

Oral History Project

Interview with Joe Sinagra on 20th June 1994 at his property in San Rosa Road, Wanneroo. His sister Rosie was also present

EDITED INTERVIEW

I Would you like to tell me your full name Joe?

Sinagra It is Guiseppe Garibaldi Sinagra better known as Joe – born on 18th April 1926.

I Who were your parents?

Sinagra Vincenzo Sinagra and Maria Gradat Sinagra – that was her maiden name. They were both born in Sicily.

I Did they marry in Sicily.

Sinagra Yes, they were married in Sicily. My father came to Western Australia in 1923 and I believe he worked in Spearwood for the first 12 months and then he came to Wanneroo. He worked for Tony Chrisafauli and then shortly after that he went into a partnership with him.

I Was he a market gardener?

Sinagra Yes. Like they were in a market garden.

I Back in Sicily - did they garden in Sicily do you know?

Sinagra Well I don't really know what they did. Yes, they would have had some sort of fruit mainly and other than that, I don't really know what they were doing.

I He was in partnership with Tony Chrisafauli?

Sinagra Yes and then after a couple of years he sent for his wife and two of his sons, Sam and Jim. Then later on again he purchased some land at Pinjar, which was about 10 Ks north of Wanneroo and started a market garden up there.

I Was that when he went into his garden on his own at Pinjar?

Sinagra On his own, yes at that time. Well he had men there helping him establish the garden there.

I What other families were out there? Were there any?

Sinagra Well as far as I can remember there were... Well [unclear] probably came a bit later, I am not sure. There was Mizzardas there, then they shifted to Kalamunda.

Rosie Ptara lived up there didn't they?

Sinagra They lived further in the bush actually. They were sort of east of Pinjar. Oh there were quite a few families up there at the time. I know there was an English bloke - he would have been a market gardener as well – old Hartman. I think it was Hartman that was up there.

Rosie There was a German bloke over where [unclear] was.

Sinagra Yes, further away.

Rosie He was a German – I don't know what he did.

Sinagra When he died one of his dogs half ate him up – ate him yes. Before people found him, the dog had eaten some of him.

I That was the German man?

Sinagra Yes.

I Is his family still around?

Sinagra He was only on his own. Nobody knew anything about him. I don't really know who found him because at that time if you wanted meat or anything, well you went out and shot a kangaroo. I think that's how they actually found him. Sort of called in just to see and they found him like that.

I Terrible. How many children did your parents have Joe?

Sinagra Eleven: three girls and eight boys.

I Can you remember their names?

Sinagra Yes. As we all grew up we were gardeners, we worked the garden.

I Oh you kids worked in the garden?

Sinagra Yes we worked. Well you can say nearly until the time we were married.

I I have spoken to a lot of people who were market gardeners, could you describe a typical working day in the garden?

Sinagra Well our typical day was we got up with a lantern in the dark. We had cows so we had to milk the cows. Then we had to walk them about a mile to where we used to garden because we were away from the garden. We used to bring them over there. We had horses that we took over and we tied them up in the garden so that they could feed during the day. Then we walked back home, we got ready for school and we had to walk another mile and a half to catch the school bus. So we had to be up there early to be able to get all that done before we caught the school bus.

Of course, when we grew older it was still get up early. You did all your chores and then you went and worked in the garden. If you weren't ploughing or anything like that well you were weeding or planting. We used to water. To water at that time we used the water in the drains. We used to pump water into drains and then we had to divert it wherever we wanted.

I So you dug a channel?

Sinagra Yes we had all the channels. Actually we had a lot because we used to send it a fair way around. We had to pump it one way to get it back to... You had to make sure that it was running down a bit of a slope, otherwise you couldn't water.

I Where were you pumping your water from?

Sinagra Well we had the pump in the middle of the garden but then we had the channels – some of them were in the bush actually to be able to get the run down back into the garden. That's the way we used to water.

I You were pumping ground water were you?

Sinagra Pumping ground water but that was the colour of beer actually. It was brown water – no white water.

Rosie I remember we used to love drinking it too as it was coming up out of the pipe.

I Would you have that in your house?

Rosie I don't know in your house.

Sinagra No we had rain water in the house. On the side of the house we had a big semi-underground cement tank, which would have been about a 10 x 10 cement tank and probably 10 feet deep. That used to be enough to keep us going. Well actually we had more - we had tanks on the corner of the house as well. That used to keep us going through the summer.

I What crops did you grow up there?

Sinagra Well mainly in those times it was tomatoes, cabbages, cauliflowers and that was it. Oh for your own use you planted a few capsicums or eggplants – things like that. All your herbs you planted but other than that, the main crops were tomatoes and cauliflowers.

I Were they seasonal?

Sinagra Seasonal only, yes. At that time it was only seasonal. Later on you got sprinklers put in and well then you could sort of control the frost because we used to get a lot of frost up there. Well you controlled that to a certain extent by watering early in the morning. Sometimes in the summertime you had the motor going even in the night-time. We had to do shifts to keep the watering up, otherwise you couldn't do it.

I You would water one section and have to move it to another section?

Sinagra That's right.

I How often would you go into market in those early days?

Sinagra Dad used to go three times a week. First he only used to do his own but then people moved in alongside. They never had vehicles so he used to cart their market in as well.

I He had a truck did he?

Sinagra Yes. The first truck he had was a Fiat, which I think he bought off Mr Chrisafauli. Yes I am pretty sure. Actually he may have even been doing mail as well. I suppose he used to pick the mail up as well when he went to the markets. I think he started off with a horse and cart. Now I don't know whether it was from Pinjar that he started or when he was working here with Chrisafauli.

I He would pick the mail up for other locals would he?

Sinagra No his own produce but that must have been when he was up at Pinjar because Chrisafauli had a truck here. So their produce would have gone on the one truck but it could have been mail that he was bringing as well.

Rosie Well it might have been his only means of transport – a horse and cart.

Sinagra Possibly it was.

Rosie If they wanted to go anywhere it would have been on the horse and cart wouldn't it?

I They probably couldn't afford a truck in those days.

Sinagra I don't think he could have from the word go because he would have bought land. I know he bought Chrisafauli's old truck – probably the one they were using first off – and Chrisafauli bought a new one. He must have bought the old one off him and that would have been his first truck.

