

A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HISTORY OF FORESTRY WITHIN THE ACT

Oral History Interviews

Transcript of Interview

with

Frank Rosin

conducted by

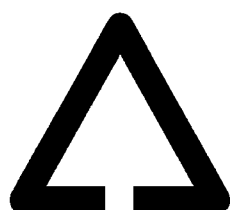
Brendan O'Keefe

at the

Australian War Memorial

on 2 June 1994

This project was carried out with the assistance of funds made available by the
ACT Government under the ACT Heritage Grants Program



ACT FORESTS

"More Than Just a Pine Forest"

ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

INTERVIEWER:	BRENDAN O'KEEFE
INTERVIEWEE:	FRANK ROSIN
DATE:	2 JUNE 1994
SUBJECT:	ACT FORESTRY HISTORY
2 TAPES	2 Hours 32 Minutes

BEGIN TAPE 1 SIDE A

Identification: This is tape 1 of an interview with Mr Frank Rosin conducted by Brendan O'Keefe, recorded on 2 June 1994 at the sound studio at the Australian War Memorial. Topics covered in this tape are the history of forests and forestry in the ACT and especially Mr Rosin's work as a logging contractor. End of identification.

Mr Rosin, welcome to the tape. You're obviously not from Australia originally. Whereabouts do you come from?

From Italy, from Venice.

What brought you to Australia?

When did I come to Australia?

Yes.

In 1956.

Why did you leave Italy?

Why did I leave Italy? - because at the time life was not successful there, a very poor country, too many people. We were in a family [with] six brothers and three sisters so my

father got only a few acres of ground but no to be stay there for Not much work around, for a start. So I had to leave Italy and come here. I came here engaged, actually, with the government - sugar cane cutter. They wanted cane cutters up in Queensland. I had to stay there for two years. We had a contract signed. When I finished the two years Queensland doesn't go very well for me because I suffer a bit from asthma and in the tropical ... [it is] very hard to breathe. So I finished the two years and then the doctor said I went to see the doctor to find out what had happened to me because it had never happened to me before because Venice was a fair bit of a cold country and to change from a cold country to a hot country like that in Queensland. The doctor said, 'There is only way to do it for you to stay good, to move in the country where there is similar weather to where you come from.' I know nothing about Australia. He said the best place to move to would be Canberra or Cooma and work in the tunnel. Then I said, 'All right, if I have to stay here - I can't go on like this otherwise I would have to go back to my country again.' Anyway, when I moved to Canberra straight away I started to breathe all right. I came by train and I stopped in Queanbeyan in the Royal Hotel and there was a couple of Italians there. And I said it's probably all right here so probably ask these few people - I hear straight away they are talking Italian. I went across to another bloke and I said, 'Excuse me, do you speak Italian?' He said, 'Yes.' And then he said, 'I never see you in Queanbeyan before.' I said, 'No, because just I get

here now from up in Queensland and I'm looking for a job.' He said, 'I'll ask my boss if he has got a job for you.' He works in the bush. So he got his car and we go and see the boss - his name is Joe Lustri - actually he lived in Narrabundah. So from Queanbeyan to travelling to Narrabundah to see this contractor. So I meet him and I say, 'Have you got a job for me?' He said, 'Yes, when do you want to start?' I said, 'Tomorrow morning.' It was about four or five o'clock in the afternoon. I said tomorrow morning because I come here for work. So that's when I started. So I work for this bloke for about two years.

Was he Italian, too?

He was Italian, actually coming from the south. I don't like much south but ...

But he was giving you a job.

It was a job. I carry on for two years and after two years They'd been logging for probably four or five years before I came here - before I started with him. He looked like he was a bit sick and tired of working and he wanted to sell the business. So to finish up the story, my brother, too, came at the same time or a couple of years later in Australia. About that time we got not much money to buy the business but the Commonwealth Bank asked what we had got. They wanted a bit of security for us. Only strong

arms and a good idea to make a bit, but no money. But the bank manager said, 'You are a very honest brothers.' And they thought they would lend me at that time - I can't remember exactly - I think it was about a thousand pounds to buy the business.

Who was the bloke who owned the business? What was his name?

Joe Lustri.

Keep going.

Anyway, we started. At that time it was a bit of a hard life; by horses - everything by handsaw. We work long hours. It is not easy, actually, the bush. You had to have a bit of experience but in two years I get bit experienced because you had to sell the wood by grade - it goes by grade. You've got first grade, second grade, third grade. So you had learn which one was first grade because even the foresters they go crook [inaudible] and if you try to sell the wood to the sawmill second grade because he gets less money - because the first grade you had to cut in one length, 12 foot it was at that time; second grade, 10 footers, and third grade, 8 footers. They use it for something different. We picked it up all right and we buy this truck and the horses and this sort of thing and then we pay back the bank after a couple of years.

You must have worked hard to pay them back in that time.

This was our plan before. We started at four o'clock in the morning, Winter or Summer, it doesn't matter. Actually in Summer at four o'clock in the morning it's all right, it's daylight, you can do something different. But in Winter we got the wood already stacked up and we got a spotlight in the truck and we put the lights on when it was dark, ready to go and come into town[?].

How many hours in a day did you work?

The checking station up in Stromlo closed up at five o'clock in the afternoon, opened at seven and closed at five o'clock. My brother actually drove the truck and I stayed and made the wood in the bush until dark - Winter and Summer. I say on average fifteen hours a day for seven days a week.

How long did you keep this up for?

I kept it up for at least twenty years. The last five years life came a bit easier because they started with the logging skeeter[?] - they call it timberjack - and the faller, the six-wheel drive you can go and pick up the wood in the middle of the bush. But you had to produce a lot more wood because Forestry actually We looked after always the Forestry because the Forestry looked after us. We got

straight away a good name in the Forest. We never - even the boss he never came to see me, 'Frank, you does this wrong' - never, because of the ways Even we turn up in the back storey when we use the horses, it's very hard to get the wood out from the bush all the time because snigging with the horse you take a long time, so we tried to make some track in the bush when it was dry weather. When it was wet you can't do it because you can't go in the bush when it's wet because you'd make a lot of mess - bogging. But when it was dry we made some tracks in the middle of the bush so we can pick up with a truck - it's much quicker to get the wood - spend the rest of my time making it. A lot easier for the horses as well. But some time when you make this track in the middle of the bush, some time you've got trees that make it a little bit narrow, you can't make the track properly. Some contractors, they fell the trees without asking the Forest and it's the wrong thing. This is wrong completely because you can't go and destroy the forest. If you do like that, your way, you can't last. So what I did that time, I get the ute - '58 model ute, Holden - I go and see the Forestry and I say [Inaudible], the foreman, now he's the boss, I have known him for the last thirty years. His name is Bill Bates. I said, 'Bill, would you mind coming round in the compartment because we want to make a track in the right spot where it's much easier for the horse but we've got a couple of trees that have to come down.' 'Yes, Frank, straightaway.' He never said no. Some of the contractors, they never think of that, not to spend the time and do the right thing. But always they come

around because the trees that had to come down they spray with silver paint - they spray the trees. Even when they do the thinning they spray the ones which have got to be cut down because some don't grow properly or are too thick or they grow with a fork, so they had to be sprayed, all the trees. They have to come in there. But sometimes where we make the track and there were good trees, I feel guilty myself to knock down the trees, but to save a bit of time for the horse and it was more convenient for us and for the Forest as well because when you make a track they would be there for the next thinning. Because before you start the clear felling like they do now, you had to thin three or four times; it all depends on the ground how they grow. When the track has been made they stay there for the next

For the next thinning or eventually for the clear felling.

For the clear felling. And then, I say five years later, we get rid of the old truck because we make a bit of money.

How long ...? You were using horses for the first five years, were you?

I think we gave the horses up in 1970.

You gave them up in 1970!

Yeah, in 1970 we gave up the horses.

Where did you keep the horses?

