Full transcript of an interview with

CONNIE & ROSALIE ROTOLO

On 2 November 2000

By Catherine Murphy

Recording available on CD

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Interview by Catherine Murphy of Connie and Rosalie Rotolo at on 2 November 2000 for the Central Market project.

TAPE 1 SIDE A

Rosalie, tell me what you remember about your first impressions of the Market. You were a little girl, weren't you, when your mum and dad took the Athens shop?

RR: I was three years old, so my first impressions are not something that are very clear, but I certainly have a lot of memories of the Market, particularly running up and down the alleyways when the stalls were closed - because Mum and Dad's shop was open every day – and I used to come tearing around the corner, and I remember all the old Market stall holders used to go to Mum and Dad, "You can't let her run around those corners. One of the trucks are going to collect her one day". And chasing the little kittens that used to be around the Market - there was always little kittens running around – and running into Lucia’s and running out the back and seeing what was there to eat. Then always just sort of playing in the back of Mum and Dad's shop.

Did you have any favourite stall holders, or did anyone.

RR: We all did, we all did but...

Who was your favourite?

RR: Definitely Lucia and Maria and Nicky – they were always great – and Pasquale. I remember Pasquale really well. He was a really gentle, kind man, who used to always make fun of me and he always used to pinch my cheeks. I remember him very clearly.

Because Maria and Nicky would have just been teenagers or so, wouldn't they?

RR: I just remember them always being there.

When were born – what date were you born?

RR: I was born in 1974, so my days in the Market were really - - -. I guess my memories, my first memories of the Market, was my first school was St Mary's at the end of Franklin Street, and when I finished school - - -. I guess from probably when I was in Year 3 or 4, especially on Friday afternoons, I'd walk down Grote Street and come into Market and I'd spend Friday afternoons in the Market. You'd just run around and go and collect some fruit from whoever wanted to give you some.

Was it an unusual thing to do amongst your school friends?
RR: Well none of my school friends - - - I don't remember any of my school friends, their family having businesses, so it was not something that I ever discussed with them. You know, as kids they would finish school and go home with their mum and dads and their weekends would be at home with their mum and dads, where on Saturday mornings I'd at work with Dad. But it was never anything that was forced on me. I loved doing it and it was a lot of fun and I learnt a lot and it's certainly given me fantastic grounding for what I do now.

Did it feel like a big family in there to you?

RR: It was our family. Even my godfather still has a stall in there.

Who's that?

RR: Tony Marinelli who has Atlas. So he's still in the Market, and the Market is like that. It's in your blood and you'll find that most of the stall holders have got some sort of connection to the Market, if not directly through a relative or, if they're not the original owners, you know, sons take them over or kids take them over, or cousins take them over. It's only been recently that new people have come into the Market. For years it was always the same people.

And I suppose by that stage the car park was in, wasn't it? [break in recording – telephone] I was just saying that the car park was there, so the western roadway was covered by that stage, wasn't it? You wouldn't have remembered it - - -.

RR: Yes and no, in a sense of I remember when the Market renovation was done and when the Market plaza was built, because the extension, or the second storey of the car park, was built directly above Mum and Dad's shop and there was a point there where the shop was going to have to be closed for six or twelve months, however long it took to actually build the car park. Because the camera shop on the corner actually was closed, and I remember Dad coming home being quite frightened about that because the Council sort of would just turn up and say, "In a month's time your place has to be closed because it will be unsafe to work". At that point a new architect was appointed and he was able to change some very minor things and so Dad's shop didn't have to be closed.

CR: And Lucia's as well.

RR: And Lucia's. That whole area was actually to be closed for up to twelve months while they built that, and at that point Dad actually bought another stall in the Market, Banat Fine Foods, because he didn't know where his income was going to come from if the shop was closed. So I remember that very clearly. The car park itself was built. I think that was built after the fire.
Yes it was. It was built in the '60s.

RR: It was built in the '60s was it? OK, so - - -.

CR: …… …… built the second storey.

Lucia had already been through being closed for over a year the first time.

CR: Yes, so we were all actually really frightened, because - - -. Well, we had no leases. The Market decided not to give anybody a lease because they knew that they were going to do major renovations, so they could virtually come to your door a week before and say, "Your time's up. You have to go". So that's when the new Market plaza was built.

RR: And the second storey of the car park.

CR: People Store went and it was thanks to that clever architect - - -. He said, "All we need to do is move the roadway a little bit to go up to the car park and the shops can stay. Thanks to him we were all still able to trade. The camera shop couldn't because they needed to do the …… place through, so he moved across the road for a year. But it was a really frightening time, because all our life's work was in the whoop.

I suppose you'd only been there a little while at that stage. Let's talk about when you took the shop – what year that was when you and Alfonso - - -. 

CR: When we first took the shop would have been - - -. Rosalie was three years old. She was born in '74.

RR: '77.

