

Rita Bianca Palumbo



From Lo Stretto to Adelaide

Edited by G. Geracitano



Italian Historical Society of SA Inc.

2024

ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC.

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**A SUITCASE FULL OF DREAMS, A TRUNK FULL OF MEMORIES: STORIES OF
ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA.**

CATEGORY

WOMEN LIFE ACHIEVEMENT



INTERVIEW WITH

RITA BIANCA PALUMBO

CONDUCTED BY

GIUSEPPE (JOE) GERACITANO

19 SEPTEMBER 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC.:	iii
BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY	vi
A RITA POEM BY FRANCO BAVA	ix
PHOTOGRAPHS	x
TRANSCRIPT NOTES	xxxii
TRANSCRIPT	1
INDEX	55



ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC.

INTRODUCTION

Italians have lived and worked outside of Italy since ancient times, but it was after unification in 1861 that they started leaving their country in large numbers, trying mainly to escape a life of poverty. From 1876 to the end of the 1980s almost twenty-seven million Italians had left Italy in search of a better life.

By far the largest recipients of Italian immigrants were the Americas, with the largest number in Argentina, followed by Brazil, Venezuela, the United States of America, and Canada. European countries have also featured as major destinations for Italian immigrants with Germany and Switzerland most favoured. As of January 2021, 880 thousand Italians lived in Argentina, two European countries, Germany, and Switzerland, followed the ranking, whilst Brazil had the fourth largest Italian emigrated population. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Americas and other European countries were the preferred destinations. Between 1878 and 1940, 20 million Italians emigrated to European countries, and the Americas. Traditionally, in this period, Northern Italians were more likely to emigrate within Europe, and Southern Italians were more likely to cross the seas. Following World War II until 1970, a further seven million Italians left Italy. The most common destinations of this period were Venezuela, Australia, Canada, Argentina, and other European countries, and almost 90% of Italians who migrated outside Europe left from the South of Italy.

Although Italians have been present in Australia since the beginning of colonization, they have not featured as a major force until after the end of World War II when factors both in Italy and Australia combined to turn the trickle of Italian immigrants into a flood. By 1933 the number of Italians in Australia had reached 26,756 out of a total population of 6,630,600. The corresponding figures for South Australia were 1,489 Italians out of a total population of 580,087. By 1971, the end of mass migration of Italians to Australia, the Italian population in Australia had risen to 289,476 out of a total population of 12.7 million, and the corresponding figures for South Australia were 32,428 Italians out of a total population of 1.1 million. Fifty years after the end of mass migration Italian migrants and their children have proportionately increased in Australia. At the 2021 census, 1,108,364 Australian residents nominated Italian ancestry representing 4.4% of the Australian population. The corresponding figures for South Australia were 103,914 representing 6.1% of the South Australian population.

This influx of Italian immigrants had a profound impact on Australian way of life and together with immigrants of other countries have irrevocably changed Australia from a monocultural Anglo-Celtic country into a vibrant multicultural society.

Despite the deep impact of migrants, and particularly Italians migrants, in Australia, there is a paucity of records and readily available information on the activities and contributions of the migrant population. History books skim over the exploits of non-Anglo-Celtic settlers in the development of Australia. Very few stories of non-English speaking migrants are stored in either the National or State archives.

It is to redress this imbalance that the Italian Historical Society of South Australia Inc. was founded. The Society focuses on the South Australian experience. Utilizing the

techniques of Oral History and collecting relevant documents and photographs, the Society aims to collect, preserve, and promote the history of Italian immigration to South Australia; to establish a repository for the stories, letters, documents, photographs, and any other item associated with Italian immigration to South Australia; and to record and celebrate the contribution of Italian immigrants to the growth of South Australia.

The Society is open to all those interested in the history of Italian immigration, including researchers, students, professional historians, and genealogists.

The primary objective is the collection of Oral Histories of first-hand accounts of the migration experience. These stories and relevant documents will be submitted to the State Library of South Australia to be included in the J. D. Somerville Oral History Collection which strives to represent a spoken account of South Australia and South Australian experiences. This method is considered to be the most effective means for collecting these stories for two reasons: the spoken word is often the most poignant testimony of the challenges and successes of immigration; and most immigrants from Italy, especially during the mass immigration of the mid twentieth century, originated from rural backgrounds with little or no formal schooling.

The stories are based on the whole-of-life approach guiding the interviewee from the place of birth, childhood experience to adulthood. The stories focus on the life and regional customs in Italy prior to emigrating, the motivation to emigrate, the voyage to South Australia, the experience on arrival, the reaction to challenges and successes in the new country, and the contribution made to the development of South Australia.

The oral stories will be transcribed and deposited in the State Library of South Australia and other appropriate institutions.

The Society has embarked on a project to record and leave for posterity the experience of Italian immigrants in South Australia. The name of the project is: "A Trunk Full of Dreams and a Suitcase Full of Memories: Stories of Italian Immigrants in South Australia." The stories are grouped under categories such as: Life Achievement, Business, Sport, Community Organizations, *A Tavola*: The Influence of Italian Immigration on Australian Food Culture, Trades, Women and Business, Culture, and so on.

The motivation for the collection of these stories is threefold:

1. To inform Australian descendants of the first-generation immigrants so that they understand their heritage.
2. To inform those left in Italy so that they understand what became of their relatives and friends who made the courageous decision to leave the country of their birth.
3. To contribute to the history of Australian immigration, in particular, to consider the form and significance of this process through a foreign community's adaptation to a society with new demands regarding culture, rhythm of work, culinary practices, forms of worships and civic life.

The collection of these stories and documents will form a database of primary sources which will be available to both public and researchers.

The project is led by the President of the Society, Giuseppe (Joe) Geracitano, who is a graduate of the University of Adelaide majoring in Economics, History, Sociology, and Education and concentrated his academic research on ethnicity and multiculturalism. Mr. Geracitano has worked as a secondary school teacher, teaching Economics, Accounting, and History. He was also a tutor in Sociology of Education at the University of Adelaide where he has written articles on multicultural education, lectured in the Diploma of Interpreters and Translators at Adelaide College of Advance Education, and was employed by the Catholic Education Office of Victoria to develop their community language program in Catholic Primary Schools. Mr. Geracitano has had a long association with the Italian community as a volunteer both in South Australia and Victoria being involved in founding and developing many of the current institutions in the Italian community including: the Dante Alighieri Society of South Australia; the South Australian Association of Teachers of Italian; Italian community radio; Italian Festival; and the Coordinating Italian Committee. Mr. Geracitano was also instrumental in advising the then Minister Assisting the Premier in Ethnic Affairs to establish the South Australian Ethnic Affairs and Multicultural Commission and the Migration Museum. He is also a past member of the State Library of South Australia Board.

All the research and interviewing are voluntary done by the President of the Society; the interviewee will receive an audio copy of the interview. The main cost for the activities of the Society is to transcribe the interview, scanning of documents, photographs, and printing the book. To receive a hard copy of the interview, documents and photographs a contribution towards the cost will be sought from the interviewee.

The project is funded through the generosity of the community and fundraising by the Committee of the Society.

This is the story of one immigrant, *Rita Bianca Palumbo*, long time volunteer in the Italian community and President of the Sicilia Social and Sports Club Inc. in South Australia.

Giuseppe (Joe) Geracitano
President
2024

Copyright of the digital interview, transcript, and all documents is shared by the Italian Society of South Australia Inc, interviewee, and State Library of South Australia for the duration of the interviewee's life, and vests wholly with the Italian Historical Society of South Australia Inc during its existence, and thereafter with the State Library of South Australia on the interviewee's death. Access to the digital interview and transcripts for either research or public use is governed by any restrictions imposed by the interviewee during his or her lifetime and subsequently by the Italian Historical Society of South Australia Inc during its existence and thereafter by the State Library of South Australia.

RITA BIANCA PALUMBO

Biographical Summary

Rita Bianca Palumbo was born on the 6th of May 1949 in Villa San Giovanni, Provincia di Reggio Calabria, Calabria Italy. Her father, Vincenzo Caminiti, was born Punta Pezzo, a frazione of Villa San Giovanni. Mother, Carmela Picciotto, born in Furci Siculo, a municipality 31 km south of Messina, Sicily, Italy. Rita was the youngest of seven children, Rosa, Carla, Maria, Francesco, Salvatore, and Santino. Rita married in 1970 to Erasmo Palumbo who was born in the region of Abruzzo, Italy and they have two children, Liana born 1972 and Claudio born 1974.

Rita's three oldest sister had emigrated to Australia prior to Rita and the remainder of her family emigrating and disembarking in Melbourne on the 13th of January 1960. Like most Italian immigrants, Rita initially struggled with the language and unfamiliar food, and found the introduction to Australian schools challenging. However, with the assistance of the headmistress at St Joseph's school Hindmarsh and Rita's hard work she overcame the obstacles and blossomed in her studies.

Rita was introduced to volunteering at a young age. In 1965 at the age of 16 she was persuaded to join the Woodville branch of the Good Neighbour Council becoming the first Italian Secretary of the Good Neighbour Council in Australia. During this time, she learnt skills of minute taking, dealing with correspondence, and general office duties which she utilized in all volunteering work she has undertaken. In her role at the Good Neighbour Council, she also assisted migrants with interpreting and translations, issues with government departments and institutions, doctors' appointments, etc.

Rita also assisted family members and friends with compiling their taxation returns and acted as an interpreter and accompanied fellow Italian migrants to doctors' appointments and dealing with government institutions. In addition, she helped friends to travel to country areas such as Virginia to purchase bulk meat and vegetables.

In the 1970s as a clerical assistant working at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Rita was called on to be an interpreter for Italian patients, often having to voluntary work back to help her fellow Italian migrants. She continued to assist Italian migrants with interpreting even after she left her position at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. This was at a time when there were no government funded positions in interpreting and translation, no Interpreting Telephone Service. Italian migrants, especially women, preferred an adult person to act as an interpreter especially in delicate matters such as medical.

In the early 1990s Rita was part of the Italian Choral and Arts Society and acted as its secretary as well being part of the choir. She also was a member of the choir in the Mater Christi Parish church in Seaton.

In 1997 Rita joined as a volunteer Doppio Teatro acting as manager for the Pulcinella Troop which entertained the elderly in nursing homes and promoted the Italian culture in places such as the Central Market. During this time Rita was also a founding member of Australia Donna becoming its first Secretary and co-webmaster with Caterina Andreacchio. She continued with Australia Donna for 2 years.

In 1999 Rita was a founding member and Secretary of PISA (Pasti Italiani e Servizi per Anziani, now Nonna's Cucina) organizing the delivery of cooked Italian style meals for the aged and people with disabilities and their carers across Adelaide. Rita was also instrumental in designing PISA's first logo.

In 1998 Rita joined Radio e Televisione Italiana organizing and broadcasting in Italian with her sister Carla and brother Francesco a program on health and wellbeing interviewing doctors and other related health professionals. She also assisted in the office when the Radio's regular secretary, Maria Donato, was away, and downloaded the music to be used on all the Radio's programs.

Rita was also invited by 5EBI (Ethnic Broadcasters Inc) to be trained as a console operator, writer for radio programs and how to conduct interviews. She was a Continuity Producer for 5 years. During her time at 5EBI, Rita was part of the team funded by the Federal Government to produce a series of eight programs on the theme of Living in Harmony.

For 12 years Rita was a tutor at 5EBI teaching newcomers how to write for Radio, how to conduct interviews, how to put music and words in a program so that it avoided dead time on air.

For many years she conducted a program on 5EBI called International Rendezvous, a request program catering for all ethnic groups.

In 1999 Rita won the Golden Mic Award in recognition of her voluntary work at 5EBI.

In 2007 Rita joined the Sicilia Social and Sports Club Inc. at the invitation of Jack Fogliano. As a member of the Committee, utilizing her organizational skills, she handled all correspondence and other secretarial duties. In 2008 after the resignation of the President of the Sicilia Social and Sports Club Inc., Rita was promoted from the role of Vice-President to President, a position which was endorsed at the following Annual General Meeting in 2009. Rita has been President of the Club for the past 17 years. During her time as President the Club has developed new social events, has added a

Bocce court, and incorporated new technology so that it can better services not only its members but also many organizations that use its facilities.

Rita has utilized skills that she acquired through her volunteering and studies to assist all community groups that she joined to make them more efficient and better placed to serve the community.

All the work that Rita has undertaken has been voluntary. Rita is a woman that can be seen as a role model for those interested in voluntary work.

Giuseppe (Joe) Geracitano
President
Italian Historical Society of South Australia Inc.
2024
©



“Brava Rita”

Gentilissima Rita,
Vai sempre di fretta?
Aspetta un momento,
che ti vorrei parlare:

Dimmi... sei forse al servizio,
della Fata Morgana?
Oppure dal Sole ascendente?
così sempre altruista:

D'ancora Ragazzotta,
con la tua Famiglia,
solcando l'Oceano,
approdasti qui in Australia:

Terra ancorata...
Come "Mamma Sicilia",
sempre in attesa,
per il figlio che torna:

Vorrei essere io,
il notissimo Pittore,
per dipingere l'insegna...
di queste bandiere:

Mettendoti al centro...
per questa occasione,
ringraziando a tutti,
con immense calore:
Brava Rita!

Dearest Rita,
Are you always in a hurry?
Wait a moment
I'd like to talk to you:

Tell me... Are you doing the good deeds?
of the Fata Morgana?
Or of the rising Sun?
So always altruistic:

Still a young girl,
with your Family,
Crossing the Ocean,
you landed here in Australia:

Anchored Earth...
Like "Mamma Sicilia",
always waiting,
For the son who returns:

I'd like it to be me,
the well-known Painter,
To paint the sign...
Of these flags:

centre...
For this occasion,
Thanking you all,
with immense affection:

Brava Rita

Di F: Bava (Franco Bava)

Calabria



*Punta
Pezzo*

*Vincenzo Caminiti
Home Town*

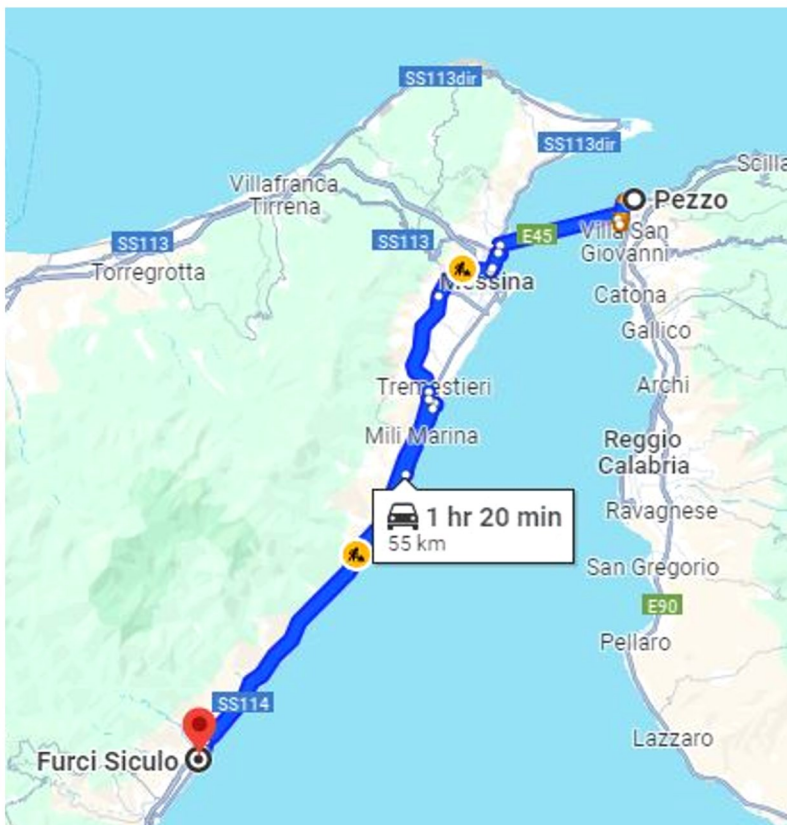


Sicily



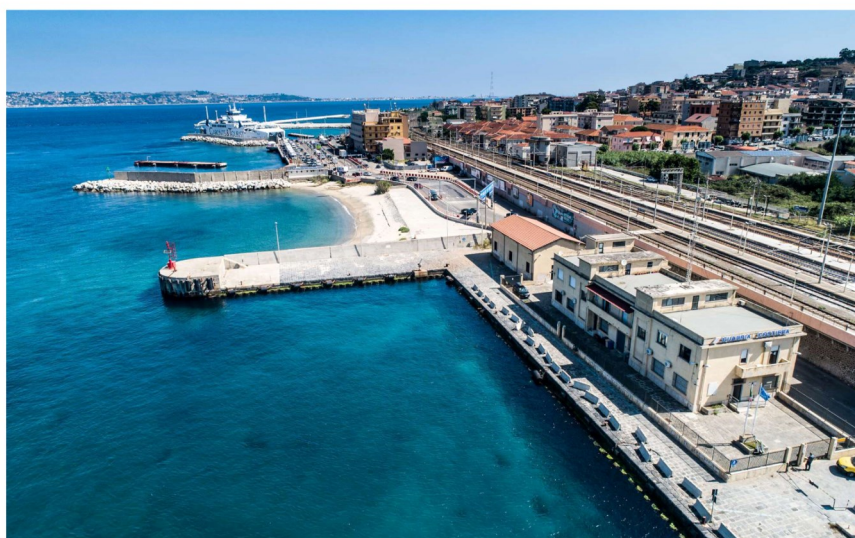
*Furci
Siculo*

*Carmela Picciotto
Home Town*



*Punta Pezzo
Calabria
to
Messina
to
Furci Siculo
to
Sicily*

*Port of Villa San Giovanni
(Porti dello Stretto)
Rita Bianca Caminiti Palumbo
Home Town*



Sicily & Calabria

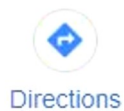


Villa San Giovanni *Crest*

Villa San Giovanni *Calabria*



41 min (10.2 km) via E45



Directions



The Beginning

(Rita's maternal Nonna)
Nonna Calogera Camarda
Born in 1890



(Rita's Dad)
Vincenzo
Caminiti



(Rita's Mum)

Carmela Picciotto

Vincenzo & Carmela

Wedding Day 1929



Vincenzo & Carmela's Family

Rosa, Carla, Maria, Franco,
Salvatore, Santo & Rita

Life in Italy



*Early 1950's at the
Plaza in the Lido
Villa San Giovanni*



*Carmela, Vincenzo ,
Maria
Rita, Salvatore, Santo
& Franco
First Holy Communion Day*

Life in Italy

1952

*Rita at
the Fountain
Villa San Giovanni*

1956



*At the Lido in Villa San
Giovanni*



School Life in Italy

School Photos' *in Year I* **1956**



1957



1958

Attending Primary *School*

in Italy

1956—1959

1959



La Colonia Scilla

Leaving Italy



Port of Messina



Passport Photo of Rita, Carmela and Santo

Travelling to Australia

*1959 New
Years Eve on the
ship (Sydney)*



*Having dinner
in the dining
room with family*



*Having
Adventures
on deck*



Passenger List

Family Name	Given names	Title	Date of arrival	Port of arrival	Ship/aircraft name
Caminiti	Rita		08 Jan 1960	Fremantle	SYDNEY

Q. 372

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.—QUARANTINE SERVICE.