In the paddock up in Uriarra, you know Blue Range Road, when they were up in the old camp in Blue Range, to the left side where there is a big powerline, there is a paddock there. You had to go and catch them every morning. But even the draughthorse is a very sensible horse. If you feed him well and if you look after When they see me open the gate in the paddock they come because he knows I feed him and I look after. I have to put his shoes on every now and then. I had to put the shoes on myself - we learn.

So you didn't know anything about this when you came to Australia.

No, not a thing, not at all. Just when I was back home in Italy we got a bit of a farm, helped my father, but about wood, nothing.

What kind of farm was it back in Italy?

We got a bit of corn, bit of wheat but not really much, just enough to keep going - not really a big farm.

So when you got into forestry in Australia you knew nothing about logs.

Nothing about logging at all. Even when I was up sugar cane cutting, I knew nothing about sugar cane cutting; actually, I liked the job.

Whereabouts was the sugar cane? Where were you exactly?

Ingham. I liked the job because it was actually good money at that time. Normally wages were about twelve pounds a week just for normal work, and us - we were four: me, another two German fellows and one Spanish - we make about fifty pounds a week - three times more than normal wages. It was good.

But hard work though.

Hard work, and a bit young, too, and a bit silly sometimes. It really was not my idea but the other friends - we all worked together - 'Are we going to the pub tonight?' When you are young you never think much about saving money. But it was good. I liked Queensland.

So you came to Canberra in ...

In beginning of 1958.

And two years later you bought the logging business.

Yes.

Okay, and then, you were saying, you were using the horses in the forest - one horse or two horses?

Two horses. Two draughthorses and we give it a bit of a rest, one work in the afternoon and one work in the morning. You can't work all day with one horse. Not too bad in Winter time when it is a bit cool weather, the horses can work all right - work better. But in Summer when they start to sweat I really feel guilty for the animal because really if you don't look after even the horses they - these animals - they fight you if you try to smack with a stick and do in a hurry, the horses don't feel like it - healthy like. We got one horse named Jack and sometimes in the weekend - we deliver the wood from Monday to Friday, and on Saturday and Sunday we go up and make a bit of a stockpile for the next week. Sometimes I was up in the hill trimming and my brother was there cross-cutting because at that time we snig full length: full length trees you have to falling, trimming and cross cutting down the hill. I was up the hill doing the trimming and my brother was down. My brother sent the horse up the hill and he comes straightaway walking by himself. When I was up I said, 'Jack, turn around'. He turned around, he waited for me to hook the trees. 'Go down now' and he started walk steady, steady in the track - very, very good horse. This is what I wanted to mention before. After five years, we trade in the old trucks.

What kind of trucks were they?

International, 160.

160 cwt.

Yeah, 160 cwt, and then we changed to a bit bigger, we bought a 180. I can't remember exactly the first crane coming in the ACT. I think it was in 1970 or '68.

The first crane.

The first crane - Tikal crane. So we changed the truck because essentially the 1600 it was a bit weak to put a crane on so we had to buy a more heavy truck to put the crane on because when you got your arm ... in your truck when you've got your arm right there, right out, to pick up the logs, so you've got a fair bit of weight - if you know what I mean. Another contractor put the crane in a 160, 1600. They had to cut - the side they got the logs - they had to cut a piece of wood, the same height as a body, and put it from the body to ground otherwise they would tip over the truck. The one eight hundred you didn't have to do that because it was a more stronger truck and a bogey truck, no single wheel in the back so a lot more stable. We keep going with this truck for another four or five years - it could be early 1975 - '74 or '75, something like that. Then we started to get a big bigger, employ a few men and we trade in the one eight hundred and we buy a Volvo.

A Volvo truck.

Yeah, just a prime mover and a couple of trailers. So then we started We picked up the job all right and we got along all right with the Forest and we like the job. And then we buy these two trailers; one stopped all the time in the bush and we're loading. By the time the driver, my brother, goes in town - it took about We had to work all the time by the watch because they took about two and a half hours.

To take a load into town.

To take a load into the town and then come back. So in two and a half hours you had to get the other semi which was stopped in the bush already loaded because if you don't get ready, if they missed it by, say, twenty minutes, he missed a load. You had to work all the time in case something happened - rain is a different story - but if the weather was all right. Sometimes you had to push when it was wet, too. When it was raining you had to work in the rain.

When you say 'miss a load', you mean he wouldn't get the load to the mill on time.

In time because at five o'clock.

They close. Where was the mill?

At that time they put a weighbridge in this Cooma Road there. What do they call it? - Hume.

Yes.

In 1975 they started. '72 actually they started but us, we keep going for another couple of years. We look at Because Crawford they come when they opened the new sawmill in Hume they had Crawford come in with a big order, half a dozen semi-trailers.

He was logging, too, was he?

He was logging, too. He was a big operation. But really Forestry, he doesn't like a big operation.

The ACT Forests.

The ACT Forestry he doesn't like it at that time - even now - because there is a lot of mess, a lot of waste. They've got a lot of faller, no experience in the job. Even now sometimes I go in the bush just for fun because I've been there for long and I go there and look at it. You see along the edge of the road are logs, good quality, first grade and just ...

Disposed of.

Forestry, has never been like that. And us, we never - me and my brother - we don't want to come really big, just the way Forestry want to do it. For that, the Forestry, when

you talk about Frank Rosin and Gino Rosin, my brother, they was very appreciative about us.

Whilst you were working in the Forests from 1958
whereabouts were you living?

We were living up in - Forestry, they give accommodation to us, just a small house.

Where was this?

When we was up in Uriarra, we got a house up in Uriarra near to the settlement there. When we was up in Pierce's Creek, we got accommodation at Pierce's Creek - it was a camp. They called it a logging camp. Just a kitchen and fuel shed. It was all right at that time - better than paying rent - we got it free. I think they charged us very little - I can't remember exactly - it could be two or three pounds a month or something. When we started to get a bit bigger in 1975 No, I bought the first house in Lyneham in 1974, I think.

When did you get married?

I got married just about around that time. I got married in Australia.

Was your wife Italian, too?

Yeah.

You met her in Australia.

I met her in Australia.

So you got married in about 1974 and you bought the house in Lyneham.

Could be - I can't remember if it was '73 or '74 - something like that, very close anyway. I bought the first house in Lyneham and my brother bought a house in Queanbeyan. Actually they found a good buy to buy in Queanbeyan at that time. They're still there in the same house. Then when I make a bit of money Actually the government gave to me - I put in an application - the government gave to me the house in Lyneham.

When you came from Italy?

No, when I got married. When I got married I put application to the government and they gave me a government home. And then a couple of years later I got a bit of money and I asked for authorisation to buy the house off the government. Finally they say yes. At that time it was not so bad, I think it was eleven thousand pounds or something for the house in Lyneham - or twelve thousand, something like that.

How much was your business making per week when you started ...?

END TAPE 1, SIDE A

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B

How much was your business making per week when you started, when you took it over in 1968 - in 1960, I should say?

1960 roughly, five hundred pounds.

A week?

A week.

And how much expenses did you have?

You had to put away in the bush half and half - half for expense, half ...

For yourself.

Sometimes when you got In a small operation it was all right you haven't got much expense: only a couple of tyres in the truck and the petrol, diesel, whatever, but it was not too bad. At that time we made a bit more money than when we was a bit bigger.

You made more money then than when you got bigger.

Yep. You don't believe it?

No, I believe it. Yes, I can see with a big Volvo truck

This is true. And not only that and with a machine they call a logging skeeter[?], a timberjack or whatever, up in the bush and they had to rush all the time because you had to buy the Volvo, you had pay by term and at the end of the month and the tyre. When you've got this logging skeeter you don't care any more. You go over the top of stumps and you break the tyres and sometimes break the diff and, oh ... trouble, trouble and spending more hours in the bush to get the wood out. We were more organised when we work everything by hand. More hard work but more organised - everything go nice and smooth all the time. This is true - be honest.