CR: '77 we took that shop over, and that western roadway was nothing but a dark alley, really dark and dingy. It was awful – actually really frightening - because we'd sold this beautiful shop in a shopping centre and when I went there I said, "My God! What have we got ourselves into?" because we just walked past one Friday night and we said, "Yes, we'll buy it". We didn't even go inside to have a look at it, and I said, "What have we done?"

Why did you think you wanted to move to the Market at that stage?

CR: Well what happened, we had an old shop that used to be like Pretzels in Allenby Gardens and we'd been there about eight years and I said to my husband, "Oh, let's buy another shop closer to home", because I saw the real estate agent in the Mitcham shopping centre and I said, "Well why don't we sell the Market [?] and get something close to home". So it just happened the next day the real estate agent comes in and he said to my husband, "Do you want to your shop?" and I said to him, "Yes, let's sell it". So he signed, and then after, the next day, he had a buyer and I said, "What are we going to do now?" So my husband went all around town looking for another shop and he couldn't find anything with
the same sort of income and we were like - - -. We were shocked because, you know, you
don't sell your business in twenty-four hours, and that's exactly what happened. [answers
phone – break in recording]

Then what happened, my husband was talking to one of the sales reps who said, "Why
don't you buy that shop in the Market, because Con wants to sell and it's a really good shop".

Who was Con?

CR: Con was the previous owner. Con Carabas. And so one Friday night my husband and I
decided to just walk in the Market, so we just walked in front of the shop. We didn't even go
inside it – we were silly – and then we saw the figures and we said, "Yes, it looks good – we
take it". And then I walked when I walked in I said, "Oh my God, what have I done, what
have we done?" because it was like so - - -. 

What kind of shop was it?

CR: It was so - - -. Like a hippies' shop, that's the way to put it really. It was like everything
was disorganised. There was nothing on the shelves probably. It was filthy. But it was a
really good business.

What sort of things did he sell?

CR: Well, it had all Asian food.

So very early Asian grocery – first Asian?

CR: There was no other Asian grocery in Adelaide and all the Indians, the Asians and
Middle East, the Greeks and the young Australians - - -. That's the sort of customers that we
had, because the only sort of Asian groceries that you could buy in vegetables were bean
sprouts. We had a little bit of ginger on the counter and a little bit of garlic, you know for the
garlic and ginger, and then fresh bean sprouts, and everything else came out of a tin –
bamboo shoots. There was only dried coriander leaves and coriander seeds, and that's all we
could buy in the way of coriander. Lemon grass was dried lemon grass, dried curry leaves –
everything dried – and now it's amazing what you can get. But see all the customers used to
have to come there to buy their Asian ingredients. We used to bring it all over from
Melbourne. My husband used to go every three, four months for the day to see what was new
to bring over.

Anything that occurs to you as we talk about that time?

RR: Well, that particular time was something way beyond – before my memory.

CR: Yes, because she was very little. They were early days.
RR: But I remember the changes Athens went through, especially in the times when I worked there. And I guess the one thing that I really remember is nobody called it Athens, it was The Athens, and Athens to the customers didn't represent anything Greek whatsoever because of the fact of what the variety of product you could get from the stalls inside.

...... ...... [talking together]

CR: Well the guy Greek, Egyptian Greek, and it started off as being a Greek shop and then he found that there was a lot of competition in the Market selling Greek foods, so he decided gradually to bring the other foods in. It was really clever of him to do that in one way, but in another he was so funny because he had the shop that was next - - -. You know how the Lucia's expanded. The shop on the other side of Lucia's used to be our store room.

So half of Lucia's now was his store room?

CR: Yes, was his store room and when we took over, Lucia was able to have our store room and we went into the shop next to it which used to be a clothing store.

So you moved north when Lucia took over the southern part.

CR: Yes. And the guy on the other side of Con's would never sell to Con. There was some rivalry of some sort.

What was that, a tailor's shop, a clothing shop?

CR: Some sort of clothing shop, because I still have a pair of stockings that fell in the back of the shelving, and we - - -. And then when we moved, that we sold, at the back - - -. I don't know why I went out there. I just happened to move one of the shelving that would have been moved there from the very beginning. I found a pair of stockings. I can't remember, it was a shilling or something, and I kept them just for fun. So it must have been some sort of clothing store, and he never wanted to sell to Con because Con was offering him all the time money to sell, and then all of a sudden, when he found out Con sold, he just closed it down.

Did you decide to maintain the clientele and the products that you had, or did you immediately decide to change?

CR: Well no at first I thought, well we'd change it, but then after, when I realised the demand for the sort of food that was required, we kept it going. Not long after that I remember G & R Wills closed down and they had the auction and we bought all these shelving, and so we ripped everything out of the shop and put all these, like a mini-supermarket, and it started going like a train. You know, like we tripled.

...... ...... ...... Middle East and cooking about that stage.

