

RANCHO CUCAMONGA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Gino Al Filippi

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MF Can we start by you telling us when and where you were born?

GF Well, I was born in 1960, January 12, at San Antonio Hospital in Upland and at that time that was probably the only large hospital around, that we were aware of.

MF And what is your occupation today?

GF Today I am vice president of Joseph Filippi Winery and my responsibilities include sales and marketing and community relations.

MF Can you now tell us a little bit about your family's background, when they came to the region.

GF My grandfather arrived with his father in 1920.

MF And what were their names?

GF Joseph was my grandfather (or Joseph Sr.) and his father's name was Giovanni. Giovanni, my great grandfather, had been here once before in 1904 but he went back to Italy and then came back in 1920. He came back in 1920 to meet up with family that was here already, farming fruits and some grapes in the area.

MF And when your great grandfather, he was here in 1904...

GF Correct.

MF And what had brought him here at that time?

GF Work and just to seek out a better way.

MF And why did he go back?

GF I'm not sure.

MF It's pretty common for immigrants to go back actually.

GF I'm not sure.

MF How did they find this particular area? Southern California?

GF Well when he had come in 1904, I understand he had found some work at the Guasti Winery. Of course Mr. Guasti was very influential in planting the first large vineyard in our valley and bringing over workers from his native Italy, families and such that would be housed and educated there in Guasti. So I assume that's what the draw was.

MF So did he work in Guasti?

GF He worked at building the winery.

MF Oh building, and that was his first trip here?

GF He was a mason by trade, that was on his first trip in 1904.

MF And when he came back in 1920, did he come straight from New York?

GF They actually went into Canada and my grandfather ended up meeting him here with their cousins who lived in the nearby area.

MF And did he continue working as a mason?

GF No, they started growing grapes. In 1922 they planted their first vineyard, which would become our families first vineyard.

MF Can you tell us where that was?

GF Southeast of Rancho Cucamonga, probably on the Ontario/Fontana city limit line now.

MF So they started out as grape growers...

GF Correct.

MF At what point did they make the transition from growing the grapes to producing wine?

GF After prohibition, they founded the winery, which was 1934. Prior to prohibition they were making wine but primarily they were growing grapes. So when prohibition lifted that was part of a boom, if you will, in California's wine industry, there were several, maybe 200 wineries started up at that time. My family chose to start their winery at that time. [This Cucamonga Valley was known as a very good place to grow grapes and make wine, grapes known for richness in flavor.]

MF Where was the winery?

GF There on the property, which later became Mira Loma or Fontana and that is this picture here, was later on in time.

MF Can you describe the picture a little bit.

GF Sure. This is where we grew up, this picture was probably taken in the early '60's, I can tell by the car. My grandparents lived across the street. We lived on the winery property which encompassed over 300 acres of grapes. It was a wonderful place to grow up because there was always something going on, harvest season or pruning season or, it was wonderful. We rode motorcycles, we shot guns, we had dogs, you name it, we did it. There wasn't Little League and soccer and all those things. We lived across the street, my mom and dad, my two brothers and I. Shortly after this picture was taken we built a pool. We were one of the few

people around this neck of the woods that had a swimming pool so all my cousins would come over and it was quite a great place to grow up.

MF How would your cousins get there?

GF their parents would drive them. Most of them lived in Ontario and Upland. We were considered the boon docks back then. So the winery expanded and grew on that property. We added more buildings and more tanks but as that happened and the business grew and more people got involved with the winery from the family, there was also growing pressure on the land values and urbanization if you will. I'm moving very fast now but on a fast track that's what happened and a lot of the vineyards started to disappear.

MF Let's go back a little bit to the depression era. Can you talk a little bit about how prohibition influenced their work as winegrowers?

GF Well I wasn't born until 30 years after prohibition lifted, actually 20-something years...

MF Right, so maybe you heard some stories though.