I can see it's quite right.

It was very good. I put aside more money when we work by hand than when we were bigger.

Your brother was doing well, too. He bought the house in Queanbeyan. When did he get married?

They go back to Italy to get married. I think they go back in 1970 and then come back in 1972. He never wanted to come back any more, so for two years I had to carry on the business myself.

Did you have any help?

I got my brothers-in-law. I was not married at that time but my brothers-in-law, they come and give me a hand sometimes but normally I had to push hard by myself and a couple of men: one driver and one give me a help in the bush. My brother looked like he doesn't want to come back any more and after I write a letter saying, 'It's up to you if you want to stay there.' But in the end he said, 'They changed a lot since we left Italy, they are going so well.' I write a letter we are going well here, too. I tried to convince him to come back. Anyway, he came back and he's happy now anyway.

How old were you when you came to Australia?

I was born in 1932 ...

Born in 1932 - '56 - twenty-four.

Twenty-four.

When did your brother come?

My brother came a year later, 1957.

How old was he then?

He's three years older than me. He's a bit older than me.
He was around twenty-seven.

He would have been twenty-seven/twenty-eight.

They go back in 1972. They got married a bit old - about thirty-three, thirty-four, something like that. But that's life. The Forestry actually, they helped us a lot because not many, even at that time, they stay, they work in the bush and always - we can hear - always there is something wrong: the contractor on the other side of the town call the Forest, they've got an argument with the boss. But not - because we're coming from a very ... from the right family. My father had been in America for a few years and always they said to me when they knew I wanted to come to Australia, he said - only one thing they told me, they learn in America - 'Be a good boy, not a wrong boy, be good boy'. I remember from back home.

So your father went to America before he got married.

Before he got married - in 1928 or something. At that time they requested in America for us - they said to collect some potato work in the farm and this sort of thing. They was engaged by the government, too, in America.

Why, when you were a young fellow, didn't you go to America? Why did you come to Australia?

There's another story because actually the government of Australia or embassy or ambassador or whatever at that time, they got a request for some sugar cane cutters. In American there was not much, I think, because we don't hear much from America to go to America. Always they say better money in Australia at that time. I can't remember exactly. But apparently I come to Australia because one day one of my friends, we'd been to school together - and they also live in Sydney - and we come together. He said, 'Frank, are you coming to Australia?' I said, 'Oh, it's too far away', just when I was coming home from national service, I'd been to national service. It was one or two weeks, I'd finished my national service and I was home. And then he said, 'Come on' and he tried to push me. I said, 'All right.' So we go in Venice to the embassy and said, 'Have we got any chance to come to Australia?' They took our name and address and a couple of weeks later, already I got my passport in my hand ready to go.

That was quick. And you both came out and cut sugar cane.

Sugar cane, yes - me and my friend.

But he didn't come to ...

Canberra, no, because he got another After a while he got married up in Queensland and he got another brother-in-law who lived in Sydney, so he decided to stop in Sydney. Nearly every Christmas we see each other, anyway. Either he comes to Canberra or I go to Sydney. We've been friends from when we were little kids in the school.

When you say you worked well in the forests and you got on well with ACT Forestry, did you ever have any problems with them at all or did they have any problems with you?

Not at all, nothing because - this is what I say before - we got good help from the Forestry because we were being honest all the time, and even some time in Winter time when we got a wet compartment he tried very hard for us, for me and my brother, to give me the next compartment where it was more rocky country, like more solid - not to get us bogged. They tried to look after us well. We go back and finish the wet compartment when it was dry - when the dry weather come we go back and finish. Not only that, because when we were You get used to the job and you like to get everything done properly. Even when we finished the compartment to thinning, you had to clean the mess in the road - leave everything in order. Sometimes you fell trees and they've got big branches and if you leave it sticking up in the air it never goes rotten quick and you've got a lot of trouble for next time when it's time to go back and thinning for the second and third time anyway because every two or three

years they thin it out. So you had to chop, you had to go past the compartment, you spend maybe one weekend to do a proper job, thin it out properly and then slash the branches two feet from the ground - I think it was two feet anyway or sometimes two feet six, not much difference anyway.

Afterwards when you drive in the road, you can see where us worked and where somebody else worked because everything was They don't say Frank and Gino, they've done a wrong job; he does professional job and you enjoy. I feel a lot better inside. Me and my brother, for that we never get any argument with the Forest.

How big were the compartments that you were cutting?

Could be around fifty acres - fifty/sixty. All depends if it is in the corner, it may be a bit smaller but it's quite a fair bit a compartment.

When you started off how were you cutting the trees?

With a five foot handsaw - one on each side. And you had to make a scarf to put it where you wanted because the trees is just like that. You had to put exactly otherwise you hung[?] up to the next trees and then if it's wet[?] or some time you missed it. You can't help because probably it's a bit windy and the trees move up in the top. You're just about ready to [inaudible] and you can't hold them.

Sometimes you miss and they hit the other trees. When you hit the other trees it does damage because pine, they've got

very soft branches, very soft bark. Even when you snig with the horses you had to have So if you're working the slope and you tried to snig with the horses on the slope, the bark comes off on the next tree standing. You had to get the right direction all the time. Somebody doesn't look at that but us we look at it because Forestry looks after us and we look after the Forest. If you go down Pierce's Creek or Uriarra or Stromlo Forest or Kowen Forest, all the bosses they know our name because we'd been working for

After you cut the trees down and you got the horses to take them out. Did the horses drag them on the ground?

Yep.

And then you loaded them onto to the truck down at the road.

Yeah. Down where the horses also had to snig, you know, where you wanted the wood, there you had to cross-cutting after with a three foot handsaw [and then ?] with an axe. Sometimes you had to lift the log, lift the full length trees on top of each other because if you leave on the ground - or put something underneath - because if you leave on the ground and they start to cut it when you're halfway through the logs they start to jam the saw. You had to have it open all the time. Now with the chainsaw, it's a different story because if the logs are on the ground and if they've got nothing underneath you start to cut from

underneath and come up. If you've got logs underneath and it's still a bit up in the air, up off the ground, you can start from the top and keep on going.

With the saws you were using you couldn't obviously get underneath.

No, no way.

When did you start using chainsaws?

'75 - '74/75.

Up till that time you were using the handsaws.

And when they were blunt you had to sharpen - had to learn to sharpen. It's not easy. You had to learn the job. It was quite interesting to learn this job. Even now, if I'm around in the bush I can hear straight away - if some contractor work and they've got some of the fallers - I can hear straight away if the chainsaw is not sharp enough. I can hear the smell from the smoke because they work hard and the smoke - the chainsaw has white smoke - and they burn away. I can hear straight away those working.

In the early days after you got the horses to drag the logs down the hill and then you cut them or did you cut them first before you dragged them?

No, the horses they dragged a full length. If it was a bit downhill, the horses got a bit of help, but if it was sometimes up, you had to cut probably in half, probably leave it to full length, twelve footers, and the rest It all depends if it goes for first, second or third grade.

So you took them down to the truck.

To where we've got a dump, what we call a dump - a place. Forestry, actually, make a place for every contractor for every block of land. They make a bit of land where you can park the truck.

How did you load the logs on to the trucks?

This is very interesting. After the dump, if you've got a bit of a bank, you had to grab with the horses again and stockpile in the bank, a bit more higher - if you've got a bank. If you haven't got a bank, you had to grab again with the horses and put in a pile because you can't load the trucks The eight footers, you load just by hand like that - lift and goes - one bloke on the top of the truck. Ten footers - between nine and twelve footers - you had to stack on the top of the hill and then with two sticks about that long - about that size

Big, thick ones.