CR: It's still there.
But that the time, wasn't it, when you started to learn about falaffa and ……

CR: I know, but we always sold that sort of food there. So when we just changed the whole concept and put the shelving up and put lots of stock - - -. Because Con had a funny thing. He used to go to the store room, get one or two jars of everything and put it on the shelf. He used to say, "I can't let the other shopkeepers see that I'm selling so much because then after they're going to come and copy". That was his attitude. I said, "Forget that". When he stopped coming with us I went in the store room and used to fill up the shelves with everything, and I thought, "Gee, things are walking out the door".

RR: In fact that's now an inherited problem. You know, as much as you'll give me I'll fill it up. You know, even here we moved from a smaller shop down the road in Kent Town to up here a year ago and I've got three times the amount of shelf space and I've still got no more room – I need more room. You've got to have a place that's full and always packed with stock, and that's what Mum and Dad's shop always was.

CR: And another thing is too, we really painted it and cleaned it, so like in six months we tripled the turnover. Marino especially, Tony Marino, when we took that shop over he said, "Oh, give those people six months. They're going to ……". It came to my ears and I was like in tears. I said, "That's not going to happen to me", and so I said, "I'll show everybody in the Market". Nobody would even give us an account because that's all the rumours that were going around, "What do those people know about Chinese food?" Like I said, within six months we'd tripled the turnover. Even the agent that sold it to us, he came and he said, "Look, I know what people are saying," he said, "but don't worry, I've got faith in you and you'll do well", and that's exactly what happened. I was determined to show everybody.

Well done. So we've jumped a long way into the business. Can you just tell me when you and Alfonso first came to Australia and what background either of you had in this kind of are?

CR: Nothing, because the first shop - - -.

What year did you come?

CR: I started working in a - - -.

Were you born in Australia?

CR: No, I was five years old.

You came with your mum and dad?

CR: I came with Mum and Dad. Four children, Mum had.

What year was that?
CR: In 1950. My youngest brother was born in Australia. Mum worked very, very hard, as long as I remember. There was three families living in one house that's in Gouger Street. It was in Gouger Street where Turner's Butchers – we were next to Turner's Butchers. Then Turner's Butchers bought our house and we moved to Woodville, and Mum always used to say, "Why did we sell that house now? It would have been worth so much". But that was the trend. Everybody was buying the houses there and Turner's Butchers needed to expand so they bought our house. From Woodville, that's like - - -. But I had no experience whatsoever. I just started working, after I had my first child. I was home for one year and I sort of said to myself, "I really need to get a job", because I couldn't stay home because everybody was making use of me. They were saying, "Oh, can you do my tax papers" or "Can you come shopping with me". I was the local interpreter and so I got fed up and I said to my husband, "I need to get a job".

So I was talking to my friend in Arndale and I said to her- this was a Continental shop – I said, "Do you think that there's a job for me?" "Oh," she said, "I'll ask the boss", and so it just happened to be a Christmas time and somebody left and the next thing I know, Helga's at my door, "I need somebody desperately to help me to work. Would you be interested?" and I said, "Oh yes, I'll come", and this was for the shop at Allenby Gardens. I remember clearly, I walked into that shop and I started …… people as if - - -.

You were born to do it?

CR: Yes, yes, exactly, because my first job was making television …… at Philips before I got married. Then Helga was so amazed that - - -.

You were a natural.

CR: Yes, and like a year or two after I think she sold the shop to Con's and - - -.

Another Con's?

CR: Con's in the Market. And what happened, they had a bit of a problem with one of the sons and so they asked me to run it a year after that, and I ran it for them for a year and then they realised that it was too much money. You know, by the time they pay everybody wages and everything, they weren't making any profits so they said to me, "Would you like to buy it?" because I had hinted to them that if one day they wanted to sell it, then I would be interested, and so that's what happened.

And Alfonso didn't have any - - -.

CR: Alfonso was working doing concrete with Floriani. He couldn't speak and word of English.
When did he come to Australia?

CR: He came in 1960s when the Depression - - -.

How old was he then?

CR: He would have been in his twenties.

RR: Twenty-seven.

CR: He was chopping wood with his uncle in Waikerie and they used to sell the wood to the barracks at Woodside. But then when there was work in the city, he started working with Floriani doing the washed marble that the Royal Adelaide Hospital is built. I think the north wing is all the work that Alfonso did and whenever we go in the Botanic Gardens I say, "Oh look, there's your work". But he had no experience whatsoever in food. What happened, when I bought the shop I employed people. I think I had about five people working for me in this tiny little shop. When we paid for the shop he decided to leave Floriani and he came, and he couldn't speak English. He used to serve the Italian customers, and I'll never forget, a German customer came in and asked for l…… and he went looking on the shelves for ……, which is like a meat loaf. (laughs) Poor thing. So he used to, like, do the manual work, the hard cutting …… and opening the tins of …… and all that sort of thing.

So you were just born for it?

CR: Yes.

RR: And she still does today.

You've got the knack, and you've got it too.

CR: Yes, still does, but I've never sort of been - - -. I suppose when I was younger I was a bit more businesslike, but Fonz in the Market was a lot better than me at making the deals making and making - - -. 