PASSENGER LIST. - 5 -

REPORT of Passengers on Board the ss. " " on the 19 at from

Master..... Medical Officer..... Agents.....

No.	NAME.	CLASS	PORT OF EMBARKATION.	PORT OF INTENDED DEBARKATION.	ADDRESS AT DESTINATION IN AUSTRALIA.*
197	BERANOVIC Tomo	Tour.	Genoa	Melbourne	I.C.E.M. - BONEGILLE - MELBOURNE
198	BUREV Stejan	"	"	Brisbane	124 Harcourt St. NEW FARM - Q ^{LD} .
199	BUREV Toma	"	"	"	"
200	BUCHALSKA An Alicja	"	"	Melbourne	CABRAMURRA - S.M.A. - VIA COOMA
201	BULJAN Mirko	"	"	Fremantle	Circle Valley - W.A. - FREMANTLE
202	BULJAN Matilde	"	"	"	"
203	BULJAN Tilda	"	"	"	"
204	BULJAN Zelke	"	"	"	"
205	BURGIO Antonine	"	Messina	"	Bribra Lark - W.A. - FREMANTLE
206	BURIOLI Lino	"	Genoa	Sydney	P.W.D. - RABAU - NEW GUINEA
207	BURIO Simus	"	Naples	Melbourne	I.C.E.M. - BONEGILLE
208	BURSZYNSKA Helena	"	Genoa	"	366 Beaconsfield Parade - VILDS -
209	CACCIVARI Francesco	"	Messina	"	124 Melrose Str. NORTH MELBOURNE
210	CADAMURO Umberto	"	Genoa	"	I.C.E.M. - BONEGILLE -
211	CALABRO Antonine	"	Messina	Brisbane	97 Heel Str. NEW FARM -
212	CALDERAZZO Nicoline	"	Naples	Melbourne	43 Ave Mareal - TRINITY GARD - S.A.
213	CALLIPARI Francesco	"	Messina	"	P.T.E. Bag - MILTURA - VICT.
214	CAMATTA Adriana	"	Genoa	"	I.C.E.M. - BONEGILLE -
215	CAMINITI Vincenzo	"	Messina	"	43 Ceglen Str. BROMPTON - ADELAIDE
216	CAMINITI Carmela	"	"	"	"
217	CAMINITI Sante	"	"	"	"
218	CAMINITI Rita	"	"	"	"
219	CAMINITI Salvatore	"	"	"	"
220	CAMINITI Francesco	"	"	"	"
221	CAMINITI Vincenzo	"	"	Sydney	28 Phillip Str. KNMORE - N.S.W.

Life In Australia



*Marias
(sister)
Wedding*

1961



*Getting ready for the
Juventus Ballo
in Maschera 1962
at Maria's home*



Debutante Ball



*Presented to
Don Dunstan
(Premier)
1967*



Life In Australia



*Italian
Centre
1965*



Rita's 18th Birthday 1967



Nursing School 1967



1969



1970

*Rita's 21st Birthday
with Family*

Family Moments

*Celebrating
Carmela
Birthday
with Rita*



*Carmela and Vincenzo
ready to attend the Opera*



*Family
Moments*

Family Memories

1970

*Erasmo & Rita
Palumbo
Wedding Day*



Sienna, Liana & Alessia

*Our Children &
Grandchildren*

Leila, Massimo, Alessia & Sienna



Family Memories
Our Children & Grandchildren



Leila, Rosanna, Erasmo, Massimo & Claudio



Leila, Cody, Massimo, Rita, Erasmo & Alessia

Community Involvement

1980



Touch Of Elegance
Rita promoted to
Manager

Choir at
Mater Christi



Community Involvement

Italian Arts & Choral Society



*Concert for the opening of
The South Road
Hindmash
New Centre
Opened by the Hon
Lyn Arnold
1993—1994*



Community Involvement

*Rita Palumbo
Graduating Radio School
15th December, 1999*



*Rita Palumbo
receiving
Golden Mike Award
1999
Carla Contarino,
John Geddis,
Rita Palumbo &
Hans Dagenheart (Station Manager)*



*Vice Consul of Italy
Rita Palumbo
&
Paolo Pulgia (right)
Discussion on
"Sicilian Culture"
held at the Sicilia Club*



Community Involvement



*Pulcinella Troupe
performing at
Central Market
Managed by
Rita Palumbo*

*Receiving an award
from Outlaw Dance
Studio*



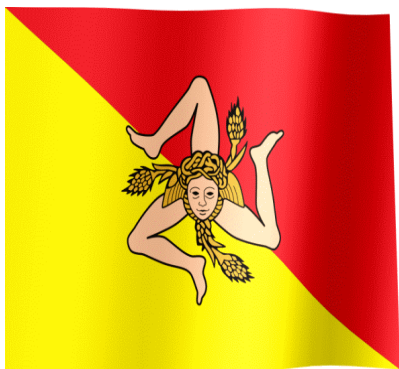
*Prime Minister
Malcolm Turnbull
Attending
A Morning Tea
at
Sicilia Social & Sports Club
in 2018*



Community Involvement
Life Time Achievement Award
Highly Commended



Life at the Sicilia Club



ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC.

TRANSCRIPT NOTES

The transcript is verbatim of the interview. Grammar has not been corrected, punctuation has been added by the transcriber.

The transcriber has deleted repeated words unless they are used to emphasize a point, also words as 'ahs', 'hmmm..', and so on have been omitted.

Non-English words whether they refer to names, places, or phrases used are in italics.

All non-English phrases are translated into English and are in square brackets.

Where explanations are needed the interviewer's notes are in square brackets.

Punctuation:

Single dashes are used to indicate pauses within a sentence.

Three dashes are used to indicate unfinished sentences that are a normal part of conversational speech.

Round brackets are used to indicate emotions and actions.

Square brackets are used to indicate words and information not on the recording but inserted for clarification.

The Interviewer and Interviewee are identified with their initials:

GG – Giuseppe Geracitano (Interviewer)

RP – Rita Bianca Palumbo (Interviewee)

Digital Interview

of

Rita Bianca Palumbo



TRANSCRIPT

Interview Conducted by:

Giuseppe Geracitano

President

**Italian Historical Society of SA
Inc.**

Tuesday 19th September. 2023.

INTERVIEW WITH RITA BIANCA PALUMBO RECORDED BY GIUSEPPE GERACITANO ON 19TH OF SEPTEMBER 2023 AT 16B BARONS ST, TRANMERE SA 5073

Category: Women Life Achievement

- 00:00:02 GG: Recording for the Italian Historical Society of South Australia Incorporated for the project "A trunk full of dreams, a suitcase full of memories", Category Women Life Achievements, on Tuesday the 19th of September 2023. Interviewer Giuseppe Geracitano, President of the Society; interviewee Rita Bianca Palumbo. Recorded at 16B Barons St. Tranmere South Australia 5022. Good afternoon, Rita.
- 00:00:43 RP: Good afternoon, *Giuseppe*
- 00:00:45 GG: Rita to start off with, we do a people's biography background and then we'll cover your experience in Italy and so on. So, for the records full name and maiden name.
- 00:01:03 RP: *Rita Bianca Palumbo and Rita Bianca Caminiti.*
- 00:01:08 GG: And you're born?
- 00:01:10 RP: In *Villa San Giovanni, Reggio Calabria* in nineteen forty-nine.
- 00:01:14 GG: And that's the province of *Reggio Calabria* in the region of *Calabria*.
- 00:01:18 RP: *Si* [Yes]
- 00:01:20 GG: in Italy.
- 00:01:21 RP: *Si* [Yes]
- 00:01:22 GG: And the date of your birth?
- 00:01:24 RP: The sixth of May nineteen forty-nine.
- 00:01:27 GG: And the name of your father?
- 00:01:30 RP: *Vincenzo Caminiti.*
- 00:01:32 GG: And his birthplace?

- 00:01:34 RP: He was born at *Punta Pezzo*, which is a suburb, I presume, of *Villa San Giovanni*.
- 00:01:44 GG: A *frazione* [a small village or hamlet outside the main town] of *Villa San Giovanni*. and his date of birth.
- 00:01:55 RP: The tenth of June nineteen o five.
- 00:02:57 GG: And your mother?
- 00:01:59 RP: My mother, her name was *Carmela Picciotto*, she was born at *Furci Siculo*, which is a *frazione* of *Messina* [It's a municipality 31 km south of *Messina*], actually it's between *Palermo* and *Messina*, right? But it's closer to *Messina* and she was born on the eighteenth of May nineteen o six.
- 00:02:21 GG: Good, and siblings?
- 00:02:24 RP: Well, I have seven. There are seven of us. My older sister Rosa. Now you're asking me for birth dates and, sorry, they have gone out of my head. Then there's *Carla*, *Maria*, *Franco* [*Francesco*], *Salvatore*, *Santino* [*Santo*], and myself. They were living, but Mum actually had ten children but three passed away, three passed away, SOCIETY.SA inc
- 00:02:54 GG: Which was not unusual in those days.
- 00:02:57 RP: No, those days, yes.
- 00:02:59 GG: Right. So, your father was born in *Villa San Giovanni*, which is one side of the *Stretto* [Strait of Messina, a narrow strait between the eastern tip of Sicily [*Punta Del Faro*] and the western tip of Calabria [*Punta Pezzo*] in Southern Italy], Your mother was born in the province of Messina, which is the other side of the *Stretto* how did they meet?
- 00:03:14 RP: Well, it was fate with this, you know it is fate because mum was, well say in those days would have been an old made at the age of twenty-three. They just met by chance, and they actually met in Messina because where dad comes from, the *Paese* [town] *Punta Pezzo*, is very close to La *Punta Di Messina* [*Punta Del Faro*], right? So, because dad's family were in the fishing industry, so they would do a lot of fishing there and I presume that's how he met mum because he was in *Messina* either delivering some fish or having been fishing all, you know, week, having respite there and that's how they must have met.
- 00:04:06 GG: Very good. So, your father was a fisherman then?

- 00:04:08 RP: Yes, his family, we had the fishing, yes.
- 00:04:11 GG: And your mother, did she work or?
- 00:04:14 RP: My mum, when she was single? No, my mum. My grandmother had sixteen children and my mother was the eldest of sixteen. So therefore, she was---
- 00:04:27 GG: Want her to look after her siblings.
- 00:04:29 RP: Everybody else, yes.
- 00:04:30 GG: Yes. Which was again, not unusual.
- 00:04:33 RP: That's exactly right, yes,
- 00:04:35 GG: And in that situation what sort of the educational background?
- 00:04:39 RP: OK. Both parents actually did up to the year five, grade five, which I believe in those days that's quite an achievement.
- 00:04:48 GG: It was. Quite an achievement.
- 00:04:50 RP: Quite an achievement and I remember mum used to say to me that if it hadn't been for her brothers, she would have gone on to further studies and she could have made something of herself. But I keep telling, I used to tell her, don't worry, Mum, you've made something of yourselves.
- 00:05:05 GG: In other ways.
- 00:05:07 RP: Yes.
- 00:05:09 GG: So, you said you had seven siblings in the order. Where, in the pecking order you fit in?
- 00:05:21 RP: Me, I'm the last one of the breeds, so I would have been, if all ten had been living, I would have been ten. But I was seventh of the living ones.
- 00:05:29 GG: And your siblings, their educational background?
- 00:05:36 RP: My three older sister they went to, now you have to help me with the names here, *La scuola* [the school], primary school.

- 00:05:49 GG: *Elementare* [Primary school].
- 00:05:51 RP: *Elementare, poi* [then], they had secondary, what was it called in Italy?
- 00:06:59 GG: *Liceo* [Lyceum, upper secondary]?
- 00:06:01 RP: *Liceo* that's right.
- 00:06:15 GG: There were three liceos, the *classico* [classical, humanities], *artistico* [artistic], *scientifico* [scientific].
- 00:06:08 RP: No, it would have been the classical one, I would imagine. Because my brother, my oldest brother, *Francesco*, he actually went to the *scientifico* one he did *liceo scientifico* and the second one, *Salvatore*. He did the *liceo classico* as well I would think instead, *Santo*, because I was ten and he was fourteen when we came to Australia. He finished his schooling here in Australia, so he did up to I think third year, 4th year, high school.
- 00:06:46 GG: Third year, fourth year.
- 00:06:47 RP: Yes. And then you had an apprenticeship.
- 00:06:52 GG: So, you mentioned you were nine when you came, or you left Italy. So, you've done primary, *scuola elementare*?
- 00:07:02 RP: Yes, yes, yes, I did up to year four, grade four, year 4 in Italy. I think it was year four, *era l'asilo. Prima, seconda, terza* [it was kindergarten, first, second, third], I would imagine.
- 00:07:20 16: Eight, nine would be yes. Where, after your parents married, where did they live?
- 00:07:27 RP: Well, because of dad's business, they had, they had to move to *Pezzo*, so they lived there for quite a while, and it was only just before I was born that they moved to *Villa San Giovanni*. And then our life to come to Australia began. But half of us are born in Sicily and half of us are born in Calabria, so we've got a nice *minestrone* [mixture] on it there.
- 00:07:53 GG: So, you were actually born in Sicily or were you born in Calabria?
- 00:08:02 RP: My brother keeps telling me I was born on the *traghetto* [ferry], but my sisters kept telling him off, for whether they don't want me to know that I was born on the *traghetto* or not, but I was actually registered in in *Villa San Giovanni*.

- 00:08:13 GG: In *Villa San Giovanni*, So officially you're *Calabrese* [Calabrian]?
- 00:08:16 RP: I'm *Calabrese* officially with the Sicilian mother.
- 00:08:22 GG: We'll come back to that. There's got to be a conflict there somewhere.
- 00:08:27 RP: No, no conflict.
- 00:08:30 GG: And so how much, what do you remember of Italy?
- 00:08:38 RP: Italy, well we lived *Villa San Giovanni*, we lived on at the *Marina*, right? *La Spiaggia*, *Il Porto* [the beach, the port], it was to me, looking back now, it reminds me like, you know, Port Adelaide side type of thing where all the ships used to come in, the *traghetto* used to stop and all that and we weren't far from there. We also had the *lido* [a public open-air swimming pool or bathing beach] very close to us. So, we've always lived by the sea. I did my schooling, you know *l'asilo* [kindergarten], and I remember being taught there by the nuns. I remember the days that we used to spend by the beach, by the, because what else was there to do? I've presumed there was nothing else. So, you were there, and you would play on the beach, things like that. I remember my dad taking me down to *le scogli* [rocks] and he used to get the, the, like the oysters, the *cozze* [mussels], He would get the *cozze* and clean them up for me and feed me the *cozze* right from the from the sea. I remember beautiful days with my dad. I'd, I'm getting emotional now. He used to take me out on the on the boats because on the weekend when he wasn't fishing, he would be there with us, and I remember trips with the in the boats. I remember going to *Il Faro* [the lighthouse]. I don't know if you ever heard *Il Faro* where there once a year, and I remember this as if it was yesterday. There used to be *La Festa Delle Cozze* [Mussel Fair], and I remember had to go, and it reminded me I saw a film once of the *Grotta* [Cave] in in *Capri* where the boats would go into the *Grotta*, and this is what it reminded me of going into *Il Faro*. We'd go in with the with the boat because the there was this *grotta* [cave] that you had to get through before you can get into the village right. And we'd have, we'd fish for *cozze*, we we'd do all that and it used to be a fantastic day with the whole family. So those are the things that I remember about Italy. I remember going to school and my teacher, because you only had one teacher in Italy you went from grade one, right through, *la signorina Battaglia*, I even remember her name. Beautiful lady she was. Yeah. Just happy memories. Happy memories, yeah.
- 00:11:29 GG: And apart from those activities any other sort of entertainment in this in the village or?