And put them from the bank to the truck one each side - two sticks - into the body of the truck and then push, roll onto the truck. And then you've got your body on one side, the lift the stanchion. The stanchion was made just like that, just like an 'L' on the side of the truck. So you start, you roll up the logs, lift up to the So you've got the logs on this side to the left or to the right, it doesn't matter, because you've got four stanchions: two on the left, two on the side. And then when you start to lift them up on to the body of the truck, you lift up - not where you've got the sticks, [but] where on the side you lift up the two stanchions about four foot high and start to pack from one side.

So you pack them on a slope.

On a slope and when you start to get a bit more higher you have to lift up the stanchions on this side as well and lift up the sticks as well. You understand what I mean?

Yes.

And then for walk from the hill to the body you need about four metres plank to walk in or to roll up the logs. Four metres long hardwood plank and then every foot they got two by two or something. They're stuck with an iron[?] to grab it to push the other way is slippery, like a stack.

So you push it up over these.

No, you push up to the stick where they goes in the top of the body of the truck and for ourself to walk, we've got these two planks and walk on the top of the planks. Otherwise when the truck started to go high

You'll slip. Yes, I see.

You can't reach any more, but if you've got your planks from the logs where they are up to the body of the truck, you've got a chaqnce until you reach it because we go up, I think, it was about two metres, two and a half metres.

Two and a half metres high.

So from the ground, between the ground and the body of the truck is about what? - about a metre or something, roughly - plus another two and a half is three and a half metres. You can't push a log up there, so you had to have something to walk, to push all the time. It was not easy.

Did you ever have any accidents?

I got one small accident in Springtime, not really bad but because it was Springtime when the pines they started really grow - move - the bark comes off very easy. And even when you snig by horses and they hit the stump or rock or something, the bark will come off, will peel off.

[Inaudible]. So when you roll up on the sticks to go up in the truck it's very slippery. When my brother said, 'I

can't make any more, they go.' [Inaudible]. I tried to jump out and let the logs go; and when I jump out, I jump out and got the axe just next to the truck and I fall ... just the axe. I don't know what is happening - probably when I jump, I hit it with the legs, with my shoes - the handle of the axe - and they turn up a bit and I get a cut here - twenty-five stitches.

That's not good.

The only one accident I had. It was bad enough. So [inaudible] had to I goes up in the bush the same after a couple of days but I can't do nothing - very stiff.

Where did you go to get the stitches in the cut?

The first hospital We were up in Pierce's Creek at that time. I think what they call the John James Hospital. Actually, the Forester was there because every morning the Forester had to come and measure the logs because we were going by superfeet; and the measure man was there, Forestry, just give me a lift in the four-wheel drive. He said, 'Come on, Frankie, we can't lose any more time.' They tie it up with my belt[?] because blood And they said we'll go straight to the hospital. [Inaudible]. This is what he did.

That was good.

This is the only one accident I got in the bush after twenty-six years.

When did you get the crane to lift the logs on?

When we got the crane in '75/76, it was not easy because The crane they've got now is all hydraulic. They've got a grabber. They push a button or a lever, whatever, grab it and up she goes. But the first Tikal crane coming, they got a winch. The harder you pull out - it was in three pieces So you pull out the first bit and put in a pin, the second bit and put in a pin, and the third pin, you put a bit. And they've got like a scissor to grab it with a rope - they use at that time with a [inaudible] or something to grab the scissor. They've got a really round, like a hook to grab the scissor and when you pull it the scissor closes.

I see what you mean - closes around the log.

Just like that and it closes around the logs, but my brother - normally they use the crane and they hook the logs underneath, and I wait in the truck to unhook the logs and put it where I want it. But sometimes if you hook in the middle - the logs - it was not too bad to get balance, but if you put a bit too much - it's heavy wood, especially twelve footers - if you put six inches over and you had to grab - sometimes if it was a normal, not really bad, you can hold the log - but if it was a bit too much you had to drop

the logs now and again and move the scissors to where they come in between balance.

So it was a bit fiddly.

It was dangerous, too, because you've got the logs and you are in the truck, three or four metres up in the air and you are there and they try to push down the logs and they never come. The logs can just move all the time because the crane is not stable, it's just a rope.

But you never had any accidents with it.

No, I never got any accidents because we are very understand not to get Because when you have an accident, you waste time and there was no compensation at that time, no insurance, no nothing.

No insurance.

The insurance started coming '75 or '76 when the big operation come in.

Before that you couldn't get insurance; they wouldn't insure you.

You couldn't get insurance. You had to look after yourself.

Yes, I can see that.

You had to look after yourself. Insurance started in 1974/75 when Crawford, this fellow we were talking of before with the big operation That happened at Pierce's Creek. He was two fallers, two cousins. Then one cousin, he felled the trees and the other one was not far enough - trimming - hit him with the logs - dead on the spot. Killed him on the spot. After that the Foresters, they put their foot down; there had to be insurance. Actually it was better because it was not an easy job, it was a bit of a dangerous job if you don't know. If you know what you are doing but still with the operation, one of these days It's dangerous - believe it or not.

Yes, I believe it's dangerous.

END TAPE 1, SIDE B

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A

Identification: this is tape 2 of an interview with Mr Frank Rosin conducted by Brendan O'Keefe, recorded on 2 June 1994 at the sound studio at the Australian War Memorial. The topics covered on this tape are the history of forests and forestry in the ACT and especially Mr Rosin's work as a logging contractor. End of identification. We were talking about your work in felling trees and so on.

One thing I wanted to ask you was who were the people you worked for? Who were the bosses in ACT Forestry at the time you were working as a logging contractor?

Ron Murray. I think he was the second boss, Ron Murray. The first boss, Bill Bateman.

Bill Bate?

Bill Bateman? Bill Bateman actually was the foreman up in Uriarra. They call him Mr Mann or Lamb.

Lamb.

Mr Lamb, he was the big manager boss in the ACT at the time.

Who did you actually deal with when you were logging? Who actually looked over what you were doing and so on during the years that you were logging?

During the years, mostly it was Bill Bateman. He was in charge to come out and see us.

Mostly when you were logging you were on your own, there wasn't somebody from ACT Forests there all the time looking

No, not at all the time. If you need him, you have to call him or go in the office and see him and 'We need you to come

in and watch what we had to do it.' But most of the time, when you know what you had to do, well, you probably see him once a week or once every fortnight. It wasn't really necessary to see him all the time, anyway, because there wasn't only us to look after. He might have half a dozen contractors at that time, could be more. What he does What we needed actually if we need for the road to be done with the grader or need a couple of loads of gravel, or a few rocks - we had a bit of a bog here - this sort of thing, but nothing else actually.

How did the contract work? You signed a contract with ACT Forests and how much did you have to pay them for the contract?

Nothing, just that they send you a letter - they call it a contract for such and such a compartment: number nine or ten or twenty or whatever. You go and look at the compartment and you give a price. Who puts the low price gets the contract.

So you give a price to say how much you'd log that for and then do they pay you that price?

They pay us that price but normally the Forestry they get the pay from the sawmill. And then after - this is another - you had to be When you sign the contract, you get so much as tonnage or superfeet goes every day or every week

because the sawmill they've got men to pay and if they [have not] got any wood they start to complain to the Forests.

If they haven't got enough ...

If they haven't got enough wood. So you have to keep going some time even if it was bad weather to deliver the wood to the sawmill because you've got a contract. Forestry never give you any fine but it doesn't look all right because Forestry got a complaint [from] the mill and us we've got a complaint [from] the Forest. Actually it got something to do with the Forest itself.

So you took the wood to the mill, the mill paid ACT Forests and then Forests paid you.

And then Forests paid us.

How long did it take to get paid?

They pay us every fortnight. Every fortnight you got your cheque in your mail - no question at all.

That's very good.

Every second Friday you look in the mail, cheque coming. Some time probably it missed it but no later than Monday. No later than the following week Monday.

That's very good.

We got no question for that - no trouble.

When you first started where was the mill at that stage?

