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Full transcript of an interview with

AVON ROSENZWEIG

on 5 May 1997

by Rob Linn

Recording available on CD

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TAPE 1 - SIDE A

RURAL HISTORY PROJECT.

Interview with Avon Rosenzweig at Mannum on 5th May, 1997.

Interviewer: Rob Linn.

Well, Avon, just to begin the tape, where and when were you born?

AR: I was born in July 1928.

At Milendella?

AR: No. I was born here at Mannum. It was the only hospital in the area at that stage. It's still the only hospital in the area. It's the only hospital in the Mannum area.

Who were your parents, Avon?

AR: Harold Rosenzweig, and my Mother was Alma. She was nee Horstmann.

And what was your Father's occupation?

AR: Virtually he was working on the original Rosenzweig farm, and I would be the third generation on that farm. Son has taken it over now and he'd be the fourth generation.

Well, what are your earliest memories of that area, Avon?

AR: I guess my earliest memories of the area, I can just imagine the horses, and they just sort of disappeared. And I never ever handled a team of horses. I've always been involved with a tractor.

So this is working horses?

AR: That's the working team, yes.

So your first memories would be the horses?

AR: That'd be right, yes. And of course, as we grew up we certainly had to get into the cow yard and milk the cows.

So, what was the nature of the farm? What, was it mixed?

AR: Well, it was firstly cereal growing at that stage, and sheep. At that stage the size of the property - if I refer to hectares, it would be 450 hectares. That was the original size. And at this stage it's probably nearly grown half again as much.

The farmstead itself, what did that consist of? Around the farm house.

AR: The farm house? Well, you had your horse stables. I remember them quite well. Cow shed with just a few sheets of iron over the roof to make sure you don't get wet when you get a shower of rain. And of course they had a few fowls, and there were also a few pigs involved.

They were mainly for domestic consumption?

AR: Well, yes. They'd always make sure they'd kill their fatted pig in the course of every year and they'd all make their small goods. I can remember that quite well.

Was it a very strong community out there, Avon?

AR: It was a very close community, very close knit. And, yes, to come to Mannum, that was a big day, just to come to Mannum once a week. And everybody, virtually the farming community, all used to be once a week, come to Mannum.

What, for supplies and groceries?

AR: For supplies, and bring the cream down. The factory was down the street, and later years when the factory closed there was a truck that used to come around and pick up the cream.

So that was the part of it.

Now, you said it was a very strong and close community. Did it have a pretty strong history itself, going back? How did it start? That Milendella community.

AR: I'm led to believe originally they thought there was a lot of minerals in the hills and even, like, Milendella itself sort of like a subdivision. It's all got its little blocks and everything, especially around the Church area there. That's all blocks. So they must have thought at one stage there could be a population here when they - but I think the mineral thought at that time didn't eventuate it. Apparently, we're led to believe, there's virtually as good as no minerals in the hills. Not around Milendella area.

Now, who are some of the other families that you can remember very, very clearly?

AR: Oh, look, there's Bormanns, Eichlers, Scheers. That lot were virtually our neighbours. And then once you start getting further afield you had the Croziers(?), the Lindners and the Payzes(?). They were sort of the next gap behind the - in our area.

Did they all run similar properties, Avon?

AR: All virtually identical.

Really?

AR: Mm. Yes, virtually very identical. Everybody was doing the same.

And how did those families come to be there? Did your Father or Grandfather ever tell you how they came there?

AR: All that I know, Grandfather was one of the early originators. I believe there was the Scheer family that was very early. Apart from that - and the Horstmann family. I'm led to believe they were fairly early in the area. But, then once you head towards the hills a bit, you'd have the Bormanns, and the Wegners and the Rachers(?). And virtually, even at this stage, what was the Bormann's lot is still the Bormann's lot. And there's only a few now that have sort of - if they sell, virtually the neighbours take the property.

So it's still in a sense the same families there?

AR: Well, it is virtually. Like, still got the Croziers(?), still got the Lindners. Scheers have gone but - and the Wattles, they're more towards the Palmer(?) area than our close area.

Well, Avon, going back to your childhood, where did you end up going to primary school?

AR: I went to primary school - the Frayville(?) Primary School. And I spent my - I didn't even finish quite my seven years. Father had a heart attack and I just had to go home.

Did he survive that?

AR: That attack, he did. But he died - be about, what? About 15 years later, I think, he succumbed.

So you came back on the farm, what? When you were 12 or 13 years old?