- 00:11:40 RP: Well, I supposed to oh, *I Giganti con La Gigantessa* [giants]. I was so scared of them because if you, I don't know if you came across them, there were people, now I understand, in stilts, and they were to me about ten feet tall because being so little, I thought that was just huge and that that was a big feast in the *Paese* [town]. And I think most of us children used to hide because this *Gigante* and *Gigantessa* could come and get us. And if I remember correctly, there was the story that if a child was being naughty, they would get them out and. You know you'd be punished.
- 00:12:22 GG: And this festival was that is, was it the religious festival? or was it---?
- 00:12:27 RP: I think no, there was no religion to it. We, the religious festivals that we had was the *La Madonna Delle Grazie* [Our Lady of Graze], was *Santa Rita*. We used to have a feast for *Santa Rita* that that was religious. Apart from that, no, I cannot remember others that. I'm sure they would have had others, but I cannot remember them.
- 00:12:49 GG: Right, now moving on to your dad, it was. When did he actually migrated?
- 00:12:56 RP: We left Italy in December nineteen fifty-nine and arrived the thirteen of January nineteen sixty in the port of Melbourne. And we took the train that brought us to Adelaide, and we arrived, because we travelled all night in the train. We arrived at the Adelaide Station, railway station on the fourteenth of January.
- 00:13:24 GG: And to, as your father, haven't spoken about why he came, why he migrated, I mean if he was a fisherman, he obviously he had an occupation?
- 00:13:36 RP: He did, he did. And it was heartbreaking because dad didn't want to leave. However, his three oldest daughters, well two actually, got married and came to, came to Australia to meet with their husbands, to meet their husbands. And then my third sister migrated to Australia because the two one, the two before her were missing all home. So, mum decided that she could come. Mum and dad obviously, decided that she could come to Australia and. And of course, she was so close to my dad, and she kept writing and saying you have to come here to Australia too dad, I can't stay. If you don't come, I'm, I'm coming back home. And that's how dad, mum and dad decided to migrate to Australia,
- 00:14:24 GG: Right? And you all came out of?
- 00:14:27 RP: We all came, yes, yes, yes. mum, dad, my three brothers and me, yeah.

- 00:14:32 GG: How did you feel about leaving?
- 00:14:34 RP: For me, was an adventure. I was only a child. I know, I remember the tears and the things on the day that we left. And I thought, why are they crying? Why are they sad? This is we're going away on a big boat, on a big ship. For me it was great.
- 00:14:48 GG: So, you didn't have a sense of leaving somebody behind grandparents or---
- 00:14:55 RP: Well, my three grandparents, my paternal, my grandmother and my maternal grandparents had died way long before I was born, so only was my paternal grandfather [maternal grandmother and paternal grandfather were both alive], and because we were at *Villa* and he was at *Pezzo*, we weren't that close. I mean, we used to get together, but you have to remember, if my grandma, both grandmothers, had sixteen kids and both my mum and dad were the first ones in their brood. So, you can imagine all the others and all the other grandchildren that they had, it would have been too much for, you know, for them to sort of be excited about this last one that came along, so. We were close, but not that close.
- 00:15:50 GG: Yeah, and what you remember the trip?
- 00:15:55 RP: The trip was fantastic. I had a great time on the boat. I had the, I had the free rein because lucky for us my, the captain was a close friend of my uncle, they grew up together. They went to school together. They even got married and were best men or whatever you call them, witnesses with one another. So, we sort of had the royal treatment on the, on the ship. So I was, and being young, I was allowed to go anywhere and everywhere I wanted, so I had no restriction.
- 00:16:29 GG: And the name of the ship?
- 00:16:31 RP: It was *la Sydney*.
- 00:16:32 GG: The *Flotta Lauro*.
- 00:16:35 RP: The *Flotta Lauro* yeah.
- 00:16:37 GG: Now arriving in Melbourne on the thirteen of January. You remember that day at all?
- 00:16:45 RP: It's a confusion. I think there was so many people, and nobody knew where anybody was going and because I think we had nobody to meet us in the port of Melbourne, we just relied on the people that were sort of in charge

up, I presume, of showing us where to go to the train and wait at the railway station. It wasn't a very pleasant experience. The parents were worried to trying to keep all the kids together. They didn't want us getting lost because nobody spoke the language. So, I do remember there was a gentleman, he must have, I don't know, now, thinking back and being involved with the Italian community and everything here, he must have belonged to one of the organisations that the Italian government had, so that he made sure that you found where to go. He gave you directions. But I do remember, I think, being a little bit stressed, not me, because as I said, I was only a kid. I didn't know what stress was, but I could see it in my parents, how they were worried. But once we got to the train station and on the train and then we were all in the cabin and we were fine until we arrived in Adelaide and then we were met by my sisters and their husbands. So---

00:18:15 GG: So, you're in many emotions or when you arrived in Adelaide, so you're still moving wondering to what where you were?

00:18:27 RP: Well, yes, it was overwhelming because everything was so different. It was a really hot day. Oh God, was it a hot day! And of course, we arrived, it was about eleven o'clock in the morning. So, it would have been about the peak of the sun hitting, but it was, there was a lot of emotion because my parents seeing that their daughters for the first time in many years, meeting the husbands and all that it. It was an emotional day, but it was a happy day, if you know what I mean.

00:19:08 GG: And obviously because you just came out from Italy, you wouldn't have had a house or anything to go to. So, where---?

00:19:19 RP: Where did we stay? We stayed with my, with *Carla*, my second sister. She had a house, a three-bedroom home in Brompton. So, this is where we were there. And living in that house was *Carla*, her husband and one child, because she was expecting another one. And then there was the six of us. And *Maria*, which would have been seven of us, so there was about ten people living in a three-bedroom home. But we made the most of it. It was fantastic, great times.

00:19:56 GG: How long were you there?

00:19:58 RP: For I think we stayed there about - maybe six months, six to eight months.

00:20:06 GG: It's a long time.

- 00:20:08 RP: We did. We did, yes, it. Until we found a nice place to go to stay and yeah, we were quite happy, And yeah.
- 00:20:19 GG: And before we move on to where you the place that you found to stay. You were there for eight months there. Obviously, you have some stage. You had to go to school.
- 00:20:31 RP: Yes, yes, I did. I did, yes, because we arrived in January and then in February school started. So, I was written, I was enrolled in the at Hindmarsh Public School, right, which is near the Adelaide Stadium now, you know, the Adelaide City, Adelaide United, whatever they called.
- 00:20:55 GG: Yes, Cooper.
- 00:20:57 RP: Yes, it's what? It's Cooper Stadium. I think it's about a street away from there.
- 00:21:02 GG: That would have been Hindmarsh Primary School?
- 00:21:04 RP: Hindmarsh Primary School. Yes. Yes. But I didn't last long there. I had a hard time.
- 00:21:10 GG: Tell me about it.
- 00:21:13 RP: Okay. Well, I remember the first day we went there, not a word of English, and the teachers weren't very nice to Italian children, especially if they didn't speak any English. And I remember being sitting next to a person and I was asked to copy everything that person did. Right---
- 00:21:36 GG: Was that person Italian?
- 00:21:38 RP: Oh no, no, no, that was.
- 00:21:40 GG: How many other Italians would have been in the school?
- 00:21:45 RP: There weren't many Italians, and I think I said for that my brother was at the same school as me. But then things changed because there was a boy there, who now I understand him to be a bully, but it didn't, I didn't comprehend in those days, and he used to call me all sorts of horrible names. Of course, to me it was just like a water off a duck's back. I did not understand what he was talking about, so I did not. But my brother had learned all the bad words being playing around with other boys. He would have learned them. And of course, he did ask this boy to leave me alone and not to harass me, but he wouldn't listen to him. So, one day my

brother sort of took matters into his own hands and showed him what you do when you're harassing someone's sister. And of course, he wouldn't do it nowadays, but in those days, it happened, so he got expelled from school. And of course, I didn't want to go back to the school because, you know, I kept saying to mum, I don't, I don't want to go there, I don't want to go there. And then a friend of my parents and my mum and dad, they mentioned to them about the Catholic school. And said there's one at Hindmarsh as well. So that's what my mum and dad did. They enrolled me at Saint Joseph's Hindmarsh on Grange Road there. And I must admit it was a lot better. And I was quite lucky that the principal, the head nun, the mother superior was also a teacher in the Year four classrooms. So, I was put in her classroom and knowing that I couldn't speak much English, what she had decided was that maybe one hour before classes and one hour after class we could have some English lessons. And this is what we did for twelve months. And so, in twelve months I learned English. And I did from school one year one to four. To catch up to all the work that everybody else did. Admittedly, I also had help from other people that sort of, you know, in the background, but we managed to get there. All thanks to Sister David.

- 00:24:18 GG: That sounds a very helpful nun.
- 00:24:22 RP: She was. She was a beautiful nun, very tough, but very, very beautiful.
- 00:24:27 GG: And were there more Italians at St. Joseph's?
- 00:24:31 RP: At St. Joseph's? Oh, yes, yes. I think half of the school was Italian. Yes. So, you felt comfortable because you were with your own people, but at the same time, you feel comfortable because the nuns understood, and I suppose they understood because they had a lot of migrant children there. So, they understood the problems that we were having, not speaking the language.
- 00:24:58 GG: Right, so, this was in the early sixties?
- 00:25:01 RP: Yes, yes, would have been February. I think I stayed there six months. So, it would have been about June, July, July making maybe second term, because we only had three terms in those years. So, I would imagine it would have been second term, it would have been about June, July.
- 00:25:18 GG: And did you do the whole primary school there?
- 00:25:20 RP: I did. I did, I did. And I did my high school there as well because in those days they had up to intermediate there and then for living and living honours you had to go to Siena College.

00:25:33 GG: Before we get on to that, let's go back about your parents now. Your father was a fisherman when he come to Australia. a) What type of work was he looking for? What did he find?

00:25:50 RP: It was a tough time for poor dad because having been a fisherman all his life and having been on the sea, having been in the open air, he actually found a job, they helped him find a job at John Shearer and he worked in the foundry. It was a hard job, it was a hard work, but there were six of us that he had to look, look after so he worked. But he hated it. He really and truly hated it. The heat from the foundry and being couped up inside, not being able to be free like he was and enjoying his fishing. It took the toll, its toll.

00:26:33 GG: And how did he manage with the language?

00:26:35 RP: No, dad did not speak any English at all. Somehow, he always found nice people around him, and there was always some Italian that would interpret it for him. But no, to the day that dad passed away did not speak a word of English.

00:26:52 GG: So, he never actually---

00:26:53 RP: No, I do not remember my father ever saying a word in English.

00:27:00 GG: Interesting. So how did he manage?

00:27:03 RP: He managed, He managed. Because he worked until he was sixty-five, sixty-five yeah sixty-five they used to retire.

00:27:11 GG: Always at John Shearers?

00:27:13 RP: Always at John Shearer.

00:27:15 GG: Yes, and always doing the same thing?

00:27:17 RP: Yes, yes. By that time, he knew what he was doing. So, they were just letting him do it because they knew he was doing it, right. So, nobody had to tell him any different. Yeah---

00:27:29 GG: What about your mother?

00:27:31 RP: Mum. She. Actually, back in Italy learnt to do tailoring men's suits. Right, so when mum came here at first when we lived in the rental property, she

didn't do much because, you know, by the time she got everybody organised to go to school, to work, whatever. But when we actually bought our own home, she, did a couple of suits for my dad and my brothers and people got to know, you know, asking her where such fine suits were being made because the off the rack suits in those days were, you know, very basic, to say it nicely. So, she started doing suits for people and mum slowly, slowly built up a business where a lot of people came to see her. And then I remember one of the tailors had come across one of her suits and he came, I can't remember his name though, isn't it terrible? He came across and asked her, you know, would she like to do something for him? And she thought, well, why not? Let me see. And yeah, and she just went up and up from there. And yeah, so both of them worked hard for the family.

00:29:04 GG: So, your mother worked from home?

00:29:06 RP: Yes, yes.

00:29:08 GG: That way she looked after the children?

00:29:09 RP: That's right. That's right.

00:29:11 GG: So, what was her language like and how did she go?

00:29:15 RP: No mum was a lot better than dad. I can't say she was fantastic, but she managed to go shopping, she managed to do her shopping, she managed to go into the city and find whatever she needed. It might take a little bit longer to explain to the assistant there what she wanted, but she always, she always managed and. She was very lucky because she always had a smile on her face, mum, and people seem to warm up to that smile. So, she most of the people that she came across were always very helpful and if they couldn't understand they would take the time to try and understand. She has come across, she had come across some bad ones where they just didn't have time for any migrant, wouldn't have matter where you come from. But then I suppose that's like that everywhere around the world you find the good, you find the bad. But in all she you know, and it always amazed me, because we weren't allowed to speak English at home, we had to speak Italian, and we weren't allowed to speak dialect either, we had to speak Italian. It always amazed me, she said she couldn't understand English, but when us brothers and sisters used to speak in English and we used to say something, she'd say what did you say *cosa hai detto, cosa hai detto* [what did you say what did you say]? And I'd say ah yeah, you know more than you catch on, an old fox.

- 00:30:52 GG: Apart from your sisters, were there any other family, relatives?
- 00:31:02 RP: In Australia, no, no, we had nobody here.
- 00:31:07 GG: So, did you interact with other Italians?
- 00:31:11 RP: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. We were party animals. I remember the first house that we rented was at Croydon, in Robert Street, and there was a huge garage. And that garage wasn't being used for storage or for cars. It was being to turn into a, you know, dancing room because on Saturday nights and everybody used to get around there and a barbecue and everybody used to bring something, you know, and we would be dancing up to midnight, one o'clock, and all the neighbours would come and join as well. So, it was a party every Saturday night, just about. So yeah, we used to have a pretty happy life.
- 00:31:58 GG: So that was the highlight of the week?
- 00:32:02 RP: It was, it was, what else could you do? You know, you couldn't sort of go out to dinner. Dinners weren't known in those days to go out to dinners, the movies, because it used to be, what was it, the *Franco Cinema* at Magill and then the other one at St. Peter's? I can't remember what that was. But they came on later, where you used to be able to go and watch an Italian film, because if you went to an Australian, an English spoken movie, mum and dad wouldn't understand. Of course, when it was just the sisters and brothers going out together, that was different, you know, we would go to the cinema, and I remember when I first, when I first saw, I go from one thing to another, when I first saw the ushers, just remembering in the sixties, the ushers were with long gowns and long gloves and all that I'm saying to my brothers, that's what I'm going to do. I think that's the job I want. That never came true. But yeah, we had, and of course then you met people and your *paesani* [fellow town's people] as well, you know both *Calabrese* [Calabrians] and *Siciliani* [Sicilians]. And you know, you have children that you've got to confirm that you've got to have first communion that you do this. So, you sort of become *Comare* [godmother/sponsor] and *Compare* [godfather/sponsor] and yeah.
- 00:33:34 GG: So, you sort of make up a family?
- 00:33:36 RP: We did. We had a very extended family, yes.
- 00:33:39 GG: So, you're talking about you, you went to movies with your brothers and sisters and so on. Tell me about what your life was as a child?

- 00:33:56 RP: With my brothers and sisters?
- 00:33:57 GG: And you know, to what extent were you, what sort of freedom did you have?
- 00:34:03 RP: OK, well, I suppose I was a bit freer than others in certain ways, because I had three older brothers, me being the youngest of the lot. And I remember that my brothers wanted to learn how to dance the Australian way, as it was called in those days, you know, the military two steps and all these things. Well, there was who did they spoil to take out, was their little sister. So, I remember on a Saturday afternoon, sometime about three o'clock it would have been, it was the Palais in the City, and they used to have these dancing classes. So, I'd be there with my brothers, and they'd be learning to do it. And of course, I'd be there as their partner to teach them, you know, to be along with them. So, I had a lot of, a lot of fun with my brothers, only because they needed to, to be able to dance and take girls out, laughs. So, I was an in, an end to their means, a means to the end, whatever you want to say.
- 00:35:15 GG: Yeah. But at least you got some freedom.
- 00:35:18 RP: I did.
- 00:35:19 GG: Most Italian girls wouldn't be able to that.
- 00:35:21 RP: I did. But then the sad part of it, when I got to eighteen years old, that all stopped because they all had girlfriends and things like that. So, the sister got left behind and you know, that was a hard time.
- 00:35:33 GG: We'll get that into that situation. Going back to your schooling, you did your primary school at and up to intermediate third year high school.....
- 00:35:48 RP: Yes,
- 00:35:31 GG: At Saint Joseph Hindmarsh,
- 00:35:45 RP: Yes
- 00:35:47 GG: How did you find it?
- 00:35:52 RP: OK, I actually quite liked school. My only problem was, and it wasn't with the studies or anything, it was, I was older than the other girls in the class didn't matter what class I was, because remembering that coming from Italy, I had to go back in, in, in levels of school which I didn't have any

problems with. But there seemed to be this thing oh, poor Rita, she's a lot older than everybody else. I don't know why age made any difference to anybody, but somehow in first year I seemed to have grasped, whether it was because I was getting help from my brother at home, you know, with all the subjects like algebra and maths and all these things, I seem to be more advanced than the other girls. The nuns decided that maybe to be able to catch up to the age of the other girls, I could skip year nine in which was year nine. So, I went from first year, I went into third year, OK, which I thought, well, if they think I can do it, OK, I'll do it. But I think that was the wrong move. Not because I couldn't cope because I had so much to catch up on, all right. And having had to catch from year one to year five in my earlier days and then having to catch up from first year to third year. Having to catch up second year school, I found that very, very difficult. I found it a stressful year. I managed to pass with flying colours, but I remember there was a lot of stress and I remember getting a lot of fevers and things because of all the tension that I was putting myself under. But I managed it. So, I did up to intermediate, and then at Siena College studying Leaving [Year 11]. Then an opportunity came our way, someone that my brothers knew, were working at a place called South Australian Stevedore and Company, which was based in Lipson St. in Port Adelaide. So, they introduced me, they said I think you would be good It's to do with that ledger machine, in that time, that's I think what the computers were. And because I hadn't been good with maths, they thought I would fit in it quite well. Maybe it was fate that I had to be there, I don't know, maybe somebody from up there was looking after me. I did get this job. The owner of the company was a beautiful man, really beautiful man. And he knew that I was still at school, so he employed me on the understanding that I would work two and half days and that I would be two and half days at school. Right, so, I did two full days of school, two full days at work, and then one-half day at school and one-half day at work. Right, so because I was the junior ledger machinist, they had the seniors there, they could do most of the work, and the days that I was there, I would be taught the run around of what to do. So, I managed to do my studies, to finish my studies and finish my leaving honours [Year 12]. And there'll be an interesting story to tell you about how it happened.