Only in Fyshwick. The logs, the first grade, had to go to the government sawmill and it was in the Causeway. Now what they call the Electrician ... near to the lake there.

In the powerhouse area?

Yeah, I think around there.

Around there somewhere.

Yeah, the first grade had to go there. The second and third grade, it goes down in Fyshwick.

Was that a government mill, too?

It was a private one.

Why did the government take only the first grade wood?

It belonged to the Forestry and it does at that time a lot of Housing Commission - these government houses - they need a fair bit at that time.

So that's why they wanted to control the first grade wood, and the second and third grade went to the Fyshwick private mill.

The private mill where they does mostly cages for cherry. They send it to Young.

Cherry boxes.

Cherry boxes. A bit of battens for the roofing.

Roof battens, yeah. Whereabouts in Fyshwick was this private mill?

Now, I think they put the Ready-mix or something.

I'll have to find that. I don't know where it is. Who ran the mill? Whose mill was it?

I think one is still running there. It's Voveris. I think it's Croatian or something. And another two fellows there [inaudible]. They call it Monier Sawmill.

When did those start?

It was there when we started, anyway. It was there. I think probably Monier, they buy out some Alec Castle, come from England, I think, and Frank Castle. I think it was two brothers. I'm not sure.

So Monier bought them out.

Monier bought them out.

Whereabouts was their mill?

They were close.

In Fyshwick?

In Fyshwick - very close. I think there was another sawmill. But normally us, we work for Voveris, Johnny Voveris. We get - what I have to say - mostly they want the third grade because they make these cherry boxes at that time. I don't know, because probably we come from a poor country and we don't want to throw away nothing; we got a lot of third grade stuff. We pick up everything. Well, Forestry actually they were very appreciative because we never wasted much of their time. Not like now - forget it.

When you were quoting for a block or a compartment, did you have any problems with quoting how much it was ...?
- especially when you started.

A bit of a tricky.

Tell me about it.

We know Forestry, actually, has got its own price. Probably at that time I think it was a dollar 100 superfeet.

A dollar or a pound?

A pound. No, ten shillings - a dollar - for a 100 super feet. But now you had to work it out, maybe that contractor is a bit cheaper than us, probably have to put nine shillings or eight because each forest, they've got a different price.

Each forest area.

Each forest area. I think in Uriarra it was the far forest from town so they pay a shilling extra; it was there eleven shillings, I think. In Pierce's Creek, it was ten. It could be ten shillings, it depends - around ten shillings. Stromlo was eight because it was more closer. And I think Kowen was more or less the same price as Stromlo. So when you were tendering you had to work it out in price each forest. If you call it ten in Uriarra, you had to tender for a bit more than Pierce's Creek. And if you were tendering Pierce's Creek you had to tender a bit less than in Uriarra, and Kowen and Stromlo the same sort of thing.

So you quoted on superfeet, you didn't quote on the whole amount that you were going to take out of a forest.

No, only on superfeet - so much per superfoot. Now they change, now they go so much per tonne.

That would make it even harder, I think, would it?

It's more harder for the Forest.

For Forestry?

Yeah, because they have to check the first, second, third grade all the time. They got a man full-time in the mill or in the weighbridge to check. At that time, it was - I don't know now for sure - but when we were still in logging they got a man and he check: this load looks like all first grade; next load probably half and half.

Why didn't they do that when you were quoting on super feet because some super feet would be much more valuable than other super feet. Like first grade would be much more valuable than third grade.

Yeah, but the contractor, they started to complain because they lose a lot of time because the forest they are sent to, I say, in Stromlo or in Pierce's Creek or Uriarra or whatever - Kowen - there are three or four contractors. And the men coming to check the logs: first or second or third grade and they write down so much superfeet. If they come first to you and if you've got not enough stockpile you're all right. But the next contractor, they have to wait and

they miss a load. And by the time they finished, some time it was - he do as quick as he can, the bloke who comes and checks the logs - but he can't do everything in one hour. They have to pass from one contractor, the next and the next. And after they think to put a weighbridge and weigh the wood; and it goes some amount. Probably the Forestry they got an arrangement with the sawmill. But there's a bit of sequence[?]; it's not easy like it used to be.

Did you have much competition from other contractors?

Yep.

Were they undercutting each other's prices?

Yep, some time you missed a good contract for five cents a ton or something, probably if you put five cents less. Some time you get to the same price, and they call you in the office. Some time you go to the same price and two contractors, they've got the same price and they call you in the office and they say They never call you in at the same time. They call first you and after me or first me and after you. And they say - it's a bit of a tricky - we got so and so, seven cents lower than you. You make it for seven cents lower - maybe it's only five. But a couple of cents, you know. And they say all right. But you've got references there, too, if you're good, you've got the job anyway; it's not hard to get the job.

If you had a good reputation with them, ACT Forests would take a higher price from you.

Yes.

How many other contractors were there when you started in 1958 and when you started your own business in 1960?

We got about ten or eleven contractors.

And they were all competing against one another.

Some time you had to work for a bit less. But you had to understand one thing: if you got the right compartment, the right block - they call a block a compartment - you can still make it because you got good wood, good area, easy to make wood. Probably you have to make a load if you put a bit low price - probably you have to make a load a week extra, but it's nothing.

One load a week extra.

One load a week extra for a cheap price - if you put a bit low price, but it's nothing compared if you've got a rough compartment, rough trees and hard to work. Probably you have to work for the same amount of hours to get probably less loads per a week - a lot more less. Some time if you got a really rough compartment, maybe three or four loads a week less than normal.

That's a lot less.

That's a lot less. So for one load a week if you put a bit cheap price - you can't win all the time in the life.

Were the other contractors working the same long hours that you and your brother worked?

No.

They worked shorter hours.

Shorter hours and - I don't know because probably there were quite a few Australians working and probably got a bit 'yappy yappy' with the bosses. They go along with

Talk too much with the bosses.

No, we don't say that but they got a better They come up better than us, anyway. You know what I mean? Put it this way, if somebody doesn't care, even some Italian doesn't care - some of the Italian contractor doesn't care - if the mill run out of wood and they have to pay the men - he doesn't care. But us, we keep caring all the time - to the mill running all the time. This was the idea because I put you in my position. If you've got men to pay and you've got no wood to cut it, you had to work around the other way, isn't it? If you've got men to pay and the

mill runs out of wood, how do you go? Your name goes bad[?].

You mean, if you've got no wood to go to the mill then the man in the mill is not doing anything.

That's right. And for that we had to work long hours. When you are in that position you have to do something with the sawmill and Forestry. And you get a bad compartment and you can't produce much, we try many times to employ men. But I remember the year I get married 1972 or '3 or whatever, I want a week off at least and in one week we employed seven men. They stay a couple of hours, and after

They go.

They say this a job for a blackfella - a job for animals - we can't do it.

They wouldn't do it.

Even when sometimes we got a bad compartment we try. They were there with me and I try to teach them and tried my best to have a bit of rest when they were a bit tired; you pick it up, no worries. The next day there was not anyone. They never turn up.

Doesn't come back.

No come back because they reckon it is a job for a bulldozer not for a man.

So even after you got married you couldn't even go and have a honeymoon because ...

No.

You just had to work. Is the number of contractors still the same or are there more contractors now or less?

Less.

Less, because they're big.

Big. I've still got a nephew there working in the bush. They call him Rosin Logging Contractor.

So the family contracting business still goes on.

Yeah, actually when I'm off work, when I said I can't do any more, my nephew still works with us - me and my brother - and I retire because of my hip and my brother for the back - it's very bad. He can barely walk. He walks but oh ... here, there. It's too late, anyway. Yes, we've still got a nephew. We sell out the business to my nephew. He still goes.

You were saying in the early days you were taking the wood to the government mill at the Causeway and then at the same time to the Fyshwick mills. Did that change later on?