GF But I heard the stories. It was a very difficult time however because they were more or less self sufficient, they farmed, they sold the product, they had a great support of a large extended family, if you will, they did fine. I hear the stories of how difficult it was. But my grandmother and grandfather used to tell me, we were happy, we had food on the table and everyone was healthy. But the stories of how business was more difficult and all of the restrictions certainly, because they were in the wine business, forced them to be a little more creative. By that they were selling grapes and shipping grapes out of the area.

MF How did they learn to make wine?

GF It was something my great grandfather had learned in Italy. Again, they had some family here when they arrived that were also....

MF Working in Guasti.

GF Yes.

MF Where in Italy were they from?

GF A small town. Of course everyone was from a small town, in northern Italy. [It was Torrebelticino, a small farming center in the province of Vicenza.] It's in the north of Italy, outside of a little town called Schio in the Veneto region which is slightly west of Venice, northwest of Venice.

MF Do you know if a lot of the Italians that settled here were from that region?

GF My family was and there were a couple others, many others from the Piedmont area and further south. Of course there was a great amount of French and Spanish and some German here too.

MF So in this little town, in the Veneto region, did everybody make wine?

GF I don't know. I visited it once with my grandfather but I'm not real sure.

MF But your great grandfather made it.

GF My great grandfather.

MF Do you know, when your family came here, what was it like to be an Italian Catholic in southern California?

GF Well, we knew nothing else because my cousins and our friends and everyone seemed to be Italian, Spanish or Mexican. So we all went to the same school, we went to wedding and funerals and all of the get-togethers. We would just

socialize with our own, if you will.

MF Have you ever heard stories, maybe even in a business way, were there every tensions between Catholic and non-Catholic?

GF Not that I remember. There could have been tensions between one group of winegrowers thinking they should have things a certain way and someone else trying to do them another way. For the most part everyone got along real well, I remember. Of course if you weren't getting along you had the nuns and priests and aunts and uncles to set you straight, right!

MF Where were the nuns?

GF At the school we went to. I went to a little school here in Etiwanda that is now called Sacred Heart Church and School but prior to that it was called Anton Martin's Slom Sack – named after a Pope or Cardinal, I believe.

MF That's not a very saintly name...

GF Named after, I believe, a cardinal or one of the higher ups in the Catholic hierarchy. Everyone used to tease us, you know, about going to this school. That was the first Catholic school in our immediate Etiwanda area.

MF How long had it been there?

GF It was kindergarten through 6, and I was in the first class.

MF So it's a pretty recent school.

GF It was a new school at that time. I felt so bad for those nuns because it would get hotter than hell out here and they were wearing those full habits! Oh boy, and no air conditioning.

MF Now, where did your parents go to school?

GF My father grew up here in the area, he was born in Loma Linda and he went to the local schools in the Riverside area and Ontario area. They met in high school at Chaffey High School in Ontario.

MF Along with everybody else.

GF Probably the only high school at that time, with the exception maybe Pomona. They got married right out of high school, or in JC, at that time junior college was at Chaffey High School, on Euclid [Ave.]. That was before they moved it up the hill on Haven, and then they went off to school. Father went out to UC Davis and then later graduated. Of course my mom worked to help put him through school.

MF When did they get married?

GF 1952 and he graduated in '55.

MF Where were they married?

GF At Guasti Church.

MF At the Guasti church. Can you tell us a little bit about that church?

GF Well, now it's surrounded by office buildings and such and a small vineyard. It was built in honor, I believe, of Mr. Guasti, similar to the church from his old home in Italy. I've heard that when they constructed the church, they used grapes, smashing them into the mortar to give the mortar a different look, opaqueness in the plaster on the inside of the church. So it was built by probably a great number of Italians and Mexican and Spanish people there in Guasti. Of course my folks were married there and probably baptized there. We were certainly baptized there and it's got a long tradition here amongst the Italians certainly.

MF Right. Did you have your first communion there?

GF No, I had it at Sacred Heart.

MF Okay.

Gf Where I went to school.

MF Now, while we are talking about that church, did you ever go to the Blessing of the Grapes?