AR: I was 14. As soon as I was 14 I could leave. I couldn't even finish my QC. Those days had QC.

QC, of course.

Well, just tell me a bit about the Frayville School though because I've seen the little building. It's a very simple building. Red brick?

AR: No, it's a limestone building.

Limestone?

AR: Yes.

With quoins on the corner?

AR: Red brick quoins, that's right. As you saw it there, there's a bit more attached to it. There's a shelter shed. That's now been gone, and there's a couple of little sheds, and toilets. But, yes, as far as my - one of my best thoughts there was - I never had much time for one teacher. Mr - what was he called? Mr Annells. He always used to park his car up against the flagpole. *(Laughter)* So some of us boys, we thought, 'We'll trick him'. We made sure that he was in the school. Somebody kept him entertained. We had a piece of

wire lined up and tied his car to the flagpole. Course then we took off down the road to see what would happen. Nobody ever admitted, yet, who was the culprit. *(Laughter)*

But, no, they were the good old days. We all walked. I suppose the furthest family was the Eichler family, and the Pfeiffer family. They had to walk best part of, at that stage, three miles. Yes, they were really the good old days. Sort of appreciate it now. Nowadays they get picked up at the door, and that's it.

So come rain or shine, you'd go.

AR: You'd go. You had to. No ifs and buts about it. And it had to be pretty wet before we'd get a ride, too. *(Laughter)*

Growing up around that area as a child, was it a really great existence? Did you have a very full life?

AR: We virtually had to make our own fun. Families at that stage were a lot - all within virtually a mile, and us kids would often get together and have our share of fun.

Well, what sort of pranks did you get up to? The repeatable ones.

AR: *(Laughter)* The repeatable ones? Well, I guess, try and play hide-and-seek. I suppose that was one of the very popular ones. Then we had sort of a wattle scrub very close and we used to have sand hills, and we used to have our share of fun in there, as a group. And then there'd be a bit of argument about who was going to take who home, even at that age. We used to have our share of - I suppose I can almost say there wasn't a dull moment. And even on the way to school, when we walked, there'd always be bickering between neighbours about who's going to get to school first, and all that type of stuff. I guess on going to school one of the worst ones was they used to have the Bureau meetings at the school. What they called the Frayville Bureau.

That's the Agricultural Bureau?

AR: Yes. And somebody left behind a packet of cigarettes and us boys got to it and smoked it. We didn't get home very early that night for some unknown reason. We had to stop in school. *(Laughter)*

Just one of those things.

AR: We wouldn't admit it but the teacher said, 'Oh, I can smell it on you, and I can smell it on you'. So us boys, we had to do our homework at school.

Did you have brothers and sisters, Avon?

AR: Yes. I've got two sisters. I've got one older and one younger. I was the little boy in the centre. I got bashed both ends, you see. *(Laughter)*

What were their names?

AR: Audrey and Doris. They're both still living. My eldest sister, she just hit the 70 mark, and I'm heading for the 69 mark now. Very close.

Avon, was it a very happy home?

AR: Well, I guess we often thought our parents were a bit hard on us. We may have deserved it, I don't know, but it's different to today's standards.

Yes.

AR: Very much so. I mean, it's nothing new to get a clout behind the ears and things of that nature. I can never forget once, I was sitting at the table and I said something I suppose I shouldn't have said and Father threw a bone at me. And I repeated them back. Boy! did I get a bloody clouting that night. *(Laughter)* Yes, there's no hesitation.

You weren't popular that night?

AR: No, that's right. But I tried to make up for it the next day.

So, Avon, were your parents very involved in the local Church?

AR: Yes. He was very much involved in the local Church. Right through his time as far as - he always held high positions in the Church, as far as I knew. And he was very much public-minded. If you're talking about the bowling green down there, he was probably one of the first leaders in that bowling.

That's the Mannum Bowling Club?

AR: Mannum Bowling Club, yes. And he paid a very long part in local government. I'm virtually the third generation as far as relations are concerned in local government. Grandfather's local government, Father's local government, and had an uncle that was in local government, and I thought, 'Blow, if they can do it, I'll follow suit'.

Has that been rewarding, by the way?

AR: Local government?

Mm.

AR: These last years, it's getting so much involved with things. I guess it had a lot to do with amalgamation and things of that nature. But I should say my first 20-odd years I thoroughly enjoyed local government, but that doesn't happen if you haven't got a wife that stands behind you, and the family stands behind you. I had - I'm just completing 25 years. I served 15 of those straight, as Chairman, and that's a record as far as Mannum Council is concerned.