They changed In 1974 we got a very wet year and very windy. The wind blows down half of the forest. And then after that it changed. After that the wood it go If you paint it When they go blue and black when they're down. They go for a fair while because there's still roots in the stump, but after the roots are out from the ground they go blue and dry very quick. So we had to work like mad to pick up all this wood and there's nowhere to sell it. So this IFP, the biggest sawmilling in Hume, they get as much as they can. So after that they changed the system. I think the government probably get a big contract with this big sawmill, so they close down at the Causeway. They close down a few sawmills in Fyshwick because most of the wood goes there [to IFP].

So they wanted one big mill to be able to take as much as possible.

As much as possible.

And that was the one in Hume.

Well, it wasn't enough because more contractors come from Tumut to get this wood; otherwise the Forest, they waste a lot.

This is when it was blown down?

Blown down, yes, in 1974. And then they carried on for two years I think - two or three years. At the last when they started to get a bit dry, there was one sawmill down the coast in Ulladulla, they take this wood there. At that time we got a driver, me and my brother, and one driver from ACT during the day. And we had to pay one driver from roughly six o'clock in the afternoon up till the next morning because they took overnight to Ulladulla with a full load and then come back. They come back at three or four o'clock in the morning so the other driver started. A lot of struggle at this time to look after because Forestry never push you, but we feel guilty ourselves. One day you pick up at [inaudible] the staff, and the next wind blow they blow up all the beautiful trees and a lot of it waste. You had to push hard to help with the Forest as well. This is the way they go at that time.

Did you employ extra people to help at that time?

At that time I think we got three or four men, I think.

Was that normal or extra?

Extra, to get this wood out as much as possible.

Was it most of the time just you and your brother?

Most of the time we worked me and my brother, yes, up to '74.

And then after that you started

After that we started to get a bit bigger. My nephew come from Italy and another nephew come from Italy and then we started to grow with the family a bit bigger. Now, actually we got another three nephews coming from Italy but now two were not very interested in the bush. The first nephews that came they were more or less, but the other two were bricklayers back home and now they have got a big company, Rosin Brothers Bricklayers - they make homes.

In Canberra?

In Canberra, yes. They've got a big job in O'Malley. They put up thirty or forty houses at a time.

You said one of your nephews took over the family business - now runs the family logging business - which one was that? Was that the first one that came?

The first one that came.

What's his name?

Nino Rosin.

Nino Rosin. So he's still working up in the forest.

Yes, and he married an Australian girl, too. They learn better English than me, anyway. It's better coming here young, actually. He came here when he was seventeen or eighteen, something like that.

During your time as a logging contractor did you do logging work in all the forests or just mainly in one or two areas?

No, all the forests. Where they call a tender you had to go, if you get it. Mostly we work between Uriarra and Pierce's Creek. We work a fair bit in Stromlo but not very often. In Kowen. I say probably in twenty-six years we spent roughly twenty years between Uriarra and Pierce's Creek; and the other six years, probably three years in Stromlo and three years in Kowen. It was a bit We tried to be always in the same area if we could because when you move from one forest to the other we got a lot of trouble. Not trouble - I mean we had to spend a lot of time because you have to move the machinery at that time with the horses and find a yard for the horses and do the right thing. We try actually to move all the time on the weekend if we could. Even now it is a lot quicker if you have to

move from one forest to the other because you've got the machinery to move and you've got your float - your prime mover and float - put machinery in the float and the next day you are ready to work in the next forest. At that time with the horses it was a bit of a I remember once I had to move from Pierce's Creek to Kowen, and I move the horses in the night-time after tea. My brother said, 'We've got a tender up in Kowen. There is nothing we can do in Pierce's Creek tomorrow'. I said, 'It's a bit of a funny story - a bit of a question? What are we doing? I've finished my tea. Ater, going to Pierce's Creek, grab the horses and go up to Kowen.' So we walked right through [to] Kowen because we've got nothing at that time. We don't know nobody. All our time was in the bush. And so we moved the horses from Pierce's Creek to Kowen. At six o'clock in the morning we were in Kowen and keep going with the work, never go back in the bed - a bit slow the next day though - a bit tired.

So you walked the horses from Pierce's Creek to Kowen and just kept going.

I say from probably eight or nine o'clock in the night, I can't remember exactly. At daylight I was in Kowen with the horses. We never do nothing with the horses, actually, because the horses were more tired than me, but we started felling and trimming ready for the next day, gave a bit of a rest to the horses.

Tell me, what happened to the horses in the long run?

What happened to the horses? Some of them are still alive.

Did you sell them?

We leave them there in Uriarra mostly. There was a bloke there - the bloke who came and measured the logs for us. He comes from England. His name is Eric Freame[?], a very good man. Then when we finished up with the horses he said to me, 'Hey, Frank, you want to sell the horses?' I said, 'No, we keep them'. 'Okay', he said, 'Because if you sell them you are no good to me because the horses have always been good, good friendly horses and I'll look after them for fun'. One died because it was too old.

Which one was that?

One of the horses.

That wasn't Jack, was it?

No, Jack is still alive - Prince.

Prince died.

Prince died and Jack's still alive.

Where is he?

Up in Uriarra - very old.

Do you go up and see him?

Yeah, my brother goes at least every fortnight to feed him. They buy a bag of lucerne chaff and they give it to Eric, to this bloke. I go and see him but he is very old now.

He must be a great horse.

He was.

So most of the time you worked in either Pierce's Creek or Uriarra and a bit of the time in Kowen and Stromlo. Was most of the wood you cut radiata pine?

Yes, radiata pine.

Did you cut any ponderosa or any other?

Yes, we cut ponderosa, too.

And any other types of ...?

Ponderosa or radiata. But radiata they use here and ponderosa they use in Albury. There is a big sawmill in Albury. They call it Limonex[?] Sawmill. They do all the chip because Ponderosa is not much good for dressed wood because very old wood and - this is what they explained to

me. I'll tell you what the bosses explained to me. In Australia, especially here in the ACT, we've got very cold weather - not cold weather - but they prefer better to grow where there is hot weather. It's very slow growing, Ponderosa, here. And when it grows slowly it's very tough inside because there's not enough sap. It's very dry wood. And when you dress it up, cut it on the bench and whatever, - dressed up four by four or two by two or whatever, they twist, so it doesn't like it. Actually, it's good only for chips.

So you can only make wood chips out of it. So it's all sent to Albury.

This Limonex, they do all the chip wood. They chip even radiata because up in Tumut My nephew - they've got another two sons - they've got a contract up in Tumut as well, but all the wood is radiata and the wood goes only to Albury for chip.

Is the radiata not good enough in the Tumut area?

In the Tumut, this is probably second or third grade, anyway. The first grade probably they keep in Tumut. I don't know the situation there, but this is what I heard. First thinnings, you never get much out from first thinnings, it is all the stuff, very small size. They use a lot of it, if it is straight enough, in Koppers logs. They treat them.

Did you log any other types of pine like nigra or anything like that?

No, only radiata - mostly radiata and ponderosa. But the ponderosa we get ... There's a big performer there, a bloke in the Tumut area - I don't know if he is in Tumut area or around that area - they've got a lot of trucks running. They call it Dean Company - trucks. So they've got a lot to do with transport, cheaper from this Albury sawmill then on to Sydney. They send it to Japan or somewhere to get pressed wood or something. I think there goes one big ship a week or a fortnight, I'm not sure. These people, these trucks from Sydney on the way back, they call it back load. They come and pick up our wood and take it to Albury. We've got nothing to do with transport - just to cut it. Forestry pay us just for an amount of tonnage.

When did this system start?

I think they started early 1980, between '79 and '80. It's a bit hard to remember everything.

Whereabouts was the ponderosa mostly?

Ponderosa they've got in every forest. Not much in Stromlo, but in Kowen and in Pierce's Creek they've still got a lot.

But it's only being chipped.

