

- OH: (Oral Historian) Maria, thank you, thank you for taking part in this market gardening oral history project.
- MM: (Maria Matetucci) That's alright.
- OH: What is your full name?
- MM: Maria Matteucci.
- OH: And what is your date of birth?
- MM: The 15/11/1940.
- OH: Were you, where were you, were you born in Australia? Where were you born?
- MM: No, I was born in Italy.
- OH: Italy, yeah.
- MM: Le Marche, Ascoli Piceno.
- OH: And what is your Dad's name?
- MM: Mario Canala.
- OH: And your Mum?
- MM: Grazia Canala.
- OH: What was her maiden name before Canala?
- MM: Seghetti..
- OH: And she was also from the Marche region?
- MM: Yeah, yeah, but not the same region, she was from Castel di Lama.
- OH: Okay. Was it close by or?
- MM: Yeah, about eight kilometres.
- OH: And do you have any brothers or sisters?
- MM: Yes, I've got three brothers and a sister.
- OH: Younger or older than you?

MM: Two younger and two older.
OH: Okay! So you're in the middle.
MM: I'm in the middle [laughs].
OH: And when did your Dad come to Australia?
MM: He came in 1949.
OH: And did he come on his own, or ...?
MM: Yes, on his own, and there was an uncle here, Virginia, he had a garden at Virginia, and he did gardening with my uncle.
OH: And what was his name?
MM: Sante Canala.
OH: He was a Canala too. Why did you, why did your father migrate to Australia?
MM: Because they had a farm, they lived on there but there was no chance for making money or anything, so they decided to come to Australia for a better future. There was no work so they decided, he decided to come and see how things were, mm.
OH: Did his uncle call him or he ...?
MM: No, no, yeah he did *l'hai fatto*¹, yeah, he asked him to come over and try.
OH: So you said you were born in Italy – how old were you when you came out to Australia?
MM: I came out, I was the and a half.
OH: So you were ten and a half.
MM: Mm.
OH: So, and who did you come with? Did you come for ...?
MM: I came with my mother, my mother and Marino, Giuseppe and Giulio was born in Australia. My eldest brother, Fredo, he came in Australia the year after, 1950 with another Marchegiano² came too and went to Virginia and worked at Virginia.
OH: So you came a year after your father?
MM: Yeah, a year after, and we came in 1951.
OH: 1951, so a year after that. When, when you first arrived, who did you live with?
MM: We lived at Virginia, this old house, one of those old pumps to pump for the water, no electricity; it was quite an old house at, at Virginia. For a year we lived at Virginia and then we shifted to Paradise.
OH: Tell me what it was like when you lived in Virginia before you came here.
MM: We started school at Virginia; we did a year at school. It was hard because you didn't know the language and there wasn't many Italians there, you know, but I think

¹ An Italian expression meaning “he did it”.

² *Marchegiano* is the term given to a person who comes from Le Marche

when you're young you don't see a lot of things that, you know, that you would see as you get older, yeah.

OH: So what would you remember, what childhood memories would you have?

MM: Well, we used to go to uncle a lot, you know, and the men would be playing cards and the women would be cooking, and we'd always be helping in the kitchen, yeah, but they were good, they were good times because there was always something go on there, you know, something, games, *bocce*³. The kids would play together, there'll always be people there too, there was always friends coming from Adelaide. It was, it was quite a good time.

OH: And what can you remember about your neighbourhood, what, what was there?

MM: Nothing, just the farm next door. That was on a farm sort of just out, just out Australian, couldn't remember their name yeah, and I remember that we went to church because they were Catholic, and she gave Mum a hat to wear because everybody wore hats to church. She just ... yeah, yeah.

OH: And were there any other children your age besides your siblings?

MM: Ah not around there, no, no, nobody in that school, we'd see them at school, and we walked to school which would be about I reckon five kilometres, we walked to school every day, mm.

OH: And then your sister was born, how many years after?

MM: She was born 1954 here in Paradise.

OH: Paradise, okay.

MM: Yeah.

OH: So your Dad and all of you started off in Virginia?

MM: Yeah.

OH: When did you move to ...?

MM: 1952.

OH: ... Paradise? Okay.

MM: 1952.

OH: 1952. Why did you move to Paradise?

MM: Because I think there was better opportunity for the young kid Dad thought, maybe more working, and there was this bloke, Mr Gray, was looking for this man, and Mr Jervis, I think he was from north of Italy, he said, *Come, you'd be better off with your children to come to Paradise*, and he came with a truck, we didn't have much then and, and we shifted to Paradise, on Crowle Road.

OH: On Crowle Road?

MM: Mm.

³ *Bocce* is the Italian word for a form of lawn bowls

OH: Which is close to where you live now?

MM: Yeah.