GF Yes.

MF Can you talk a little bit about what that was like?

GF That was a big event. Of course, at that time the Guasti Winery was occupied by the Brookside Vineyard Co. and they had a long tradition of this ceremony where they priest would be blessing the grapes. As I recall, a two or three day festival celebrating the harvest. The blessing of the grapes would take place in the courtyard of the church which is a wonderful marble image of grape clusters and such, it's still there. So I remember all the activities and the fun and my folks and our friends in the area, we would all go and meet there. It was a good time.

MF What time of the year was that? Was that in the Fall?

GF The harvest in our valley generally late August through October. I think the blessing of the grapes was in September.

MF Can you talk a little bit about the wine traditionally that your family has produced.

GF Our family, like many others in the valley, were producing a great amount of red wine because that's the predominant variety of our valley. In addition to, say, Zinfandel or dry red wines, dry Rosés and things like that. They were also producing a large amount of Sherry and Port wines because our valley is a

relatively warm climate so that the varieties that produced those types of wine grew well here. The varieties that grew well here were those which Mr. Guasti and some of the other early vintners brought over from Europe to plant here. So that they were familiar with these varieties from the old country, meaning the Rhone Valley of France or parts of Italy. As the world progressed and my father returned home from UC Davis, he brought with him modern wine making skills and so the style of wines changed.

MF I understand that especially before WWII, sweet wines were really popular among Americans in general and that that was also....

GF Absolutely. The trends started to change, I've been told, when the men returned home from WWII they had acquired a taste for European wines which were generally easier to drink, lower alcohol, less sweet. That was an important time in California winemaking history because the people, who were to move our industry forward, also needed to change. The north surpassed the south in terms of California on how are we going to produce wines that appeal more to people like the wines of Europe? As that was happening, and more people were coming into our area, the land values started to rise and some people grew tired of growing grapes and eventually would sell their property. But WWII had a great influence on the American taste for wines.

MF Now, it seems that grapes, the vines themselves take a long time to mature?

GF Yes.

MF So being able to respond to those changes quickly is almost impossible.

GF It can be impossible but the varieties that we were growing could produce those

kinds of wines. It was just the change in maybe mindset and wine making techniques in the winery.

MF So what kind of techniques would have to change?

GF Before I answer that, I'll tell you a little bit. The varieties that they grew early on in our valley are still being grown only we are producing different styles of wines from those old vines. Technology, what has changed? Knowledge of fermentation, influences of temperature, style of pressing of grapes, and time grapes are picked. We've just learned so much more, especially in the last 10 years, on how to take care of our wines and that it really started in the vineyard, how we take care of our fruit as we grow it.

MF When you were a boy, did you ever participate in the wineries operations?

GF Yes! My first time picking grapes was, I was 5 years old. I remember the photo well because it was my brother's first camera, you know, so it was a big deal - let's go out and take a picture in the vineyard. To me the best time of year was grape season because number one, we were home from school so there was not a great amount of church to go to in the morning, no big schedule and like, I said before, we weren't so occupied with Little League or these other things. I really looked forward to summer and being on the ranch, we called it and the grape harvest. When it was an early harvest I was most excited because that meant more days of grapes coming in and all the workers and some of the families had picked grapes for us for a generation, you would see the father, the son and then eventually the grandkids. So it was a really great time and I remember getting involved as early as I could, probably I wouldn't last that long, it was a very

difficult job. Imagine treading through the hot sand and it's 80, 90, 100 degrees out and you're lugging these 20, 30 pound boxes of grapes to the truck to dump. As you put your hands inside the had vines out come the little gnats and it's probably the most exhausting job I've ever had but it was fun. When I wasn't outside I would be following my father around who was an oenologist, wine maker day and night. Grape seasons were very long hours and a lot of late nights. I can remember just following my dad around the winery day and night until my mom would make me come in and go to sleep. He'd come in for dinner and then go back out to the winery. Then any chance I could, I would go with him. I would of course!

