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Full transcript of an interview with

COLIN GRAMP

on 26 June 2000

by Rob Linn

Recording available on CD

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OH 692/48 TAPE 1 - SIDE A

NATIONAL WINE CENTRE, WOLF BLASS FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT.

Interview with Mr Colin Gramp at Tanunda on 26th June, 2000.

Interviewer: Rob Linn.

Well, Colin, just before we start by going through your background, I don't know if you've got it there, could you just for the tape say where and when you were born?

CG: Well, this is all part and parcel of my introduction. If I can go ahead with it that.

Yes.

CG: Allow me to introduce myself. Colin Gramp. My father was Hugo Gramp, the Managing Director of G Gramp & Sons Limited at the time, and my mother was (*sounds like, Hulga*) Gramp. I was born on 4th October, 1921, at Tanunda in the Barossa Valley. Educated at the Rowland Flat public school, a year at Nuriootpa High School, followed by four years at St Peter's College. During the latter years at St Peter's I became interested in winemaking, and my father encouraged me to gain vintage experience during the Easter holidays. Such as cleaning the sieves for the free run of juice, testing the fermentation tanks for sweetness and temperature, and hand pumping headed down red wine tanks so that the juice obtained good colour and body.

In 1938 my father, who was blessed with a very good wine palate, also introduced me to the art of wine tasting whenever I was home on leave. Tragically, I lost Dad in the 'Kyeema' air disaster on 25th October, 1938. It was not only a tragic loss for the Gramp family but also for the wine industry, as Tom Hardy and Sid Hill Smith were also on the 'Kyeema'. Three major South Australian wine companies lost their Managing Director at that unfortunate air accident.

After completing my schooling at St Peter's, I joined Gramps Orlando in 1940 as an apprentice winemaker. This enabled me to obtain the basic skills of winemaking prior to attending Roseworthy College in 1941 to '42 to study oenology.

Mid 1942 I joined the RAAF air crew, and the following year I was posted to the United Kingdom, where I completed my training as an air gunner on Sunderland flying boats prior to joining 461 squadron, the Anzac squadron operating at Pembroke docks, south Wales.

I flew with the squadron until V Day Europe, 8th May '45. And during this period of time, when I was given leave, I was able to call on the Gramps Orlando agents throughout the United Kingdom. These visits had a twofold advantage. Firstly, it was a wonderful opportunity to get to know the company's agents and to know what wines they were looking for for marketing. And secondly, I had access to a goodly supply of wine and spirits for the squadron, and especially our crew.

At a good price?

CG: At a very good price. (*Laughter in voice*)

When Pacific hostilities ceased on 11th August '45, John Seppelt RAAF—course of B Seppelt & Sons—Drew Allen, also RAAF, a member of the Victorian Viticultural Society, and myself, applied for repatriation through America so that we could study the Californian wine industry during their 1945 vintage, which is September/October and the early part of November. This was granted and the RAAF arranged the necessary transport to San Francisco. The Californian Wine Advisory Board were most helpful in arranging our proposed tour of the Californian wine industry, recommending which wineries we should see, and the personnel we should contact. Professors GL Marsh, Reece Vaughan and Dr Cruse(?) of the Californian University also gave us considerable input on the wine industry, particularly on the technical side. I should point out that we had to pay our own way whilst touring the Californian wine industry for the period of six weeks. However, for the remaining period,

until we were able to embark for Australia on 24th December 1945, the RAAF helped us with our expenses through the Repat Board. This golden opportunity to look over a very modern equipped wine industry, doing its best to catch up after prohibition, which was only repealed in the early 1930's—'32, I believe—gave me a great insight on how we could modernise the Australian wine industry through automation and bulk handling.

Leon Peters of the Valley foundry at Fresno, who at that time supplied the bulk of the modern winemaking equipment to the industry, arranged VIP entrée to the leading wineries in the Fresno area.