OH: So tell me, your Dad worked on Mr ...

MM: Mr Gray's and Mr Pitt's land, and grew celery, that's all, only celery.

OH: Okay.

MM: Mm.

OH: And did they, did the Pitt's and the Gray's own the land?

MM: Yes.

OH: How much land was there?

MM: We, we worked it out; it was between eight and ten acres I would say.

OH: Uh huh. And tell me about Mr Gray and Mr Pitt, what were they like?

MM: The, the owner?

OH: Yes.

MM: Mr Gray and Mr Pitt, very nice people, very nice, yeah. Mr Gray didn't have any children. Mr Pitt then sold his land to Mr Gray and went to live down south somewhere, bought a farm down south. Then there was only Mr Gray and Dad.

OH: And Dad?

MM: Mm.

OH: So the two of them worked together?

MM: For a while. Mm.

OH: ... on the land growing celery and ...?

MM: Yeah, and they had a horse and they had a little old tractor, yeah, and they, they used to wash celery; it had to be washed out. They had a big shed where they put their tractor, and horse. They had the horse there and, yeah, and then they had the pump. They used to pump water from down the river. I remember there was a big locust tree, we used to always go and pick locusts down there as kids, and went down the river. It's not lovely and clean like now; it was ... [laughs]

OH: Changed since then.

MM: That's right, yeah.

OH: So tell me what can you remember about the area where you ... Where did you live? Did you live in this house, or what area did you live?

MM: We lived on celery farm.

OH: On celery farm.

MM: On there, there was an old house there. The only thing I remember about that, we had to put water to have a shower, little wooden thing, they light it and have a shower or bath. There was no hot water. There was electricity, an electric stove and a

wooden stove but yeah, the bathroom was with a wooden ... and an outdoor toilet, yeah, for many years, yeah.

OH: So that was hard, hard?

MM: Well I think it was, it wasn't hard for them because they had it fairly hard in Italy too so, you know, they had the bath and a big basin in, you know, like being in Italy and all that, so I don't think it was hard for them.

OH: Mm.

MM: Maybe now if our kids had to do it, it wouldn't be easy.

OH: They would have been used to chopping wood and () the fires.

MM: Yeah, and doing all that sort of thing, yeah, yeah, but it was only little pieces of wood, the water would heat up very quickly, mm.

OH: Were there any other families around the area?

MM: Yes, there was the Ridley's, I think, next door, and then they had children, and then in 19..., I've got to look that up, we had neighbours, Italians from up the hills, came to live ... Oh yeah, the Ridley's, and, and then in 1952 we got Mr Luigi () come and live next door, two Italians, they had a farm up in the hills. They worked for a farmer but they bought this land.

OH: Next to Mr Truscott?

MM: Next to our garden, next to the celery growing. They grew different things, but later they started growing celery too, mm.

OH: Because celery...

MM: And, Reg, one of the son, still lives on Melville Road.

OH: Reg Cirocco?

MM: Reg Cirocco, yeah. I did go and see him, told him I was doing this interview, and he was happy to give me all this information, you know, yeah.

OH: I can hear it in your voice that you had a good relationship with Reg Cirocco.

MM: Very good, yeah, and even when Dad finished his garden, gardening celery there, he retired; he'd go and help Mr and Mrs Cirocco for a while, mm.

OH: So tell me a little bit more about what it was like on the land for your Dad and Mum growing celery and market gardening.

MM: Well I think ...

OH: From what you remember, what was it like?

MM: Well I went to school at the Campbelltown Primary School, where the Marche Club, is, that was our singing room, and we're, we all went to school. Giuseppe went to uni, and my brother became a builder, Fred, Alfred, and yeah, and we went to school, and then Giuseppe went to uni, and yeah, I went to school – grade 7, I didn't want ... I was 14 I could get a job anywhere, being Italian. I didn't want to go back to school. I've always regretted it but that was like ... and then I did a bit of English

night school, but when you're married and got kids, I used to fall asleep doing homework. I don't know how they do it, a lot of them [laughs].

OH: Did you work? Did you help your parents work on the land?

MM: Yeah, we used to have to pick beans and ... Mum had a bit of land near the house, and some land down by the river, and they grew tomatoes, and then in those days there was people that used to take kilo boxes of tomatoes and that to the market for you, and there was a bloke on Hectorville Road – I can only remember his first name was Gennaro – he used to pick up Mum's tomatoes and sell them for her, and he'd take a cut or something. There was a lot of that going on.

OH: Yeah, they were like merchants. And did your Dad go to the market with the celery or ...?

MM: No, they all worked interstate.

OH: Oh!

MM: Yeah, they all went interstate, that I know of anyhow. Maybe they might have sold some, but I don't think they packed them all very nice, they used to ...