RR: Mum and Dad were a perfect business couple. Mum has the knack for selling things, and Dad has the knack for buying things at the right price, because if you leave it to Mum, I'm not sure about that. I think she'd buy the stock at the highest possible price and then she'd give it away to the customers because she feels sorry for them.

CR: That's me. (laughs)

You're the sort of ideas person as well, aren't you?

CR: Yes.

Let's talk now about some of those ideas that you started to have through observation of the Market and the customers and what they were wanting.
CR: Well, I always had a list at the back of the cash register and whenever anybody asked me for something I'd write it down if I didn't have it, and I would sometimes make up to twenty phone calls to find that product, but I had to find it for the next time that the person came. And I started reading a lot of the Penguin books – like the …… …… …… because I had no idea of Italian food. So I learnt a lot by reading and by listening to people.

And you'd been brought up in an Italian family with Italian cooking.

CR: Yes, but that was completely different to the sort of food that we were selling, because the Italian food was not the biggest thing in the shop. It was more the Asian and I had no idea about Japanese food.

When you say Asian, that's broad isn't it? That's just not noodles, that's Middle Eastern, Indian.

CR: No, ingredients – it was ingredients. Like all the Japanese noodles, the wine and the mirin, the Japanese soya sauce, all the other ingredients that goes with Japanese cooking. Then we had the Chinese, which was - - -. Like I said, nearly everything came out of a tin, and noodles as well, and also Indonesian. Then there was the Middle Eastern. Cous-cous was only sold like out of a little container. Now cous-cous is the Market's - - -.

Packets.

CR: Yes, not even in a packet. The early cous-cous that we sold was in one of those plastic peanut containers, and that's how Con - - -. And then all of a sudden cous-cous came very popular, also like polenta. And then what other one was there?

RR: The Indian spices.

CR: The Indians. All the Indians, there was nowhere else that they could buy all their curry spices, and we used to also send to Whyalla. There was a lot of Indian doctors in Whyalla so we'd send parcels off to Whyalla - up north, lots of places.

RR: But then for a complete contrast you also always had cheese.

CR: Yes. No, no, the cheese came later.

RR: See, the cheese is in my memory.

CR: Because we had this tiny little fridge, and it was rusty, and I used to be embarrassed when I'd pick up a piece of cheese and you'd see the tray was all rust. I kept saying to my husband, "We've got to get a new fridge in". What encouraged us to go into that was when the Vietnamese boats started coming in, they started opening shops all around us and selling for very, very cheap. I don't know how they did it, where they got their products from, but
they were selling with 10 per cent mark up, but we couldn't do it. We had wages and things to do. So what happened.

**Were they like roadway stalls and things?**

**CR:** No, no, they were like - - -. First that started Asian Kitchen and then, like, when the - - -. Then there was the very first one was near Hindley Street. I can't remember what their name was, in Victoria Street there. It was a big Asian grocery store opened up.

**RR:** The Asian Grocer.

**CR:** No, it's not Asian Grocer, I can't remember. Hong Oriental – Hong Oriental it was – and he started selling things at prices that we couldn't compete with, so what we did then, we completely changed the shop really. So we went into more specialised, so we put a complete new big fridge in and another self-service fridge, and so we started going into all these other ingredients. Cheeses - - -.

**What were some of those first cheeses that you were doing?**

**CR:** Oh, the very first brie that was brought into Adelaide was into our shop and my husband wanted to murder me. (laughs)

**How much did you pay for it?**

**CR:** He said, "And who do you think's going to buy that?" and I said, "Well, just leave it to me", so I started cutting this brie up and putting it on the counter and letting people taste it, and it just like walked out the door. I don't think they even cared how much they paid for it because the taste was so good, because they'd only been used to the brie in the tin, the President. Then, when I kept ordering more cheese, my husband was so proud that he was cutting it up and selling it and I said, "Yes, who's idea was it? You wanted to kill me". (laughs)

**Quick to take - - -.**

**CR:** Yes, he was quick to take over, but he was always frightened to introduce something new and expensive.

**RR:** Just cautious.

**CR:** Yes, he was very cautious and me, I'd go like a bull which I am. (laughs)

**RR:** That's what I mean, they made a great business pair because between the two of them they - - -.

**CR:** I go like a bull, you know, and I'd just order whatever I - - -. I thought, "Yes, that will sell".
So the Athens that I remember with the sacks out the front and the cheeses and the quince paste and all that, was that that period?

CR: The sacks were always there – the sacks were always there – and very - - -.

That was a bit new though, wasn't it, having sacks?

CR: No. Well, there was no one else doing it. I always used to hate them. I used to say, "Oh, can't we do anything else?" and my husband used to say, "Don't be stupid. That's what's the attractions – that's what attracts people". I used to say to him, "Well get something different", so I made him get these big clear plastic bags to put it in so it looked a little bit neater. But the sacks were always there.

Who did you start to appeal to after that? When did the - - -.