I What were the roads like back then Joe?

Sinagra Well I think some of them were still plank roads or block roads. They had just wooden blocks in the very early stages. I know later on here I used to drive a truck and there were still some up here in Dundobar Road – blocks which they pulled out and put limestone instead.

Rosie Down [unclear] Avenue was all blocks.

Sinagra Yes that would have been all block road.

Rosie I remember them.

I Pinjar Road?

Sinagra Pinjar Road would have been either limestone – well part of it would have been bitumen – but I think that would have been because it was the main Yanchep road. That used to be the Yanchep road. So we were lucky that way that when we did go up to Pinjar there was that road there. Otherwise it would have been probably either a sand track or blocks.

I How often did your father have to go into market with his produce?

Sinagra Three times a week they used to go because you did your market on either a Sunday, Tuesday or a Thursday and you brought it in on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The odd time he used to bring some meat home but normally we wouldn't buy meat. We would have just

what we produced at home. Fishing – we used to go fishing and kangaroo shooting. That used to supply all our meat.

I Where would you do your fishing Joe?

Sinagra Well you only caught rock fish mainly in those days. Oh you caught herring but normally they were just rock cod because we never had good rods and reels then. It was just an old bamboo stick. Some of them were only just a hand line that you had. Later on they used to buy just the normal reel because you never had to cast with them. They were all right; you only just dropped your line into a sort of a hole. You never came home without any fish.

I Which beach would you go to?

Sinagra Burns Beach.

I How long did that take?

Sinagra That used to be a two-hour trip just about because you had to push your vehicle up a big hill there. It was all sand and it used to take you a long time to get out there.

I You would have the whole family pushing would you?

Sinagra Yes, you'd have the whole family get out and push. [laughter] That was half the fun, you see but I'll admit you had to get up. Well we used to get up about 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning to be able to get out there by sunrise.

I It was an outing then?

Sinagra It was a great outing you see - yes. Well you had abalone there. We used to walk all over the abalone because there were that many on the rocks. Sometimes your feet never touched the rocks, there was that many abalone but now you can't find any. Yes, that was great then.

I What about at Pinjar – did your mother make her own bread?

Sinagra Yes Mum made her own bread, cheese. We used to pickle some of the vegetables like capsicum and you had it in a big barrel there. You put all different stuff in it.

[pause in recording]

I You were talking about the cooking your mum did.

Sinagra We used to help her mix the dough for the bread. She used to make her own yeast to make the bread and make cheese and all your pickling, butter.

I Would you boys help with the cooking as well?

Sinagra Not really with the cooking. Like say any of the heavy work, we used to go out and cut and cart wood because she had a great big oven she used to bake the bread in. She used to use a 50-pound bag of flour at a time and I used to make great big round loaves of bread.

I Did she cook inside?

Sinagra Oh yes – we had a wood stove. If there was anything like sometimes we used to bake a small pig. Well that used to go into the oven. We used to heat that up and cook it in there.

I This was in your kitchen?

Sinagra In the kitchen yes.

I A huge oven?

Sinagra Yes. Well the oven itself was outside but the door of the oven was built into the wall of the kitchen. So you got into it from the kitchen. We had a long, big kitchen. Well it seated all of us and you had your sink on one side as well. The oven was on one end but it was a great big long kitchen.

I Would you put the fuel into the oven from the outside?

Sinagra No, we used to bring the wood in through the kitchen. We had a door alongside the oven as well that you came in from outside and we used to bring the wood in from there. We had the stove on one end and the oven was on the other end.

I That would keep you warm in winter.

Sinagra Well it would. That was the only way. Oh in what should have been the lounge was a great big fireplace and we always used to light that up.

Rosie That was always going in wintertime.

Sinagra Yes. It really wasn't cold because you had the big fireplace there and the kitchen stove which kept us warm really.

I Did your father build that house?

Sinagra No. He bought that off a chap by the name of Thomas. They used to have a dairy. Even before Dad went up there, there was a dairy up there. We bought that. When he first went up there he built two tin houses actually and he used to live in that. Then when I suppose he got a bit more financial, he built a stone house. That was a bit further away, about a mile from the other property. There was a fair bit of land there.

I What happened to Thomas? Why did he sell?

Sinagra I don't really know. He probably was a bit old and moved back towards Perth I think because there was no more dairy there at the time. Dad bought the property and used it as garden land.

I Which school did you go to Joe?

Sinagra Well I started off at the State School first and then the Catholic School opened a couple of years later. So we went to the Catholic School and I had all my education there. No high school. Then from there once I finished school – well we never went to work in Perth. We just sort of carried on market gardening until we got married. Then, of course, the main

family moved down here closer to the corner of Wanneroo Road and Pinjar Road. Three brothers were left up on the old place and we continued on there market gardening for a while until we all separated. Ross, he bought a truck and went away carting stone and Jim was working for the mill. He went to Villanova's there. He was working there. Then I got married and well I had all different jobs. I started off with a truck as well. I went away wheat carting. Oh before that I had a couple of years with the eldest brother in a garage.

I Where was the garage?

Sinagra On the corner of Wanneroo Road - on the corner of Shakespeare Avenue and Wanneroo Road the garage was.

I That was your brother's garage was it?

Sinagra Well it was Dad's garage but we were running it. Then I decided to get into trucks as well. So I went away and left Sam there running the garage. I went into trucking and that's been most of my life – trucking and driving buses and owning buses.

I When you were driving you were still living in Wanneroo?

Sinagra Yes. Well when I got married. When I first got married we were living in the old house up at Pinjar. We were there probably a couple of years I think. Yes because I was carting garden produce for some of the neighbours as well. Some were up Pinjar and some down here in Wanneroo. I used to take it into the market but then we shifted down here into Wanneroo and we lived with her parents for a while. Then we built a couple of rooms here in Wanneroo and we lived there for quite a while and then we came down here to San Rosa Road.

I You bought the property here did you?

Sinagra Yes. Well one of my brothers had 10 acres here, so we subdivided it in half and I was on half here. Bill got half and he kept the other block and we are still here.