Well, that won't be broken, will it?

AR: *(Laughter)* No, not this one. And I had four years as Deputy, and six years as Councillor.

We're going back to your family background, and even your own upbringing. Was the Lutheran Church a very central part of that close community that you were talking about?

AR: That was the centre. Everybody would head for that direction on a Sunday. Hail or sunshine, you go to Church. No, that was very close knit at Milendella as far as Church was concerned.

Now, of the two parts of the Lutheran Church at that early stage, what part did Milendella represent?

AR: What are you referring to? What part? I know there was -

The Zion or -

AR: We're the -

Evangelicals?

AR: We're the evangelicals.

Right. So at that time that's what Milendella was about. So were you served from Palmer or -

AR: Originally we were served from Birdwood. And then Palmer grew, and Milendella grew, and Milendella were going to Palmer that first stage. And then they decided to build the Church at Milendella.

Now, when you were young, Avon, was Milendella a fairly thriving little village or was it still pretty small?

AR: It's virtually no different to what it was today.

Really?

AR: Mm. Everything's still there. The houses that were there, they - there's still relics around. And the Post Office, come latter years, well, that still is there. And the railway line. I guess that played a very big part in keeping things closer knit. And then there was a store there, temporary. Course, then the butcher shop - butcher business, I should say. And the school. And that's virtually - that was Milendella.

Well, the butchery business, who was that run by?

AR: That was run by - originally, I'm led to believe, it started off with the Licul(?) family, and then Lou Crozier(?) took it over. I still can remember the dates. He used to come to Mannum with his old Oakland ute, I think it was, and he'd cart the meat, kill it out there, cart it down here and go around the town and sell it.

To individuals or the butcher shop?

AR: No, no. Individuals. He was opposition to the butcher shops. *(Laughter)*

I'm with you.

AR: Yes. I believe there's one or two butcher carts that used to come to Mannum.

Now, you were saying earlier, Avon, that you came home at 14 because of your Father's heart attack. What were your jobs then around the farm?

AR: I was virtually doing what he was doing. Admittedly, had no horses. I just had the tractor and I guess that made it so much easier. But, he was still the boss. He'd tell me what to do and I'd try and do it, and if I couldn't manage he'd come and give me a bit of a hand - what he could do.

Well, just describe for me the routine that you had every year, and then on a daily basis maybe.

AR: Well, the daily basis, I guess it was virtually a few pigs to look after. Those days, nearly every other day they'd go around and see where the sheep are and see that the cows remain in the paddock and not break into the neighbour's paddock. And then, harvest time - well, that's a lot different to what it is nowadays. You'd fill your bags and sow them up and load them up and cart them away.

And where were you carting to? Apamurra?

AR: Apamurra.

In terms of your seasonal work, what was the run of your year? Where did you start and where did you finish, say?

AR: Well, just what do you mean when you start and when you -

What was the routine that you had every year?

AR: Oh, right. Virtually it'd start in July. You worked your ground up. Those days it was early working your ground up.

What equipment were you using, Avon?

AR: I had a moldboard plough. We had a ten moldboard plough. We thought we had a mighty big thing (*Laughter in voice*) compared to nowadays. And then you'd have to work the fallow two or three times before Christmas, and then shearing used to come in between. And we also had a depot for dipping sheep. I would dip sheep for nearly a fortnight. All the neighbours come and bring their sheep in there to dip.

So you had a water run, did you? A proper dip?

AR: It was a hole in the ground. You'd catch each sheep and drag it back and let it drop in the water.

Is that right?

AR: That's right, yes.

So you didn't even run them through?

AR: Oh, no, no, no. You'd catch each sheep by the back leg and drag them in, and when you get them far enough, let it drop.

Okay. Well, what did you have in the wash?

AR: Those days it was virtually for tick and lice. And dip - I can remember quite well, Cooper's(?) powder dip. That's the dip we used to be using.

Pretty potent stuff.

AR: Yes. You don't want to lick your fingers after it. (*Laughter in voice*)

That's right.

So, okay, we get up to Christmas. What comes after that?

AR: Well, then you had your harvest just all prior to Christmas, and you'd work - if I can put it real bluntly - like buggery, and make sure you're finished by Christmas. Everybody who finished by Christmas, you were a good farmer.

But if you finished after Christmas, 'Oh, you've been dragging your feet a bit, mate, haven't you?' *(Laughter)*

Is that right?