Those three months, visiting, studying and comparing the different winemaking procedures and equipment in California, without doubt, provided me with a valuable background knowledge that I was to implement in many ways at Gramps Orlando in the years to come. Together with the many technical packaging and wine promotion discussions, those three months in California were equivalent to one and a half years oenological study. This is why upon my return to Australia I decided to only study microbiology at Roseworthy College instead of completing the oenology course.

I rejoined the Gramp family company in March 1946 as a winemaker. And in 1947, the centenary of Gramps Orlando, I was appointed Technical Director. It is interesting to note that at that time the Australian wine industry was handling around 100,000 tonnes of grapes, of which around 80% was made into fortified wine, and the remaining 20% into table wine. This ratio continued until the early 1950's, when in 1953 the Gramp family introduced the cold and pressure fermentation process, which revolutionised white table wine production in Australia.

Then in 1956, the 5th November, Orlando commenced the marketing of Barossa Pearl, a light sparkling wine of only 9% alcohol by volume compared with the sparkling wines today of 12.5% alcohol by volume. This wine became a huge success, and I always feel that together with the influx of migrants from Europe we saw steady increase in table wine production as against fortified

wine. This trend continued, and with the help of wine sales in bag in the box and our terrific export today, the ratio has completely reversed itself.

So Colin, that's how you fit into the Gramp family tree in Australia. I'll ask you some questions later on more specifically from what you said but could you tell me a little bit about the Gramps themselves as a family, and their winemaking tradition?

CG: Yes, Rob. Well, perhaps we must start right at the beginning.

Johann Gramp—and I should mention here the Gramp was spelt with a double 'p'—was born on the 28th August, 1819, at Eichig, near Kulmbach in Bavaria. And of course, as a lot of people know, Kulmbach is a beer producing area. And also grow a lot of hops in that area.

And he was 1790, was it?

CG: This is in 1819. Then when he was eighteen years old he sailed from Hamburg, Germany, on the 9th June, 1837, on the 337 ton barquentine 'Solway', a three mastered sailing ship, together with fifty-one other German emigrants for Kingscote, Reeves(?) Point, on Kangaroo Island. They sailed via Rio de Janeiro and Cape Town. Landed at Reeves Point on 16th October, 1837. A journey of four months.

Under contract with the South Australian company, working on Kangaroo Island for a year, and for a further two years at Port Adelaide constructing wharves. And on completion of his contract, Johann then helped two fellow passengers who had started a bakery business in Currie Street, Adelaide. In 1843 he married a young Prussian girl, seventeen years of age, (*couldn't decipher names*) Nitschke. During 1847 Johann became a naturalised British subject. His name was recorded Johann Gramp, with a single 'p'.

The same year he purchased land at Jacob's Creek in the Barossa Valley, where in October he planted Rhine Riesling, which today we call Riesling. Three years later, 1850, he was able to make a small quantity of wine, an octave(?)

, 68 litres of a hock style of wine. As the plantings and tonnage increased he was able to produce commercial quantities, marketing same as Carte(?) blanche(?).

Johann's second son, Gustav, was born in 1850, and in his early teens commenced helping his father in the winemaking business. As Gustav had confirmed his interest in winemaking, his father in 1874 purchased land for him at Rowland Flat, situated on the main road leading from the Barossa to Adelaide via Gawler. Gustav transferred the winemaking business to Rowland Flat, and later with the help and interest of his two sons, Fred and Hugo, continued expanding the winery and cellars, eventually forming the company G. Gramp & Sons Limited. The foundation of the huge Orlando complex we see today. Hugo Gramp eventually took over as the Managing Director until his untimely death in the 'Kyeema' air disaster on October 25th, 1938.

During the 1920's through to the Second World War, Gramps Orlando produced a full range of wines, white and red table wines, sherries, ports, muscats and tokays, together with a range of brandies in latter years.

In the late 20's, my father was able to build up a large export for fortified wines in both the UK and Canada. Unfortunately, World War 2 put a stop to this market. However, the export market opened again soon after hostilities ceased. Post Second World War consumption of wine in Australia was around 80% fortified compared with 20% table wine.

In 1952 a Dr Brunke visited the Australian wine industry and told us about the new cold and pressure fermentation tanks that they were producing and which were used for the control fermentation in both Germany and Austria.