I Tell me about the trucks Joe. Did you have your own truck?

Sinagra Well I bought my own truck. I went away wheat carting and then I came back. Actually I went into bulldozing after I came back. I was driving a truck for Villanovas first off, wheat carting. I think it was during the War that they closed some of the railway lines. We had to transport some from the country down to the wharves. So they put a truck on the road and I drove it for them. I used to get £5 a load for driving it. In those times it worked out not too bad because all I had to do was just drive it. I never had to buy fuel or tyres or anything like that.

I That was wartime. Was driving a protected job during the War? You weren't called up?

Sinagra No, we weren't called up during the War. I don't know whether I would have been old enough.

Rosie You would be all too small I think. See Sam would have been the older one and they wouldn't have taken Sam because he was the elder one and he had to help drive the tractor and things

Sinagra I think during the War because we were in the market garden – see a lot of our veggies went to the Army. They used to take it – mainly tomatoes and cabbage I think they used to take. Then I think Jim – he was put in the saw mill. Yes, that's when he went to work for Villanovas because that was sort of another industry they wanted. I don't know how that used to help but because he was over there, he wasn't called up either.

I They were making packing cases?

Sinagra They were making cases mainly for the vegetables. It was packing cases mainly for tomatoes – that's all it was. They used to supply all Wanneroo then and they even used to send some up to Geraldton. Yes, a lot used to go up to Geraldton. So he was working there.

I You had soldiers in Wanneroo during the War, didn't you - the troops? What effect did that have on the community?

Sinagra The soldiers being here. There was a camp but that didn't really make any difference. I don't really know what they were here for. It was possibly only a place where they rested. At odd times they used to stop you when you went through with a vehicle, just checking but I think most of those were only what they used to call the Home Guard soldiers. I know they did have a big camp further up the road here but that was the light horse. I don't really know whether they were just sort of resting here or whether they used to patrol the coastline. We never really got out during the War. Well I wouldn't have been old enough then; I wasn't driving during the War. So being away up on Pinjar you never really went out. So you didn't know much and we just kept to ourselves.

I What about social life?

Sinagra Well Saturday night was the only night we used to come down to the pictures. It was a big thing see. Everybody used to come to the pictures.

Rosie Or if there was a wedding we used to have a night out – everybody was invited.

Sinagra That's right. If there was a wedding well you knew everybody, so everybody was there but it is different now. Only the immediate family was at the wedding breakfast and then all the others came after for the dance. Otherwise it would have been too expensive to organize and to run.

I What about the picture shows? Did you come to those?

Sinagra Yes, we came to the pictures. When we were young before we could drive we used to go out there but later on when we drove the odd time we used to go into Town. We never used to really go to the dances. Some of us did but not too many. I didn't go dancing and I can't dance to this day. [laughter] I went to dancing school classes just before I was married. I can do some of the old time but not...

I Would you still go to the dance in Wanneroo just for the social thing?

Sinagra No, I don't really like dancing. Camilla does but, of course, she's not too good now. So we haven't been dancing for a while. If we go to a wedding or anything yes, we used to dance but I wouldn't go if I could get out it. [laughter]

I Do you remember when the church was built? You would have been quite young.

Sinagra I only remember that the parents were there. Yes I remember when they were building it. All the old people were there - like they all helped. That's the only thing I can remember, that the old people were there clearing and things like that.

I Did they actually build the church as well?

Sinagra No they had a builder. What was his name now? It was Chrisafauli's son-in-law wasn't it?

Rosie [unclear]?

Sinagra I think.

Rosie Did he build it?

Sinagra I think. I am not really sure who built it but I do know that all the old people were there. Yes, he would n't have been old enough to be a builder – Eric [unclear].

Rosie No.

[pause in recording]

I You said you have seen a lot of changes in market gardening?

Sinagra Yes. Well as I say we used to plough our land with a horse and plough. Like some of the other people couldn't do that because the ground was too wet and they had to do it with a shovel. They used to gain in one way because they never had to water by pump whereas we did have to but we saved it by not having to dig with a shovel. So we could do more. We could plant more and easier with a horse and plough. Later on we got an old tractor and then we did a fair bit with the tractor.

Then seasonal we used to plant either a crop of tomatoes or pumpkin just about in the middle of the Pinjar Lake. Sometimes we used to get caught with the pumpkins because if we got an early rain and the pumpkins weren't quite ready, well we had to drag them out in water. When we were only small kids we used to put one or two in a bag and we just used to drag them out to where we could load them onto the truck. That was hard work because we used to plant a lot of pumpkins. You put them onto the truck and you brought them up home and you'd unload them again. We'd get quite a few truckloads all in a big heap like that but then you'd sort them out and send them to market. In the meantime a lot of them would get rotten because you would get a lot of water that would sit on the top of the pumpkin and make them go rotten but we survived.

I Have you seen Lake Pinjar in recent times? Has it changed much the lake?

Sinagra Well there's not as much water as there used to be. I have seen it but no you don't get the amount of water anymore because you have got all these bores now and the Water Authority has got a lot of bores on the east side of it. So you don't get any water runs into it. It doesn't give it a chance to fill up like it used to. We used to make a tin canoe and go out onto the lake, mainly to shoot ducks and things like that. Kim used to bring in sometimes eggs that he

used to find – either duck eggs or swan eggs. At times there we had tame swans and ducks although the ducks were hard to keep because when they are small they just run around and you can't really catch hold of them. The swans were there and young kangaroos – we had a lot of wild pets.

Rosie I remember the pet kangaroo. It used to come up with us to the bus stop when we were kids.

I Were you talking about the school bus?

Sinagra Yes. Mr Murphy used to drive the school bus although the first one in the very early days that we used to go on was driven by Mr Dennis – an old Ford T.

I Was that a truck or a bus?

Sinagra It was the shape of a bus, wooden seats I think it had.

Rosie It was square wasn't it?

Sinagra Yes. Oh nothing like they are today but we had a better bus here because in South Wanneroo they had a horse and cart. That's how they used to go to school. That used to be driven by Mr Steele. Yes, their first school bus was a horse and cart. Well it was like a closed in type of vehicle but they used to come to school in that.

I Did you ever get up to mischief on the bus going to school?