CR: Very up-market it ended up being.

When did the connection get made between the Athens and the Chefs and Lucia's and the - - -?

CR: It just gradually came. I had the ingredients that they were looking for and so that's - - -.

So then they started to ring you and say, "Can you get - - -?"

CR: Well even customers would come in with their list and they would walk out of the shop with 95 per cent of what they needed - - -.

Out of a cookery book.

CR: Out of whatever they were doing, and they'd say, "If you haven't got it, we're not going anywhere else", because they said, "If you haven't got it, no one else has got it". So I used to feel good to have that sort of reputation.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A: SIDE B

Can we let Rosalie say something?

RR: It's very interesting to listen to Mum and how she remembers the shop, because that shop was not the Athens, that shop was Connie and Frons and that's, towards the end, what people went there for. They went there for Mum and Dad and the atmosphere that they brought to that shop. And that's what I remember about it as well towards the end, the last five years I guess, which is where I took an active role in actually taking an interest in what products were there and the way in which we went about selling them. I had my own customers that would come in and wait for me on a Friday night and let me serve them, and the same on Saturday mornings, you know. It's very interesting to listen to that. Towards the end we did some promotional events which really also lifted the shop as well. The very first South Australian olive oil was Joe Grilli's oil.
Tell me about that – so Joe Grilli was it?

CR: No, no, it wasn't, it was Bravo. That was Manuel's very first olive oil that we started to sell in bottles. Before he only used to have it in tins, and I used to say, "Manual, can you put me some oil in bottles?" He says, "Yes, but it's too much trouble. I have to have labels printed". I said, "Yes, but it doesn't matter. I know that I will sell enough for you to do it". So finally I convinced him and then he was so happy because I think that's when the olive oil industry started. Everybody thought, "Oh, there's money to be made". You know what people are like, everybody copies.

Is it Manuel Bravo, or was Bravo - - -?

CR: No, Manuel, he had a block in McLaren Vale that eventually sold to Coriole.

RR: Only very recently, a couple of years ago.

CR: I can't remember his surname.

RR: Manuel G…… - I can't remember it either.

CR: I think that's when it started, and then somebody brought a bottle of Joseph olive oil to my husband and said, "This is the oil you need to get". So I got the phone number on the bottom of the bottle and I rang Joe, and we had a long chat. He said, "Yes, I'll sell you some oil".

Where was he growing?

RR: Virginia. The oil was from Virginia and I guess when I said the very first oil, I meant the first oil that was commercially branded and became known. You know, Manuel's oil was never - - - . It was known to the people who used it, but it was never an advertised product, never a promoted product, where Joe's oil, that was bottled and labelled with a vintage on it in 1989. In fact I don't think they actually started putting a vintage on it until later than that, but the first bottle in '89 we didn't do a promotion on by you sold everything he had. And then in 1990 - - - .

CR: We still sold everything he had.

RR: David Ridge, who is currently our neighbour in this building – it's the way the business grew - - - . Our businesses sort of grew together and now we still work in conjunction with each other more than ten years later. But Grilli who is - or David Ridge who is Joe Grilli's brother-in-law, is his distributor – came to us and said, "Well, why don't we ask the Market if they'll open after hours one evening and we'll have a tasting?" We all thought, "Oh, OK, if you really want to do that, we'll do that – a tasting of olive oil". We would do it, but just the thought of actually getting customers tasting oil.
CR: I said, "Who do you think's going to come and taste olive oil after hours?" He says, "You just ask your customers and you'll be surprised". I was like shaking in my boots. I said, "No, it can't be possible".

RR: We had so many people turn up.

Who came?

RR: Customers and they all brought their friends.

CR: Our favourite customers. They were written invitations and to our favourite customers, the ones that used the Joseph olive oil. We gave them and they all RSVP'd and said, "Yes, we'd love to come". And it was on a Monday night and we did ----. We had the barbecue going outside and we did bruschettas with garlic and olive oil. I think we even had a marmalade as well. We had oil and marmalade.

RR: And then we did an olive oil cake as well made out of the Joseph's oil. But that tasting was the first one of many, to the point where we were still doing Joe's oil launches when we were in Kent Town in a new business. You know, we even sold Athens, moved on to the new business, being Bottega ------, that time in ------ ------, and it was a fantastic location to do it in, and we did his oil launch there as well.

Where were you?

RR: On the Parade West, behind Princes Alfred College.

CR: And also the first bread and oil tasting was done there.

What bread did you taste oil with?

CR: Well, the Italian wood oven bread. They did a festival in the Market and I decided anybody could choose what they wanted to do, and I said, "Well, I'm going to do olive oil and bread". The wood oven bread, when they first started, they were still making it all by hand then. It was an Italian family, southern Italian, and they used to do it in their wood oven in their back yard, and that bread was so good that we couldn't get enough of it. And it just happened that I decided to do oil and bread. And then I was so cross after the – because it worked so well. As soon as that man left my store, all the other stall holders were grabbing him and saying, "Can we have some of that bread to sell – can we have some of that bread to sell?" I thought, "Oh gee, why does everybody have to copy?"