AR: Yes.

Well, what were you using for harvesting, Avon?

AR: I can still remember Father having a, what they called, an old Big E harvester. But when I started, that's when he got his first header.

So what type of harvester was it?

AR: They used to call it a Big E.

A Big E?

AR: Yes. Don't ask me why. In fact it was run by a - I wouldn't even like to say who it was run by. I know there were a few of them around in our area in those days - old Big E. I think it was a Federal harvester, what they're called.

Oh, Federal, okay.

AR: I never handled any of them. That was just before -

So you were into the headers?

AR: I got the privilege of starting off with a header. At that stage, Father would always be sitting on the machine and I'd be driving the tractor. Took two of us to handle that machine. We thought it was a big thing. And then you got your bags - you had to empty your bags out.

Were you sewing in the paddocks or other people sewing for you?

AR: Well, depends on the season. If you had a big season, probably get somebody in. But if it was just mediocre, well, you'd do it yourself. Course that wasn't just sewing. Then you had to ram them tight and make sure they were tight. I always had trying to beat the neighbour as far as weight-wise was concerned. *(Laughter in voice)* Oh, yes.

Did you do your own lugging of the bags?

AR: Not initially. We used to load them or - a piece of stick. Lay the bag out - there were two of us - and then we'd lift it up on the truck with a piece of stick going across the - but latter years had a G-well bag loader. And when Father died I used to virtually do all the carting myself. Put the bag on the loader, quickly open your legs up in between, the bag loader comes up, and jump up on the truck then and grab the bag as it comes up, and then you jump down and load up and keep going.

And that managed pretty well for quite a while I guess, Avon?

AR: Oh, yes. If I got six/seven loads a day I thought I was doing a real good job.

Is that right?

AR: Course then, when you get up to this ladder - used to get up to the siding up there. If you helped to lump up there, to do some of the work, he'll allow you at night time to come and take another load of wheat. So if they wanted another load of wheat, they'd go and help him.

So, how many bags were you putting on your truck, do you remember?

AR: 60 bags on a little Bedford truck.

That's a day's work. A few bags, isn't it?

AR: Yes. Around about 400 bags we're carting. That'd be a good day's work.

So your first memories of the property, when you're coming back on it towards the end of the War years probably, would that be right?

AR: That's when I sort of left school. That'd be right.

Were they pretty tight years, Avon? Would you remember? Or was your Father really running those things?

AR: It was very close, yes, because casual labour was very short and you just sort of had to try and do that extra. Because if there's any free labour around they were taken in with the Army. I was never ever called up even though my

age was pretty close there. The only reason I wasn't called up was on account of Father's health. But, I had to go around to the community and help other people. That was my role during the latter parts of the War years.

So you had your hands full?

AR: Mm. Barely time to go and look for a wife. *(Laughter)*

Sounds to me like she might have found you, Avon.

AR: No, no, I don't think so.

Where did you meet Joylene?

AR: I met her at a dance at Springton, although I knew of them well beforehand. But we had a dance at Springton and that's when I first met Joylene. Although, she was at my 21st. She was one of the gate-crashers, and she often reminds me that I didn't as much as look at her that night.

(Laughter)

But, yes, then during the grape season I used to get out of the farm life and go grape picking. I used to do a fair bit of grape picking just to be with other company. And the parents appreciated that.

Okay. So that's how you got to Springton, was it?

AR: No. I had my own little car. Those days, dances were quite common in our age group. I think I was one of the first little boys around the area that had a car, and was quite popular. All wanted to ride.

What type of car was it, Avon?

AR: A little red Mayflower car. Commonly known to people as a matchbox.
(Laughter in voice)

How many would that take?

AR: Oh, we could sit four or five if they wanted to nurse each other.

Were those the centre of your social events, the dances? Or were there other things as well that you went to for -

AR: I used to play sport. I used to play football. I used to ride a bike from home right to Palmer to catch - always called it a dog box. There were no buses to drive in. Just open truck affair. And away we'd go. Then ride home again at night time. Practise once a week. Go right up with the bike. We didn't know no better.

So that was your footy?

AR: Yes. Everybody was doing the same thing.

That was for your footy?

AR: Mm.

And where did you play? All up and down the river, or in Mount Pleasant?

AR: We did play at Mount Pleasant. Mainly it was down this area. Murray Bridge, Mannum, Tailem Bend, Monteith, Mypolonga. And in the latter years, we did play in the Hills Association. That virtually went defunct, that football club. Not enough young boys around no more. And I guess now with transport, too, so quick. They can go from A to B so quick and think not much of it.