OH: So they packed them and then what happened?

MM: I think they, somebody picked them up or ...

OH: Did he have a truck?

MM: Yeah, they had a truck and they would have taken them to the station or wherever, I'm not sure how they did that.

OH: Mm.

MM: And when you're young you don't even, you're not even interested in that sort of thing [laughs].

OH: So you weren't really involved in the market garden very much?

MM: No.

OH: No. But what could you remember about your Dad and Mum?

MM: He'd get up early and work until late ... That was it.

OH: What's early, what's early, how early?

MM: Oh well, just as light, you know, they ... When Mr Gray was there, no, they, they, he'd like to just do the eight hours and that was it, no. But Dad would get up early and help out.

OH: And had your Dad had any experience with market gardening otherwise?

MM: Well yeah because Mr Canala at Virginia used to grow cabbages and cauliflowers, and all that, yeah, they used to grow that sort of stuff, yeah, they knew gardening and they had a farm in Italy so they grew everything, yeah, they knew it all. That's what most Italian know about, they all knew about gardening.

OH: And was your Dad happy with the move to Paradise?

MM: Yes.

OH: And the family ...

MM: We were all happy, yeah, because there was a lot more Italians here, yeah, and then, I can't remember what year they built the Italian church up here because they used to do it at the Coun..., the old Council thing.

OH: Oh right.

MM: Which is now, on Newton Road, the end of Newton Road, that little hall, they used to use that as a church. I remember going there as a young girl.

OH: So the church would have been built in the '50s?

MM: Yeah, I ...

OH: The migration that came out, a lot of Italians.

MM: I think I've got it somewhere written down when we built the church. It's in that, that paper, but anyhow it was built, yeah.

OH: In the '50s.

MM: And the priest used to help, they all, yeah, mm.

OH: They used to help the community or?

MM: The community used to, yeah, yeah, or even help there when they were building, yeah, they all, mm.

OH: So tell me about the life outside of market gardening, what did you used to do as a family?

MM: Well the, there was a picture theatre, just before Martin Corner where there's the Marden Church there now, just before there, there was a little hall where they used to have pictures every week; we'd go to the pictures, yeah.

OH: Still a tiny building

MM: Yeah. And we'd go to pictures, and we used to go to church, and then a lot of the ... Mum used to ride a bike and there was a lot of her friends used to come over. We'd always have some sort of piece of fruit, and Dad was a card player so there was always people playing cards at our place, always, until ... I would say four weeks before he died he played cards.

OH: Right.

MM: He'd always have people at home playing cards.

OH: Mm.

MM: He loved playing cards.

OH: And you said your Mum rode a bike. Where did she go when she ...?

MM: Oh, she'd go shopping, she'd go to see her friends, yeah, yeah, she rode her bike.

OH: And what about you children, how did you get around, what did you ...?

MM: We had a bike, or there was the tram that ... I used to catch, I started work in, at, no, at a place on top of Peoples' Store at the Central Market, where they made the children's dresses, pyjamas, nappies, and we'd be on the machines, a lot of young girls there, yeah.

OH: So you were 14 when ...?

MM: Fourteen when I started, and then about six months later they thought, you know, *Would, would you like to go to the shop in the market where they sold what they made? Oh, alright.* So there was this old, they were Jewish people, this old lady there, and I worked with her for a while, and then after that I went to work at Four Square down at Glynde, and I was about 16 I reckon.

OH: And tell me were there a lot of Italians that would come into the Four Square?

MM: A lot of Italian, yeah, a lot, and then when I was 17, 1975, Mario's Store, opened at the beginning of '75, I went to work in Mario's Store, and I worked at Mario's Store for five years until I got married, in 1962 I got married.

OH: And were there a lot of market gardeners that you saw?

MM: Oh yeah, yeah. Well they were all market ... All the Italians out in the area used to come to Mario's Store, all of them, and because we had not only we had a little cafe thing, and then they had groceries, Italian groceries, deliveries, and we had like a little John Martin's, and they were all little ... everything you could think, had men's shoes, ladies' wear, we had – it was only a little place – but we had everything.

OH: So you catered for ...

MM: And that's where I was, I was in the drapery department.

OH: Oh, okay.

MM: Mm, yeah, and there I worked five years.

OH: And so the people would come in and you would speak Italian?

MM: Yes, yeah, mm, most of them spoke Italian, and you'd get to know the ... I, I still know a lot of the families, and I'm wondering whether know. What year did your Mum come?

OH: Probably in the '50s, they all came about ...

MM: Oh yes, so I reckon, yeah.

OH: Now going back to your, your market gardening experience with your parents, did your Dad end up owning any of the land or living on the land?

MM: No, no.

OH: No. So he worked for ...?

MM: For the, yeah.