So then everyone sold wood oven bread.

CR: Yes, and so I said, "Oh, forget it".

Could he keep up with business?
CR: No. No, then what happened, he had to put in a commercial oven and the bread was never the same. Doing it on a commercial basis is not the same, but the very first one was just like - - -.

This is recent history isn't it, 1989?
CR: Yes, it's not that long ago that the wood oven bread - - -.

What, did you have a Weber, when you say you had a barbecue?
CR: No, just coal. David brought - - -.

Like a brazier?
CR: Yes, David brought his from home. It was just like a square metal thing with a rack on it, and he put charcoal on the bottom and we toasted the bread.

In the western roadway?
CR: Yes, in the western roadway, and everybody was like hanging out for it. (laughs) so that was really good fun.

Were the festivals a feature, or was that something unusual that happened?
CR: No, they did a - - - . The very first one I think was when I did the bread.

Was that an arts festival or just a food festival?
CR: No, it was just for the Market. It was a food festival in the Market and it went off so well that everybody was - - - . You know where Providore is? It was all set up there and everybody set up their stall and they all had whatever they wanted to give as tasting. I think they did that a couple of times and then they stopped it because the people on the other side of the Market started to complain because all the business was going there.

Was that something that Providore organised? He was talking about a café with ……
CR: No, they had - - - . That was after. No, this was organised by the management. Sort of all the stall holders together. It was a way of promoting the Market.

What are some of the other products that you remember introducing?
CR: Well I introduced the first quince paste into Adelaide.
RR: Balsamic vinegar.
CR: Balsamic vinegar.

How did you manage to do the quince paste?
CR: Well, my brother had a farm in Norton Summit and he had this quince tree, and it was like full of quinces every year and he didn't know what to do with them, so he said, "Do you want some quince?" So he gave me a box full, so I looked through Elizabeth David's French provincial book and I found a recipe and I made quince paste. And I had so much quince paste I didn't know what to do with it. It was like all over my dining room table. (laughs) So I said, "Well, I'll take it to the shop and see what happens". I cut it up into little cubes and rolled it in sugar and put it …………..

I remember tasting it from there – with cheese.

CR: Yes, and I said to people, "You could have it with a cup coffee or you could put it on your cheese platter", and I did that for the first year and I did it for the second year, and then after the third year I think somebody came to me and said, "Would you like to buy some of my quince paste?" I said, "No, I don't want to buy any of your - - -".

So way before Maggie ……..

CR: She got the idea from - - -. I mean, she can say whatever she likes, but she got the idea from me, because I used to sell it to the chefs too. Because I made it in the foil trays the second year. Because I thought, "Well, I sold it", and I calculated how much profit I'd made from it and I said, "Well, I suppose it's worth it".

And you had a quince tree.

CR: Well, nobody bought quinces in those days. Nobody wanted quinces. You know, they couldn't give them away. So I put the quince paste in the foil tray and then Alan W…… used to come. Because he bought a small one. He said, "Have you got a lot of that?" and I said, "Yes, I've got a bit of it". So I never ever told them that I made it. And Wayne, from Duthy's, Wayne Hargreaves, he used to buy it by the slab from me. So that's how that started. Yes, I think I introduced a lot of food into Adelaide.

What else do you remember?

CR: …….. …….. used to make so much of that, it couldn't keep up with it.

You made it yourself?

CR: I used to make it myself – used to make it myself.

RR: Semi-dried tomatoes.

CR: Not semi-dried tomatoes. I used to - - -.

RR: Semi-dried tomatoes. When I went for a trip to Melbourne one weekend and found semi-dried tomatoes, we brought them into Adelaide and within a month everybody else had
them. But everyone was buying sun-dried tomatoes beforehand, and Mum and I went to Melbourne to visit …… because ironically Mum and Dad used to sell a lot of the products that we are the distributors for, so we basically bought the business from the lady who used to sell us product. And we went over just out of interest. I think I was still in – just out of school – and we went over and had a look and found these fantastic product. It was in the Lygon Street food store and I said to the guy behind the counter – because Mum says I'll approach anyone about anyone, and I would – I said, "Hey, they're really good. Where do you get them from?" He said, "Oh, a friend of mine makes them. Here's his card". I contacted him and - - -.

CR: She rang him from a mobile phone outside the door of the shop.

RR: I rang him and said, "I'm from Adelaide".

CR: …… …… …… …… …… (laughter)

RR: Well we were bringing them into Adelaide. We weren't selling them in Melbourne, so it was quite a difference. It's a matter of being able to see something that has a potential. That person I dealt with for probably seven years, and unfortunately the commercial factor of mass production got the better of him and he was producing a product that was not very good, and now I've been able to actually locate some stunning product out of Sydney and we sell really beautiful semi-dried tomatoes now. But the irony of it is it all comes from South Australia – the best tomatoes are from South Australia. They get sent to the eastern states, processed, and we buy them back.