0:39:56 GG: Before you talk about leaving honours [Year 12] because you said you went to Siena [Siena College Findon]. This will be in the sixties.

00:40:06 RP: Oh, yes, yes.

00:40:07 GG: They had Leaving, which was year eleven, from memory I don't think they had---

- 00:40:15 RP: No, I didn't do Leaving Honours [Year 12] at the school. I did, I did it off the school.
- 00:40:20 RP: If you know what I mean? Right, so because I was working, and this is why it happened, that happened in Leaving [Year 11] when this opportunity came up. So, I was studying Two and half days for my Leaving Honours [Year 12] and I think for the, yes, I think for the exams it was actually done at the University [University of Adelaide], or was it at Wayville?
- 00:40:46 GG: It would have been Wayville.
- 00:40:47 RP: Wayville the Show Grounds.
- 00:40:48 GG: Centennial Hall.
- 00:40:49 RP: Centennial Hall. That's right. That's where we had the exams. So, and I did quite well. I, you know, I passed all the subjects and yeah, better than average.
- 00:41:02 GG: Yeah, that's right. Yeah. Because I remember that Sienna did not have Leaving Honours [Year 12].
- 00:41:06 RP: No, no, no.
- 00:41:08 GG: They went, first of all they went to St Michael's [St Michael's College] and then St Michael's developed their own co-education. Okay, so you.
- 00:41:13 RP: Yes, yes, yes, that's right, you brought me back some memories.
- 00:41:24 GG: That's the whole idea. I built this type of interviewing that it does bring back memories. Okay, Leaving Honours [Year 12] you did Leaving Honours [Year 12] two and half days a week, which is quite an achievement. And I know how much is involved, and what sort of subjects did you to excel?
- 00:41:49 RP: Well, there was Italian, so I had to take that up. I wasn't going to pass it something that I was familiar with. And then there was shorthand and bookkeeping, so that was, and of course you had to do Maths and English, so that was the five subjects that I had picked. So, Maths, I liked, the only thing I didn't like was Algebra, I couldn't for the life of me get my head around it, but that's alright, I managed to get past that. And because I'd always, as I said you know, working with figures had always been my idea, because life takes you different ways after, but that was the thing. Italian, I

excelled in. And it was strange because when I when I did my exams for the Italian subject, and I think this was an Intermediate [Year 10] that it happened, yes, it was when I was doing intermediate [Year 10] exams, because at that stage that's when you had to go to the university [University of Adelaide] to do the exams because the Catholic schools weren't on the same level as the public schools as far as exams were concerned. They didn't let you do the exams in the Catholic school you had to go to, to a government facility. So, I, that's where the university [University of Adelaide] came in. We had to sit the Italian exams at the university [University of Adelaide] and they would then correct, mark the papers. That wasn't for all the exams, just for the Italian. And I remember, Sister Anne was my third, my Intermediate teacher, third year. I remember that she said that she got a note saying that I had failed Italian, and I couldn't believe it, I thought, how can I? How can I fail Italian? I've been great at it all year round. How can I fail Italian? Anyway, she somehow got an appointment with the with the professor and I can't remember his surname at the moment.

00:44:16 GG: Would it have been Dr Georgio Masero?

00:44:18 RP: No, no, his wife was working for a doctor surgery at Henley at Seaton, what was his name? It might come to me later [Cinzio]. She had an appointment with him, and she said, can you explain to me why the student failed? He said, oh, I failed her because she's too far advanced. And she said what? What do you mean she's too far advanced? Oh, she's using verbs and things that we haven't taught yet here. And she said, and you're failing her for that. So, she took it up with the head of the Italian school and he had to retract it, and I actually got a hundred percent.

00:45:08 GG: Did you actually have a teacher of Italian?

00:45:11 RP: Yes, yes.

00:45:13 GG: And this would have been---

00:45:19 RP: Nineteen sixty I started, oh God Joe.

00:45:23 GG: sixty-seven, sixty-eight---

00:45:27 RP: Sixty-seven, sixty-eight yeah, I would have been about seventeen years old.

00:45:34 GG: That's interesting because my understand was the Italian wasn't introduced in schools until much later.

- 00:45:41 RP: Oh no, no, we did Italian, we did Italian. It was. But anyway, yeah, we, I managed to get the right then they marked my papers again, and no, I passed with leaving colours, you know.
- 00:45:57 GG: So, you're working. You worked two and half days; you were at school two and half days. What were you working towards? What? What did you want to achieve?
- 00:46:09 RP: I'd always wanted to have a career in medicine, right, now because, I shouldn't say this, but because my mom wanted me to become a doctor and she was pushing so hard. She turned me off. It was always you have to study medicine; you have to study medicine. Now if she had left me alone and had just backed me up, I might have. I can't say I would, and I can't say I wouldn't. I might have, but because, being seventeen, and having been so told what to do all the time, I thought, this is my only the only thing that I've got control on my life is my study. I said no, I don't want to study anymore. I'm working, I want to continue working with what I'm doing. I'm quite happy to do, to do that because I could actually see a future in, in, in computers, I suppose you know, because the ledger machine was the beginning of computers. So, and this is what I did for ages you know, until I met Erasmo.
- 00:47:35 GG: OK, right. Let's before we get on to that. So, you were seventeen, you finished school, you gone to work for the Stevedore industry full time?
- 00:47:49 RP: Yes, yes, work full time and I worked there, I think, I think for another year, but then something came up. There was a job opening up at the Adelaide Council, the Adelaide City Council. There was a job working up there and, I have to maybe go back a little bit to the age I was sixteen, because at the age of sixteen I met a gentleman named Mr. Anderson. And this Mr. Anderson was involved with the Woodville Council and talking to me, he, he thought, well, this girl got, he must have seen that I had something that I could contribute to life. So, he somehow managed to talk my parents, which were very strict, into letting me join the Good Neighbour Council, I don't know if you ever heard of the Good Neighbour Council, right. And that was the Woodville branch and the Good Neighbour Council---
- 00:48:49 GG: Just explain what Good Neighbour council was about.
- 00:48:03 RP: It was to help migrant, migrants, OK. It was also to help migrants in finding, you know, like any government businesses, that they had to find, departments. But it was also very important, that they would look after people's properties, you know, like a Neighbourhood Watch, right? It was both incorporated into the Good Neighbour Council and mum and dad

agreed, and so I was the first ever Italian secretary of the Good Neighbour Council in Australia at sixteen years of age. I didn't know what was involved. I didn't know what a secretary was. I had; I had no idea. But Mr. Anderson was so patient, he showed me how to take the minutes, how to type up the minutes, how to do things. And I learned a lot from this gentleman. And it was great because there was a lot of people, as you know, you know, migrants, who had no idea how to deal with any, not just government departments, but with any, anything at all, doctors, anything that they needed. So, they used to see, I remember the Woodville office, because it wasn't the Woodville council that they've got now [City of Charles Sturt], it was the old one in the little town hall and there was an office there and there were, because of course, me being at school still, I could only help on the Saturday. So, on the Saturday there was the office open, and Italians would come in and you know we do things, they explain what they needed done and we used to do it for them. So, I did that for four years as a volunteer.

00:51:01 GG: As a volunteer?

00:51:02 RP: Always. As a volunteer, yeah. So, at 16 I started my volunteering work. And this is, I think, how I came to hear about the position opening up at the Adelaide City Council. There was a position for a, for a, we call them nowadays a PA [Physician Assistant], right? So, I had to apply, I wanted, I did apply for that, but at the same time there was a position opening up at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. So, I applied for that as well.

00:51:39 GG: What was the position?

00:51:41 RP: It was a clerical, clerical work, but there was a possibility of interpreting, okay, so, I thought, well, this will make up my mind whether I want to go to nursing school if I work in the hospital. But at the same time, I wanted the job at the Adelaide City Council because that sounded very, you know, high and mighty thing but as fate would have it the job at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital came through, and so I got the telegram because in those days they used to send you a telegram. I'm saying those days isn't it sound like ancient? So, I got this telegram. And of course, I was so excited, I said I'm going to accept this job because I didn't want to work in Port Adelaide anymore, I had outgrown that place. I said, I'm going to accept it, and, I should have listened to mum, she said, well, just wait a day, you don't have to answer straight away, wait a day. I said no, no I said they were good enough to accept me, I'm good enough to work there. So, I accepted the job, not knowing that the next day I've got the telephone [call] from the

Adelaide City Council, to say that I had the job there as well. And of course, I felt obligated that I had accepted this job and I couldn't let the hospital down because they were, you know, so good in hiring me, little old me, you know. So, I turned the council's job down. And so, I, that's how my career started in, in the hospital. So, working at the hospital, it was good, because I learned, they sent me all over the hospital, I worked in, in the, and actually I did, I did eight months of nursing, but I didn't last, because I just couldn't cope with the dying and things like that. So, I was going to leave, but the Matron, was a tough old bird, she was, but she said, well, instead of leaving, let's see if we can transfer you over to the administration side of it. And that's how I became a clerk, and I was going all over the place, you know. I learnt in theatre because I had done nursing, I had learnt in theatre, I've done outpatients, casualty. You sort of in those days, it's not like today where you're starting one job because that is your job, you started at the ground floor, and you worked yourself up. But then all of a sudden, the interpreting took over and it just consumed most of the day because there were so many people, they just couldn't speak English. And then they needed the help.

00:54:52 GG: So, this will be in the early seventies [1970s]?

00:54:55 RP: Yes, this was early seventies. Yeah and yeah and that's how my life began in working, and as far as my volunteering concerned, even though I was working for the Good Neighbour Council, then my, I think it was my bad luck that I had, I did the tax returns for one of my mum's *Comare* [godparent/sponsor] and of course she got a good return that year and then all the neighbours got to know that, so taxation time it was Rita, can you do my tax Rita? Can you do this? And it was getting to the stage where it was too much, so I had to leave the Good Neighbour Council. To say I'm sorry because working full time and doing the interpreting and a lot of the time that went over the time that I was supposed to be at the hospital. But I wouldn't leave because I thought, you know, I feel sorry for the people that don't speak English. Because I kept thinking, what if it was my mother that needed the help, you know? So, I did all that, and so I left the Good Neighbour Council. Much to my heartbreak, but I had to and continued my volunteering with doing *comares*, *compares* or the neighbours or you know, *la mica di questa*, *la mica di quella* [the friend of this, the friend of that] all their paperwork.

00:56:28 GG: You are doing that from home?

00:56:30 RP: I was doing it from home. Yes. Yes. And never, never, the most that I got was, I used to get a lot of chocolates, which I used to think I can't eat this chocolate. So, I'm going to be the house, size of the house. But yeah. Yeah.

- 00:56:46 GG: So, OK. So, in the meantime this you would've been, what the early twenties?
- 00:56:51 RP: Yes, When I was, in my twenties, my twenties, I met my husband.
- 00:56:59 GG: Yeah. Before we get on to your husband, you mentioned before that your brothers sort took you out because they needed a partner, and so on and so on, when they've got partners that you go---
- 00:57:13 RP: That's right. I got left behind. I was, I was jilted by my brothers.
- 00:57:17 GG: So, what, did you get a chance to go out?
- 00:57:23 RP: We used to, we used to go out to *festas* [religious feasts] and we used to go out to weddings and you know *I balli che facevano delle feste* [the dances that they held for the feasts], my third sister, *Maria*, she married a *Veneto* [a Venetian], a man from *Padova* [a Province of the Region of Veneto in Italy], a *Padovano* [a person from Padova], so he was, he was a lot outgoing, so he would organize for us to go out on a Saturday night and that's how I met my husband.
- 00:57:53 GG: So, what sort of places where you going to?
- 00:57:57 RP: We used to go to the Juventus [Adelaide City Football Club] dances because both of my brothers, my two eldest brothers and, or even the third one, played soccer. My oldest brother was the goalkeeper for the Juventus. And a lot of the players used to come home, mum would feed them, and we'd wash their guernseys and things, their uniforms. And so, you got, you got to know all these people and we used to go to those, to the dancers there and any dancers that was, but it was always a family. Never, never alone never, unless they had a chaperone.
- 00:58:36 GG: So, you went to these dances and that's how you met *Erasmus*?
- 00:58:45 RP: *Erasmus*, yes, I met at *Erasmus* on the 14th of February, Saint Valentine's Day, at Centennial Hall, and that was the Juventus' event for Saint Valentine's, and that's how I met *Erasmus*. He was there to meet somebody else. He saw me, came, and asked me to dance. Fortunate for me my brother-in-law was there with us because I wasn't allowed to accept dances from anybody, because my father said you are not to dance with strangers. But as it was, my brother-in-law said to him, dad, I'm here with my wife, I want to have a good time with my wife, if somebody comes and asks Rita to dance, she'd better dance because he said, you know, nothing is going to happen to her in the hall. So, *Erasmus* was the first one to come

and ask to dance, and I did. And that's how it started. So that's how we met.

00:59:41 GG: That's romantic in one way.

00:59:45 RP: Well we can't forget our anniversary.

00:59:48 GG: Obviously you can't forget your anniversary. So, at what stage did you mention to your parents that you met someone and how did you break it?

01:00:01 RP: That's a funny thing. It was really odd because working at the Queen Elizabeth, and *Erasmus* used to work at Telecom as it was and it was on Grange Road at Kidman Park, you know where the hotel. No, the restaurant *La Vita*, that used to be all telecom properties, right.

01:00:25 GG: It was almost on the corner of Grange Road and Findon Road.

01:00:29 RP: Yes, yes, yes.

01:00:30 GG: And Frogmore Rd.

01:00:32 RP: Frogmore Road. He was working there. So, on the Monday after Saint Valentine's Day when he said, you know, I said I met him and I was always at work and his and one of his mates said, well, did you meet anybody? No, they knew that he was going there for a blind date. So, they all asked him, how did you go with your blind date? He said oh yeah, I saw her, but no, she wasn't for me. Oh, so you bummed out, he said, oh, no, I didn't bum out, I met a nice girl. He said, oh, who is she? He said, oh, I don't think you'd know. But who is she? So, he said, my name, her name is Rita. And where does she work? Oh, she works at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Well, this fellow's name was Steve. The friend was Steve, and Steve said, my girlfriend works at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. What did you say her name was? Rita. So, he rings up Sandra, his girlfriend, and said to her, when it's meant to be, it's meant to be, and he said to Sandra, *Erasmus* or Harry, they used to call him Harry, Harry has met a girl named Rita who works at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, do you know her? She said, yeah. Do you know what department she's in? I said, well, she's right here next to me now. Oh, hang on, let me put Harry on, you speak to her. And this is how we sort of connected because I didn't tell, I didn't tell *Erasmus* where I lived, I didn't tell him what I did, but I told him I worked at the Queen Liz. So, he knew I lived at Kilkenny somewhere, but didn't know the address. So, he had gone around all weekend, all Sunday trying to find if you could see me at Kilkenny, as if I'd be out there on the streets you know with Sicilian and *Calabrese* [Calabrian] parents. Fat chance he had. Yeah. So,

what happened, she put him on, and he said can I come and see you tonight? And I said, oh after work? I thought, oh my God what am I going to do? I said, well alright you can come. No harm, you can come in there. And he said, he said, I'll be there. I said, well, what car do you drive? And he said, I have a Jag [Jaguar]. I said all right and left it at that. There was a girlfriend that worked with me at the Queen Elizabeth. Her name was Elizabeth. And I said to Elizabeth do you know what a Jag looks like? And I've never clue from Jag, from a, from a from a lion or from a you know, anything. She said, yeah, Jag, I know what it. So, I explained to her what was happening. I said, well, you better stay here with me because I we used to go home together, I said, because I don't know what the Jag looks like. So there comes *Erasmus*, and she said, that's a Jag. I said, oh, OK, it's just an old car. To me, it was just an old car, a bomb.

01:03:43 GG: It wasn't for *Erasmus*.

01:03:45 RP: It wasn't for *Erasmus*, he'd been working, or not, for years to bring it up to, because it was a sports car as well, you see, and that's how it all started. But we kept it, we kept it sort of secret for about a month. And he used to come and have lunch with me at the canteen, at the hospital, at the Queen Liz. And then one day, as fate would have it, one of my brothers saw me, didn't they, walking from the front entrance of the hospital to tick, tick, tick to the canteen with this fellow. And he thought he doesn't look like a hospital worker. He wasn't dressed like a hospital worker anyway. So, he told my mom, and mom gave me the third degree, and I said, well I don't know what you're talking about, you know, I've I walk with a lot of people, go to lunch, blah blah, blah. So, she said you better not be doing anything wrong because, she said, you know, *se voi vivere* [if you want to live] and that was all I needed to know. So, I said to *Erasmus*, look this can't go on, if you're interested in me, and I hope you are, I said, you have to come and see my parents. I said I can't do this anymore and that's how it happened. He came to see mum and dad home. Mum wasn't happy because he was ten years older than me and she thought, you know what's going to happen in your old age, he's going to be an old man, you're still going to be young, blah, blah, blah, è *Abruzzese* [he is from Abruzzo, region in Italy]. And I said what's *Abruzzese* got to do with the price of fish. What? What's that got to do with it? You know, I said it's just a region of Italy. No, no, no *ti deve sposare uno Siciliano*. O nu *Calabrese* [you have to marry a Sicilian or Calabrian]. I said I don't want *Calabrese*, I don't want *Siciliano*, I said I'm never going to marry an Italian, if that's the case. So, you know, and dad said, *ma* [but] why are you putting these obstacles in her way, if that's what she wants. Anyway, she agreed for *Erasmus* to come home, and, and I don't know if I should tell you the next bit, anyway, we had a nice evening, *Erasmus* came, and you know it was lovely, we sat in the lounge and got to

know him, ask questions about the family and he was asking questions about our family all very civil and at one stage mum said to me, well you better go and make a cup of coffee. So, I got a good daughter, I ticked off into the kitchen to make coffee and biscuits and things like that. As it was, she needed to go to the bathroom, so, in the old houses, you remember the old knobs that used to swivel and they used to come undone sometimes, she got stuck in the bathroom, didn't she? And because it was winter when he came, we had all the doors closed, because in those days we didn't have air conditioning, we just had the little heaters, gas heaters, remember? So, we had all the doors shut and of course I had brought coffee, and we were waiting for mum to come back to the lounge so we could have coffee. But we couldn't hear that mum was banging on the door to say get me out of here, you know I can't open the door because the knob on the other side had fallen off so she couldn't open it. So anyway, finally I went to look for mum and I heard. So, in the meantime, when all this was happening at us, we had a discussion with dad because she wasn't present and she got upset with that, didn't she? So, we, you know, dad said, well if this is what they want, this is what they get. You know, he seems to be a nice man, we don't know nothing about him, blah blah blah, this, and that and the other. And dad said, if she's happy, we're happy, OK? We're not the one that's got to marry him, because she had her eyes on somebody else for me.