So in those days transport was a fair sort of luxury?

AR: Oh, my word it was. If you had a car - I started off with a motor bike first but that didn't last very long. And if you had a car, it was really a luxury.

So in summer, what sports did you play?

AR: I really didn't play much sport in summer. I couldn't digest cricket. I just couldn't see much sense sitting out in the oval there in the heat and when the ball comes you'd be asleep anyway. *(Laughter)* No, I couldn't digest that one.

So you liked the activity of the footy in winter?

AR: Yes, that's right. Winter sport. That was - I enjoyed that.

Tell me more about these dances, Avon. Where were they held? You said Springton. Were there other places?

AR: Oh, yes. There was a hall at Palmer, where it was quite common. And that one used to be very popular. Mannum. And then you'd have dances at - oh, in the outer areas sort of thing you might only have a small room or where a dozen or so might congregate at the neighbours or something of that nature. They were quite popular, too.

What about in your own community? Were there any yearly celebrations that were a feature of the life there?

AR: Well, not really. I just couldn't put my finger on ones that I'd be calling a yearly celebration, unless it came to Church affairs. Well, they'd have their -

Did they have Harvest Thanksgiving?

AR: Yes. Harvest Thanksgiving and what we call Mission Festival. That used to be very popular. They used to congregate at the Milendella silos, in the big wheat shed there, and that used to be quite a big thing in those days.

So there were all these events. So you weren't without your fun by the sounds -

AR: No, no, we had our fun. We had our share. I guess there probably were times of disgust to the parents (*Laughter in voice*) but they'd let us know if they think we were doing wrong.

I bet they did.

AR: Yes.

Pretty quickly?

AR: Oh, yes, very quick. Very quick.

And Avon, looking back on those years, I guess there have been tremendous changes. But we'll talk about them on the next side of the tape.

TAPE 1 - SIDE B

Avon, we've been talking about some of the social life that you got up to. I guess it was an interesting district to grow up in, and you've described something of the farming life you had, and you said during the War years, and immediately after, it was pretty tight. I guess with all that rationing and stuff that was going on you couldn't do a lot. But when did it really start to move? Do you remember, roughly, when the agricultural end of things began to really start to move quickly?

AR: I think that virtually took place almost immediately after the War. Things started to progress. Well, we thought it was hellishing good, if I can use those words. Yes, at that stage I guess I was growing up more and more, getting more keen and interested. I used to dig potatoes too.

How many acres of spuds?

AR: Oh, not - we never had any. I used to go to a person up in the hills by the name of Lawrie Pfitzner. We'd dig with a fork. And together with Elton Scheers, a neighbour of ours, we'd always go up there and have our fun and share up there.

So you were into grape harvesting, you were digging potatoes -

AR: I virtually put my fingers almost in the pie. For quite a few years I used to shear - shear sheep.

Did you love it all, really?

AR: My best part of it - yes, I loved everything I done because it was getting into different community, different people to talk to, and I think that's where you gain a lot of your knowledge from.

Did you find all these country people very friendly people, Avon?

AR: Very friendly. I can't even recall any ill effect with any neighbour or anything.

Is that different, do you think, from living in an urban situation? In a city? That there's just not that same feeling there?

AR: I think living in the city is certainly a different atmosphere altogether. In the city, well, you probably don't have to go far to have your fun and that, but here we had to look for it and travel.

I know in some of the German communities over towards Monarto way, it wasn't uncommon for people to share pigs and to make the sauerkraut together and all that sort of thing. Did that happen in your community much?

AR: Only what I - Dad used to have a brother by the name of Otto who lived about a mile away. I still can remember them sharing their meat together. One'd kill a pig, say, in March/April. Another one would kill a pig later on and they'd share that - the goods together. I can remember that quite well.

Did they make their own smallgoods, or your Mother?

AR: Yes. My word, yes. That was big business.

Mother or Father did that, Avon?

AR: Both.

Really?

AR: Oh, yes.

Well, just talk to me about that. Tell me what happened.

AR: Well, first day - say, Tuesday. Tuesday, that's the day they killed the pig.

Yes, well, go on. Tell us what happened.

AR: And that was - make sure your water's all lined up, scrape the scales off and the hair, and then -

This is boiling water?

AR: That was boiling water, yes. That was my job to make sure it was kept hot and had enough wood going.

What did you use to put the pig into to do that? What was the water in?