It's a pity.

RR: It is, but that's one product I also remember took a very, very short amount of time before - - -.

CR: Oh, and the caramelised figs.

RR: And the caramelised figs which Mum makes, and she still does and we sell into restaurants for their cheese plates.

CR: I send them over to Sydney as well.

RR: And to Perth.

CR: There's a distributor in Sydney who's …… ……

Let's both of you - - - I think we've talked about the business enough, haven't we – what it became and what it was? When did you sell?

CR: In 1996.
So you were there nearly twenty years.

CR: Yes.

What are you memories? How would you both describe the Market as you knew it in that time?

CR: Oh, I didn't want to leave.

What kind of place was it, is it?

CR: It was exciting, I suppose, really multicultural. You had people from all over Adelaide coming into the Market, because being central. What else can I say about it?

The smells, the crowds.

CR: I couldn't smell it in the end, because the smells. We were so used to it. The only time I could smell the spices was when I put my clothes in the washing machine. (laughs) people would walk past the shop and they'd say, "Oh gee, what a beautiful smell". I couldn't smell it any more, so I really can't say much about the smells. But the people working around us, it was like one big family. We were all happy I think. We had some good times.

What about you, Rosalie?

RR: I just remember the Market being a place like my home. It was my home, I grew up there, so the Market for me, I walk in there now on a Saturday morning to do my shopping, or on Friday afternoon, and it's. You still know everybody and it's just familiar. That's the only thing I can say about it – it's a familiar place, it's a comforting place. You make lifelong friends in the Market.

What has it contributed to both of you in your lives and in your personal development?

CR: We've met a lot of people – we've met a lot of wonderful people.

You've made a lot of transformations too, haven't you?

CR: We have, yes. Because, like I said, we had people from all over Adelaide coming into the Market, so we've made a lot of friends through there.

Grown into interesting work.

CR: And even to this business here.

So how would you describe what you're doing now?

RR: Very much an extension of what you started. Mum and Dad's business was a retail business focused on the public, but I guess what we didn't realise at the time, of course chefs and restaurant owners are the public as well, and when they wanted to go out shopping for their own food, you would have found them in Athens. When we took over this business, it
was a very quiet business as that point in time. It had very few customers, it had enormous potential and the opportunity to expand the product range was there but just never taken up, which was something that we did automatically. But we found so many familiar people that were chefs who were just a Friday night customer all of a sudden were a chef of a restaurant. They would walk into the shop and say, "Oh, I'd like to buy such-and-such", and you'd say, "Is it for yourself?" "Oh no, it's for my restaurant down the road." And hence my business here, I have been exceptionally lucky in the grounding that Mum and Dad made in food. They created an institution in food that will be remembered by everybody. Not only people that are in the Market, but all the people that shopped in the Market, and I benefit from that because of the fact that they have reputation that I've been able to build on. So I guess if you look at a business, or a long-term business as the foundations of a house – you have the base and then you put up the walls and you put up the roof – well my foundations were already poured and laid before I even started my business. I had not only grounding in the food knowledge, which I learnt by being immersed in the Athens from day one, but I also had the contacts, which are invaluable and not something you could ever buy. So they've given me the opportunity and they've opened all the doors. It's now my job to keep all the doors open and walk through them and then open some more.

So is it a business now that really works with chefs and cooks?

RR: Very much. Our focus as distributors are, "We are here to help you do your job and we want to help you be able to do that by supplying you product in its best condition, being able to supply you with information and education that other suppliers cannot give you. And at the end of the day as much as, sure, the sale is important, it's not the most important thing. The fact that you're happy with the product is the important thing", and that's something Mum and Dad have taught me.

Have you gone to tertiary education and all, or have you just relied on - - -?

RR: Well, Mum and Dad were always convinced that I had to go to university – matriculate, go to university – and follow a career, anything except food, because it was what they did and they didn't want me doing the long hours and the hard work. But I matriculated and managed to get into university - in economics and politics was something that I was always very interested in, which everyone in the Market will know, and I don't think I need to go any further about that. But I managed to finish a semester and then transferred to business marketing at University of South Australia and always found myself drawn away from lectures to work. I have started two degrees, haven't finished either one of them, but as I say to people now who ask me, I haven't got any tertiary education, I haven't finished any, but my boss doesn't mind. (laughter)
Did …… languages as well.

RR: What I know about my business, running a business and the food industry, no university could ever teach m.

What about the future of the Market from someone who's interested in politics and futures? What do you both think about the future of the Market?

RR: The Market will always have a place in South Australia. It is part of our history, it is always a meeting place, and its future is very bright not only because of the fact that it will always have a very strong attraction to - - - . All those kids that get taken there by their parents now to do their shopping, they will go back as parents themselves and take their own children. But with all the inner city living and all the developments that are going on, in especially that south western side, the Market has just got to boom. But that's still a few years away. The Market will always go through economic cycles like everything does. You see it go up and down, and at the moment it just happens to be in one of those downs.