OH: And was it with Mr Gray, Mr Arnold wasn't it?

MM: Arnold Gray.

OH: Right to the end? Or another block?

MM: No. Arnold sold it to – can I mention the name? Oh, to Timo Angelini, an Italian, and then Dad became partner with him.

OH: Okay, and when was that, when did he sell it?

MM: Er, I don't think I've got it down. It would have been ... we were still home. I'm not sure.

OH: No, but in the '60s?

MM: Maybe the ...

OH: '80s?

MM: I would say the end of the '60s.

OH: End of the '60s.

MM: '60s or '70s, '60s and '70s.

OH: And Timo and your father ...

MM: Timo, Timo.

OH: Timo and your father ...

MM: Were partners...

OH: Oh partners.

MM: ... in growing, and then I don't know how they worked out the finances, but ...

OH: And they grew celery only?

MM: And they grew only celery.

OH: Only celery.

MM: Yeah.

OH: And every day of the week they'd grow celery?

MM: Yeah, yeah, every day. Oh no, no, they worked Saturday but not Sunday. Sunday was the only day off they'd have.

OH: Mm.

MM: Mm.

OH: And when the celery went interstate, do you remember where it went interstate?

MM: No.

OH: No.

MM: I've got a feeling Sydney, Melbourne, but no.

OH: Mm.

MM: Yeah. Maybe I should have had my brother here; he'd know a lot more about this.

OH: Was your brother involved in the celery growing?

MM: No, no, no, my brother, one was a builder and the other one was ..., and then one of them became a chiropractor so...

OH: So only your father was involved in the celery growing?

MM: Yeah, yeah.

OH: And anything else after that, other vegetables? No?

MM: No, only celery. Mum would be the one growing other things for a lot of her home, and if there was too much that's when Gennaro would take them to the market.

OH: Could you remember any challenges at the time, like the soil or machinery they used?

MM: Oh, they, they used a horse, they used a tractor, and every ... they used to put, to make the celery white, the boards along the side of the celery; the watering, they had, they used to pump water from the river into a big tank, right in the corner of Crowle Road.

OH: And do you know how much celery they would export or you know send away or, you know ...?

MM: No, no, I don't know that.

OH: And when did your parents finish market gardening?

MM: Dad retired about '72 I think. I think he, he was, he was born 1910. I thought I'd written it down.

OH: So it was a good 20 years, at least 20 years, that he worked in the market gardening?

MM: Yes, I think so. I'll write it down to see if it should have ... No, it looks like I have. It would have, I reckon, I got married in 1962 and it was still there, so it would have been early-70s, '72 I think that he, he finished.

OH: Alright. So you, you married Armando.

MM: Married Armando in 1962.

OH: 1962?

MM: Yeah, September.

OH: So old would have you been? You would have been ...?

MM: I was 22 and he was 31.

OH: Lovely! And where did you live after you got married?

MM: We lived at St Peter's for a year, on Stepney Street, and then we shifted here in 1963, where we are now.

OH: Melville Road?

MM: Melville Road, mm.

OH: I see you've got a beautiful garden as well.

MM: Yeah.

OH: Is it your influence or was your husband involved in ...?

MM: I think most Italians got a garden [laughs], the older Italians they all love their garden, yeah, yeah.

OH: Why do you think that is?

MM: Because that's what they grew up on the farm, and they [grew] everything they made. During the war they had to go and get wheat, and then they'd get the flour done, everything was so different, and own soap, and then they couldn't get like Omo⁴ or anything like that, and they used to use ash to wash their clothes, yeah.

OH: Yeah.

MM: If you ask your mum, she'd remember that, mm.

OH: And, so you've got your own little garden in here?

MM: Yes.

OH: What, what do you grow, what sort of vegetables do you grow?

MM: Oh, all sorts of food and all sorts of vegetable on the average. Now there's tomatoes, there's hot peppers, there's cucumbers, beans; we've got a lot of trees, peach trees, fruit trees, we're picking fruit now, all type of them. We've got lemon, we've got oranges, kiwi, there's a lot of stuff.

OH: A lot of work.

MM: Lot of work, yeah, lot of ... persimmon, um, what do they call it, quinces, I make quince jam, sometimes I make fig jam, yeah, we've got a lot.

OH: ... and what do you like most about market gardening, with the garden that you do market gardening?

MM: Well you could go to get something fresh, you know, go there and cook it – pick a cucumber or tomato, make a salad, it's fresh, and he doesn't spray much. What you buy has been ...

OH: Organic.

MM: A lot of, yeah, this is organic.

OH: Organic.

MM: Yeah.

OH: Lovely. Do you sell any of the vegetables?

MM: No.

OH: No.

MM: No.

OH: For your own home.

MM: Just home, and the children, you know, and friends if they pop in, you know.