Only being chipped. They try to sell it here, too, but it doesn't go. I spoke to my nephew a short time ago. I think the biggest sawmill in Hume, they've got a chipper as well, now. But I never asked him if they deliver any Ponderosa there or if it still goes in Tumut; I never asked him.

You don't hear much about it. Usually you hear about the radiata.

I know very well radiata - I can tell you everything.

What sort of machinery did you get together over the years? You started off with the ordinary saws and loading the logs by hand and then you got a crane but what other kinds of machinery did you get?

If I explain to you, maybe you will start to cry. The first chainsaw. We talk about after they come with the steel chainsaw it was not too bad. But the first chainsaw we buy it was a Denham[?] saw, forty-two pounds heavy. Carrying it on your shoulder to go up in the hills, up to forty-five degrees - to carry the saw up there and fell the trees - oh, my goodness. When I was up there Then after, they came in this sort of steel saw, I think, made in Germany or something - a good saw, a really good saw. It lasts because I never got any trouble. When they're old they start to give a bit of trouble, but if you had to make a living with the logging business, you had to have good gear. Otherwise when you have an old saw and start and pull it out and it

never starts, you waste your time and get cranky - it doesn't work. Then after that we got this logging skeeter, they called a Forda[?], they come from Sweden. It goes up forty-five degrees.

How does it work? Can you explain it?

It's got six wheel drive, two wheels where the engine is, another four in the trailer. But it had to go all the time in reverse up because, if you try it, it turns over up the hill.

So the skeeter gets backed up the hill.

Backed up the hill all the time. It's got its own crane. It's like a little trailer in the back. In the back of the cabin you've got your own crane, like Hyap[?] or something - something different crane, there are a lot of different cranes - and you've got your grabber and you're carrying fifteen tonnes at a time from the bush.

Fifteen tonnes a day.

No, fifteen tonnes each trailer. You have to do a lot of bloody trips because normally we shift in the last five or six years from 1976 up to '85 - nine years - we shift, me and my brother, with a couple of fallers and a driver, a 120 tonnes a day. So we had to go eight or nine times because you need two full loads to fill the trailer because

we're carrying thirty tonnes at time, a load, in the semi-trailer. And four trips a day is 120 tonnes. The fallers took fifteen tonnes a time up in the bush and get down to the road.

Fifteen tonnes comes down in the skeeter.

No, they put in the trailer - it's a faller trailer. From there with a crane you're loading - it's the same crane, the same machine - you're loading the semi-trailer. So this job I do for the last six years.

How much did this skeeter cost from Sweden?

Very dear, around 150,000 and they never last long.

How long would they last?

Three years.

Is that all and they've had it and you had to buy another one? How many did you go through?

We go through three. We sold the last one to my nephew who is still carting wood with it. It was not too bad, but don't push very hard - a bit of flat country - but in the hill and you need a good machine, too - it's very dangerous. It was automatic. [If] something happened with the brake, you can't put it in gear, you can't put nothing.

Why was it automatic? I would have thought

Automatic, I don't know why they make it like that. Because when you were ready to load it, you had to look no gear, no nothing, just stop and keep going. Leave the brake down a bit and stop and keep going. It happened to me a couple of times. Brake leaking a bit ...

END TAPE 2, SIDE A

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE B

Brake leaking a bit of air and they started to move it but they had to be very careful. You had to wait for a long time. When they start to move it, you've got the brake on and you start to move it, you had to put the stake and a couple of logs under the tyres - grab a couple of logs quick to stop it rolling. And then after that you have to find out where the leak is and had to change probably the hose.

Weren't there any other types of machinery that could do the job and were manual rather than automatic?

The way they go now - everything has changed. My nephew buy a couple of - they call it Kettle[?] or something - they're using the big chain track. They use it in town for the excavation or backhoe or something - this sort of machine. They've got a big hump[?] and they've got a scissor and they chop down the trees and they put it in bundles. They've got

another - it's not that dangerous because it's got gears, it's not automatic. It goes up a fair bit of a steep. And behind is nothing. You can't trim any more now by hand. Behind this machine you've got another machine - we're talking about 300,000 each - we've got another machine the same with a bigger grabber on the top of the cabin and they grab the logs and they've got a delimber, like a scissor again - hydraulic - and they grab the logs and they push back to the cabin and this delimber saws the limbs and when they're coming - there is a red light on the dash - when they're coming you want four metre in length or five metre length, you press the button and the chainsaw, a jolly good chainsaw, cuts the length. And then behind this machine they've got a Forda: grabs the logs, put in the trailer and take it down the hill - does the lot. Now, to be a I know my nephew, anyway, because we see him now and again. Now to be a contractor, he said at least you need a million dollars just running around all the time.

It's become a big business.

And they're lucky because my nephew learns a bit of welding and fitting, but sometimes he never had to go in the bed because if they're broken down you had to get this machine ready for in the morning or during the day or as soon as you can, anyway. Sometimes he never goes to bed because he has to fix the machine, otherwise he goes broke very smart. He told me a short time ago he got \$2,000 a day to pay back the bank for seven days a week - Saturday and Sunday as well.

He has got a lot of worries. He's a fair bit bigger because he's got two sons helping at Tumut. He's got a contract there and a fair bit in the ACT. He's a big bloke. He's big in one way but a lot of worries, a lot of risk.

You'd have to be making a lot of money every day to cover the costs.

It's true. He's no liar.

So one of your nephews went into the business. Did you have any children of your own?

Two daughters.

Not loggers.

No loggers.

What do they do?

One is an accountant - my son-in-law. No, my daughter never does She got kids now - normally was in the Public Service. The youngest work in the ACT bank before getting married and the other one worked in Russell for the Department of Defence.

A bit easier than logging.

The sons-in-law, one is an accountant in the university - very clever bloke. And the other one is a rep - sells wine for a company.

And what about your brother, Gino, how many kids?

My brother, Gino, has got two daughters and a son. The son, actually, he drives - he works for a company as a mechanic. He works for a company - Fremont[?] or something - big company - trucks. It's in Queanbeyan, they've got a big company in Queanbeyan.

What big events stand out in your mind from when you were working in the forests? Did you have any big disasters apart from the blowing down of the wood? Were there any big bushfires or anything you had?

Sometimes, when we were involved with the forests, we get a fire. We had to go there with the skeeter and help the Forest. It happened only once, a bit of trouble, up in Brindabella, a fire started in the forest. One day the bloke who was in charge - what was his name? - he's dead now Anyway, he gives us a ring, he said, 'Frank, we've got a fire in so and so.' I said, 'All right, I'll be there as soon as possible.' It was pretty handy that time because it was up in Uriarra. We were very close to where the fire started, so I had to go there with the skeeter and make a couple of tracks. We had to work out how to stop the fire.

When was that roughly?

'78, close to 1980.

Fairly late in the piece.

Even the Forestry was not organised like now. They had at that time a fire truck but old trucks. Now they've got special things. In Stromlo they've got a big fire truck. At that time it was a small tank in the back, an old International and very hard to go up in the hills. Sometimes you had to push it. It was a bit of funny sometimes. The bloke who drove the truck, his name was Harold - I forget his second name - maybe very close to getting caught between the fires, he said, 'Come and help me, Frank'. So I go along with the skeeter and push him out. It was a bit hard, I tell you.

That's really amazing that they only had the one old fire truck that they had to push sometimes uphill.

They've got another little tank in a four-wheel-drive but That was interesting. Up to now, that time, it was You spent your time What am I trying to say? It was very interesting because you try to help ... we were like a brother - everybody - now it's a different story. If you go around now - sometimes I go around - in Uriarra or Pierce's Creek and a couple of the oldest - I've known them for a long time - and they say hello, how are you and this

and that, but the young people say what are you doing here, you old man, but I never mind. I was young myself many years back.

Identification: this is tape 3 of an interview with Mr Frank Rosin conducted by Brendan O'Keefe, recorded on 2 June 1994 at the sound studio of the Australian War Memorial. Topics covered on this tape are the history of forests and forestry in the ACT and especially Mr Rosin's work as a logging contractor. End of identification.