MF When you went with your dad, would you just follow him around and kind of as a shadow or would he talk to you about what was going on?

GF We were doing a little bit of everything. I would probably get in trouble for doing something I wasn't supposed. He would be describing to me what we're doing. We would just visit about other things while we were getting ready, while we were preparing a tank say.

MF What do you mean when you were "preparing the tank"?

GF The general job during grape season of course, is the fermentation of grapes into juice and wine. So we would be monitoring fermentations throughout the winery. At that time our winery had roughly nearly a million-gallon capacity and I would say a third of that was fermentation. So 300,000 gallons of space fermenting grapes from time to time. We would be monitoring the tanks, checking temperatures, getting ready to circulate the tank. By that we would take from the

bottom of the tank and we would pump with an electric pump over the top of the tank and that circulates the juice with the grape musk. The musk is skins, seeds and pulp. I learned at an early age that wine gains its color from the skin of the grape through fermentation. So in order to get good color extraction you want to circulate the tanks. Well my job was to turn the pump on, which was downstairs, and my father would be upstairs pumping over the tank.

MF How would you turn the pump on?

GF Pushing a button. So we would do that throughout the nights and then check up on the work from the guys in the morning.

MF Did your dad enjoy having you boys following him around? Was that fun for him?

GF I think so. I think in some ways he had probably wished a different life for us because it was such hard work. On the other hand I think that he would have been proud to see what we have done with the business today. My father died in 1993 and he really didn't get an opportunity to see this restoration up here and this new [winery restoration] project. But I think he was excited when we would show interest and I certainly was excited to be around him.

MF What about your mom? Was she excited about the wine business?

GF My mom, (Elena), was a special person who helped put her husband through school and raised 3 boys and worked the winery store and then create these fantastic meals without looking like she was exerting much effort.

MF Was she Italian also?

GF She was Italian also and Spanish. So I think the Spanish tempered her Italian

- flare a little bit.
- MF Tell me about these great meals.
- GF My mom was quite a cook, I think she learned most of her technique from my grandfather Filippi's wife, my grandmother Mary, because we lived on the property together so she was in the kitchen a lot. My mom could take a chicken and turn it into a great roast with potatoes, a salad and fresh beans in about 45 minutes. Of course there was wine on the table and if you were at the house you had to eat with us. We seemed to always have a house full.
- MF Now did you eat with your grandparents? Did they come over for dinner with you?
- GF Yeah, frequently we would share. I was at my grandparents quite often, I was the middle of three boys, Joey went away, my older brother, to Catholic military school, Jamie was too young, so I was actually the one who got, I think, to enjoy my grandparents the most because I was the middle age.
- MF Okay. You said there was wine at the table. How young were the kids when they started having a little bit of wine with dinner?
- GF As soon as we could walk, we were able to have wine and of course...
- MF Did they cut it with water?
- GF Yes, it was with water and that was the old way. So if you wanted wine it was there. I always remember us drinking a little wine but I think we were more interested in when the soda pop started coming in cans and things, you know.
- MF That was special.
- GF Yes.

MF When they invested in the winery and they started producing the wine, did you start buying grapes from other growers?

GF Yes. We were fortunate in one way that we didn't really rely a great deal on other growers. But from time to time we would and my father and grandfather had relationships with other growers so we could do business. So I do remember those families.

MF Could you give us some names maybe?

GF We did business with the Guideras, the Columberos, the Bienes, and the Galleanos. There was probably a great deal more that I can't think of right now.

MF Did you ever buy grapes from the Hofer's?

GF Yes, we also farmed that Hofer ranch for a number of years ourselves.

MF Now why was that?

GF They were doing other projects and they no longer owned a winery and so we leased the property from them and my brother farmed that for quite a few years.

MF What did you grow on there?

GF I think we were growing Zinfandel, Mission, perhaps some Grenache.

MF What about cooperatives, did they work with grower cooperatives?

GF I don't recall us doing much of that. The only cooperative we got involved with was when the winery purchased the Thomas Winery, which was the old winery in Cucamonga – California's oldest winery.