Dr Brunke of (*couldn't decipher name*).

CG: Yes.

The Gramp family, in their wisdom, purchased two of these tanks, which we commenced using during the 1953 vintage for fermenting, basically, our Riesling. This delicate wine was held in stainless steel tanks until bottling six months later. Within its first year it commenced winning first prizes at the major

State wine shows. This new method of fermentation revolutionised the Australian wine industry. After a visit to Germany in 1954 to study the new fermentation process on behalf of the company, I ordered a further four tanks, together with bottling cellar equipment that could handle delicate white wines under sterile conditions. This high tech equipment at the time enabled Gramps Orlando to vintage a complete new style of wine in Australia.

Colin, would you like to talk about that wine? I mean, you were there tasting it. Do you still have a memory of what that was like? That first Riesling.

CG: Yes. As you can imagine, when we were fermenting wine in these pressure tanks, and being guided by the instructions, we were amazed how we could slow the fermentation down from normally three to four days in an open tank, but under controlled conditions we were able to slow it down, and the fermentation taking up to ten to twelve days. As we eventually found out after fermentation was completed, these wines had much more character than the open fermented. And there's no doubt about it, that slowing the fermentation down, holding your carbondioxide on the surface for a longer period, and particularly under pressure, helped to retain the Riesling character in those early pressure fermented days.

Several people used to call me 'Pressure Cooker Gramp'. *(Laughter)* I guess because with pressure cooking you also retain the flavour when you're cooking vegetables.

So as against the Rieslings of the 40's, which were quite flinty I suppose you'd call them—I was thinking of Rudi Kronberger's Rieslings I've tried, Colin. This would've been fresh and light?

CG: Yes. The difference—I always try and make the comparison, prior to '53 the wine firstly was open fermented. It therefore developed quite a bit of colour. It was then matured in wood, sometimes up to two or three years, and this lost its freshness. And I think those wines were rightly called hocks. But with the pressure fermented wine, particularly for the delicate Rieslings from

the pressure tank, after racking they'd go straight into a stainless steel tank. So there's no likelihood of any oxidation.

Did the result surprise you at the time?

CG: It did, but we did have the feeling when we had those few tastings that this could change the method of fermentation, particularly for delicate table wines. And of course, within six months we had the Melbourne Show awarding it first prize. And when I say first prize, I think there were about twenty-three entries. It was first, second and third. Not what we see today, a gold medal—and could be quite a few gold medal awards—silver and bronze. But it was first.

Wasn't that quite a revolutionary thing for a first year wine to do that? Because normally they were five and six year olds?

CG: Yes. Yes. Would you like me to read out an extract from the Victorian Viticultural Council?

Yes please, Colin.

CG: Yes, it's very interesting to note that it was a very young wine, and it was presented at the Victorian Viticultural Society. And I'm reading an extract from the Australian Brewing and Wine Journal dated May 20th, 1954:

'The presentation of a 1953 South Australian Riesling fermented in pressure tanks and winner of first prize in a section both at the 1953 Melbourne and 1954 Sydney Wine Shows created more than usual interest at the April luncheon of the Viticultural Society of Victoria at the Ritz Cafe, Melbourne, on April 22nd. Mr GH Adams, President, was in the Chair but unfortunately the attendance was smaller than usual, only taking fourteen places at table'.

And then they refer to the 1953 Orlando Riesling:

'This, the first sample passed around at table, was the wine which won the prizes mentioned above, and it's presentation on this occasion created a great deal of interest and unanimous commendation. Prior to unwrapping, opinions generally were that it was a particularly good young Australian hock, showing

South Australian character. And probably suggested generally about two or three years old. This is surprising. When it's identity was revealed, high praise was given to the makers for their initiative in introducing a new system, as far as Australia is concerned, into winemaking. The wine carries excellent colour, is very delicate and has plenty of body to carry it through to an attractive finish'. And how true that was because five to six years ago we were still lucky enough opening the odd bottle of '53 Orlando Riesling, and it was still drinkable. And interesting.