AR: The water was probably in a copper. And you'd take the copper and you'd pour it slowly over the pig and they'd be scraping it, cleaning it. That was half a days work to kill one pig. But it had to be done perfectly. And the next day, that's when you used to hear all the arguments. 'I've got to put a bit more pepper in'. The next one said, 'No, that's too much pepper. A bit more salt'. *(Laughter in voice)*

This is to the wurst, is it?

AR: That is right. Sometimes it used to take up to three days.

Three days?

AR: Yes. One afternoon to kill the pig. That was the day gone, to kill a pig. And if they didn't finish the smallgoods one day, then the next day they had to carry on again. But mainly the third day was virtually curing the bacon, and they had their mettwurst. That all had to be smoked. That was virtually the third day's job.

Well, where was your smoke house?

AR: Just a hole in the ground. Yes, that was only removed latter part of the years. I can quite remember where it was.

A hole in the ground with a roof over it?

AR: Yes, a roof over it and a few little holes to let the smoke escape that you could see if it was smoking.

And how did they set the fire? Just coals or -

AR: Just coals. Usually try and get hold of some saw dust and bark and that type of material so that it would just smoulder and not burn. About three weeks after that you'd take your bacon and your hams out of your brine, and you'd smoke them also. And then you had smallgoods for the rest of the year.

So, okay, your ham and your bacon were put into a brine. Were they ever sugared at all or just in the salt?

AR: No, they were sugared. Yes, they'd do all that.

And then in the smoke house?

AR: Then in the smoke house, and then they'd just hang in the cellar.

Hang in your cellar. Well, what type of cellar did you have?

AR: Underground. We've still got it- the cellar's still in with the house.

So you walked down into it and there's a breezeway through it, or something like that?

AR: No, no. It's just a plain room with stairway down it.

Underneath the actual house?

AR: That is underneath the actual house, yes.

Okay, I'm with you.

Now, how did those smallgoods taste, Avon?

AR: Pretty good. But, I don't know that they did much good to the waist line though. *(Laughter)* Things are very, very greasy.

So the wurst has a lot of fat, eh?

AR: That is right, yes. Those days, the more fat they had the better they used to like it.

Now, when you took your lunches to school, or whatever, was it always wurst sandwiches or what type of sandwiches?

AR: Well, during the pickling time you always had your wurst and apart from that there was virtually apricot and bread. And if we had a piece of fritz in with it, well, we'd think we were doing pretty good.

The fritz, you would have bought though. Your Mum would've bought, wouldn't she?

AR: Oh, yes, but that was a delicacy those days.

Really?

AR: Oh, my word, yes. It didn't happen too often.

So Crozier(?), or whoever, he made the fritz, did he?

AR: Fritz? Well, that probably came more or less from the butcher down the street. That was above Croziers(?). All what they were concerned about was their rice(?) wurst, their liver wurst. They had plenty of that, and of course their mettwurst was very good. But by the time you had all these smallgoods, you'd nearly had enough there for the best part of six months. Once it was smoked.

From the one animal?

AR: Mm. The mettwurst or that used to last at least that long. The bacon also.

So at the same time were you eating mutton and all that sort of thing?

AR: Oh, yes, yes. That came in between.

So I guess your diet at home was mainly meat, a few vegetables, a bit of bread?

AR: Yes, that'd be right. But it'd be a pretty rich sort of a diet because on account of all the grease we used to have those days. Nowadays you turn your eyes on it.

What about yeasts? Did your Mother cook a lot of that type of yeast?

AR: Yeast cake?

Mm.

AR: Oh, she was very good at that. My wife, Joylene, she's very good on it. She still does that. That's a cake - well, I suppose this is what they call a German cake.

Real German cake, mm.

AR: That was very good.

So, Avon, getting away from the food now, back to those years after the War on the farm, you were sowing cereals. Were you putting in wheats, barleys, oats?

AR: It was mainly wheat those days. And barley sort of came on a bit more.

What varieties, do you remember?

AR: I can remember Ford, Sword(?), Bencubbin. That's about the three varieties - and Warigal.

What was that - Bencubbin?

AR: It's a fairly tall wheat and it will always go down.

Yes. Warigal, I remember.

AR: Then there's Ford, Sword(?) - then there was (*sounds like Rah-nee*) .

How do you spell that one?

AR: Don't ask me, Rob.

That one I can't remember. Okay.

So after the War you said there was a big demand for the goods so the farm was looking pretty good at that stage.