01:07:56 GG: I was going to ask you.

01:08:03 RP: That was another story, which I don't know if I'd go into that one.

01:08:06 GG: It's up to you. What you want to preserve for posterity?

01:08:10 RP: What they tell us girls went through was unbelievable. Unbelievable with jealous parents. And you know, this *paesano* [fellow town person] of hers, of mums, had, had in, in mind this fellow for me. And he was twenty years older than me, quite wealthy. He was quite wealthy, but OK I wasn't a ravishing beauty, but I wasn't that bloody ugly either. So, when I saw him, anyway, he was a little bit challenging. He was about a foot shorter than me, twenty years older than me, all right he was driving an *Alfa Romeo* sports car, and as I said, cars to me meant nothing. I didn't know A from B in cars. So, and I said no. I said there's no way that I that I want this fella. And you know, that went on for months, used to come and see me at home and would buy presents, would buy me ice creams, you know, he'd come to the soccer, because every Saturday would take dad to the soccer, I'd be with him there at the soccer and he would be at the soccer there. And I said to dad, I said this can't go on. I said I've got no intent, no interest in this fellow. I said either, you tell him I'm, or I'm going to tell him. So, dad

had to let him down quite gently and said, look, if she doesn't want you, she doesn't want you. What can you do? You know, So and then of course *Erasmus* came along, and I said, oh the twenty-year-old was older than me was alright, now he's ten-years-older it's not alright. Yeah. So anyway, never mind. I like the look of *Erasmus*, he was lovely, and I haven't regret it since, we've been married fifty-three years so.

01:10:06 GG: So, you continue to work at Queen Elizabeth Hospital?

01:10:12 RP: I was there for seven years, and then I became pregnant, after I got married, of course. And I now, let me think, did I go back after I had *Liana*, after I had the baby? No, I didn't. I, in those days you couldn't work. It was hard enough getting married and keep working, let alone being pregnant and getting and working. You had to leave once, once the baby was born, not when the baby when you were pregnant. But once the baby was born, you had to leave. Yeah, that's right. So I was, I was home for about, I don't know, nine months, I presume, nine months. And then an opportunity came along at the surgery where my mother used to go, and it used to be Doctor *Chitti*, Doctor *Barbera*, and Doctor *Chitti* Surgery on Grange Road. So that opportunity came along, and mum said, well, why don't you ask them? They're looking for a reception as a secretary, whatever. And she said, you've got a medical background in you. They might appreciate you speak Italian. So, I met Ben, and I met Frank, *Barbera* and *Frank Chitti*, and then in they said, yeah, that'd be lovely. And at that stage, it actually worked out quite well because the position wasn't at Seaton, the position was at Mile End, and the Mile End surgery was an afterhours surgery, which, having *Liana* worked out perfectly because I was home during the day and *Erasmus* would get home at half past four or quarter to five, right? We'd have dinner because that didn't start until six o'clock, the surgery, right. So, I would, I would sort of be ready to go to work and *Erasmus* would give me a lift to work, and then he'd be back home with *Liana*, and most of the time, because *Frank* [*Dr. Chitti*] lived not far from where we lived, and when he was on duty, he would take me back home so *Erasmus* didn't have to come and pick me up. And then *Ben* [*Dr. Barbera*] was on the other side of town, but after he learnt that that was happening, because *Erasmus* was coming to pick me up. But after he learnt what was happening, he said I can take you home and you know he doesn't have to come out especially in winter. Wrapping up a baby was a bit hard, so and this is what happened for oh, I think about for about three years, three to four years I worked with.

01:13:11 GG: What year did you start working for the *Dr. Chitti*, for the surgery?

01:13:16 RP: Well, *Liana* was born in seventy-two [1972], so it would have been towards the end of seventy-two, seventy-two, seventy-three, something like that. And I worked there, I worked there for about three years, three years, four years, something like that, because then I became pregnant with *Claudio*, my second child, and I yes. And I worked there a little bit longer in the evening but then the opportunity came for me to work at Seaton [Seaton surgery] because the lady that was the receptionist there, she, she was quite elderly by that time, and she was making a lot of mistakes and I think it was getting too much for her. So, they asked me if I wanted to transfer to Seaton. So, I worked there for another few years and then we sold up at Seaton because I lived at Seaton, and we went to live at Banksia Park. So, I had to give up work for a few years. But all the time doing work for my community doing their---

01:13:35 GG: Tell me.

01:13:36 RP: Yeah, doing, doing all that stuff, yeah helping them, going seeing doctors. And yes, taxation, interpreting for them because we had all the *comare* [godmothers/sponsors] and things, you know, and they liked, although they had kids, their kids had grown up, a lot of them were used to me being there with them, with the doctors, you know, they didn't want their kids to interpret for them. So, I used to do it. It didn't bother me. I enjoyed it. And I remember we also used to have the, because I used to have an EH Holden, and I used to remember I'd have, before, before I had the kids, I'd have three of the *comare* [godmothers/sponsors] in the back and mum in the front, and we used to go to Virginia [country town in South Australia] to buy the meat, the bulk meat for everybody because that's how it was. You had to have the Tucker Box [chest freeze] for half a side of beef, half a sider lamb, those that ate lamb. Yeah. So, and you did it because you were a community, you were all together. That was your family, because really your family, in Italy, they were all out there, we were the only ones here, and you sort of made-up. Yeah.

01:15:50 GG: This was all informal?

01:15:54 RP: This was all informal. Yeah, yeah, all of it.

01:15:56 GG: In interpreting, did you at any stage try to qualify for NAATI [National Accreditation Authority for translators and Interpreters]?

01:16:03 RP: No, I didn't. No, I didn't think. I didn't think it at that time. But yeah, no, I never did. I never did. It was only after I had *Claudio*, living at Banksia Park and having so much time on my hand that *Erasmus* said to me, would you like to go back to do finish your studies?

- 01:16:29 GG: Before we get into that, hey, how come you moved from Seaton on the western side of the city to Banksia Park [suburb outer Adelaide, South Australia], which is at no stage at that stage was almost at the end of the world?
- 01:16:46 RP: You needed a picnic lunch. It was because we wanted to buy, no, let me say this, we had bought the house at Seaton that we lived in, but it was an old Trust home [South Australian Housing Trust] that we had bought, and we wanted something a little bit better, not that we were ashamed where we were living, but because of where we were, one neighbour on one side was always drunk and the noises and the language and the things that came out of it, because they were, and I hate to say this, but, and I don't mean any offense to anybody, they were Housing Trust people, and she had about, oh, I don't know, she, I think she had about ten kids. But she was always drunk, and her husband was working very hard, and it was, it was a shamble that place. The other, the other side wasn't as bad. But you know, it wasn't very a very happy atmosphere to bring up a child and we wanted to get out of that environment. So, this house came up, actually, we had seen a house at Paradise [suburb of Adelaide, South Australia], and we wanted it, but it was just a couple of thousand dollars too much. So, we put in a bid and of course the land agent did his best for us to get it, but the owner put his foot down and actually put it another couple of thousand dollars more. But in the meantime, this house at Banksia Park came up and it was a beautiful home, and it was even less than what we had expect to pay. So that's how we bought the house at Banksia Park.
- 01:18:46 GG: How did you find the shift from the Western suburbs where are a lot of Italians to Banksia Park where at that stage there are no Italians?
- 01:18:57 RP: It was all English or Australians. Yes, it was. It was difficult. It was, it was hard, but you know you had to do something for the family. We couldn't have afforded a place down West. Always hoping that, you know, something eventually would come up. They would be able to shift back, which it did happen. But in the meantime, I wrote, you know, I brought up the two kids. They were both school age. I used to take them to school at Saint Joseph's and Hectorville [suburb in eastern Adelaide, South Australia] from Banksia Park, I used to come to Hectorville because I used to know now, isn't it funny how life does now? Thinking back today, I used to do volunteering work at the Civic Centre at Campbelltown [suburb in eastern Adelaide, South Australia, next to Hectorville]. So, I would drop the kids at school, and I would do the volunteering at the Campbelltown Civic Centre where they had a play group and I found out about the play group, when I had the kids at home, that was the only play group I could put them in, so I would be there with them, and I'd be volunteering. So, once they went to

school, I kept volunteering there. And yeah, I did that for quite a few years until we sold and moved back to the West.

01:20:21 GG: Now before we got to there. Raising the kids, the children, and so on. Linguistically, language was.... Right, we were talking about you raising your children. And first of all, what sort of language? What language did you speak at home?

01:20:47 RP: We spoke Italian, the intention was there. So, *Liana* was born in seventy-four [1974] in seventy-two [1972], sorry, and Claudio in seventy-four [1974]. And it was always an Italian that we spoke at home. We had made a conscious decision that we wanted them to, to learn it. However, when *Liana* started play group, as it was known then, it was very difficult for people to understand her because she didn't speak a word of English. So, she had gotten to the habit of grabbing the children's hands to bring them to show them what she wanted to tell them or to ask them. And they, the parents and everybody took it as a, as an aggression that she was aggressive that she was trying to argue with them or fight with them, I don't know what their perception was. But the child worker there mentioned this to me and said, you know, the people are not comfortable with *Liana* grabbing the children's hands and blah blah blah. I said, well the reason she's doing that is because she doesn't speak English. She said, well then you better find somewhere where they speak Italian and she'll be in the right company. And I thought, how, how can you discriminate? I guess poor child, it doesn't speak a word of English. And you know, going home that night, I was devastated, I talked it over with that *Erasmus*. I, we come to the conscious decision that maybe we should start speaking to her in English. And this is what we did, which in a way I think it was wrong because we lost that fluency of speaking Italian to the kids in another way, well, we were trying to do what was the best for her. But yes, to this day my kids understand English, Italian, but they refuse to speak it because they think they don't pronounce the words right and that people would make fun of them if they heard them speak. So, and I'm sorry to say that you know, with the grandkids, except two, the others don't understand a word of English, of Italian, which is sad.

01:23:17 GG: Yeah, in a way. Sad.

01:23:19 RP: We've lost that, that continuance of culture, I suppose that, yeah.

01:23:25 GG: And so how did they find school when they started. I mean obviously the Play School was a bit of a---

01:23:37 RP: Well for *Liana*, it was, for *Claudio*, it wasn't. *Claudio* had no problem because we spoke English and it was OK. But as soon as she was able to understand, *Liana* always been a person that could make friends quite easy. She was very, very well at school. She like she enjoyed being at school. She studied. She was always in the high average and the high percentile of studies. There she never had any problems with anything she did in. I think it was in nineteen-eighty-eight maybe, or something, I can't remember, was it the bicentennial? Was it what's that? She was at school at Loreto [Catholic College in Kensington South Australia], in' I can't remember, it was, year nine year ten, yeah, it must have been year ten that they had to do, Australia wide, every school had to do a painting that associated with the, with the Aboriginal world, the what, how they saw the Aborigines and their culture and things like that. Aboriginal studies they were doing, so the whole the whole of Australia was involved in doing this and Loreto being a proactive school and, a very, a school that you know regarded itself as on the high level, joined this, this, I don't know what would you call it, this project yeah. So *Liana* painted did a beautiful painting and I've got it somewhere I will show it to you one day, it's a huge painting of two aboriginal men who have got their spears and on one hand they've got their spear and on the other hand they've got the boomerang, and then she's painted the platypus, the, all the aboriginal animals that were native animals, and then you know how they do all the dot painting, she had some of that in there as well. She won first prize. She got chosen as the best, the best one, whether it was Australia wide or just for South Australia, I can't tell you that now. It sort of goes out of my mind. But she did. So, they did have great time at school. *Claudio* was a different he was quite smart, but he was quite lazy, you know, he says, oh yeah mom, I can study that tomorrow. Unfortunate, fortunate for him, he could pick up a book and read and study whatever he had to do and could remember it. He wasn't the type that he had to really study day after day. And this is how he managed to get ahead for his exams because he was lazy the whole year. And then he sailed through his exams because that last week he knuckled down and he thought, which used to make me so angry and think why? Why have you got this ability when everybody else is struggling?

01:27:01 GG: So, did they go on with their studies?

01:27:02 RP: They did up to year twelve and when *Claudio* finished year twelve, he went into an apprenticeship as a mechanic and *Liana* wanted to do hairdressing. So, they both got their secondary HSC [High School] certificates. But no, they didn't go on until, well, *Claudio* had to do his apprenticeship, so he had TAFE [Technical and Further Education, a government-run system that provides education after secondary school in vocational areas] and so did

Liana. Yeah, yeah. I think they were seeing their mother study and they didn't want to do that.

01:27:46 GG: OK, well let's go back to about you studying, it brought us up to your *Erasmus* asking whether you want to go back.

01:27:49 RP: To study that's right. Yeah.

01:27:50 GG: What happened?

01:27:52 RP: He said to me, well, would you like to go back and finish your studies? Because I had given it up to have to have the children. I said, oh, you know, that will involve a lot, he said. Well, I'm here if you can do it part time or you want to do it full time, he said. We'll manage.

01:28:07 GG: How old were the children?

01:28:09 RP: At that stage, the children would have been, *Claudio* would have been about six, six, seven, so he would have been in second year, grade two, not second year grade two. So, he said they are at school most of the day, he said you're not working at the moment, if you want to study, and that's how I went back to school to do my study. And yeah, and I hadn't stopped until, I started then, and I think I must have stopped the studying about, I don't know, fifteen years ago because I've always done some sort of study somewhere along the line.

01:28:46 GG: Well, let's go through some, some of the things you did.

01:28:48 RP: OK. Well, I studied a business administration that what it was called in those days at UniSA [University of South Australia] and that, that took I think four years to do it. Once I got that degree, which was fine, I was quite happy, and I went to do Importing and Exporting on the Institute on Greenhill Rd, which was a which was affiliated with the UniSA [University of South Australia], but it wasn't actually done there, it was done in on Greenhill Rd. I had, had, well we I should say had, had ideas of maybe importing things and selling. So, I did the course but no that didn't eventuate I finished the course. I got that certificate, that degree, whatever you want to call it and that was as far as it went. Then I decided that I want to do, I want to do beauty therapy. So, I did four, four years in, in beauty therapy at the Adelaide TAFE. But that was part time. That's why it was four years because at that time I went back to work. So that was part time of four years and you had to study all about the skin and the conditions of the skin and all that and the other. Having finished that, and I thought, what am I going to do with my time? I decided to do couture at the

Douglas Mawson Institute, which is a campus of SA [University of South Australia], and I did that for two years and I graduated from there. So, as you can see Joe I couldn't stay home and this is why the kids gave up studying because they've seen me studying all the time that, that no, no mum is enough you can do it. So, I did that, and the reason I did that was because as you can see, I'm no, no average size. I'm actually, I've got the fuller figure, and it was very, very difficult in those days to find something that was beautifully made for a woman with the fuller figure. And because I had been spoiled from childhood until then, firstly with my mother making all my clothes because she was a tailor, then my sister, my older sister taking over and doing all my clothes. But then, of course, she had passed away, and I had lost that comfort that, that people, those people doing the clothes for me. So, I couldn't find anything that was, that looked elegant enough and that was comfortable enough. So, I decided to do a course, a couture, as they called it, for the fuller figure. And of course, I did. And I'll never forget my mum saying to me, by this time she's in her late eighties and I actually made her a dress and she said, *eh ho dovuto arrivare a ottanta anni per te farmi na vesta* [I had to arrive at 80 years old for you to make me a dress], I never forget that. And I said, well mum *meglio tardi che mai* [better late than never], you know, so it's, yeah, so, the reason I always study is for, it was for a purpose. It was for always something to do. But then I suppose my degree from UniSA has seen me in my jobs or the organizational skills that you have. I also did a short course in journalism and a short course in psychology. I didn't finish the psychology degree, like I had gotten into my mind at one stage that I wanted to be a land broker and to do land broking you had to do a law degree, a law for real estate, you know. So, I did that for two years at the Port Adelaide TAFE. But in those two years my father got ill, and I was very close to my dad, and I didn't finish it. I couldn't because then he eventually passed away. And once he passed away, I just couldn't get my head in enough to go and finish that course. But I did, I did Law one and Law two for the first year, so I suppose I had my fingers in a lot of pots, and they have helped me along my career, if you want to call up my career, my working career with a lot of things that I have done. So yes, I've always been able to get myself out of a lot of scrapes and things, you know, where other people had to have others help them. And along the way I have helped a lot of the *paesani* [fellow town people] because of that.