Sinagra No because I suppose the bus driver would probably give you a clip under the ear and if you were reported to your parents, well then you got a good hiding. [laughter] Not only that you would have to go up to the headmaster. The only time I remember there were a couple of kids but that was in the later years. Yes, you were called up before the headmaster and if you had been playing up, well you got the cane. Not too many kids wanted that.

I You can recall people getting the cane?

Sinagra My word, yes we did. I never got the cane but I just about did one time. One of my brothers was involved in it. They must have been playing up on the school bus. Anyway the headmaster – actually even though we were at the Catholic School if anything arose on the school bus, we went up to the State School and he would deal with things like that. So I went up and I was just about to get the cane and I said, 'well it wasn't me, it was one of my brothers that was involved in it'. So I got out of it that way. [laughter] I don't know whether they were fighting or whatever but that's the only time that I recall that.

I So the children from St Anthony's and from the State School would go on the same bus?

Sinagra Yes.

Rosie That's where there were fights because the State Schoolers used to tease the Catholics. They used to do that and, of course, some of the boys would take it and some wouldn't. They'd fight back.

Sinagra Also if the two schools had a fight, it was pretty bad. Like we had shanghais and what I was talking about before. I think even one of the State School kids had an air rifle. Of course,

there was a big, big thing over that because a lot of us were involved in it. Anyhow after that it sorted of calmed down and there was nothing.

I How old would you have been then Joe?

Sinagra I suppose maybe 10 or 12 probably when the fight broke out.

I Did some kids get swept along with the fight?

Sinagra Well you would yes and you stood up for your rights because as Rosie said, they used to call you names because you were a Catholic and things like that.

I Was there every any problem because you were Italian?

Sinagra Well during the War it was a bit hard. You couldn't say anything and so we just had to really keep quiet. Some of the parents – like the fathers – they were interned, some of the Wanneroo people. I know [unclear] was and he only used to live down the road. I know there was one or two that were interned.

I That must have been very difficult for their families.

Sinagra Yes. I mean during the War you had...

Rosie You weren't allowed to put your radio on during the War.

Sinagra You weren't supposed to.

Rosie We weren't allowed radios or anything.

Sinagra Well actually you weren't supposed to own any I don't think but we had a short-wave when we were up at Pinjar and we used to hear a bit of news. You couldn't do anything. Dad had relations there but more or less just to see where the fighting was and what was going on.

I Do you remember when War broke out? You were still quite young.

Sinagra Well yes because I would have been... Well yes, I remember the War years. You had coupons. On your truck you had to cover the front of your lights. You only had a slit where you only showed a little bit of light just to get you going. I remember that. You had coupons for your petrol. Then later on seeing we were carting we got a gas producer put on.

I What was a gas producer?

Sinagra It was like a big container. We had ours on the back of the truck. Seeing we were carting vegetables that was the best place to put it out of your way. That was like a big round steel thing that you put charcoal into and you lit that up. That made your gas and you ran your vehicle on that. Then, of course, you had to have a big air cleaner because you charcoal had fine dust and everything like that – before it went into the engine otherwise it would wear your motor out too quick. You started it off on petrol and then you lit your gas producer. With the motor going you kept the thing lighting and then eventually when you had the thing lit, you switched over to gas. Then you ran entirely on gas. I forget whether you could go into Town and back on a bag of charcoal or whatever but if you had to fill it up, you just had

to fill it up and continue on, which was not too bad. We started making our own charcoal then.

I Did you – how would you make charcoal?

Sinagra We used to dig a big hole and we used to cut all your timber. You used to cut it green, put it into the hole and then you covered it up with three branches. Then you had sheets of iron on top of that and then you put sand on top of that. I think there was a hole to light it so that it would draw and one for the smoke to come out. It didn't light, it just sort of smouldered in there and when it stopped smoking you scraped the sand away and moved all the tin and there was your charcoal.

I Did you continue to use charcoal after the War?

Sinagra No that was just because you really had to. Well they wouldn't give you enough petrol to use your truck. Even though you had to go to market you still wouldn't get enough. They had a place – I forget now what they used to call themselves. You had to sit in there and wait for them to give you coupons to be able to buy your petrol and sometimes you sat there nearly all day.

I Was that in Perth?

Sinagra Yes, in Perth. That was life during the War. Not that anyone would have spoken out but they didn't really have a good time here. Well the Greeks would have been in the same situation but that was it.

I Joe when you had a truck later did you do cartage work around Wanneroo?

Sinagra While I was in the garden we did a lot of carting vegetables but then when I got married and bought my own truck, yes I was carting here in Wanneroo – mainly limestone. I worked for the Shire for a while. We used to cart limestone for the roads.

I Where would you get the limestone?

Sinagra There were quarries up in Wanneroo here. Then, of course, for the roads too the Shire had their own machine after a while. It used to dig the stone up and we used to just cart it for the roads. No I did a lot for the Wanneroo Shire. I actually had a little bulldozer in there when they first started the rubbish tip up at Pinjar. I used to push the rubbish here and in Warwick Road – I had one down there.

I They had a rubbish tip in Warwick Road?

Sinagra There used to be in Wanneroo Road. Hudson Park was actually a rubbish tip. [laughter] Yes, that was a rubbish tip there. Now, of course, they have got their own machines but we had to leave Pinjar on account of the water table. They didn't want all that rubbish to go into the water, so they stopped that.

I Where does the rubbish go now?

Sinagra They have got one here in Marmion Avenue. They call it Tamala Park.

Rosie Yes something like that I think. I haven't been there.

Sinagra I think that has got a stone floor or something like that – or they sealed it but that's out near the coast. So even if it went down to the water, I don't think it would worry. Your water runs out to the coast anyway – all your underground water. So I can't see that being any problem there.

I Did you ever have any contact with the lime kilns that were operating at Pinjar?

Sinagra Yes, I did a bit of limestone carting as well but that was carting into Perth mainly – just your big blocks of stone. It is a lot different now, they saw them into square blocks but before you could get a rock that probably weighed two tons or more and they used to load it onto your truck. As long as the machine could lift it, they used to put it onto your truck. Then you took it away onto a block. Then the stonemasons used to cut it up to what they wanted, you see.