Amazing!

Oh, that's right. You had a tasting up here, didn't you, Colin?

CG: Yes.

And it still held its own?

CG: It still held its own. And I just wonder whether the industry should be going back to pressure fermentation and cold fermentation. I think everyone is using cold fermentation process but fermenting it under a blanket of its natural carbondioxide I think should be again considered. We may see this in time to come.

So, Colin, that technical revolution in the Australian wine industry—I'm wondering if you could do something for me. In your background, you didn't actually describe what Gramps winery was like prior to those coming. What type of winery set-up was it?

CG: It was a very modern winery because in the early 30's a complete new vintage cellar was completed, and also the leaching winery was extended. Because in the 30's Orlando were enjoying very good export sales of Port style of wine and sweet sherry to the United Kingdom. And naturally in those days the growers were persuaded to ripen their grapes well because they were paid extra baume(?) above the minimum, and this was a great help in that the less fortifying spirit you use, the more flavour and character you had in those fortified wines. So basically, as I mentioned earlier, Orlando were producing about the same ratio—80% fortified wine as against 20% table wine.

Two wines of Orlando were very well known throughout Australia, and particularly in the country areas. They were minimum priced wines, and I still can remember them being sold for two and three a bottle, and that was (*sounds like, Conto*) and Yellow Label sweet sherry.

What was (*Conto*) ?

CG: (*Conto*) was a very light, easy to drink, Port.

A white style or -

CG: No. No, it was a light red but very light in style and easy to drink. And the Yellow Label sweet sherry, that was a favourite, particularly with the ladies. After the Second World War changes were needed and, as I've mentioned previously, that fortunately we were given the opportunity in 1953 to make our table wines much more delicate and with plenty of character. From then on, the industry gradually changed, with the emphasis more and more on table wines.

It was also at this particular stage after we commenced with the pressure fermentation process that we were having difficulties with our fortified wines, particularly the sweet sherry throwing crystals—tartrate crystals—in the bottle. Because people were serving their sherries cold and keeping them in the refrigerator prior to consuming them. And of course, in the case of hotels, they could've been in the refrigerator for days, and in fact, weeks. And we were getting rude complaints from customers. They'd bought a bottle of sweet sherry and they had (some of them said) sand deposited in the bottles, but it was tartrates that had dropped because of the cold. This then forced us to consider treating our fortified wines before marketing. And the wines were chilled and held in eutectic tanks. Eutectic meaning that you were holding the temperature by a coil around the outside through which brine flowed. And we brought these temperatures down to about minus three degrees, and it was amazing the amount of crystals that formed and deposited. And whilst the wine was still cold, to make certain we got all the crystals out, it was filtered.

TAPE 1 - SIDE B

So Colin, this time in the mid 50's is a great technical surge for Orlando, and the industry, but in one sense you were leading the way.

CG: Yes, well, in 1954 I visited Germany. In fact, I spent four months in Germany during their '54 vintage, basically studying the operation and handling of the pressure tanks. And of course, it was during that time, when I was able to also look at the latest bottling plant, and particularly sterile bottling plant for the delicate table wines where you retained a certain amount of sweetness. You certainly didn't want to run the risk of refermentation in the bottle afterwards.

Prior to germ-proof filtration, to make certain that our Sauternes did not ferment, we unfortunately had to give them a goodly dose of sulphur dioxide. And of course, as many people found out, it affected quite a few—the sulphur dioxide affected quite a few people.

But from then on, I feel there were terrific changes in the industry. Because with the huge demand for our Barossa Riesling, and the Barossa Pearl, in 1956 we had to install the first site semi-automatic sterile bottling plant. And it was a first in Australia. That handled seventy dozen per hour.

In '58 we commenced—because of the continuing demand of Barossa Pearl we had to install larger semi pressure tanks, 10,000 gallon capacity, for the handling of all white table wines and, as I said before, the increased production of Barossa Pearl and the new wine, Star Wine, which was also sparkling.

Just backtracking. The Barossa Pearl, which we haven't talked about yet, came on the market to be launched in the 1956 -

CG: 1956, yes.