⁴ "Omo" is a brand name for washing powder

OH: Lovely. That's the legacy of your parents most probably?

MM: Yeah, yeah, they grew up, they played. Even on the farm in Italy, you know, if you didn't have something, you know, yeah.

OH: Um, so it's lovely that you've continued, Armando and Maria, the art of market gardening in a sense, um, that's your passion.

MM: Mm, yeah, well I think ... Well that's Armando's hobby, that's his sport, that's his ... He doesn't play sport, he doesn't ... That's all, that's his exercise.

OH: Excellent!

MM: Yeah [laughs].

OH: Okay! So is there anything else you'd like to say about your time in the market gardening, your father, or what it was like, or what experiences in market gardening that you remember?

MM: Not much. I think when you're young you don't think. As you get older this sort of thing interests you more, but when you're young you're thinking differently, yeah, but I think we all enjoyed our life, and then when later in life you ... every part of Italy had their own club, you know like we built a club there, I went to school, Marche Club, that's, you know, it was a fantastic ... A lot of work, lot of work, but they all did it, all voluntary, they all, yeah.

OH: So you would have seen a lot of changes in the area?

MM: Oh, very much so, yeah.

OH: What, what do you think about that? I mean there's no more celery growing.

MM: No, no, there's, no, everything goes, gone you know. A lot of growing at Virginia. We've got friends that have still got market garden at Virginia; we buy tomatoes to make sauce with, yeah.

OH: Why do you, why do you think people moved to Virginia?

MM: Well, that was where there was a lot of gardening, a lot of Italians were down there then, you know, having gardens and mm, and Greeks, I think Greeks, yeah.

OH: Okay. Alright well just ... Is there anything else you wish to add, or anything...?

MM: I don't think there's much.

OH: Armando, would you like to say something?

[Maria laughs]

MM: I don't really know. Well, you know, we had, we had a good life with everything here, you know. I worked at the post office at Stepney for 26 years and, and all your payments would come from Campbelltown that knew me, they'd come down here because in the olden days you had to do a form just to get a money order, they couldn't do it, so I helped out so many Italian in that way, so many ... or they let me read some of their private letters, *Maria, can you tell me what this means?* Or, yeah. I used to help a lot.

- OH: So a lot of Italians, were they not able to read or ...?
- MM: Well yeah, they didn't know English, and they mightn't have had any children, yeah, maybe too young they go to school, or ... a lot like ... yeah, and another experience I'll have to put there because I ... When I was at Mario's this old lady with four or five children wrote, and she must have bought – I do not remember – but she must have bought some groceries, didn't have enough money. She asked me if I'd lend her some money. Anyhow, I lent her some money, she gave them back. When I went to work at St Peter's Post Office in 1978, one woman, this lady comes in, she goes, *Hello Maria*, I remember her face, but ... anyhow she brings in this bag of biscuits – she used to make biscuits, continental biscuits, right – and she said, *You lend me money, you don't ... You've forgotten but I haven't*, and she bought this big bag of biscuits, and I had them, and we still kept ... and we still kept ... her name was Mrs Mercurio, and her daughter's still got Avanti Pasticceria.
- OH: Right.
- MM: Yeah, and she, yeah, she used, used to make biscuits in the house, and then I got to know her then again, and we made biscuits at our house, you know, because she had a big *forno*⁵ electric oven, big one, we used to, yeah, and my husband got friendly with her husband, they'd have a drink together. I, I don't think it's been bad. I think you've got to think positive though. You could always be ... if you look at negative you could always find negative too, and I say to everybody, *Just keep positive and be happy*.
- OH: So what do you mean by *the negative*, in what way?
- MM: Oh, I don't know, people, some people just negative, they never see the good side of things. I've got friends say [spoken in Italian]. Oh forgot I was saying it in Italian [spoken in Italian], you know, yeah, where it's not true, it's not, but they're not, you know, they're not like the Italian doctors, but I don't believe that, I think they're all the same all over the world, they studied the same and that, yeah.
- OH: So do you think that some people feel that they couldn't let go of their Italian ...?
- MM: Yeah, that's right, they can't let go and, and if I go back over there I don't think they're happy, mm.
- OH: But you are?
- MM: Yeah, yeah. Well I, I was young, see I took my life ... yeah. I loved Italy, we've been back three or four times, but ...
- MM: Yeah. I don't know whether I could live in Italy. I think a lot of show in Italy though, but we've got people here like that too, you know, it just depends on your personality too. I get on with everybody.
- OH: Yeah.
- MM: Whether they're rich, poor, whatever, yeah.

⁵ *Forno* is the Italian word for oven

OH: So would you say that a lot of people that were market gardening continued on with market gardening, or not?