I What about the lime kilns? You know the lime burning?

Sinagra I didn't really have much to do with the lime kilns. I didn't like that because the lime burns your skin but I did do probably about six weeks. The chap that used to do it went on holidays and he asked me if I would do it. I actually used to cart some wood into this particular lime kiln, which was Westcoe's lime kiln in Westcoe Road. I used to cart the wood in to the burn the lime. Come to think of it, that was my first truck that I bought and I did that sort of work. I was carting wood into the lime kiln but to cart the lime itself, I only did that because the other chap went away on holidays. I was always glad when he came back because it used to eat into your fingers and you could never wash it off. Your skin was always dry and it just used to burn into it. Your clothes - you couldn't put your clothes on the second time because the dust was that fine. The worst was if you were delivering lime which you had in bags at the time. If it rained, well that could catch on fire. The lime used to come in lumps. As the stone was put into the kiln, well the lime used to come back as that – in a lump.

I How did they do it?

Sinagra Well they would have two or three little archways in the front of the lime kiln. I suppose it would be 20 foot high. It was built into the side of a hill and they used to throw all the wood and stone from the top of it. They used to put a layer of wood and then they'd put a layer of stone, then another layer of wood – right to the top. I don't know whether they still do that now but they used to get coke, which was from the gas works, and they used to mix some of that in as well to burn. Then they'd set fire to it and through these archways if by any chance it didn't burn it enough, they used to keep feeding wood through the front there to just keep the thing going until it was good lime.

I What would the end product look like after the burning?

Sinagra Well it finished up still in lumps. Oh some was fine because some of it would burn – probably get too hot and burn. That used to be what they used to call slack lime. That wasn't any good for building but it was good for gardens. So you could go and buy that or probably take it away in those days - in the early days - and you could put it on your land for your vegetables, which did a bit of good. The lumpy one they used to put into bags and that was for building. To get that into... You had to wet that and make it into a paste, a watery paste. Then they used to mix it with their cement and that used to help in the brickwork and things like that.

I Did you have other experiences?

Sinagra I have done a lot of things in my time.

I What about the buses you had?

Sinagra The first one I bought I did school from Lancelin to Balcatta High every day.

I What year was that? Can you remember?

Sinagra 1969. I actually bought the bus to start a bus service from Lancelin to Perth. I got a permit from the Transport Commission. I thought I just want to start a bus service. While I was up there - I think I bought it in May '69 – a contract came up for carting school children from Lancelin to Perth. So I put in for it and I was lucky enough to get it. I did that for four and a half years. Then we went off. What did I do? The kids got down to about 10 or 11 or less and they decided to send some of them to Gingin and I think another place. So that run finished. Anyway I think 18 months later I bought two other runs here locally and we did that until a few years ago.

I You have you still got the buses?

Sinagra No the chap that bought mine still keeps them here because he hasn't got room where he lives. In the meantime I had bought one that I used to do – I took over a run from Yanchep to Perth, which I used to do daily. I kept that going for about two or three years and then a chap wanted to buy the business. Well actually he wanted to buy the buses and in the meantime Transperth, they started a run up there. So I was sort of pushed out and I sold the buses to a chap. He was in the tourist business. So he was doing tour runs. I did a couple up to Darwin while I had them.

I Did you?

Sinagra Yes, I did a couple of runs up there. I did one to Port Hedland – like a tourist group. So I have actually been around. We have actually seen a fair bit of Western Australia. When I was on the road carting wheat for Villanovas we were only first married and Camilla was down there with me. She was all over the place too with me.

I When you say you were carting wheat for the Villanovas, did they just have truck carting?

Sinagra They had a contract. I don't know why they closed the railways – whether there was a strike. There must have been a strike on and apparently there were ships coming in to load this wheat and they couldn't get it from the bins in the country down to the wharf. So they put on trucks – the Government put on all these trucks. Anybody that had a truck had it on wheat carting because at that time... Well when did I get married? It would have been '49. Yes well in the '50s there were no big trucks here in Perth. So everybody that had a five-ton truck or a three-ton truck, well they were carting wheat more or less. We used to cart from all over the place. We used to go down south and we carted into Geraldton as well.

I And you always came back to Wanneroo though?

Sinagra Yes. Well this was your home town so you came back here.

I Your parents did very well in Wanneroo didn't they?

Sinagra Yes. In those days we all worked as a family and as you got married you went away and you got into something else but while we were living at home we all worked. I'll admit we were possibly the eldest three or four of the boys – I mean the girls as well but the girls did the housework and they were in the garden there when they were needed but everything went into one bin you could say. You know, all the money that was earned but if you wanted money, it was given to you and you bought what you wanted.

I Have you got any funny stories from those early days?

Sinagra Not really. The only time I remember – and it probably wasn't funny either because we got a good hiding out of it – a couple of us went away shooting birds on a Sunday. We used to go miles too, just walk. That was the only free time we had so he didn't worry. As long as there was no work to be done, Dad didn't really worry very much and if he knew we were out after birds well he didn't worry but this particular time. I think only two of us – well it might have been three – went out and we didn't know but the younger brother followed us. That was Johnny. I think it was Jim, myself and Ross. So we went out and we didn't notice him following us. Anyhow when we came back it was late. The sun had set or near enough and Johnny hadn't come home. Dad didn't say anything, he just took off. You know, 'you go out and look for him'. Anyway we went out and we found him and anyhow when we got home he was waiting. We got the strap and did we cop a hiding! Anyhow from there we never had dinner, he sent us down into the garden. He said, 'you go out and when I call you, you come back'. Anyhow we were lucky that time – we had visitors – and the visitors came. We weren't really game enough to go home even at that time. Yes, we got a good hiding that time and we weren't to blame either. [laughter]

I Rosie, what about the younger sisters, can you remember any of the mischief they got up to?

Rosie Not really because I was one of the youngest and they were all older. So I don't remember them getting into any mischief or anything because they would have all been grown up.

Sinagra Even the boys, we used to look after the younger children because Mum always had either washing or cooking – things to do. We all helped.

I Did your Mum help in the garden as well?