- with the Olympic Games in Melbourne. Is that right?

CG: No. We had hoped to market it at that time but unfortunately we ran into difficulties with the closure. We had hoped to use a natural cork, and then with a screw cap over that to hold it in position, but unfortunately the gas—after filling at a cold temperature to retain the gas, but when the bottle warmed up, unfortunately it was like a leaking car tyre. (*Laughs*) You'd hear the gas—the loss of gas.

Who came up with the idea for Barossa Pearl, Colin?

CG: The idea—when I was in Germany in 1952? and learning to operate these pressure tanks, both (*sounds like, Geiss*) and Dr Brunke—(*Geiss*) of (*couldn't decipher name*) and Dr Brunke of (*couldn't decipher name*)—advised me that we should consider marketing pearl wine. And with the help of (*Geiss*) we bought this, as I mentioned earlier, semi automatic sterile bottling plant. The decision to—as far as a bottle was concerned we felt that we should not have an ordinary sparkling wine bottle because immediately people would compare it with—in those days we were allowed to call it champagne. We wanted to get right away from that. And the bottle that caught my eye, and also had been proven that it could stand pressure, was Perrier.

Oh, the Perrier water -

CG: But what we actually did with that is that we gave it a much longer neck. But that gave us the basic idea.

And of course, the major difference between the making of pearl compared with the Charmat process of sparkling wines, which we were also doing, was that you didn't know—the secondary fermentation, instead of adding sugar—a solution of sugar—for additional fermentation, we added usually Muscatel and another fruity—and Frontignan—as a sweetener, and also for the refermentation process. And by adding a quantity of juice you broke back your alcohol. In the case of sparkling wines, when you added sugar, you may have broken it back a fraction. But then, of course, during the secondary fermentation, the alcohol would build up again. But in the case of using grape

juice, you broke the alcohol back considerably. And of course, using grape varieties such as Muscat and Frontignan, you obtained that fruitiness in the wine, and that's why it was so much lower in alcoholic strength.

But, Colin, had you expected the public to accept the taste so readily? It seemed to me, looking back on it, to have brought particularly women drinkers in that hadn't been there before.

CG: Yes, but I was amazed how many young men enjoyed it. Whether they were enjoying it to encourage the women to drink it also, I don't know.

(Laughs) But it was amazing how it caught on. And I was surprised that the industry gave us two years to consolidate.

Do you mean without -

CG: Without any competition. I think a lot of them were sitting back and thinking that this was a one day wonder. And of course, the first people to move, and I expected that, was Leo Buring with his sparkling Rhinegold.

So that would've been Reg Shipster down here?

CG: Yes, that would've been Reg, yes.

Well, sparkling Rhinegold as well became a great favourite.

CG: See, Rhinegold was on the market, and I guess Barossa Pearl made inroads into that market, and they just had to give it a sparkle also.

Now that was a completely different bottle, away from the Perrier bottle more towards the Portuguese Rose style bottle, but in a green glass.

CG: Yes. No, it's wonderful history to look back on. And of course, the only Barossa Pearl—unfortunately it's no longer on the market but its successor, sparkling Star Wine, I'm glad to say is still being asked for today.

And, Colin, Star Wine came on the market in—what year was that that you said?

CG: In '58. It had a little more effervescence, and the base wine was a higher quality too. Because we soon realised that Barossa Pearl had a market, a particular market, and I feel it—I can't think of the right word. An introductory market. And once people got used to it they would be looking for something just a little more finesse. And hence the sparkling Star Wine.

And of course, after assembling these 10,000 gallon (*couldn't decipher word*) tanks, we had to look for a larger sterile bottling—fully automatic bottling plant. In '59 we installed this unit and it produced—we moved from seventy dozen to two hundred dozen per hour.

In '62 I decided that we should try and make a Riesling very similar to the Moselle style. And this is when we planted Steingarten.

Your new vineyard.

CG: Our new vineyard. Up in the hills at the back of Orlando. And hardly any soil on the surface but we broke it up. It was the schist rock formation, which was ripped up by a Caterpillar hoe. And then, unfortunately, the larger pieces had to be broken by the stone hammer.