MF That was in 1976?

GF 1967.

MF Oh, I got my numbers wrong.

GF They bought that and that was a new project for the family.

MF You know, I read some stories about some wild times between POW's partying with the grape growers during WWII. Have you heard any of those stories?

GF I've heard them but I don't know of anyone who participated.

MF So it's all hearsay.

GF It's all hearsay but there's probably a few of them still around that could tell you. There was a great camaraderie I knew that amongst everyone that was involved with the wineries, whether they were growers or field workers or cellar workers or what have you. There was great camaraderie and fellowship.

MF Who were the field workers?

GF For our family, we would have relationships with groups of families that would work in the fields, whether it be harvest season or pruning season or just winery or vineyard maintenance.

MF Would these families just stay for a certain amount of time and then move on?

GF They seemed to go from winery or ranch to ranch. At that time there was a great deal of agriculture here so there was enough work for them year round. Some of the names I remember is the Lopezs, the Fauchins, Val de Peña.

MF Was it common, like the Guastis, to provide housing for the workers?

GF I think that was the exception because he had such a large operation.

MF So you guys didn't.

GF We never needed to do that. Also my family came along after that time so I would assume that was because people had more, they were more stable and had their own homes.

MF It seems like your family got involved in this business almost at some of the most challenging times. They start growing the grapes, then there's prohibition, they get into the winery business, there's this war and then they keep making grapes and then there's suburbanization.

GF It gets better, after that the challenges of the mass distribution of wine starts showing up in the Thrifty's, Alpha-Beta's, Ralph's, and Albertson's. The winery was not involved in those distributions channel as were a number of wineries, so they missed out on the opportunity to have prominent shelf space. So the winery would have it's own tasting rooms. At one time we operated 9 tasting rooms in southern California, similar to a Baskin- Robbins where you can go and buy, in this case wine, directly from the producer in many different styles and flavors. Then that faded out during the '70's; it looked like it was too difficult for people to go the wine store. So there was a challenge there. There was a challenge that land values were growing and people weren't interested in growing grapes. That really effected my brother and I because in the early '90's my family decided to sell the property from out from under the winery. This was after the tragic suicide death of my father. The family, quite frankly, made some bad decisions, sold the property out from the winery and my brothers and I were forced to find a new location for the winery if we wanted it to continue. So you're absolutely right, it was challenge after challenge after challenge. The other terrible thing that happened was after they purchased the Thomas winery, two years after (in 1969), it was flooded. So here they were purchasing a National Historic Landmark in Rancho Cucamonga, or Cucamonga at that time, and 2 years later it gets

destroyed by this terrible flood. So it was just an incredible amount of challenge for the family.

MF I'm wondering, like why, especially as other people are dropping out, I mean, you're the only wine makers left in that region, right?

GF We are the only year round producing winery left in San Bernardino County. We're the only year round producing winery in Rancho Cucamonga. The exception in Cucamonga is the Biane family, which operates a small Sherry winery in the foothills of Alta Loma. At one time, as most of us know, there was over 60 wineries from San Bernardino to Los Angeles. At one time there were over 40,000 acres of grapes being grown in the Cucamonga valley.

MF How many acres are there now?

GF Probably 1,200.

MF Wow.

GF After this interview's done there'll probably be less. So why do we do it? We love it, we're dedicated. It's not the romantic, wealthy lifestyle that you might see on TV in the form of a "Falcon Crest" or "A Walk in the Clouds" movie. It's something that's important certainly to our family and to this region. That's what really motivates me to do some of the projects I've done.

MF What kind of projects?

GF The first thing we did is we went and petitioned the federal government so that we could use the words "Cucamonga Valley" on our wine labels. Prior to anyone doing this we weren't permitted to use Cucamonga Valley on the labels. We were forced to use California.

MF Why was that?