MM: I think not, not their children. I don't think many Italian ... I know a few at Virginia, the boys that I buy tomatoes for. The father came here before the war, and they now grow tomatoes to sell, and the cabbages and that, they still ... There'd be a few but there's not that many of the younger generation of Italians that stayed in gardening.

OH: Why do you think that is, do you think?

MM: Well, yeah, it's hard work, very hard work, and some years, you know like you've got nothing because the rain or the hailstone or, you know, and that's a lot of different where ... and, and another thing we came here and wanted the kids to study, because a lot of them only did grade 3, grade 3, you know like I, I was just passing grade 5 in Italy but, yeah, Armando only did grade 5. So they wanted their kids to study and, you know, very important, and that's I think most Italian had that thing that kids had to study, and you'll find most of the Italian children have all got quite good jobs and, you know, even if they become like an electrician or whatever, yeah.

OH: So that market gardening died out?

MM: Died out, yeah.

OH: Would you say a lot of the youth continued on with ...?

MM: Well the ... a lot of, a lot of our friends, like his cousin, a lot of our friends still got their little garden at the big, not as big as ours, because don't forget we've got a lot more land here so the ... they've still got their tomatoes growing, and their celery, and whatnot, everything, yeah. There's quite a few that we know, and of course a lot of Armando's friends have passed away now leave the wife, yeah.

OH: Can't do it.

MM: Yeah, like we got lot of friends that are widows. I think more men dying than women.

OH: Mm.

MM: Like they die younger than us, yeah.

OH: Armando, you would like to say something. What would you like to say? () what were you going to say?

Armando: See our garden had plenty land there because I have the semi.

OH: Oh, you've got a semi-trailer.

Armando: I used park in the sand, otherwise I stay in some big, like some big, you know, but really I live in Sydney. I got marriage to Maria [laughs].

OH: You're originally from Sydney. How beautiful ... you met Maria and fell in love ... [Armando laughs]

OH: You never really ...

Armando: And after, after two years I come back with semi in Adelaide because I do Queensland.

OH: Are you a semi-trailer, a semi truck driver?

Armando: Yeah.

OH: And what did you do, what did you, what did you carry in your truck, your semi-trailers?

Armando: Oh anything, yeah.

OH: Vegetables or ...?

Armando: No, no, no vegetable.

OH: No vegetables.

Armando: House ... Western Australia, get the jarrah.

OH: Jar? Jar?

Armando: To make the jarrah floor – I bring a lot of timber back. After two years I come back, in Adelaide again, you know, to Mario store. [laughs]

OH: You went to Mario store?

Armando: I got to Mario store, Maria got all the family and I no gotta nobody.

OH: Oh, lovely.

Armando: Allora⁶, for me the job or here or Sydney, no difference.

OH: As long as you got ...

Armando: I work for Bramble Transport as a subi⁷ and then no different, I come over here.

OH: How much land did you buy? You bought the land here?

Armando: I bought the house and the block.

OH: How big is your block?

Armando: One block for the house.

OH: The, the old blocks?

Armando: Yeah.

OH: You know, the old ... blocks.

Armando: Plenty for parking the semi, you know, we got St Peters, no room, you know, yeah.

OH: And did you remember Maria's father working?

Armando: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

OH: What could you remember, what could you remember about the market garden?

⁶ *Allora* is the Italian word for now

⁷ Subi – short for subcontractor

Armando: Oh, really nice man, you know, really quiet and thing but very good, you know.

OH: Did you help in the garden at all?

Armando: No, no, no, never be home anyway much.

OH: No.

Armando: Yeah.

OH: And how did you learn about market gardening, because you've got a beautiful garden?

Armando: Oh, I born in Italy in the garden, I see, make a lot of wine in Italy, he sell it to the Rome.

MM: People used to ... in Rome ... from the farm.

Armando: Yeah, I make different wine, the red wine, they only drank white wine.

OH: In those days, in Rome, they didn't drink the red wine, they only drank white wine?

Armando: No, no, no, yeah. I, I send bottle of wine, you know, let it boil, come strong and come a little bit of sweet because we come from a lotta snow, the grapes not get very sweet, you know.

OH: Where did you come from, where were you born?

Armando: Oh 30 kilometre kilometre from Maria.

MM: In the hills

OH: In the hills?

Armando: Yeah. Yeah, and they make all of this wine and send it to the Rome, he come and get the wine there over there, put half full water in and make vino Romano.

[MM laughs].

Armando: Because when he come there he say how many *quintale*⁸ taka the lot, you now, not say, *I give less much. Allora. My father say, Ma, why you, what you ask, you give it to me, you know. Then say, No, its for make vino Romano, this too strong, but if they put half the water ask him, make, you know, for money. Allora, use you know, lotta your wine.*

OH: And do you do wine now in Australia, do you make your own wine?