When you say unfortunately, you mean from a labour point of view?

CG: From the labour point of view. I wouldn't like to mention what our workmen thought of me at the time. (*Laughter*)

But we planted this up, and here again it met with success. Unfortunately, the extension of the vineyard is rather limited but it did prove the point that the Rhine Riesling grown under tough conditions and where they had a long ripening time, compared with the Riesling grown on the valley proper, which during the summer months would ripen too quickly, there up in the Barossa ranges it was only picked in late April compared with early March as down on the valley. And these vines, because of these harsh conditions and growing amongst rock, produced a Riesling that was delicate, flinty. The flavour was there but it was delicate and it was well balanced with the natural acid, and of course it was named Steingarten Riesling, the name of the vineyard.

Colin, was that also the origin of your Ribbon series as well?

CG: No. The Ribbon series were introduced three or four years after the making of the Barossa Riesling, when it was thought that we should consider making late picking Auslese. Once or twice we made a Trockenbeeren auslese but we concentrated mainly on the Auslese and the Spätlese, which is late picking, and Auslese's very late picking.

We used the same label as on the dry Riesling but differentiated it with the ribbon—a coloured ribbon.

There was blue -

CG: Blue for the Spätlese, and gold for the Auslese.

And the brown was which one?

CG: The reddy-brown one was more the Beeren auslese.

And that wasn't every vintage, was it?

CG: No. No, it was very rare, and was difficult to make under Australian conditions.

But it was absolutely beautiful.

CG: Oh, yes. Yes.

Sorry to interrupt, Colin.

CG: No, that's alright.

Then in '65, following a visit to South Africa in 1964, Günter Prass, who happened to come back from an overseas visit to his parents, came back via South Africa so that he could have a look at the South African industry, saw this wine Mac press in operation. And in '64 I went over during the latter part of our vintage, because their vintage is the same, and had a look at the unit in operation, and could see that, particularly with the demand for more and more table wine—thus meaning we should get the juice off the mark as quickly as possible—we decided to order a fully automatic Mac press, together with its

gravity separator, and also pressure separator—a carbon dioxide carbon separator.

This was installed, and on the 12th March we had an opening where we invited the members of the industry to see this latest trend. And I believe—I'm not certain—three or four of them were sold to the major Australian winemakers. And then of course, in 1970 it was announced that—this is late December 1970—Reckitt & Colman Australia were interested in purchasing Gramps Orlando. And in 1971, in April, the official merger of Orlando with Reckitt & Colman Australia Pty Ltd took place.

It was unfortunate in this regard that the Gramp family were unable to carry on. We had grown so much in the past, particularly from the Second World War, and had I guess stretched our purse strings. And we had members of the family who wanted out, and rather than just plod along we thought that the company should continue expanding, and with the help of Reckitt & Colman we were able to do this, particularly on the marketing side. They were very helpful in introducing the Coolabah range, which eventually came out in the wine casks, and then in 1976 when Jacob's Creek was launched on to the Australian market.

So that, Colin, is the period that you become -

CG: This is when I started to bow out. I just saw the Jacob's Creek come on to the market and that's when I bowed out of the company.

Did you not become a restaurateur though at the time?

CG: Yes, I did. But I think we were far too early for the Barossa Valley. When you see the number of restaurants in the Valley today—I'm talking about—the restaurant was opened in 1972. It went extremely well for a while but it was something new I guess. Restaurants, in those days, weren't called for as much as they are today. So I think we were just a little bit before the time.

Maybe 20 years ahead.

CG: Yes.

Colin, Rowland Flat as a place, was that almost wholly the Gramp dynasty there really?

CG: No. No, it was originally settled by a Mr Rowland, and I'm glad that you've reminded me here, Rob. Because Rowland Flat was named after Mr Rowland—I should say that prior to the Second World War it was Rowland's Flat. But now it's Rowland Flat. But in a German dictionary, an old German dictionary which my father had—(*sounds like, Thiem*) dictionary—the name Rowland (R.O.W.L.A.N.D) in German was Orlando, or Roland (R.O.L.A.N.D), or Orlando. And I'm certain this is where Orlando derived from.