GF Because the federal law didn't recognize Cucamonga as a growing district. So I went through the steps, wrote and filed the petition on behalf of ourselves and other vintners and growers in the area so, that we could, in the future, label our wine being from the Cucamonga Valley Appellation. I started that process in 1992, a year before my father died. I can remember telling him, dad I want to do this, I think it's real important. "Why didn't anyone do this when the valley was in high production?" "Well, he said that everyone was so busy just trying to grow grapes, make wine and stay ahead of the game that it wasn't that important to us." I said, "Well, it's important to me because, number one, our family is still doing this, and number two, all the people that came before us. I think they deserve some sort of mark, if you will, so that some day we can sit around and talk about the history of the Cucamonga/Guasti region." He said (my dad was a practical scientist, he actually was a real wine chemist), "It won't matter and people don't care anymore." Well that just made me want to do it more. So we went through the steps, I re-filed and we were responding to the Federal Government, the Department of Treasury over sees alcohol and that is who we were responding to, and in 1995 it became law. So now if you purchase grapes or grow grapes and make wine from "Cucamonga Valley" grapes, you can use that on the label. So that was a real good thing, I thought. We received some accolades for it and of course, we have received great thanks from some of the older families. They just think it's wonderful. But most importantly it allows us to share the story of Cucamonga right on the label. I think that's significant.

MF What are some of the other projects?

GF The other thing we have done here, with the assistance of the city of Rancho Cucamonga, who owns the property where this winery is now, is they enabled us to come in and start work on it to restore it into a working winery. So we took this old winery that had been abandoned and went to work in 1992.

MF Who owned it at one time? Do you know?

GF The Ellena family, which was the Regina Winery family. They had sold to a larger company and they spun it off to, I believe Nabisco Foods. Well, the city came along and purchased the property and wasn't quite sure what they were going to do with it, housing, a library, they just weren't sure. Well we inquired about an opportunity to move the winery here because we needed a place to move our winery to. So they let us in with a lease. We started work and it's been a very ambitious restoration project. We have a museum, art gallery, we've added a historic display, meeting rooms, a banquet room, a tasting room and we've moved our winery here. So we believe it will become a wonderful measure of our past agriculture and wine making heritage to share with our community and visitors from afar.

MF What year did this all start, did you say?

GF We started this project in '93.

MF Can you tell us, before you started the project, what the space would have looked like?

GF It was so terrible you wouldn't have wanted to pull your car over in here and change a tire! It was just an eyesore. The buildings were crumbling, it was just

terrible.

MF When was it built?

GF Originally parts of the, there was an old home here that was built in the, I believe 1916, Larry Henderson has all the information. Larry helped us with the study. So we did all these wonderful things to the building and of course with assistance from the city, who was our landlord. We were to do a great deal of improvements so we added murals to the side of the building, a park area with an educational vineyard and expanded wine cellars for tours and that's what we have today. (tape cuts off and starts again).

MF Now we were talking about the flood of 1969. I was going to ask you if you remember that flood?

GF I remember my father coming home very upset that morning in January 25th, it was 1969, I didn't remember the date but I remember him coming home. The flood happened the morning of January 25, 1969. My mom and dad were at the winery, they came home, or rather they went to the winery because the men working there called and said there was a lot of water coming in the doors. So they went up and I remember crying, "I wanted to go, I wanna go! I wanna go!" I was 9 years old. "No, you can't go." So I stayed home with my grandparents, with my grandmother. My grandfather, my mom and dad went to the winery. My mom said about 9:00 or 10:00 a wall of water, 5' or 6' high came through the backdoor and flushed them out the front door. It actually moved casks out the front door. It was terrible. I remember my father coming home and he was so upset, because the beautiful winery had been destroyed. Sure enough, when I saw the pictures and

when we went up there, it brought back memories. But that morning after, the day after the flood, we went up and looked around and it was unbelievable. It looked like a war zone. At that time Governor Reagan came out. I remember seeing a helicopter and him there and it was unbelievable. So here the family had just bought this property 2 years before, which was California's oldest winery and actually, in less than 2 years, it was destroyed. [There are no more vines, and citrus and avocado groves are all gone.]