AR: At that stage it was going very well.

Were there some big changes that followed over the years to come?

AR: Now, when you talk about changes, you mean the changes what we're seeing at the present time or -

No, no. More in those 50's and 60's in machinery and such like.

AR: Well, you could start to see - it started to grow. Everything started to get bigger and bigger and bigger. And I would say the last 10/15 years, that's when it started to take - that's when all the farmers were starting to get bigger, and larger implements used to come around. But initially when you see a tractor going along the road you watched it until you couldn't see it no more.

Because it was so unusual?

AR: So unusual, mm.

So when you got your tractor when you came home from school, that was pretty unusual, was it?

AR: Yes. Although, at that stage, I think there wouldn't have been too many horse teams around no more. I think the horse teams all virtually finished in the latter 30's, and after that I don't think you saw many horse teams in the area. I can remember one horse team. They wouldn't - that's the Mother's side again, the Horstmann family. One of her brothers, they had a horse team for quite a few years after the tractor. Tractors really exploded in the area sort of thing. Tractor companies did well for a while.

**I bet they did.
Were there agencies here?**

AR: Oh, my word, yes. There was the Case and the John Deere. They were the two - they were like tigers amongst each other.

Was this at Murray Bridge or Mannum, these agencies?

AR: They were virtually local agencies. John Deere was by the name of Hartmann from Palmer, and the Case was Wattle(?) Bros. They used to run the Case.

Did very well at that time?

AR: I would've thought so.

Now, what was Mannum like as a town in those years, Avon?

AR: Well, you could almost call it as a one street, one horse town. That was a common saying. Mannum only virtually, say, in the last 20 years, when it started to really come on the map. Perhaps I may be wrong. It may have been a bit before because on account at the time Shearers, they were the making of the farm implements. And their peak would have been in the 50's, I would've thought.

Yes, I think that would be right.

AR: I think it was the mid - in the 50's, they would have been at their peak. And from then on, that's when I felt that Mannum would've grown.

Well, how did the town change with all the activity going on here? What was added to the area and the town over the next 20 years from the 50's to the 70's that changed it?

AR: Well, I guess the school, where it is now. High School, sort of came forward. Then it was virtually being recognised as a centre. It sort of started in the centre and the houses just kept going around the outside the buildings.

What about the pipeline - the building of the pipeline? Do you remember that?

AR: '56. That's when it was opened. Yes, well, actually what is the showgrounds, that was their depot. Those buildings there, that they sort of left standing, and they're now made use of by the Show Society once a year sort of thing. And I think that really put Mannum on the map as far as - because when that was opened it was Mannum. Mannum was almost every other word. What they used to say used to be Mannum. Yes, that really shone out in those days.

So in the early 1970's, Avon, you came on to local Council?

AR: Mm.

Now, what was the Council like in those days? A pretty small show or was it really picking up?

AR: Well, I would've thought those days, I would've thought they were big. That's my impression. If you were in the Council in those days - a bit of a snob. *(Laughter in voice)* Yes, I think what sort of made me lean towards the Council a bit was during the '64/5 droughts that we used to work on the road - government grants and things of that nature.

This is 1964/65, was it?

AR: Yes, that's right. And I often thought then, too, it would be a jolly good idea to be a Councillor, and that's where it probably started from. Started to get interested in Council life.

Was there a lot of local politics in those days, or was it pretty straightforward local government?

AR: It was pretty straightforward.

Roads? Recreation grounds?

AR: Nowadays you've got a lot more. It was just roads and rubbish. That was Council those days. But now you've got all the environment crowd come into it and a lot more politicking, and of course now there's all this paper work that's involved. I feel that's made things a lot harder.

Avon, you've just mentioned those droughts in the 1960's. They were pretty terrible times. Well, what do you remember clearly about those times?

AR: Well, what I really remember clearly about this drought here is the massive drift from the hills virtually down to the river. It just looked like a real desert. And that's where we're getting all these grants to metal these sand (*couldn't decipher word*) roads we can get through. No, that was terrible.

Was that through over ploughing, or was it the rabbits, or -

AR: No, I would say it had a lot to do with farming techniques. Played a very big part. Because nowadays you barely see a fallow paddock until about now sort of thing. There are a few that still got - uses the old style. But the younger generations, they've got different techniques.

Well, technique's now, basically no till at all.

AR: That's right. And I think it's really good. I didn't think much of it from the start but I think I have to back pedal a bit because I think you can start to see perhaps they are on the right track.