Well everyone is in …… ……

RR: Exactly. So it's time will come back, but it won't ever be a shopping centre that will close down. Personally I feel something quite strongly that a number of shopkeepers in the Market didn't, and it was the one thing that we all seem to disagree with, or that they all seem to disagree with me, and that's opening hours. I believe the Market should be open Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, because at the end of the day you provide a service and you can't tell people when to come and spend their money and it's reality. Everywhere around the world, people shop on Sundays in markets, and it's the popular day. And sure, it might not be the day where you do the biggest turnover, but it's silly for it to open Tuesday, close Wednesday, open half a day Thursday, open Friday and a bit of Saturday. You know, make the commitment to being there so people know when it's open, because in twenty years - - - . I would be a multi-millionaire if I had a dollar for every time somebody said to me, "What day of the week is the Market open?" where if it was opening continual Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, people would know.

CR: …… Market …… really down a year after the shopping centres started to open on Saturday afternoon. The Market - - - . All the stall holders were saying, "We don't have to open – we're special – because people will always come to the Market". My husband said, "Well for the moment they will, but you wait and see, in the future they won't". Saturday mornings used to be so busy in the Market before Saturday afternoon came in the shopping centres.

RR: We just all have to accept that people's shopping habits are changing and you need to change along with it.
It's also an issue about freshness, isn't it? The fruit and veg. has dominated in the Market. That's been the majority of the stall holders.

RR: Well there's seventeen Continental, thirty-two fruit and veg. – four butchers, two fish.

…… …… like that. Freshness is an issue. You know, how they get their produce and whether they buy on Wednesdays and sell through to Sunday. It's not ……

RR: Yes, but in reality I can tell you that a stall holder on a fruit and veg. stall that hasn't sold all his goods on Saturday, he's not going to throw it away. He'll sell it Tuesday, and that's reality, and the point is, giving them the opportunity to stock up their stall and leave it and replenish what's there instead of having to pull it down on one day and then pull it all back up again will actually give - - -.

There's resistance to it though.

RR: There is, there's huge resistance to it, and as I said it's been something that for a long time a lot of the stall holders - - -.

CR: I think Saturday afternoon they did make a mistake in not opening late like the shopping centre, because people - - -. A lot of young families that have got children, they have sport on Saturday, so if they had longer hours on - - -. It's too late now because people have already broken the tradition, you know, so if - - -. They would have continued and the people wouldn't have gone away. But if you change your habits, it's very hard to go back.

RR: So the only hindrance to the Market's future would be the hours in which they open, because even today on a Saturday afternoon, three o'clock you go there and everyone's shut up.

CR: …… …… they're pushing so hard to have like Sunday trading. I think eventually it will come, but I don't think South Australia can really cope with it.

I'm interested in the question of if the Market hadn't existed, if South Australia would have the reputation that it has for food and good eating.

RR: Probably not because unlike Melbourne and Sydney, we are very lucky to have our fresh produce very, very close to our Market. You know, you have Melbourne and Sydney where the farms that actually grow the product that is sold is considerably further away than what it is here in South Australia. You know, you've got all of Virginia that grows a lot of the Market produce that goes to the Pooraka Market which is down the road from them, you know – two kilometres, three kilometres down the road. The Central Market stall holders go there to buy all their stock and we're lucky to have that. You get fresher product, you get it sooner, you get it in better condition because it doesn't have the transport and therefore the damage.
And also the connection between the chef, the retailer, the customer, the grower. ...... big circle that goes on. That happens anywhere, but it seems like it did really happen strongly at the Market and through the Market.

CR: If you go on a Thursday morning when everybody's just set out their stalls.

I love Thursday mornings.

CR: That's the only time I'll shop in the Market. Everything is all set up so beautifully, where the Melbourne market - - - -. I've never been to the Sydney market. The Melbourne market is all just on trestles and it's just not the same, is it? And it's not the same the way everything is so attractively - - -.

Yes, it's beautiful in there on Thursdays.

CR: It's beautifully put. Yes, it's just nice and fresh.

Is there anything else that you can think of about the Market.

RR: Yes, only that the Market was such a meeting place for so many people that you somehow have met or been in contact with just about everybody you're going to be in contact with for the rest of your life. I have to tell you a very funny little story about a gentleman called Charles Hasseim, an Egyptian Jew that came to Australia with six of his other brothers, and they would all shop in Mum and Dad's shop - they're customers that I remember quite clearly; not all of them but a few of them would shop in Mum and Dad's shop, either buying cheese or buying coffee because it would be the type of food that they used to buy - is now my grandpa. I married his grandson. (laughter) So he saw me when I was three and four and five and six and seven years old. When Matthew took me home to meet his family it's like, "I know you".

So you're Mrs Hassein.

RR: I am actually Rosalie Hassein.

Congratulations.'

RR: Thanks. That was a few years ago now.

Thank you very much for the interview today to both of you.