01:34:20 GG: OK, so that's your educational background. And let's go back. You went back to work. Take me through your working experience, what you've done over the years, how you've changed, how you've managed marriage, education plus the work.

01:34:42 RP: OK, so I married *Erasmus* in nineteen seventy, we married in nineteen seventy, and at that stage I was still working at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and then on the birth of *Liana*, I took time off because, as I said, you couldn't work in a government position and at that time, working for the hospital was working for the Hospital's Department, which is SA Health now, so it was a government job. Now, although the hospital is government use, they still allow to hire their own staff, whether before you had to go through the Public Service Association and all that. So, I had *Liana*, and I debated whether to go back, there was a lot of restrictions in what I could, what could not do and the job, you know, and this and that. And so, we decided that, because by that time my mother was fairly elderly and she wasn't able to look after *Liana* during the day, we decided that maybe I would give up the hospital and try to find something that fitted in my lifestyle in the evening. And so, a position came up where my mom used to go, to my mom's surgery, where she used to go, which was Doctor *Barbera* and Doctor *Chitti* and I got the position as the receptionist, or whatever you want to call it in for the surgery. And I used to start work at six o'clock which fitted quite well into our life because *Erasmus* used to finish quarter past four at work we didn't leave, by that time, we had left Banksia Park and gone lived at Henley Beach. So, it didn't, it didn't, no sorry, no we were still living at Seaton when this was happening. We hadn't gone to Banksia Park yet. It fitted in my life while I was there and yes *Erasmus* would come home, we'd have dinner and then he would take me to work, and I'd work until I think it was from six to ten. Sometimes went on to eleven, eleven thirty depending how busy the surgery was and then either one of the doctors would give me a lift home or *Erasmus* would make his way with *Liana* to pick me up, and that how it happened for a couple of years Then I became pregnant with *Claudio*. I was' then I got the position at, going from Mile End, the position the doctors had the surgery on Grange Road at Kidman Park and that had become vacant that position. So, they asked me if I wanted to go at Kidman Park, which I thought it was a lot easier because I was working during the day. At that stage I had somebody to look after *Liana* during the day, which was great. And yeah, and I became pregnant with *Claudio*. I was there for a couple of years, became pregnant with *Claudio*. I worked up to the stage of having *Claudio* there and then of course I had to give up because I had two children. I couldn't chance anybody looking after two children for me, and because the environment where we were leaving didn't suit to raise a family, we decided to sell up and buy a house at Banksia Park which in those days was very cheap to buy because it was adding woody whoop-whoop, Banksia Park you know Tea Tree Gully way you needed a picnic lunch to sort of to drive up there and that's how it was. We were there quite a few years, because *Claudio* was born just after we moved there, actually I think he was born the week that we moved. And yes, he was, he was born the week that we moved. So, we

were at Banksia Park, and we stayed there for seven years looking after both kids. Then the children decided to, you know, not decided, the children work school age, and I could find something to work, with that, and I went to work for the Education Department, the Catholic Education. No, no, no, no, The SA Education Department, only because, and I tell you it's not what you know, sometimes it is who you know. My nephew worked in Human Services at that stage at the Education Department and something came up, what they were trying to do with the language, in the language section of the school. And as it was there was this, this yeah program, this thing being called or All-Language Program. They were seconding linguistic person from Scotland. His name was Doctor John Smith, and he could speak about seven languages. He was, he was brains, and the idea what was they wanted to do was to be able to amalgamate the whole of Australia on the same level of learning languages. Because the Italian that was being taught here in Adelaide was on a different level than Melbourne, with different level than Sydney than and the other states. And this was with all the other languages, so they wanted to have the whole Australia working on the same level, so that if you were studying here and you moved over there you could just take over instead of starting all over again. So, Sam, my nephew, rang me and said, *zia* [aunty], are you interested in doing some work? He said, I don't know if it's going to be permanent or not, at the moment it's just a contract. And I thought, well, why not? It's a, it's a foot in the door, isn't it? And I said, yeah, let's give it a go. He said you'll have to come to the interview. He said, I can only recommend you. I'm not the one that hires. He said you come to the interview and if you're successful, they'll let you know. And that's what I did, and I was successful. So, for two years we worked on the All-Languages Program as it was called. And we were based at the corner of Grote St. and Morphett St., you know, the old building there, and I think it used to be a wine centre there at one stage, right. So, the Education Department hired that out for us to use it. And we had *Angela Scarino* and this other lady named Pamela who was a languages professor as well, and Doctor John Smith. And we worked, they worked, we worked, I did the work for them and for two years and it all came to fruition. And it all worked well, and everything got done, but then in the end, I don't know what happened. However, when this project was scaling down, I got a phone call from head office.

01:42:57 GG: Right, before you go on, what were you actually doing?

01:43:01 RP: I was actually doing all the transcripts, I was doing all the, the, the studies that they all the research that they were doing, I was putting it on computer and it's amazing this computer came that I had, I can't remember if it came from Germany or from America, but anyway, it had, it

had programs in it that I would type the whatever it was in English, right, and then I would actually hit a button and it would translate it in all in their language, like in Italian, in German, in whatever language you know they wanted done, which was magnificent. I'd never seen anything like it. And it wasn't as if I had to do a lot of study for it, because I didn't. I had to learn the program and that was good because it took me, I think I had about three months, three months tuition, something like that on how to how to convert all of it and yes it was great. So, we were a group, I also organised all the conferences for, because it was all of Australia was involved. Here was the base which was fantastic because I think that's the first time Australia, South Australia been a base of anything for the first time. So, I used to organise all the conferences to come for everybody from all the states to come to South Australia, organise all their, all their accommodation or all everything and at the same time organise the, the minute, the, the, the documents that had to be spoken to at these conferences. Of course, I wasn't there by myself. I had a lot of people working under me as well because not possible to do this all by itself. So, I had a quite a nice team of people. We were together and the thing was even although I had been in the in charge of the program, I've always, I've never been a superior to any of them. We've always worked together, and this is why everything was working smoothly, because we all did work and if one day, I wasn't there somebody could easily step into and take that role on the same thing, if the others weren't there, we'd all share it. So, it went on for two years and it was quite successful, but unfortunately it got canned or binned or whatever you want to say it, I don't know why, powers to be, governments change.

01:45:49 GG: It was before the national curriculum?

01:45:53 RP: Yes, yes. Which is, which is a shame because and I think and, I'm nonpolitical and, but I think it's a shame when one Party does something and it's good for the country that another Party comes in and just scraps that it, that that's the sad part about it. But never mind, it's life.

01:46:15 GG: So that project finished, you intimated that you moved on something else.

01:46:21 RP: Yes. As that project was winding up, I got a phone call from head office, the Education Department, and they asked me if, there was a vacancy in the education in the in the centre there, right. And although they said it's not very glamorous, they said, you know, you might be able to do something with it. And it was to do with writing speeches for the then Minister, Greg Crafter, he was the Minister of Education. I wasn't just the only one, it was a group of people working there. But it was, it was something new, a challenge. And I said yes, all right, it's not a problem.

They said it's not a permanent position. It doesn't matter. I haven't got, you know, at the moment, I don't have a permanent position to go to. And I thought, what have I got to lose? You never lose anything on any job that you do, you always gain some sort of, you know, whatever you call it, you gain experience. So, I did that, and I think that lasted about twelve months and---

01:47:38 GG: Was this occupation, this role before or after you did the course in journalism?

01:47:49 RP: It was before. Which gave me that push to just do a little bit of research into do the journalism, I thought that would be interesting. Not that I thought I was ever going to go out and be a journalist, you know, it was just something to wet the appetite. But then I got, I got a call, just as that was winding down, I got a call from the Catholic Education Office, and would I like to go in for an interview and I thought, well.

01:48:26 GG: Can you put some dates to this?

01:48:28 RP: Oh God, no, Joe. No Joe.

01:48:31 GG: Roughly.

01:48:32 RP: OK Well, *Claudio* was born in seventy-four [1974]. That was what, six years after, wasn't it, seventy-four? No. Yeah, that was six years in the eighties [1980s], yes. It'd be the eighties, yeah. So, I went in and Helen McPhee was the person interviewing and she said that it's not, you know, the offices here aren't as glamorous as the Education Department because we are Catholic Ed [Catholic Education Office]. and, you know, and I said it didn't really matter, didn't matter anyway I got the job.

01:49:16 GG: Were they at this stage still in the city?

01:49:22 RP: In the city in Waymouth St. Yes, next to the gas company? Was it the gas company there? Yeah, in that building there, and we did, I was working for the disadvantaged schools.

01:49:34 GG: Disadvantaged School Program?

01:49:36 RP: That's right. Which was a---

01:49:38 GG: Commonwealth funded [Federal Government] program.

01:49:39 RP: Yes, yes. And it was very, very interesting and I think that whetted my appetite again for doing some volunteering work because you saw the devastation and some of the children were going through, you know, with the parents being on drugs and being alcoholics and, you know, them being on a, on a, on a pension type of thing, on what were they called in those days? The they used to get benefits, right, benefits where they would spend the benefits in one day, they would either go to the races or something, and then for the next fortnight the poor kids would be starving, going to school without food, going to school with, you know, dirty clothes or unmended clothes. It was the devastation was terrible and the worst, the worst school for that, and not that it was the worst school, but the worst affected school that had so many of those children was at Brompton [inner city suburb in West]. It was so sad, so, we would try to get some funding for the schools. We would try to get some teachers or whoever so that they would help these children. And so, we managed to organise breakfast so that when they got in, they would have at least some breakfasts and some lunch that at least these kids will get two meals a day, Monday to Friday and then Saturday and Sunday, well, it was, you know, nothing could be done. So that, that for me lasted for about two, two, years, three years, something like that. That project lasted for about two, yeah, close to three years probably. And then, and then I had to go out and, I still was working for them but and, I knew that it was coming to an end, but I had to sort of look for something else to do. And I went to work for the Hindmarsh Adelaide Bank, in the financial services and that was the worst time because that was when the first crash happened, and it, if you started working in the bank that's a bad time to do it. It was shocking. So many people losing their money. There was quite a few suicides. It, it wasn't a very pleasant place to work at, not the place itself, but what was happening. And then I said to *Erasmus* I said I can't keep working here. This is too depressing. And sometimes I wouldn't get home until eight, nine o'clock at night because of all the things that were going on. And I said this is no life for me. I said I don't want to do it. So, I think I lasted fifteen months there. But in the meantime, a job came up in a psychiatric practice and I went for the interview. And I must admit I wasn't the first choice, they had given the job to somebody else, but the girl only lasted one day. So, they rang me, and I thought, these people are, you know, I had a little bit of suspicion at the back of my mind. How can anybody just last one day in a job, right? And I went home, and I said to *Erasmus*, I explained what happened and he said, well, I'll leave it up to you. He said you've got good senses you know, what you want to do. He said if you want to go there, he said you're not happy at the bank. I said yeah, but a psychiatric practice. I said come on; am I jump getting out of the pan into the fire and he said you choose, do whatever you wish. Anyway, I did, I bit the bullet and I, before I did that though I contacted the person in charge there and I said

before I accept the position, I wanted in writing that I have got your position, the position I want in writing, what my role is and what my pay is. I thought if they are making fun of me or doing something, at least I've got something in writing. Not that would have done any good, but anyway, never mind. So, I did. I left the bank, and I went to work for the psychiatric practice, and I was practice manager there. I was quite, quite well liked because the person there in front of me, although they thought she would, did a fantastic job. And I'm not saying she didn't. But when I started and I looked at the books there, I always go back to the books. I could see that there was over thirty thousand dollars owing to them, that some people were just not paying. So slowly, slowly I got all that money paid by the people. We managed to build up a nice practice because they were just starting out. They had a nice practice it, and it was right next door to the Italian Club [South Australian Italian Association Inc.] in Carrington St. Right, now I'm not sure if you know that you know the club is here on this side going towards the beach right on other side was the practice and it was owned by a Yugoslav, they were Yugoslavian person that that time and he was a psychiatrist as well, with the two psychiatrists that I worked for but and it was such a small place and everybody smoked, everybody, patients, his secretary, not my two doctors and neither of them smoked, but he smoked the others doctor smoked, his wife smoked. They were all smoking around me, and I was there for twelve months, and I started getting breathless, was coughing. So, going to see the doctor they want to know how many cigarettes a day I smoked. I said hang on I don't smoke, but and that's how we worked out that was happening to me, So I went to the boys, and I said look, Peter and Neil were the doctors, I said I'm sorry boys but I'm going to have to leave, and they said why. So, I explained to them they said don't you leave, we're moving, and they did. From Carrington St. we moved to Wakefield St. opposite the Calvary hospital [corner of Wakefield and Hutt St. Adelaide], it was, and I was there for, yeah, five to six years. And then I thought, I've got to get out of this depressive---

01:57:02 GG: Did they stop smoking?

01:57:05 RP: No, we left the doctors I work for never smoked, It was all the others, so we left them, and the new practice, nobody smoked. Anybody smoked, had to go outside, which was good. So, I said no, I've got to get out. There was a lot of suicides and a lot of unhappy people, and you can imagine a psychiatric practice. We got threatened with pieces of, big pieces of woods and you know one patient came in really, you know, hyped up and nasty and smashed our desk, because I had a high desk so when they sit, they couldn't see me. He smashed the desk on the top and I said to *Erasmus* I can't go on anymore. And I was yeah, I was quite, I was quite sad to leave

them, but I said I think my safety and yeah, it's got to be, got to be something else at the end of the rainbow. So, I went to, at that time my GP [general practitioner] was opening up a specialized clinic and she said---

01:58:18 GG: Can we stop there before we continue, some dates--- before we lose track?

01:58:25 RP: I know you want dates. - I do not remember dates. I do not remember dates. However, I do remember. No, I cannot. I cannot. I think *Claudio* was in year, in year eleven, year ten, how old would that be? Fifteen, sixteen, so it's seventy-four plus fifteen, eighty-five, [1985] eighty-six [1986], something like that. So yeah, about there, but before then I went to work at the Queen Vic [Queen Victoria Hospital] late eighties mid to late eighties. Yes, from then, yes this, this came up. My GP [general practitioner] was starting a new clinic, called the Adelaide Health Clinic, opposite where the Royal Adelaide is now, [near the corner of North and West Terraces, Adelaide] so they wanted me to run that.

01:59:42 GG: North Terrace.

01:59:43 RP: North Terrace. But, and I did it for, I don't know, a short time I, it was, I was twenty-four hours on call, twenty-four-seven on call and I thought, nah, there's got to be something better than that. So, I, then a stint came up at the Queen Victoria Hospital and I did, I did a few years there between the Victoria, Queen Victoria Hospital, and the Children's Hospital. And then of course the children, the Queen Vic amalgamated with the Children's. And by that stage a lot of their departments integrated. So, there was a surplus of staff and of course you know when it's time for you to go, and I did.

02:00:38 GG: This was still clerical work with the Queen Victoria Hospital?

02:00:46 RP: With the Queen Victoria Hospital it was in the research department. So, I was the PA [Personal Assistance] for the researcher, Dr. Andy McPhee. Yes, I think that lasted, that lasted for about two years as well. There was also a program called the long term follow up program, which followed up prem babies, babies that were born under a certain weight and so those babies were followed up for seven years to see, you know, the ones that survived, to see their progress. And so, I was there for a short time as well and then yeah. - And then I decided that I, I decided to go overseas. So, I stayed home for a few years, and we went overseas, and when we came back from overseas, well, you know I had to do something. So, I joined the Italian radio [*Radio e Televisione Italiana* Inc].

02:02:09 GG: Right. So, this will be the nineties [1990s]?

- 02:02:12 RP: Yes, towards the, towards the middle of the nineties, yes. I joined the radio, and I did a did programs there. I also helped out in the office when *Maria* [*Maria Donato*, radio's office secretary] ---
- 02:02:29 GG: So far was work. Is this work, or?
- 02:02:26 RP: No, it's volunteering.
- 02:02:28 GG: We'll go, we'll go back and examine the volunteering, just what you did for the community--- Was that the Queen Vic, was that the last official occupation?
- 02:02:49 RP: The last work, so, Queen Vic I miss, I messed up there. The Queen Vic was before the Adelaide Clinic. You know we're opposite the Royal Adelaide where it's now. So that was my last job. That was my last paid job. OK. So, after that I thought, nah, I don't need, I can scale back and having gone overseas gave me the chance of doing, of doing this. There's a few years missing there only because I wasn't well. So, I decided to get my health on track and then we went overseas and then when we came back from overseas, I joined the radio. So, I joined the radio in nineteen-ninety-eight.
- 02:03:42 GG: Talking about community involvement, you started it at sixteen helping out with taxation, everything and so on---
- 02:03:58 RP: The Good Neighbour Council, yes.
- 02:04:00 GG: Neighbour Council, take me through the progression of your involvement as a volunteer in the community.
- 02:04:11 RP: Well, how, how would you like me to take you through it? To me, volunteering is very, it's very fulfilling, because you're always helping someone who needs help and who wants to be helped, right? In the time that I was off that I said I had those few years that I was off, I'll go back, because I've just remembered I was volunteering as well in *il Patronato* [Italian welfare organization that provides services and assistance to the beneficiaries of Italian pensions], which it was first, now let me, let me, let me start. Let me start again. Let me go back. I met, I've met, because my sister was in the Italian radio before I actually joined, but I met this lady named *Renata Bertozzi*. I don't know if you ever heard of *Renata Bertozzi*. She was involved with a lot of the community, of the community, but she was involved with the Italian radio as well. We used to go to the *Toscana Club* for Sunday dinners. I think it was only once a month, but we used to go. So, I got to talking to her and she was doing a lot of projects and I said to her, well, one day I'm going to join some of these projects because I

want to get back into the volunteering full side of it. And she said to me, well we're starting a new project called *Australia Donna*. Now it's a few of us women at the moment and if you're really interested come and have a listen, a look on what we're doing. And I was invited to a meeting. At that stage it wasn't a formal meeting, it was just a discussion and I thought, yeah this will be interesting. So, I joined *Australia Donna*, and I was the first, I was the secretary there and at the same time I was the co-webmaster with *Caterina Andreacchio*, I'm not sure if you've heard of her or not. So, and *Australia Donna* is in existent to this day. We did it for quite a few years. But then, you know, I thought, I'll move on from there, because---

02:06:32 GG: Just go through a bit about what *Australia Donna* set out to do.