Armando: Yeah, yeah.

OH: And where do you get your grapes from? Do you grow them, or ...?

Armando: No, the one you grow here only for eat, sort of thing. If you get from the river here you got one woman and they got a farm, he bring, you know, very cheap. I get a lot of scraps from them. Now I don't drink much wine anymore now – beer yes, but the wine, no, coupla glass, it make you silly, you know.

OH: You've got to get up early in the morning to tend to your garden now?

⁸ *Quintale* is the Italian word for a hundred kilograms

[Armando laughs]

OH: What time do you get up to do all your ...?

Armando: Oh, in the morning, 6 o'clock, half-past, I be up, you know. I have a big breakfast, after that I no want anymore the food, my breakfast in the morning. I need a lot of eggs, you know, four, five eggs in the morning [laughs].

MM: Not every morning. [laughs]

Armando: Lot of morning, yeah.

OH: Do you have your own chickens here?

Armando: Yeah, yeah, I got 12 chickens.

OH: Twelve?

Armando: Yeah. The first thing I put over here because this nearly the first house boughta in Paradise. This one here stay six months to have a look at the people, you know, when they finish; this house and after this, everybody bought land, new house, and new house, all the garden, and they finish. They move, a lot move up to, what do you call it down there, close the river?

MM: Murray Bridge.

Armando: Murray Bridge.

OH: Oh, who moved to Murray Bridge?

Armando: Oh, a lot of people did, yeah.

OH: But you didn't ...

Armando: Because, because over there the land cheap.

OH: Okay.

Armando: And here started get really dear, the land, you see everybody go because builda the house, and a lot he moved up Murray Bridge, some along the river, you know, Waikerie, what other ways ...

OH: To do market gardening in the area?

Armando: Yeah. After I finda lotta lot of water in Virginia and lot they moved to Virginia because the land were peanuts, you know, cost much, you have ... used to make a little bore, have plenty water. Yeah, that's what, that's what he done, see.

OH: Yeah.

Armando: Yeah.

OH: Yeah! So you're saying that the land here was sold off for houses?

Armando: Yeah, all houses

OH: And the market gardeners moved out of this ...

Armando: Yeah, when I come here, a lot of block had been made, for sale, block, block, block, yeah. All the people had gone.

OH: What do you think about that now?

Armando: Oh, when I come here, I mean not very happy really, because in the Sydney still 10 o'clock it still light, you know. You come here, 6 o'clock and no, no light in the road, nothing. Have the pictures, St Peters one, pictures, you remember a bit and I live just next door, that's what it is, you know, it's 6 o'clock, everybody there, going to the pub, there he bought two, three pint. What do you calla this after found out, *You do this you know close, you not drink anymore*, and everybody getting drunk, you know, because drink quick, and it's very bad, is in Sydney.

OH: Bit more life ...

Armando: The young one he got a lot of life in the city, in his nice suit, very nice thing, ma still get big, too big.

OH: In Sydney?

Armando: Yeah, see if they go worka ...

OH: So Adelaide is okay? [laughs]

Armando: Yeah, Adelaide now is good because, you know, not much traffic, you know, it's good.

OH: Alright! Now Maria ...

Armando: Yeah.

OH: Thank you so much Armando.

Armando: Yeah.

OH: Maria, is there anything else that you would like to say?

MM: Not really. I'm just happy to be here, yeah. About gardening I don't know. I still make jam with whatever we've got in the garden here now, yeah, I pickle things, I do all sorts.

OH: Do you still have contact with the Timo family, the Angelini family, they're still alive?

MM: Yes, yeah, yeah. I rang actually to ... but ... and then I rang her daughter twice, I couldn't get in touch with them. The mother, the wife of Tino said, *Get in touch with my daughter*. I did twice but ...

OH: How old would they be now, how old ... Mrs Tino, Angeline would be?

MM: Oh, he was older than my Dad I think, yeah, he was quite old. He passed away, I think, last year, yeah, he was in a home. The daughters, they'd be ...

OH: About your age?

MM: You know, yeah, I would say they'd be in their 60s, yeah.

OH: And any of those do market gardening?

MM: No, no. One was a dentist and the other one, two girls, and the other one was an air hostess I think. They're both, yeah, I'm not really sure. We were never, we sort of knew them there but then they, they went and live up in the hills and things, yeah.

OH: So once they'd sold ...

MM: Mm.

OH: ... they moved out of that ...

MM: Yeah.

OH: ... you didn't have much contact with them.

MM: When Dad retired, well we just, yeah.

OH: And did your Dad keep a relationship with them, or not really?

MM: No, well then Tino continued doing celery growing with his wife for a while, yeah. I thought I had the date that Dad retired. It would have been about 1970.