Sinagra Oh very seldom. If there were tomatoes and things to pack, we used to do the packing and the picking and Mum and Dad would be in the shed there either sorting out or packing the tomatoes because sometimes we had quite a few. To pick and pack – and they used to sort them all out. It is not like today, they put them all in a box loose. They were all packed and then you nailed them. They used to put all the half-ripe, good-looking tomatoes on the top and things like that. That's the way it was, you packed your tomatoes like that. The buyers in the markets, once they got to know who the grower was, didn't really worry because they knew you had good tomatoes - so as long as they knew the name. You graded them into about three grades – you had your top grade, No. 1, the seconds – which were smaller tomatoes – and the odd times if they were dear even the ones that had holes, grub holes in them. They were packed into a separate box and sold off. Then you had the sauce factories and they would come into it. They took everything whether they had grub holes or...as long

as they were ripe. You just took them in and they made sauces with them. So whether you had worms or you know. They just went in and that's what they did.

Rosie That's probably why tomato sauce tastes so nice. [laughter]

I That's why you should make your own sauces.

TRACK TWO

Rosie It was better then than now.

Sinagra That's right. You never broke anything; you made your own fun.

Rosie You had nothing to play with and families always used to get together for an outing. You really liked that. Then you had your whole day at the Show.

Sinagra Yes, the shows were a big thing – the Wanneroo Show.

I When did that start? Was that there when you were very young?

Sinagra It would have been, yes. Well the Royal Show – you never really got to go to the Royal Show too often. I remember one of the workmen took me and I thought it was great because he bought me a model aeroplane, which was great because you never got that sort of thing at the time. Dad when he got a bit of money he was always buying land. Well he spent a long time paying off there where we were. Then he bought the land down at Tuart Hill where the garage went and I remember that was only £15 for a quarter-acre block but it was all bush at the time. I think the last house – there was a brick house a few hundred yards towards Perth but otherwise there was nothing. Oh then you came to the corner of Main Street and Wanneroo Road where there was an old hotel.

Rosie And a saw mill.

Sinagra Yes, there was a saw mill alongside. They had an old hotel there. Actually Ben Pullyer was still living in that.

I Where did Ben Pullyer live?

Sinagra The Pullyers lived out here. Well actually his younger brother was the only one. There were three brothers. The eldest was Ben who used to do wood carting. He was always with wood. The second one wasn't too good in health. So he went back to Italy. The younger one stayed here and he brought up a family. They still live in Wanneroo but that was in the later years. Actually the younger one there had a great big steam engine on wheels and he used to do a lot of clearing here in Wanneroo – the big trees and that he used to knock down just by putting a rope around the trees and knocking them down.

I That was in the early years?

Sinagra Yes, that would have been in the '50s, I would imagine. The cable was that big he had to have a horse to be able to drag the cable around the trees. The poor old horse used to do the heavy work.

Rosie They were big heavy horses weren't they, the draft horses. I can remember even down here they used to plough with a horse. I remember the horse there.

Sinagra Yes and there used to be wild horses too in the early days and they were a menace because a lot of people used to hit them with their vehicles on the roads. At night-time it was dangerous to really drive on the road because you had wild horses. Eventually people came in and killed them for their meat. I think it was mainly for dog food and things like that but they have disappeared.

I Did you ever get out and try to catch the wild horses?

Sinagra Not really no. The stallions used to be the worst because they would chase you. So you kept away from them.

I You didn't eat horse meat?

Sinagra No but there were people here in Wanneroo. Actually they used to make sausage and they used to mix horse meat and pork all together and make sausage.

I Did you make sausage?

Sinagra Out of pork yes. We used to make pork sausage. We used to make our own wine and we used to make our own olive oil. It was funny when we used to clean our barrels when it was time to make the wine. Any of the dregs and what-have-you we used to give to the pigs and it used to make them drunk. Of course, being kids - we had an electric fence up to stop them from digging their way out of the thing. So if they were close to this electric wire we used to just get another bit of wire and used to put it onto the pig and onto the thing. Every time the thing went the poor old pig would grunt but he couldn't move away. He was too drunk to get on his feet. [laughter]

I As kids did you drink wine at home with meals?

Sinagra Well we used to – from kids we used to. That was another thing. I got drunk. We would have been 14 or 15 I suppose. I don't know whether we were still going to school but Jim, my next eldest brother and myself, we decided to see who could drink a glass of wine the quickest but the glass was nearly as big as a litre carton of milk. So we drank this thing here and I remember I just got on the bed and stretched my arms and legs out. The whole thing was just turning around and around. I got that sick that I never drank wine anymore until I did my first bus trip to Darwin. The chap that came up with me to help with the passengers said, 'will you have a glass of wine?' or 'did you want some wine?' I said, 'I might' and he said, 'which do you prefer – either a white or a red?' I said, 'well I don't know whether I can but if I do, it will be red wine'. So he went and got a bottle of red wine but I only just tasted it. That was the first time I had ever tasted wine since I got drunk.

I What about beer Joe?

Sinagra I don't drink beer. I might just have a sip but I just can't drink it.

I Was there beer in your family when you were young?

Sinagra Not really – beer wasn't really... The men folk if they went to Perth, they would go to the pub and probably have one or two drinks but other than that, no. Nobody really had beer at home like you do today.

Rosie We still drink wine; I still have my wine all the time with my meals.

Sinagra A lot of people drink wine. Actually I think more people drink wine now than they used to because see a lot of times in those days, even if it was half vinegar they'd still drink it. What used to happen was it used to go off. See it used to turn to vinegar anyway eventually because they put nothing into it to preserve it. They were drinking it and it used to slowly turn to vinegar. So they used to get used to that and they used to drink it.

Rosie Now there's that much around and all different sorts. That's why people drink a lot and sweet wines now.

I As children when would you first be given wine?

Sinagra Whenever you wanted it.

I Right from being small.

Sinagra From babies, yes.

Rosie We give it to the grandkids from really small – let them taste a bit of wine. We let them have a little bit like this when we eat – only when they eat. They all look for their wine when they come up home, the little kids.

Sinagra I think it is better that way because you get used to it and you are not going to...

Rosie Get drunk on it.

I You did Joe.

Sinagra Well I did because...

Rosie It was probably because you were betting you see and it made you sick.