I've never heard that. Because Mr Rowland who took up the land was a partner of Charles Flaxman with George Fife Angas. And I mean you couldn't get a much closer connection to the settlement of the Barossa, could you, than Orlando if that's the case?

CG: No. Rowland doesn't roll off the tongue as well as Orlando. But it was still associated with Rowland on the German side.

Colin, at the winery itself, when you began life as an apprentice winemaker, were there some old characters on the place at the time?

CG: Oh, yes. (*Laughs*) There were many an old character. But the amazing thing is that when I first used to visit the winery itself, and I guess I would've been around 12/13, I was surprised how the elderly workmen would address me. In many cases it was Master Gramp, which surprised me. They were real characters and yet they were very polite. But the amazing part is that I found in my life at Orlando there was a wonderful feeling between the employees, the staff and the Gramp family. We seemed to be one big family. Over the years, when I was Technical Director—in fact, I reckon every other two or three years, one of the employees would come up, and say, 'Look, my daughter, or my son, is completing schooling at Nuri High. Is there any possibility of a position here with the company?' And I don't think I knocked anybody back. And that's how it grew. In fact, towards the end of my life with the company, the son of the—

the previous son of the old employee was coming along for an interview. So there's no doubt that they must've thought a lot of the Gramp family.

Colin, that sense of family I think was around a few of the older Barossa wineries.

CG: Yes.

Did you have much to do with the other Barossa winemaking families? Exchanging information or socially?

CG: Yes. Well, very much because in 1954 when I came back from my first—well, actually it'd be 1955 because I only got back early '55. I purchased a lot of wine in Spain, Portugal, France and Germany through the help of our London agents, Atkinson and Baldwin. And they arranged for these to be shipped back. And I put on a tasting for all the leading—well, I think all the winemakers here, not only in the Valley but nearby. Clare, and I know Tom Angove came down, and Southern Vales. They all came up to have a look at these wines. Because I felt that it was necessary to show them what we were competing with. And likewise, whenever we installed new equipment we had an opening day for them to have a look at the plant and that. And I've got some papers here which you can look at later, Rob.

Thank you, Colin. That would be good.

And Colin, on a social level I suppose you would've had the Bacchus Club with Alf Wark and those characters?

CG: Yes. Very much.

And that was used as a point of fellowship and exchange of information?

CG: The Bacchus Club did a lot, I feel, for the wine industry in that it brought us all together more and more. We all had an opportunity to bring our particular wine along, and the amazing thing, all those wines at those early Bacchus Club—I say early because I don't think they're doing it today—were wrapped. So you could be criticising your own wine. *(Laughs)*

And you wouldn't know it.

CG: Until they unveiled the bottle. *(Laughter)*

And I gather that on one occasion at least Peter Lehmann and Peter Wall and—I'm not sure. Was it Ray Ward produced an apple wine as well?

CG: Yes, yes.

And had that bagged.

CG: Yes, well, Peter Lehmann unfortunately caught me on that.

But he was caught later. *(Laughter)*

CG: Yes, when he showed it to me I thought it was a new style of Riesling.

**I don't think you were the only one. *(Laughter)*
So you had that wonderful camaraderie.**

CG: Yes. Yes. Because in those days we were all plodding along. When I compare those years with today, the industry is really on a high. I mean, they're in the position where they don't worry about how they're going to empty their tanks for the next vintage. I think they're looking for next vintage.

Would this be unprecedented, Colin?

CG: Oh, I think it must be. I mean, what a wonderful position for the industry to be in. When you think back that—I think it was around 1985 that the government of the day allowed vines to be pulled out instead of saying, 'Well, look, let's have a special promotion', and use the money they paid out to the growers to pull out, use that for promoting Australian wine overseas, I think our overseas market would've started earlier.

Yes, I guess you would've seen the early days of export through your father's efforts but that would've been mainly in the fortified area?