MF What led them to buy the Thomas winery?

GF It was for sale and my father thought it would be a good addition to the company and an opportunity to sell more wine and showcase the facility. It did, we rebuilt it at our own expense. Later the winery went before the county of San Bernardino courts and filed a class action lawsuit against the county because the county was holding water in the foothills. They determined that had they not been doing that it wouldn't have caused the flood, the reservoirs broke. So on behalf of our winery and the people who got flooded below the winery, my parents went to court and they won a settlement. They ended up helping some of the homeowners who had gotten flooded out also. It was terrible. But the winery was for sale and they saw it as an opportunity to preserve more of our history and grow our business and that is what they did.

MF Can you just say a little bit about the history of the Thomas Winery?

GF From what I've learned, the original property building was constructed in about 1839. The first vineyard was planted there and on its territory in 1838, making it one of the first vineyards planted in the state. Throughout time there was a series

of different owners. My family purchased the winery from the Thomas Bros., which was Clifford and Webb Thomas. My father and grandfather felt it important to keep the name the same as the Thomas Winery so they never changed it. In the late '80's the family sold the property, moved the winery entity back into our winery so that we still offered Thomas wines, but the building was sold and the property. Today there is a restaurant tenant there within that building.

MF Nowadays, with so few grapes left, where do you guys get your grapes from?

GF We rely on approximately 200 acres that we farm here locally. That includes approximately 30-40 new acres we planted in the last few years. That was the third project that we initiated here, which was revitalizing old vineyards, where we can, and planting new. When we plant new we start relationships with the entity, whether it be a company or private landowner. We have been able to plant new vines so that we're able to produce premium local wines. So that's really our future as these large vineyards diminish because of new homes and buildings and airport expansion and what have you. We're forced to do things a little differently and we're actually being able to produce nicer wines by focusing on taking better care of our existing vineyards and new vineyards.

MM How does the whole issue of smog, water prices, I mean because you're competing suburbanization and subdivisions....

GF The biggest competition is just that, competing with subdivisions and things. The water costs are very low because we use modern drip irrigation systems. Like in the vineyard, out here in the park, you'll see them on rows with special training, trellis system and drip irrigation. What was the other thing?

MM Oh, and the issue of smog.

GF The smog issue was more or less a bad rap. They did a study once and they were monitoring the output of Kaiser Steel, which of course has been closed for a number of years. When Kaiser Steel closed our valley's air pollution was greatly reduced. We became a better area and so forth. However, the history books and the wine critics tend to only focus, had for some time only focused on that. Our air has actually improved over the last 30 years here. The varieties we're growing here, like Mourvedre and Zinfandel, Sangiouse are making some wonderful wines from these old vines and the new vines we're planting. So we have managed to preserve, if you will, a part of our vineyards and we're making some wonderful wines from them. We just won a big award at the L.A. County Fair this year.

MF What was the award?

GF It was a silver medal for our Cabernet Franc. Then the Mourvedre has won 2 golds back to back and the Grenache has also won some awards. So we're really thrilled with that and we're making new customers every day with wines from old vines!

MF On the perspective that we sent out to you to fill out about some of the changes to help us prepare for the interview, one of the things you noticed is that the greatest change you've seen in your life in the region has to do with rapid growth and urbanization. I wonder if you could speak a little bit more to how that has changed the valley from the way you see it? You know, sort of the physical outlay of the land, then sort of, I guess the culture and environment of where you're

living?

(End Side A; Begin Side B)

Just talk a little bit more about suburbanization and how it's changed what the region looks like.

GF Well, today we're becoming a sea of rooftops unfortunately. Ten years ago we had more open space. We still retained somewhat of a rural feeling. I think that's almost completely diminished. We're doing what we can here to at least surround ourselves with a little bit of more open space in vineyards. It's disheartening on one hand but it's reality. I would only hope that before everything is built out we stop and look. Build projects similar maybe to the Citrus Park in Riverside or some of these other models where we have taken some space and have preserved it so we can continue, not just to make wine, but we can continue to grow olives or oranges or whatever it be. It bothers me a great deal but I can only do what I can do and I'm doing something about it.