Sinagra I remember the odd one too - they liked the taste and they drank it. Actually none of the family really were big drinkers – not really.

Rosie Not to get drunk or anything like that.

Sinagra The ones that used to drink the most probably were Sam and Ross.

Rosie Yes, they used to love their beer but none of the others I don't think.

Sinagra No. None of us smoked. While I was wheat carting I tried to smoke but I just couldn't take to it. It was only just to keep awake because we used to travel. If we kept going we would be travelling 24 hours a day. So your normal night's sleep would be from two to four hours in the 24 because you were on the road all the time.

I The other thing I wanted to ask you. Were there any Aboriginal families in Wanneroo that you can remember?

Sinagra Not families. Well there were only one or two but the chap used to work for the saw mill, for Villanovas. They had an Aboriginal there. I am pretty sure it was there. That was in the early stages. Actually there weren't any up here then. They were the only ones. We used to have a couple of hobos that used to travel up and down. They were real winos. [laughter]

I They used to visit?

Sinagra Just up and down. I suppose they used to walk into Perth and out here. People used to give them a drink or a meal – something like that. Anybody that came in, your first thing was had they eaten? You never locked your house in those days – your front door, back door. They were all open. Anybody could have walked in and out but nobody ever did.

I Did you ever get travelling salesmen or anyone coming around selling things?

Sinagra No, not really. As I said before we were right out there and nobody used to come out. The first people that were like that was the butcher. He used to come around on a motorbike and he used to bring out meat or fish. I don't know whether he used to come up to Pinjar but out here in Wanneroo. You ordered your meat. Yes, it must have been here though, I don't think they came up in Pinjar. They used to come along on a motorbike and deliver your meat.

I Where were they bringing the meat from?

Sinagra From North Perth.

I I wonder how they kept it cool in the hot weather.

Sinagra Well I suppose it would only take them an hour.

Rosie Once you bought it you had to cook it as well. I couldn't believe it.

Sinagra At Pinjar we had a fridge.

Rosie No, it wasn't there.

Sinagra Wasn't it at Pinjar we got the first fridge?

Rosie No ice. I remember here when they used to bring a block of ice. You know, a big block of ice.

Sinagra Yes, they used to.

Rosie The ice and then the first kerosene fridge was here. I remember that. When we were living here, not up at Pinjar – we didn't have a fridge.

Sinagra How would you keep food cold then Rosie?

Rosie Well I don't know. Every now and then they'd buy a big block of ice and have it in a drum in a bag and that's where you kept your bottles.

Sinagra We used to put them in water. We used to hang them down into the well. It wouldn't get icy cold – not like what we'd call icy cold but it was cool.

I And you had your water bag for the water and hang it outside.

Rosie Your milk – you were milking every morning so you didn't have to keep it in the fridge. You butter – well I suppose if it was melted, it was melted. You just had to eat it like that.

Sinagra Oh but it you wrapped that up anyway.

Rosie Yes, if you wrapped everything up.

Sinagra Well as I said too we had 32-volt power in the early days when we were up in Pinjar. We used to run the generator off one of the pumps that used to pump water for the garden. We had batteries and we had electric power. As a matter of fact while we were up I suppose I would have been 17/18 I developed my first photos up there. I made myself a little wooden box and I had a globe in there. I used to have some paper – red paper – to put over the globe so that I could see what I was doing in the dark room. Well we never had a dark room but in the room where I was doing it. I got me a couple of bowls that I had the stuff in to develop the photos. Those photos are still good and that's a long time ago. I didn't need any fancy enlarger or things like that. [laughter]

I Can you remember anything about the home that was important within the community? Or anything particularly memorable within the community that affected everyone?

Sinagra No not really. That's right, nothing really exciting happened in those days.

I What about church? Did you go to that?

Rosie Yes church and then there was Show Day where you had your races and tug-o-wars and things like that. That was the only thing where everybody was involved but apart from that I don't think.

Sinagra Even in my time at school we never went anywhere like they do these days on excursions or you go from school-to-school for sports and things like that. There was nothing like that. Oh there was the odd time that one of the parents who had a truck would take kids out to the beach. I think I only remember once or twice old Jack Hancock there – he took us out to the beach just for the day. I am pretty sure it was a school outing.

I Did you have sports days?

Sinagra Well we never played inter sports.

Rosie With the State Schools. We always went against the State Schools. Not in your time.

Sinagra Not in my time there wouldn't have been. That's right they used to go down to the Showgrounds there.

I You have seen a lot of changes Joe.

Sinagra Yes, a lot. Well even when we came down here we had no power for three months, we had to wait and argue with the... Because they put the high tension leads and they had a thing down on the bottom there because there were a couple of houses down there. Anyhow we built here and first they would come back to the bottom of the block, which was a long way down. I mean they had the poles here and I said, 'well why don't you run the wires back up here? I'll pay for them' because at that time when they put a spur on like this, they had to have two or three people and they used to charge them so much. Then over a certain amount of time they'd give them their money back. I think it was about £30 then - or £30 per pole. Yes, it was £30 per pole. Anyway I had to get someone pretty high up in Government to overturn their decision. I said to them, 'well you are going to get your wires here and I don't want any money back, you can keep it'. 'No we still can't do it because if we do it for you, we've got to do it for someone else' but I said, 'it is not costing you anything'. They still wouldn't until I got hold of a chap.

I You had to fight to get electric power?

Sinagra That's right because if I had of put it here it would have only been temporary anyway but I thought if I could get it done properly in the first place, why not?

I What year was that Joe?

Sinagra I think we were here in 1966 or '65.

Rosie It is still the same now for the power if they have got to bring it anywhere, they won't just bring it for one person.

Sinagra I know but if they are going to get a piece done here for nothing and I said, 'eventually you are going to get houses across the road and you've got your wires there'.

I What are the other big changes in the medical services as well? What did you do in the early days?

Sinagra Well in the early days you went to North Perth – Fitzgerald Street in North Perth.

Rosie The doctors were there! [laughter]

I That's where the doctor was?

Sinagra Yes, that was the closest doctor – it was Fitzgerald Street. All Wanneroo used to go into there. It was Dr Cowden and Heymanson were the people and all Wanneroo used to land up there.