OH: 1969, who retired in 19...? Mario retired in 1969 you told me at our last meeting.

MM: '69 I got married, yeah, it would have been, that's right, yeah. Dad retired, yeah, 1969, and Tino, Tino continued. I know his wife used to help there, you might have got some stuff helping, yeah, and then he sold to the church.

OH: The?

MM: That church on Crowell Road.

OH: Oh, the Assemblies of God.

MM: The Assembly of God, he sold all his land to the Assembly of God, mm.

OH: Mm, okay. That's about it.

MM: I mean we've had our garden open for the open garden scheme for twice, this one here.

OH: Okay!

MM: Yeah.

OH: Tell me about it.

MM: And we had so many people. Oh and Armando went in the competition of garden and came first of the Campbelltown Council. Yeah, he did, yeah, he did that. He came second I think one year, and then first the next year, and then they changed it to Literature, so every few years they change, and when we had the open garden, we had Maggie Beer do a show in our garden.

OH: Oh, so your garden ...

MM: Australian, Australia Gardening done a show, I've got, give you details of it, yeah, so it was ... but the second time we did this open garden we had about 500 people come through, Saturday and Sunday.

OH: Really?

MM: Because it used to be flowers more than gardening, but once people ... more people are interested in gardening now, trying it really hard to do gardening, and it became quite popular, and because ours was everything, flowers and garden together, mm.

OH: That's really ...

MM: Yeah, we had a love..., the first time we cooked, we made, Armando had grown potatoes that year, you'd get a nice garden, and we had ...

OH: What year was that?

MM: ... we made soup.

OH: What year was that?

MM: Oh, it would be about four years ago.

OH: Four years ago.

MM: Twelve, twelve.

OH: Oh, twelve years.

MM: Twelve years ago, and then the second one was another, about four years later, you know.

OH: So twelve years ago?

MM: Yeah! And we, Rosa Matto she's a cook, so she, she came that morning, and we made soup, we made frittata, we made ... we cooked leek and potato soup, and we served it in little ... we, yeah, under the carport. We sold coffee, and we went to a lot ..., you know, the second time it was, I did it quieter, it was hard, a lot of hard work, yeah.

AM: Primo wine there ...

MM: Oh, the second time we had Primo's wine.

A voice speaking in the background – inaudible

MM: Tasting, tasting.

OH: Oh!

MM: But you, we weren't allowed to sell, we gave orders, you know, like we had orders.

OH: Primrose?

MM: Primo Winery.

OH: Primo!

MM: Primo, the Italian boy, you know.

OH: Oh, yeah! Primo.

MM: He's got a place at ... and he's got one at Virginia, he started at Virginia, Primo.

OH: Primo?

MM: Yeah, Primo. He makes a nice wine but I can't even remember the name, yeah.

OH: What a wonderful community thing.

MM: Yeah, yeah. Well Primo, he's Marchegiano, his Dad, Mum and Dad, yeah, Marchegiano, mm.

OH: But what a wonderful way of getting the community and educating them.

MM: Oh yeah, yeah.

Armando: They were very good.

MM: They did a lot; I think they worked hard, the Italians. Maybe the other ones. I can only say because I was involved with a lot of Italians. I did a lot of interpreting. At 13 I used to interpret ladies, pregnant ladies, at Queen Victoria on Fullarton Road.

OH: Wow!

MM: Because there, there wasn't many, you know, they couldn't speak English, so a lot of them, it was hard for them, you know, you're young, we learn English very quickly, and we were at school, but the other thing I remember, we couldn't do, *the*. I think I've told ... Mr Truscott, you wouldn't remember the teacher's name. He put me in front of the mirror and he said, *Just say 'the', 'the'*, and I can do it now.

OH: You can do it now.

[Maria laughs]

MM: Yeah, I, I loved the ... you know, I've always had a good time, and I always got on with the staff. I worked in a butcher, I've, I've worked selling curtains, I've done a lot of different jobs, and I think it's a good experience.

OH: What a wonderful story, you've come from the roots of Italy; you've brought your parents.

MM: Yeah.

OH: And now you share it with the community.

MM: Yeah, yeah.

OH: Well congratulations with the awards you've got there, and I notice you've got something that was in a magazine. What magazine was that?

MM: That, that was from the Council, and the other one was in, this girl wrote a book, in Melbourne, what was her name? She was in a wheelchair. I can't remember her name. Herts [Maria spells the name], something, and then in *Cosmopolitan* I think, or one of those newspapers, they did a story on him, yeah.

OH: On Armando's garden?

MM: The garden, it was always on the garden, yeah, everything ...

Armando: You got the book and the photos

MM: Mm, yeah.

OH: Thank you so much for your time, Armando and Maria; it's been a wonderful experience to hear your story, thank you.

MM: Thank you.