MF My other question is you mentioned earlier particularly the church being sort of a way of bringing at least the Italian community together. Can you think of other institutions, I don't know, Boy Scouts or other institutions that sort of helped create a community where you were living?

GF Well, certainly San Antonio Hospital did because it was the only place for health care. So many of the families relied on the hospital and made friends with the hospital. As the hospital grew and our communities grew, it was a common organization if you will. Probably the schools that we all attended to and Chaffey College, the Rotary Club is a long time established organization here, as well.

MF So besides the rotary club can you think of other institutions that have helped bring people together? Especially when you were young, that you remember that brought people together.

GF Well, my grandparents were involved a great deal with the Son's of Italy group.

MF Oh, and what was that?

GF It was a fellowship organization. They would meet in Riverside area and I can remember going as a young boy with them and celebrations and dinners and helping each other where they could.

MF What kinds of celebrations would they have?

GF Barbecues, picnics, picking grapes, and sharing vegetables.

MF Okay. I think we're ready to wrap it up but I'm wondering if you have some comments or some things that we didn't touch on that you thought were....

GF Let's look at what I grabbed....we did the flood, we did this place. What else did I have? Oh maybe what's the perception now of Cucamonga as a wine region.

MF Yes, tell us that.

GF We'll kind of bring it back around to where we are today.

MF Great.

GF Today we're fortunate that the few producers left in our valley, which are the Biane family, the Galleano family, and ourselves, are the three producing families that grow grapes here and produce award-winning wine. We're very fortunate that we have all done very well in wine competitions over the last 25 years. We're being mentioned now by some of the more discriminating wine writers also. We have preserved, to a point, our area's heritage and I think that's very important. In

the early days we were regarded as a desert wine area. Just waiting for the freeways and the new homes to be built. But now, we have managed to hold our ground, if you will, work with some local organizations and landowners. We are still producing wonderful wines, we're planting more vineyards and we're preserving our great viticulture heritage. I think that's remarkable considering how things are today and how often people think more of the short term than the long term. So I'm very grateful that I had an opportunity, certainly to be here in this site, and to further my family's history and our region's history.

MM One question I was wondering, is did you talk about your relationship between citrus and viticulture?

GF I don't know much about that.

MM Oh, okay, about the relationship between the two?

GF Yes, the citrus...

MM Just how, you know, because this area is also identified as the citrus region and...

GF The citrus took place further west to my knowledge; Upland, Claremont, La Verne, and higher in the foothills. The vineyards primarily occupied space, Euclid Ave. east to the Cajon Pass and the Cajon-Santa Ana River basin, from approximately the 2000-foot mark of our mountains here to the north, south into the Pared Basin. That was the geographic territory of most of the viticulture, grape growing.

MM In terms of when the city was formed, did either of those interests have an influence on the formation of the city?

GF As we sit here today I say not enough. We look around and with the exception of

the City of Rancho Cucamonga, I don't think any other cities made any effort to do much in terms of preservation or those kinds of things. The city has its logo that is a grape cluster. The Rancho Cucamonga City Council has put forth energy and resources, certainly in this project, and a couple others around town. As we sit here today maybe other cities could have done more, but I don't think it's the sole responsibility of government. I think you need to get people involved. If you have public private- partnerships, that's a win-win, in my opinion. The project we have here in Rancho Cucamonga is a win-win. It's a public private partnership where they have a facility and they have enabled a business entity to come into the facility and by investing private dollars, and preserving the site. I think those types of arrangements work better, I think it's unrealistic to expect government to save everything. I think you need to have partnerships. [The winery today is a wonderful place where visitors can learn more about wine, and the extensive winemaking history of our Cucamonga-Guasti area. Thank you for having interest in my family and our winery.]

(End of Interview)