I Do you remember any emergencies where you had to get a doctor quickly? Because it was a long way to go wasn't it?

Rosie We never went to the doctor. We were never sick or anything to go to a doctor. I never had anything.

Sinagra I got a piece of wood stuck in my leg. It went in one way and came out through the other. Mum only just pulled it out and put Condes Chrystals on it. I have still got the marks there on my leg.

Rosie I don't ever remember going to the doctor for anything.

Sinagra They would have had to go for Johnny because he lost an eye.

I How did that happen?

Sinagra And I think they took Mary in for something as well. Yes, Mary had to go in for something but I don't really remember what it was all about. That was the eldest girl.

I Did you have doctor's bills in those days?

Rosie I don't know how they paid. They probably would have had to pay I would say.

Sinagra Oh yes, you had to pay for your own doctor.

I What about when you had your babies?

Sinagra Well that was the same. There was no Medicare or anything like that – now way - and there was no Dole either, not that I remember. [laughter]

I Did any of the men die and leave widows in Wanneroo? What happened in those circumstances?

Sinagra Well there would have been like Mrs Arigo.

Rosie She died young.

Sinagra Yes. Well she left a few children.

Rosie Well she left the twins who were only babies – Nancy and Frank, they were only small. Old Mrs Villanova was giving milk to one and I think the older sister was giving milk to the other one.

I Breast feeding them?

Sinagra Yes. She would have been probably one of the first. Then Mr Villanova died of cancer.

Rosie Mr Coultrona died before him didn't he or after? Mr Coultrona died young.

Sinagra Yes. Well I suppose when you look back there were a few.

Rosie Yes, I remember those.

Sinagra There was a chap in the real early days by himself up in Chrisafauli's place up here. You know the old place? I forget who it was. He blew himself up in the house.

I How did he do that?

Sinagra I don't really know what it was all about. Whether it was family troubles or what – I don't really know. Yes, I suppose when you look back there is – and that other chap that I was saying that the dogs ate. He was half eaten up in Pinjar. That was really early there.

Rosie It would have been before my time.

I Can you think of anything else you would like to add?

Sinagra Not really?

I What about you Rosie? You are Joe's sister.

Sinagra I don't remember much.

I You are actually still living on part of the Sinagra property in Pinjar?

Rosie Yes.

I What work are you doing on the property?

Rosie Well we've got a bit of a vineyard and olive trees.

Sinagra You've got the original homestead anyway, like the property.

Rosie We've got the old one yes. We bought that and we have got a few cattle up there. We can't do much up there so the boys will probably take it over and we'll let them do something with it. We just do what we can at home. We have got to keep working to keep going. You have your ups and your downs but you know you keep going.

Sinagra Dennises used to own it. Well they used to have the garage there. First off they used to have the saw mill at Pinjar – Dennises. Then they built a garage here, they had the hall.

Rosie He moved his saw mill down to Caporn Road didn't he?

Sinagra Yes. Well they had it there sometime. Whether it was there first I don't know. No, it would have been there first and then they went to Pinjar – the saw mill. But you had your dances, you had your picture shows. Then, of course, Chrisafauli took it over and they just continued on to what it was.

Rosie Any wedding was done in the Dennis' hall eh?

Sinagra Yes you had weddings there and then they put an open-air theatre alongside it. You just had canvas seats. Yes in the summertime they used to have it outside. They had a little shop there; you could buy drinks there for a penny a drink - a glass. They had a little room there where the kids could sleep while the parents were either dancing or watching the picture show. What else? They invented a power saw – Dennis did. Actually a couple of versions of them, they could turn the blade right around to any angle they wanted to, to cut a tree down. That was with a circular saw and then they invented another one with a cross-cut saw. They must have made a lot of money out of those because there were quite a few around.

I Were there any other buildings in Wanneroo at the time when you were young? There was the dance hall. Was there anything else?

Sinagra Well the only ones for a start were that and the post office.

I Where was the post office?

Sinagra It was on the corner of Dundobar Road and Wanneroo Road?

Rosie Where the Forestry is.

Sinagra Yes, on the north where the Forestry is – well right on the corner was the post office. Then Tognas came in - I don't know whether I was going to school?

Rosie No.

Sinagra Tognas built a shop there on the other side of the road. It actually started up as a tea shop I think.

Rosie Yes.

Sinagra But they didn't keep that open for long because then they built the shopping centre there. So that went.

I The post office stayed there until...?

Sinagra The post office was there for a long time. Well my kids were going to school.

Rosie And the post office was still there.

Sinagra Yes, it was still there.

I What did they actually sell? Did they sell goods as well?

Sinagra No, the only thing that I remember she used to sell lollies and drinks.

Rosie Cordial drinks.

Sinagra Remember that – it wasn't Coke, it was something like Coke that they used to sell.

Rosie Vig.

Sinagra Yes, they used to call it Vig. Do you remember that?

Rosie Yes. It was better than Coke.

Sinagra That's right.

Rosie That and glasses of cordial. It was a penny a glass. Then they started making ice blocks.

Sinagra Two sisters used to run it. No, that was quite a good little shop.

I That was the focal point for you kids was it?

Sinagra Yes.

I What about your mail? How did you get your mail then?

Rosie You had to go to the post office to pick it up. Then if a telegram came or anything I remember one of the sisters would walk up. This is when we were living near but I don't know from up there. I suppose they would just be coming down to pick up their mail.

Sinagra In the later years the school bus used to take the mail and deliver it as the kids got off. They used to deliver it that way.

Rosie See a lot of the kids I think when you got out of school, if you had time you would run up to the post office and ask if there was any mail for you and pick it up.

Sinagra Yes. I know on the Yanchep road the bloke, Mr Bosnakis, used to drop it off. Whether they used to give it to the kids or what as they got off the bus I don't know but I know he had the contract for the mail for quite a while.

I Who was that?

Sinagra Mr Bosnakis – the school bus contractor but they wouldn't have now because it would be too much anyway.

I Okay Joe. Well I have really enjoyed this morning. There are quite a few things I still haven't asked you. [laughter]

Sinagra Well such as it is – well I hope it works out.

I I am sure it will.

END OF INTERVIEW