02:06:414 RP: Oh well they wanted.

02:06:42 GG: I Know about it.

02:06:44 RP: Yeah, they wanted to empower women. They wanted to tell the stories of women, what they've done as migrants, how they worked, and we all had to do our own story on how we integrated into the community, into the Australian life, still keeping our, our, our culture and our things. So, it was, it was great in that because it was something, something to do with women that women were going to be recognised. But anyway, everything comes, comes to an end. So, and as I said, I mentioned my sister was on radio and she said why don't you come and help me doing do the program. She said you could learn how to do the console and you can help me present it. And at that stage I said I don't want to do anything like that. But at that stage I had, I had done the journalism course right and I said no, I don't want to do it. She said come on; you know. Anyway, she talked me into it and so we started, with, I started with the Italian radio and---

02:08:09 GG: At this stage, it was part of 5EBI [Ethnic Broadcasters Inc.]?

02:08:11 RP: Yes, 5EBI yes.

02:08:13 GG: Before it went to Fresh FM.

02:08:15 RP: Yes, yes, yeah, it was part of it. But at the same time, they had their own offices, if you know what I mean. Right. So, (excuse me, I need to take a drink). So, I did. I joined with *Carla* and *Franco*. We used to do a program on the Thursday, and it was quite, it was quite going on quite well. It, having done the journalism course it helped me in a lot of way on how to

organize the program, telling *Carla* shall we do it this way, what about this you know: the research side of it was good and we because she had been, she my sister had been a volunteer for the Cancer Council she wanted to do it on the medical side of, not so much the medical side of it, but on the volunteer side of the Cancer Council. So, we talked a lot about medicine, and we had a lot of doctors coming and giving their opinions, and I researched a lot of papers, and we would translate it in Italian and do all that but, you know, no it's not protocol but sometimes the red tape is getting gets a little bit too much there was a lot of it anyway.

02:09:52 GG: At that stage was the radio only operating on EBI [Ethnic Broadcasters Inc.] or did they have any other stations?

02:10:00 RP: No, they had their own station. I joined the radio in nineteen ninety-eight, so they had programs at 5EBI [Ethnic Broadcasters Inc.] plus at the *Radio Televisione Italiana* studio in the city.

02:10:15 GG: In the city that was Wright St.?

02:10:17 RP: Wright Street. That's correct.

02:10:19 GG: And the programs were broadcast from 92.7 FM?

02:10:24 RP: That's correct, yes.

02:10:27 GG: And you also mentioned that you helped, apart from doing your program, you helped in the office.

02:10:36 RP: That's correct. When *Maria Donato*, the secretary of the radio, used to take, have trips overseas, the trips that they take, sponsored trips, whatever you call them. I used to look after the office, yes.

02:10:56 GG: And was this a paid position?

02:10:59 RP: Or no, no, no, no, all volunteers, no, no money, no. I don't believe in getting paid if you're a volunteer.

02:11:05 GG: And also, you made a slight mention about the politics, you want to amplify what you had talked about it?

02:11:21 RP: Go on a bit more. What did I say?

02:11:24 GG: The politics in the radio.

- 02:11:26 RP: Politics in the radio? No, I don't think we'll go into the politics of the radio, I think we'll leave, we'll let it be, just that it was very involved. I can explain to you my role at the radio if you like.
- 02:11:45 GG: Yes
- 02:11:46 RP: My sister, my brother. and myself, we started with a radio program a better health. We did have doctors come in and giving their topics and explanations on things and that went on for quite a while. Then of course *Luigi Penna* [President of the *Radio e Televisione Italiana Inc.*] sort of found out my background and he asked me to help in the office when *Maria* wasn't there and which I did very, very happy, happily. And then I also did, download the music from the DVD, the CDs to the computer. I used to do that about two or three times a week. I'd go in and sit in this little booth by myself and then transfer all the music down. At the same time, because remember I mentioned that I did a little stint course for journalism, at the same time, I wanted to get my qualifications or my certificate in doing the console and you could only do it at 5EBI and this is how I was introduced to 5EBI. I went there to do this course, which was, I think a twelve-week course, if I remember correctly, you learned how to do all facets of the console. Plus, because I already had some of the knowledge, they teach the newcomers about writing for radio and how to conduct an interview. Some of the law that, is, you know you need to be able to know what you can say and what you can't say or there. And so, I became involved in 5EBI as well as the *Radio Televisione Italiana* as it was known in those days. But then things sort of went a little bit pear shape in the *Radio Italiana* and I was taken, when I was begged to stay at 5EBI and I, and this is still all volunteering, I actually spent a lot of time there. I became a continue, continuity producer. So therefore, I was helping produce a lot of the programs that they were doing. We had the Filipino, we had the German, we had the Greeks, the Italian for, Franco Bava was involved in that, also the *Filef* [*Federazione Italiana Lavoratori Emigrati e Famiglie*, Federation of Italian Migrant Workers and Families] people used to have half an hour a week and they talked all about the pensions and all that stuff. And I did that for about, you know, three or four years. But then the government had given money to 5EBI to do research into living in harmony. So therefore, I was one of the people that was lucky enough to be chosen to do this, some of this research, and my little stint was into, I suppose like it is now in sports, you know, where there's that antagonism with people being different, colour, being different country. So, trying to find what actually made people be like that. So that, that was, that was a great project and we eventually finished it, and there was eight segments, I think. One was sport, one was everyday living. It sorts of went on, so different people had different things to do and it was aired by a long time

by the Federal Government. So that that was a very interesting. So, I did that. And after that I went on to become a tutor, teaching the newcomers how to write radio, how to conduct interviews, how to put music and words together. The segment, the segue between talking and music and a segue from one conversation to another so that you sort of didn't have any dead airtime. And I did that for twelve years. We, I also did a program and I used to love doing it. It was called International Rendezvous, and that was once a month because we had different presenters that did that, and mine was always the first Saturday of the month. It was International Rendezvous, and it was a request program. And where anybody could ring in and we'd play music from, you know, Germany, Holland, all sorts of places. And I remember we did that for about six years. I think it was myself and two other ladies. They were there to help me. And also, my husband used to be outside of the studio taking phone calls. And I remember one of the highlights was that John Dean [radio announcer on Radio Station Cruise 1323AM], if you remember John Dean from the commercial radio, ringing up and asking me to play a request for him. So, I thought, hang on, I'm listening, I listen to you every day and now you're listening to me. I thought that was fantastic. So yes, I did that, as I said, for twelve years, teaching, the newcomers. And in nineteen ninety-nine I won the Golden Mic Award. So, I was very, very proud of that and yeah, what else can I say that.

- 02:18:17 GG: You mentioned there were two ladies helping out in the International.....
- 02:18:23 RP: Program Rendezvous Yes. ---
- 02:18:25 GG: Do you remember their names?
- 02:18:27 RP: Yes, *Manuela Marira*, and *Ludmilla*, and I've never found, I've never gotten *Ludmilla's* surname. But they were there to help me because, you know, being request shows, you have to go into the library, get the music, so they'll be running around, and I'd be sitting on the console doing that. So, and that was from nine o'clock in the evening until one o'clock the next morning. And it was, it was a great time. It was a great time. And you people used to come and bring us treats. We'd let them in and they'd bring us all sorts of things. Because they would be listening and they say, oh, we're going to bring you something, so it was a great, great time then.
- 02:19:13 GG: Sounds like you've had quite a diverse involvement.
- 02:19:18 RP: It was, it was. And at the same time, I was at the radio, at the *Radio Italiana*. But then as I said, I sort of left the *Radio Italiana* and I went on to

5EBI because that for me was more interesting and, it gave more satisfaction, that's it, it just gave us a lot of satisfaction.

02:19:39 GG: And I take this particular program that 5EBI was doing wasn't connected with any particular ethnic group.

02:19:50 RP: All, all ethnic groups and if I remember correctly, we had fifty-two languages at the radio at EBI. So, there was a vast, a vast music, vast languages, vast everything. A huge, huge *minestrone* [a rich Italian soup containing a mixture of vegetables, hers, and elbow pasta].

02:20:09 GG: OK, so after that, what did you get involved in?

02:20:14 RP: After the radio, well, well, I think I've sort of mumbled up a lot of things, if I can sort of reiterate. Remember I said I started with the Good Neighbour Council in nineteen sixty-five, then in nineteen seventies I was working at the hospital and doing a lot of interpreting, but then when I did leave the hospital, I was still doing some interpreting there because, you know, some of the people used to say come and help us. Where I used to do that. In nineteen ninety-seven I did *Doppio Teatro* with *Pulcinella* [*Pulcinella* is a classical character that originated in *commedia dell'arte* of the 17th century and became a stock character in Neapolitan puppetry]. I don't know if you remember the *Pulcinella* troop, but my nephew Vince Contarino was one of the *Pulcinella*. So, I managed them for a for a short while and booked gigs for them to go into nursing homes, retirement villages, and we did a stint at the Central Market, that was very, very popular, a lot of people enjoyed that. So, I looked after the *Pulcinella* group for I think it would have been about eighteen months and at the same time then I went to *Australia Donna*, there was a new concept being born which was called *Australia Donna* and it was all about women, Italian women in Australia. So, I was the secretary there and co-webmaster with *Caterina Andreacchio*. So, I think that I did that for about two years because at the same time *PISA* came along, that is *Pasti Italiani e Servizi per Anziani* [Italian Food and Services for the elderly – a community-based service that provided a cooked Italian style meal delivered to the aged and people with disabilities and their carers across Adelaide] which I think nowadays is called *Nonna's Cucina*. So, we, the concept, we were there at the beginning at the birth of this, which was a fantastic thing because in those days you could only get Meals on Wheels, and the Italians, with the food the way we are, weren't very happy with receiving those meals. So, this is where the concept came of *PISA* came along and at the same time wasn't just the meals. If somebody needed some help in the home or something like that, you know, they would try to get the right people to do it. All volunteers of course, so, and I remember when we designed the first logo for the letter

heads, I sort of put together the leaning tower of *Pisa* with a little chef and the *Pisa* holding a pizza tray there so that you know we could more or less marry it with the with the foods. So that was very interesting and at the same time that I was there my husband used to deliver the meals, so it was very rewarding and very, very satisfying. And---

02:23:32 GG: At PISA, what was your role?

02:23:38 RP: I was the secretary. Yes, I've been secretary for a lot of places. Taking minutes and doing all that sorts of things. (laughs) I have to thank Mr. Andersons back in nineteen sixty-five when he taught me how to do it as a sixteen-year-old. Yeah, so I've been involved in a lot of places, and yes, some good memories, some not so good. But overall, I think it was great, very rewarding.

02:24:13 GG: Rita, you mentioned you forgot to talk about one of the other organizations that you were volunteering with. Tell me about it.

02:24:19 RP: Yes, it was the Italian Choral and Arts Society. That was in the early eighties. No, late eighties, early nineties. We had the choir, which I think still exists to this day. I'm not a hundred percent sure. And yes, we were involved, I was involved with that, and I was actually at the secretary there again. But I was also involved in the choir. We did many, many concerts. We went to Mildura. We went to Swan Hill, to, what was the other place that Penola. Yes, we did. We did a lot and we did a lot of concerts here at the Town Hall [Adelaide Town Hall] and for Italian *festas* and things like that it was, we had the headquarters were on South Road at Hindmarsh, and I remember when we renovated the new hall at Hindmarsh, we had the then premier, Lynn Arnold, come and we gave him a performance and he enjoyed it thoroughly that that was a great time as well. So many people. We were quite nice. A big bunch of people. And Mrs. Lower was our conductor and pianist and she, was, she was great. She was really, great. We did that for quite a few years, I think about eight, nine years, if I remember correctly. Yes. Yeah, that that was a big bunch, big chunk of my life in there.

02:26:14 GG: OK, so, that what else did you achieved in that period?

02:26:21 RP: A lot of satisfaction I've achieved, a lot of satisfaction and a lot of people saying thank you. And I think the biggest reward is when somebody says thank you for helping me, That's the biggest reward, right, so, and then I did a few other things. I went overseas for a while, so I stopped everything. We went overseas. And when we came back, I was associated with some

clubs and then I ended up at the *Sicilia Club* [Sicilia Social and Sports Club Inc., Klemzig, South Australia].

02:26:55 GG: OK, what? What are some of the clubs you've been involved in?

02:27:03 RP: I'd rather not say.

02:27:05 GG: OK, I respect that, OK. In that case, the *Sicilia Club*.

02:27:09 RP: The *Sicilia Club* back in nineteen ninety-seven. Was it? Yes, nineteen ninety-seven [the year was actually 2007]. I was asked if I could join, to join the *Sicilia Club* and it was *Jack Fogliano* who asked me to join the club and I said to Jack, I remember saying these words, Jack, I don't want to have any position at the club. I am quite happy to help them out. Just to do some correspondence, he said that's all they need. It's just for somebody to reply to the letters because, you know, they were all men, all over sixty seventy who didn't know how to write English. And I said I'm quite happy to do that, I do not want to be involved in any positions, I don't want politics because I had had my fill of politics and I said that's the only thing I will do. And he said, yeah, that's all you need to do. Well, in nineteen ninety-eight [the year was 2008] things happened and I was elected president, so that was me saying I don't want a roll, no, no position roll, just a committee member.

02:28:24 GG: So, you went from committee member to President?

02:28:27 RP: To President. Yes, yes. Well, actually, I'll go back a little bit. I went from committee member to being voted as Vice President. But then the president left unexpected and of course as vice president, I got promoted to President. And the following year when we had the AGM [annual general meeting], it was brought up at the AGM, and everybody voted for me. So, I have been President at the *Sicilia Club* since nineteen ninety-eight [the year was 2008] until today so. And there's been lots and lots of happening there. We've had lots of beautiful functions, lots of beautiful memories. We've lost some beautiful people. I've made some fantastic friends. You for one. And yes, it's been very, very rewarding,

02:29:21 GG: OK, since a large slice of your life has been the *Sicilia Club*, let's hear something, how the *Sicilia Club* came about and how it developed.

02:29:37 RP: OK, well the club was the brainchild of two gentlemen, cousins, *Leonardo Carobia* and *Gino Carobia*, who thought, being Sicilians and being a community of Sicilians here, they had nowhere to meet and you know, they were sort of lost. So, they started this little club and what they used to

do, they used to meet at people's houses, right, different house every month. And then when they'd organize functions, they would hire halls everywhere. And I remember, as a younger person going to, and now you might be able to help me here because that's on that side of on the West side, the hall on Port Rd. Was it the Hungarian? No. It on Port Rd, there's a-

02:30:39 GG: Port Rd, which suburb?

02:30:41 RP: Down, Kilkenny way.

02:30:43 GG: No that don't recall. I don't recall.

02:30:51 RP: There, there was a hall there, and I remember as a young girl with my parents and my family going there to a function that the *Siciliani* [Sicilians] put on.

02:30:39 GG: Any idea what year we're talking about?

02:31:01 RP: Oh, I would have been about eighteen years old. So yes, you do the maths [1967].

02:31:13 GG: Would this be the *Anzano Club*?

02:31:18 RP: No, no, no. The *Anzano Club* is at Brompton. Bowden, Bowden, Brompton. No, this was. There's a church there. Is it a Russian church?

02:31:31 GG: Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes. there is an Orthodox church [St Sava Serbian Orthodox Church, corner of Port Rd and Balmoral St. Woodville Pk].

02:31:36 RP: Yes, there's an Orthodox Church. There is a hall there as well. So, I remember them doing that there. But we've also been to the Norwood Town Hall, they've had the functions doing there. So, what actually happened they sort of got sick of carting plates and things, hiring plates and tables and chairs and going to places. So, the group of the committee, that was the first committee that was elected there got the heads together and they bought a little a little property at Camden Park, and that's where the first *Sicilia Club* was established at Camden Park. Now as functions started happening and good food was being served it sort of outgrew the place. So, they looked around and someone found, some of the members, found the land that the club is standing on today at OG Rd. at Klemzig. So, because the *paesani* [fellow towns people], the *Siciliani* had all sorts of labourers and people in there. The club was built and *Ralph Briani* of *Briani Constructions* are now, if you know him, was the planner of building the

club and a lot of people donated stuff a lot of people put their work in and they built what we've got nowadays and, I'm happy to say that they really didn't have a lot of, a big mortgage. They were all good, everybody put in money and labour and the club was built, and it is a beautiful club. I suppose I'm a little bit partial because I'm the President there, but everybody that comes says it's a beautiful club.

02:33:38 GG: You remember what year that club was built?

02:33:34 RP: Nineteen ninety-two I think, but don't hold me to that. I think it's around that time because the first one at Camden Park was around seventy-five, nineteen seventy-five somewhere something like that. So, I if I think of the, what's called the certificate [Certificate of Incorporation], it was done in nineteen seventy-five for Camden Park and I think it's nineteen ninety-two for OG, Rd. for Klemzig, yeah.

02:34:28 GG: That's quite an achievement, of all the groups, Italian groups, this is, *Siciliani* [Sicilians] wouldn't be one of the biggest groups.