CG: Mainly in the fortified area. Perhaps I should mention that we did try, reasonably successfully, exporting our Barossa Riesling. Because particularly Atkinson and Baldwin for their London and English market felt that we should market it, and we did pretty well. But we started to run into a bit of a problem.

The cost of sending them over in bottles in those days—and particularly if the wine wasn't sent by refrigeration they could oxidise. So eventually when we were importing quite a bit of Scotch Whisky, we decided to get 44 gallon stainless steel drums and export our Barossa Riesling in bulk. It wasn't a huge quantity. And Atkinson and Baldwin had a Szeitz bottling plant and they bottled it over there. That went extremely well. But it was limited.

But you found in the stainless containers that it kept its temperature?

CG: Yes. And so the empty containers were then sent up to Scotland and filled with Scotch Whisky and out to Australia. So we were making good use of the drums both ways.

So were Gramps acting as an agency for a Scotch whisky making company at the time?

CG: Yes. We were agents for Grants for quite a while but limited as far as States(?) were concerned. And then we were offered the opportunity to market (*sounds like, Cher-tons*) for a period of time. (*Cher-tons*) were our midlands agents. And then eventually—well, today we've got Campbells. But that didn't last for long. Unfortunately Reckitt and Colman didn't think it was a profitable exercise. But I still felt that it would've been good to keep Orlando Barossa Riesling on the market.

Colin, all the things that we've spoken about today in terms of the change, the largest seems to me to've been the technical change of the 50's and early 60's. Would that be true?

CG: Yes. I did make a—the major changes I feel that I've witnessed in my period with the industry from 1940 to 1975 was (1) the necessity for refrigeration for controlled fermentation and the stabilising of wine, the introduction of the eutectic pressure tanks for controlled fermentation of delicate and quality table wines, and also for producing Charmat process sparkling wines. And then because of Barossa Pearl, we had to contract winery (*tape ceased*)

OH 692/48 TAPE 2 - SIDE A

NATIONAL WINE CENTRE, WOLF BLASS FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT.

Interview with Mr Colin Gramp on 26th June, 2000.

Interviewer: Rob Linn.

Thank you, Colin.

CG: Yes, with the demand of base wine for Barossa Pearl it was necessary to contract wineries in the various districts, especially co-operatives, to vintage wines according to our specification, rather than handling extra grapes from that area or district. It was basically for Barossa Pearl base material. But it—when you look at the industry today, I think every major wine company is doing this. Because it's much easier to produce the wine, or extract the juice, and then send those products to the wineries that require them, rather than cart grapes from State to State.

And then of course, the conversion of the flagon trade wine sales to the bag in the box. And then finally the launching of Australian table wines on to the world market, particularly England and Europe.

And Colin to have—I know we've talked about this at other times, but to have that 80% fortified/20% table turned on its head in, well, a lifetime is an incredible change.

CG: Yes, it is. It's just amazing. I would never have dreamt that it would've changed so quickly. But I guess that one has just got to look at the world market today, and unfortunately there isn't such a bright future for sherry and port. There's a limited market. Because there's a lot of people, and I'm included, I still love my glass of fino sherry.

Oh, yes.

I was going to ask you that actually, Colin, because I just wonder whether that's one skill that in fact is beginning to wane away in the winemaking industry, or are there still specialised fortified makers?

CG: Well, there are. I mean, you've got Seppelts. You've got Mildara Blass, who are still producing ports and sherries—a range of sherries. I think most major winemakers are still marketing ports. And I think port will still retain a place. But I'm hoping that there'll be a turn in demand—more demand for the sherries because they were terrific appetiser wines. A glass before a meal. Or even when friends called in.

Yes, it's a very different -

CG: Yes.

But it's a refreshing taste.

CG: Yes.

Well, Colin, can I thank you so much for your time today and all you've shared with us on this? It's been a wonderful exercise to talk to you about these things.

CG: Well, I only hope—when I look back over the years, I only hope I've made reference to everything I should've. *(Laughs)* I'm sure that soon after I'll realise I should've said this and should've said that.

Thank you, Colin.