The yields are higher?

AR: Oh, yes. Well, they are higher now than I think they've ever been.

Is that right?

AR: Mm. Yes.

One thing I do know that I heard recently that might interest you, Avon, was about the Reedy Creek bridge there that's being repaired at the moment. In the 50's when that bridge was built, one of the chaps that worked on it was telling me that there was an old wooden bridge there then.

AR: I can just remember it and that was about all.

Yes, and there's only about a yard's clearance between the water and the bridge, and they had to repair the superstructure of the thing. They got down and they found a pair of cross beams - the trusses - underneath it, and underneath that again there was another truss. So it was originally up about 20 feet, and the silt had come down from the paddocks on the hills and had filled it up over the years, and they felt, even at the time, that that was probably from over doing the ground.

AR: Well, I think it probably had a lot more water erosion those days, especially the upper parts. You see all these gutters around and things of that nature. You don't see that - barely see that nowadays.

No. That's something I can recall, too, up in those hills.

AR: That's right. And I think there's more careful stocking rates. There's nowhere near the number of sheep perhaps graze on the property.

Where was your local market for your sheep, and your cattle, and your pigs?

AR: The cattle, they used to go down to the abattoirs. I can remember that quite well. Because Father, when he was going, he had a double framed truck and hurdle and he often used to be carting stock down to the abattoirs. Then the - they had markets down here at Mannum. I can visualise them quite well.

Where were they held?

AR: Up here by the water towers. Yes, they had - still can remember - long shed where they had pigs and calves in them. And the sheep yards. I still can remember driving sheep down to what we used to call off-shear sales. Used to drive them down.

Along the road, you mean?

AR: Yes, yes. Nothing head on here of that nature. The traffic in those days weren't as smart as what they're now. *(Laughter)* No, that was a busy day.

So in those times was everything far more labour intensive, do you think?

AR: Oh, yes, very much so. To me, nowadays with farming, I think it's just child's play. It might be monotonous, it might get rather tiresome, but all that you do is just pull levers. You take, like, your harvesting machinery, it's all bulk. Put it straight into the truck and it's gone. And, to me, it's - you tell the younger generation you should be sowing bags and things of that nature, you're old fashioned. *(Laughter)* They throw that up to you very often.

And what would be the biggest overall change that you've seen to the whole district, both in farming and with the wider population, Avon? What would be the biggest changes you've seen?

AR: Oh, I think the biggest changes at this stage is tourism.

Really?

AR: I would think so. That's as far as Mannum is concerned.

How recently has that really gone ahead?

AR: Well, I would say the last five years. Might have been a bit before. I think it's our river frontage. I always did say when I was Chairman in the local government, I used to impress our river front, I always used to say it was the best along the Murray. And I still say we've got the best caravan park anywhere along the Murray. And then of course, then we've got our complex up here, and just because we're one hour from the city - hour and a half - it makes a comfortable day's outing.

Oh, this is the community sports complex, do you mean? The Community Centre they call it?

AR: Yes, yes. And like Marion Reserve, you go down there on a Sunday, if you get the right weather, there's quite a crowd on there. Yesterday you couldn't even walk in the street.

That was the house boat?

AR: House boat, and then I think the bowling. *(sounds like Ron Bond's)* bowls. I suppose he played a very big part down there yesterday.

He probably did. He probably did.

AR: So as far as the other areas are concerned, I think the biggest change in life there is bulk handling. It's certainly made the farming so much easier, and you can do so much more.

Has that meant that less people are needed, too?

AR: That is right, yes. If you want to do it yourself, you could almost do your harvest yourself if you wanted to. In fact there are some who do do it themselves. They strip their load full, they go up to the silos. And I guess we've got fairly good facilities up there, which certainly helps.

And do you still feel a great closeness to the land that you farmed for so long, Avon, even though your son's taken it over now?

AR: At this stage perhaps - I still go out there quite a bit. Sometimes I think I shouldn't but I just can't help myself. I just feel a part of it. But I think it's only a matter of time there. I think you do less and less and less and in the finish up you - good luck to them.

What is the future for this area, Avon? Can you see anything coming there?

AR: Well, if it's going to change like it did, say, the last 30 years, I don't know where - because it's all computers nowadays. Even the farmers - well, they've

virtually got their own computers now. So what the technique is going to be in 30 years time it will be very interesting to see what will happen.

Thank you very much for talking to me today, Avon.

AR: It's been good. I enjoyed it. I thought it would be a lot harder.