02:34:41 RP: I don't think we're one of the biggest groups, but it seemed that they were one of the stronger groups, they've seemed to, they all seemed to put their strength and their and their willingness to build the club and to make it come to fruition because they wanted somewhere where they could hang around, hang about. And you know, they wanted to play cards they wanted to play *bocce* [a ball sport belonging to the boule's family. Developed into its present form in Italy, it is closely related to British bowls with a common ancestry from ancient games played in the Roman Empire] and they made it happen. They did do make it happen, and I raised my hat off to them because I, and I always say we have to thank our forefathers for did what they did because without their struggle and without their willingness and without their, you know, imagination we wouldn't, and the determination, we wouldn't be where we were today.

02:35:45 GG: And where do you see the club going from here?

02:35:49 RP: Oh, I can just. I can just see it going up and up and up, or the younger generation that's going to come or, the little or the little *Siciliani* that were, you know, running around, oh, now the big *Siciliani* because we're the older *Siciliani*. So, they trying to come in and do things so I can see that we have evolved. I remember when I first started there, there was no EFTPOS [electronic funds transfer at point of sale] machines, there was no computers, there were no audio-visual system. Well, you know, we sort of all came in and, like a bomb, we decided that you know, we had to have ETFPOS [electronic funds transfer at point of sale], we have to do this and

so technology has come to the *Sicilia Club*, maybe a little bit later than the others, but it's there now and the younger ones that are coming in are doing it. It's great. For example, we had, when the Matildas [Australian women's national soccer team] were playing in the World Cup, right? We decided to have on the spur of the moment, when they were, they were in the quarter finals, right, within two days we organised it and we had one nice turn out, you know, where we had pizzas and cakes and coffee and it was a great, a great night. I believe you were there that night.

02:37:11 GG: Well, it certainly was.

02:37:15 RP: So, and so it's things like this at the club is evolving and it's making good progress.

02:37:20 GG: Does the Club cater purely for *Siciliani*, or does it cater for other Italians, other groups?

02:37:28 RP: Oh, no, no, no, no, absolutely not. We've got, we've got Greeks, we've got Asians, we've got Germans, we've got Polish, all sorts of people. There is no, as you know, history of Sicily, we are, a lot of people there, right? we've been invaded by everybody and taken over by everybody. So, *Sicilia* [Sicily] is the Pearl of the Mediterranean, has got a lot of nationalities and the *Sicilia Club* is exactly the same.

02:38:07 GG: Same replica.

02:38:38 RP: Yes, we are. We are. We haven't gone far away from our forefathers.

02:38:13 GG: Where do you see your volunteering from now?

02:38:18 RP: When I think, when I finish with the Club I will, I might have a couple of months off because I've been, you know, going twenty-four-seven for seventeen years at the Club and I think I'll go back into the hospital and do a bit of volunteering there because I used to, I used to do the Purple Ladies [friends of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital established 1959] at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Purple Angels, they were called all to that. So, and that's very fulfilling because you are helping people. I did a little stint at the Children's Hospital for volunteering as well.

02:39:01 GG: So Purple Ladies, Purple Angels, would you explain what that is?

02:39:07 RP: These are volunteers who, at the hospital they, in the days that I was doing it, it's a little bit different now the role that they have, but in the days that I used to do it, we used to go in, we used to visit people that had no families

to come and visit them or people that were had operations they could not move. We used to read to them, if they wanted to write a letter to somebody or a card to somebody. We would do it, if they wanted a cup of tea, we would go and get it for them and bring it to them. So, it was just, yes, looking after their well-being, never in the medical side of it, but in the in the personal side of it, in the physical and mental side of it. And if they wanted something from the shop, we used to go and get it. We always used to pay with our money and then we take it in and they would reimburse us for what we spent because we never touched their money. We never touched. It always was a medical person, a nurse or yes, it would have been a nurse most of the time to get the money for them and give it to us. But yes, that, that, that, that was, that was great. So, I think this is what I'm planning to do, you know, a couple of days a week, so that the brain doesn't go to mush, as, a friend of mine's grandson says, I don't want my brain to leak.

02:40:45 GG: Okay. Well, it's quite an array of activities on a voluntary basis. There's another topic that we haven't really pursued, and I'd like to take you back to the day that you arrived in Australia. Nineteen sixty Australia was very much an Anglo-Celtic country and one of the things that we all faced as migrants was the types of food available. Can you remember those days and---

02:41:34 RP: Before I go into that I need to tell you about the day we arrived in Adelaide, which was the fourteenth of January nineteen sixty and it was a forty-two-degree day. We arrived at the railway station, at the Adelaide Railway station, and there of course are my sisters and their, and their husbands and my other sister and the fiancé. I had this, this visioned as a as a little girl in my head that in Australia there was red carpets all over the place, you know, and then I would be seeing some Kangaroos bopping around the place. Cause when we got down reality, it was a stinking hot day. It was stifling, it was so shocking. And I remember getting out of the down from the train and thinking Oh my God, this is nothing like I imagined. You know, as a nine-year-old I'm thinking all these beautiful things. But, anyway we got home, within a week I was, I was enrolled at the primary school at Hindmarsh and it was hard because not speaking English, it was hard and I couldn't, I couldn't understand how, well I used to watch people eat. It was difficult for my mum to source the type of foods that she was used to source back home, vegetables and all sorts of things. Some of the things they weren't even heard of in those days. But with Italians they they're never short on imagination and things, so, the food at home was, sort of like we had back home, but not, not as you know, not, not quite, but. I remember the first day I was at school and of course for my lunch I had a *stuffed pepperoni* [stuffed capsicums], right? Because my

mum made this pepperoni stuff like she normally did, and there was one and I took it to school, as did my brother. And because there was no sandwiches, we weren't used to having sandwiches. And I remember sitting there with my brother, I was so lucky that I had him there with me because I would have been lost, opening up this lunch box and them going, oh yuck, what are you eating? And of course, there they were with their pies and pasties, or sandwiches which had no crust. I thought why would you get rid of the crust? That's the best part of the bread. But then we didn't have Tip Top bread, you know mum used to make the bread so it was nice, crunchy, and crusty and I couldn't understand why you would cut the crust off. That's the best part. So that that was my introduction with food in, in, in the Australian living in, in the environment. So yes, I'll never forget that day and it sort didn't get better as I as I went to school because our foods didn't change. We didn't, sort of. We still kept going, you know, with the, with the way we used to eat and cooking and that. And every, every day was the same thing. What are you eating now? What's that? You know, what's that rubbish? What's this thing? And that? I remember when I was in year six, I think six or seven, because I wasn't allowed to have the tuck shop money, right? I wasn't allowed to buy anything from the tuck shop, no lunch order, nothing whatsoever. So, I just, I remember saying to mom can't you just let me have some money just for once so I can? I said I see all these people eating pies and you know, they love them. And I said I would like to try this pie. So, she relented one day and she gave me money for my lunch order. And fair enough in my brown bag, we had brown bags in those days and guess what? We got them nowadays too. I wrote my name, my class number and what I want and I put pie. So, I was so excited, you know, I went out there when lunch came, got it, and went out there. And of course, I took one bite and I thought, Oh my God. What's this crap? It's disgusting. I left it. One of the boys ate it. I said I don't want this and I want to tell you what I said. And of course, I went home and mum said to me, well, did you like your lunch? I said I'm starving. I haven't had anything to eat. I couldn't eat that lunch. She said serves you right. Better be starve *se la prossima volta mi ascolti* [next time you listen to me].

02:47:15 GG: So, it was a two-way dislike of food?

02:47:19 RP: My Lord, and to this day I have never tasted a pie again, ever. We sort of pastie, you know, was a little bit better, if we were really going somewhere I might buy a pastie because that was full of the vegetables and that it was a different but. No, I must admit as a school, going to school, I always had lunch, had lunches made from you know, there was either *cotoletta* [veal breaded cutlet similar to wiener schnitzel] or some *frittata* [Frittatas are an Italian dish consisting of cooked eggs with other ingredients added in like meat, vegetables, or cheese] or stuffed Peppers, *melanzane* [eggplants],

because then as you get older and the food, the introduction that we gave to the country and to the people. More Italians came up to have deli shops and fruit and veggies, so they were bringing in all the right things. So of course, all the, and the *parmigiana* [an Italian dish made with fried, sliced eggplant layered with cheese and tomato] was never a *cotoletta* with, as my father used to say, with a little bit of sauce on the top. *parmigiana* was made with *zucchini* [Italian marrow] or eggplants. So, it was a piece of *parmigiana* at school or a *cotoletta* or whatever. It was *frittata*. Never, ever, ever. Sandwiches. Ever.

02:48:40 GG: And did the reaction of the non-Italians change over time?

02:48:46 RP: Oh yes. It was amazing from year four to year twelve how it was: Rita, do you want to eat that? Do you want to swap with me? No thanks. I'll give you some of it, but I won't swap. So yes the difference and the change was one hundred percent, was overwhelming and of course to this day now at this age we you know, Italian food is well known everywhere.

02:49:21 GG: What, do you think actually happened to change that attitude in the, in the sixties [1960s] and seventies [1970s]? We know what's happened now.

02:49:33 RP: Was it our stubbornness, maybe, our persistence of not wanting to change our way of eating, of the neighbours, sharing it with your neighbours? I remember when mum used to make *lasagna* [Lasagna is basically a baked casserole made with wide flat pasta and layered with fillings such as ragu [tomato sauce], vegetables and various chesses] and things like that, you know, which we didn't call it *lasagna*. We used to call it *Pasta al Forno* [baked pasta], right. And she would share it with Mr. and Mrs. Burr, Mr. and Mrs. Raymond, you know. So, introducing them to these, to these foods, I would imagine that like my family were doing it, every other Italian family would have done it with their neighbours. So, introducing our food to the wider community. Must have, must have worked because everybody loves it now.

02:50:28 GG: Certainly does, they do now. And, sourcing the ingredients now, you said it was difficult that many Italians had that backyard that grew their own veggies. And how did you, your family go about doing it?

02:50:49 RP: Well, when we first arrived, because we all lived, there was six of us plus another four, and there was ten in one little house that had three bedrooms. But we managed. But when we eventually managed to rent a house, there was a huge backyard. It was in Jervois Ave. at Hindmarsh, the first house we lived in. It was a huge house, huge and huge block. So, with mum, dad of course was out working, with mum being at home, she

started a little bit of gardening here, a little bit of gardening there. The *paesani* that came from overseas would bring you some seeds or some, you know, things which were allowed in those days and not allowed now. But that's what happened. And so yes, we started growing our own things. But then, as I mentioned before, more Italians started having fruit and veg shop and of course they started to introduce more foods. I remember a gentleman telling me that he had, he used to go to Melbourne and buy salami, provolone all these things and at the same times bring a lot of the vegetables from Melbourne to Adelaide. So, I don't, we just sort of didn't have a lot of problems sourcing the foods because one, if you didn't grow it in your garden, your *comare* and *compare* had it in their garden and you know we'll take over to this and we'll take over to that. And secondly, because it didn't take very long for fruit and veg shops to come along and for us to be able to buy them.

02:52:42 GG: OK. Is there anything else you want to tell me about food?

02:52:48 RP: Food. Glorious food, yes, it's. It's for example, now that I'm at the club, at the *Sicilia Club*, we have lots and lots of compliments that people come and eat the food because fortunate, we've been fortunate to have a chef there or cook whatever you want to call her. She's a chef, she's a master chef that is married to a Sicilian, but she actually comes from Calabria. So, her food, the food that she cooks is very, very tasteful, is very, very authentic. And so, people that haven't tasted the food, because it's amazing how many people there are still that haven't had a lot of the things that we serve. They say I've never had this, this and they are appreciating it. So, food, has become, has become the, the, the, the central point of everything that we do and our food, our Mediterranean diet, I think everybody seems to accept it because one, it's all-natural stuff and two, is healthy for you, for us Italians.

02:54:28 GG: OK, well, we covered a number of different subjects and the last one I really want to cover is how did you do you see your life integrated into Australian life?

02:54:45 RP: Oh, Joe, now you've made me think about that because really, apart from, I've never had many, much, many problems. Apart from when I first started at school back in those in nineteen sixties [1960s], where I used to get called all sorts of names, although I did not understand them because I didn't speak English. And you know, they knew that I was Italian, so I don't know what they were calling me. I've never had problem integrating with other nationalities. Maybe it's the colouring of my skin, my hair, because everywhere that I go nobody used to say, used to think that I was Italian. So, I've never had any bad reaction with anybody any bad, apart those

school days, of course. Even when I was at uni [university] and I was married, they didn't believe that I was Italian, of Italian background. And because I suppose I didn't have a strong Italian accent and they couldn't Yeah, I've I've never had problems. As a matter of fact, I'll tell you a little story. We went on a trip to Mildura in nineteen eighty and we were on the riverboat for dinner and the captain, must have been a slow night, he decided to come and see the guests there and he caught on to me and he said, oh, you know, ask me my name, and told him, he said where are you from? And I said we're from Adelaide, we're not that far away from here. That's thinking that's what he wanted to know. He said no, no, where were you born? I said I was born in Italy. He said no. You sound English. I said no, no, I'm not English, I am Italian. And he said no, no, no, no. So, he introduced me as Rita from England and I said don't do that, I'm Italian and I'm proud of it, right. So, I think that was my life like that as growing up and even in these days nobody still takes me for Italian.

02:57:14 GG: How do you feel about Australia?

02:57:18 RP: I love Australia. Australia's my country. Yes, I love it. I I've, we went back to Italy. I loved Italy, I loved Europe, I loved everything, but I was happy to be back home. This is my country and I thank because I've had lots of opportunities here that my brothers and sisters didn't. I've had a schooling, I've had a career, you know? So, would I have had that in Italy? Maybe, maybe not. I don't know. But this is my country.

02:57:33 GG: Do you consider yourself Australian, Italian?

02:57:57 RP: I'm an Italo Australiana and I love the Sunburn Country?

02:58:03 GG: Is there anything else?

02:58:10 RP: No. Just thank you for taking time to do this interview.

02:58:14 GG: Very good Well, thank you very much for the interview. It's been very interesting.

02:58:20 RP: It's a pleasure.

02:58:21 GG: I'm looking forward to writing your story.

02:58:25 RP: Wonderful. And I'm looking forward to the next thirty years volunteering. Thanks Joe.

02:58:31 GG: Thanks, Rita.

INDEX

Birthplace

Father, 1; Mother, 2; Rita, 1, 4.

Celebrations

La Festa Delle Cozze, 5; La Madonna Delle Grazie, 6; Santa Rita, 6.

Cities, Towns, and Suburbs.

Adelaide, 6, 8, 33, 50, 52, 53;
Banksia Park, 26, 27 32; Brompton, 8;
Calabria, 1 4; Camden Park. 47;
Campbelltown, 27; Capri, 5; Furci Siculo, 2;
Hectorville, 27; Hindmarsh, 9, 10, 45, 50;
Kidman Park, 32; Kilkenny, 22, 46; Klemzig,
48; Melbourne, 7, 33, 52; Messina, 2;
Mildura, 53; Mile End, 32; Penola, 45; Port
Adelaide, 5; Punta Dell Faro, 2; Punta
Pezzo, 2, 4, 7; Reggio Calabria, 1; Seaton,
27; Tea Tree Gully, 32; Villa San Giovanni,
1, 2, 4, 5, 7; Wayville, 16.

Countries

America, 33; Australia, 6, 33, 34; England,
33, Germany, 33; Italy, 1; Sicily, 4.

Clubs, Associations, & Societies

SEBI, 40-43; Australia Donna, 39, 40, 44;
Italian Choral and Arts Society, 45; PISA
(Nonna's Cucina), 44, 45; Radio e
Televisione Italiana, 38, 40-43; Sicilia
Social and Sports Club Inc. 45-46.

Culture

Food, 50.

Date of Birth

Daughter, 25; father, 2; Mother, 2; Rita, 1;
Son, 26, 35.

Discrimination

School, 9, 50.

Education

Attitude Towards, 3, 18; Brothers, 4;
Father, 3; Mother, 3; Rita, 4, 5.

Food

Australian Reaction, 50-52; Cozze
(Mussels), 5; Home Vegetable Garden, 52;
Reaction to Italian Food, 51; Southern
Italian, 50.

Housing

Living with Relatives, 8.

Immigration and Immigrants.

Australia, 6; Date of Arrival in Australia, 6;
Date of Departure from Italy, 6; Decision
to Emigrate, 6; Father, 6; Name of Ship, 7.

Interaction

Calabrians, 13; Italians, 13; Sicilians, 13,
47, 48.

Italians & Italian Community

Australians, 53.

Language

Difficulties with English, 50, Father, 11;
Mother, 12; With Children, 28.

Marriage

Courtship. 21-25; Date of Wedding, 31;
Regional Conflict, 23.

Name

Brothers, 1; Hather, 1; Mother, 1; Sisters,
8.

Occupation

Father, 2, 11; Mother, 11, 12; Rita, 15, 18,
19, 20, 25, 31-39.

Recreation

Dance Classes, 28, 29; Festas, 21; Home
Parties, 13; Italian Dances, 21; Movies
(English), 13; Movies (Italian), 13.

Schooling

Children, 28, 29; Post Secondary, 30;
Primary, 9, 10, 14; Secondary, 10, 14-17;

TAFE, 30, 31; University of South Australia, 30, 31.

Volunteering

SEBI, 40-43; Australia Donna, 39, 40, 43; Campbelltown Civic Centre, 27; Doppio Teatro, 40; Family and Friends, 20, 26; Good Neighbour Council, 18, 19, 39, 44; Il Patronato, 39; Italian Choral and Arts Society, 45; PISA (Nonna's Cucina) , 44-45; Purple Ladies, 49; Radio e Televisione Italiana, 38, 40, 41-43; Sicilia Social and Sports Club, 45-46.

World View

Australia, 54; Ethnicity, 54.

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