Frank, during your time as a contractor did you ever have any work with hardwoods in the forests?

Yes, in the dam there.

What did the work involve with the hardwoods?

Well, I don't know what they did with the hardwoods, but they sent us over there because we didn't have much job here in going[?].

Where did they send you?

Forestry asked me if I would go because otherwise I didn't have much to do. Probably at that time, I think it was early '60 or '61, logging was a bit down and Forests said they have probably got two or three days job a week. If you

want a full job then they asked probably - the contractor was building a dam - they're asking if there is any [inaudible] in logging. The Forest asked if I wanted to go and do a bit of work over there for a month until the sawmill picks up. I said I wouldn't mind. So we go there, me and my brother, and we started clear felling behind where they make the retaining wall for the dam. We started to clean up

Just clearing all the eucalypts and so on.

Eucalypts - a fair bit. It was hard, I tell you. Rocky country and steep, probably fifty degrees.

Do you remember the name of the dam? What dam it was?
.Where was it, anyway?

I think it was about thirty Ks up to Uriarra place.

Thirty K from Uriarra. Which way?

I think probably Upper Cotter Dam.

I'll have to look it up, I think.

I can't remember exactly the name, Brendan.

Anyway, it was pretty hard work clearing this hardwood forest.

Well, They've got a job for ... like my age if you go there fifty/sixty years old, you can't make it any more because you can't stand in the place - very hard to stand up.

It's so steep.

It's so steep. Imagine yourself to knock all the trees down. A fair bit of size we can fell by handsaw, with a five foot handsaw, one each side and the small stuff you had to clean up by axe. It was good money, actually - better than staying home.

So that was only for about a month or so.

I think we were there for five weeks and then after, when the Forest came around, they said, 'How long have you got to keep going?' We said, 'We've just about finished this', because now the sawmill said they started to improve a bit. He said, 'Any time when you've finished you can start back in your job.' And we did.

So this clearing was just for the sake of this dam that was being built.

Yeah. I don't know after that what they did with ... because most of the big stuff when we fell it, it goes straight into a creek where water started running. I think that time they snig out by bulldozer, push it and burn it or something - I don't know. I don't think they used this

wood, anyway. Who would get it out from there? It was very hard to get out from there.

So you just cut it down ...

Cut it down. Yeah, after there was a contractor, he got a contract with the dam. They called me there just to fell, anyway - clearing.

You said you were in ...

I forget all about it before to tell you because you asked me if I did any other job other than pine, but I forget ...

About the hardwoods. You said all up you worked for twenty-six years in the forests. What made you give it up?

When did I give it up?

What happened? Why did you quit?

I give it up for this trouble.

What happened?

When you finished putting the loads on to make a safety for not to get any trouble in the roads with the logs, you have to put a chain around - a dog chain, something like that -

and you have to tie them up properly, to tighten as much as you can. As that was happening, the chain broke. The chain snapped and I was on the top.

You were standing on top of the logs.

And then when I come down, I try to do my best when I get the dog chain a bit loose, I hear straightaway banging on the chain and tried to grab the logs as quick as possible, but no chance and from there I fall down in the logs. I can't hear much straightaway. I'm a bit sore but keep going. But I keep going for a fair while - a couple months. I don't say much, not even to my wife because it would start her worrying. She told me many times to give up the bush, no way seven days a week and this and that. I said, 'One day, one day.' After a couple of months more sore, and I started to limp, too, a bit. I said I had to go and see the doctor this time. So I went to see the doctor and she said, 'What's your trouble?'. I explained the story and they checked. They pushed a bit hard where we've got the join on the hip here.

On your right hip.

And she said to make sure we'll have to send you in to x-ray to see what is happening. The next day - I think the same day - I go to the x-ray and they said they'd send a copy to me. He said, 'You come and see me in two days time.' A couple of days after I go and see the doctor again and he

said He never said to me, the doctor, straightaway, 'You've got your hip cracked.' He said, 'You've got a bit of arthritis.' I said, 'But I don't think it actually comes quick like that, arthritis', because rheumatism or arthritis they take a bit of time to build up. But I said it happened to strike after I had my accident when I come down from I started to get sore and more sore. He said, 'We'll wait another month to see how you are going', but it was getting worse and worse. He said, 'What do you reckon about an operation?' I said to the doctor, 'If you think that it would be better, we'll do the operation.' He said, 'I don't know about working in the bush any more because they have to cut your legs.' I said, 'What?' He said, 'They have to cut your bone and your legs completely to take out the hip and they put a plastic hip.' I said, 'Let me think about it for a couple of days. I've got to have a bit of a talk with ...' The doctor actually explained to me somebody I know, one of the other fellows, they get the same operation but for arthritis. He was an Italian living in Queanbeyan. 'Because,' I said, 'if I have to finish up, I'll be without my work any more' 'But if you go on like that,' he said, 'you'll finish up in a wheelchair. It's as simple as that.'

So you had the operation.

So I decided to have the operation. I talked with another of my - not my friend really but I know the name of the bloke - I go and see him. I said, 'How are you going with

your hip?' He said, 'It's not like before. I feel it when the weather changes a bit. It's not really sore, just something is not mine, but I walk. It's not bad.' 'Okay', I said, 'thank you very much.' He said, 'Why?' I said, 'Because it looks like I have to have the same operation.' So he asked me what was happening with this and that, and I explained to him what was happening. Anyway, to finish up, in 1986, the beginning of 1986, I think, I get the operation.

The hip replacement operation.

And after six months ... because Dr Kitchener I have my operation here, he said to forget about the bush, but I was not convinced. My mind was there. But he said, for three months you can't move from your chair. It was not an easy operation. But I'm coming after six months I said, I'll try one morning. My wife said, 'Where are you going?' I said, 'I [am going] up in the bush this morning.' She said, 'You can't walk properly.' 'But maybe,' I said, 'I can overlook the men - what they are doing.' So I went up there. I tried to go in the logging skeeter to clean up a bit of the road, do [inaudible] a bit of a job. A couple of hours later ...

You couldn't do it.

I said no.

This is the end.

I had to go home. I said to my nephew and my brother, 'No, [inaudible].' My brother said, 'Go home. If we can't do nothing about it ... If it's impossible, it's impossible.' I stayed home for another week and back again - back in the bush. My nephew said, 'What are you doing here?' I said, 'I'm sick and tired of staying home.' I tried again with the logging skeeter - it's the easiest job you can do. Somebody has to do it, but I can't do it with the chainsaw, I can't do it with the skeeter, with the falling or to get the Because even with the faller there is another ... if something happened you had to be quick, otherwise you've lost your life and I wasn't in condition to do it. So I tried with the easy job to do it and for another couple of hours and I said, 'Now, it's just the end', and I had to give up.

Was your brother and one your nephews operating the business while you were off?

Just about that time my brother was not very good, too.

He had a bad back.

He had a bad back.

Was that from an accident or just from ...?

From an accident, too.

Up in the forest? What happened to him?

It was a very frosty morning and he tried to walk in the [inaudible], three metre trees, and tried to walk back to go and trim the next trees and decided not to walk in the middle of the branches or rocks. He walked just on the top of the trees and it was frosty and slippery - slippery on top of the logs - and he hit it with his back straight on the logs.

When did this happen?

'82. Very close ... a couple of years before me. He kept working for another three or four years, but he was getting worse and worse. The doctor said, 'It happened because you fall off on the logs, but it happened because your back is finished, too. You use a lot of the chainsaw.'

And it had affected his back badly. When you finally stopped working what happened to the business then?

We sell it out to my nephew.

Gino decided it was time for him to stop, too.

Yeah, time for him to stop and we stopped just about the same time.

So this was about '86?

'86 - end of '85/beginning of '86.

And you sold out to Nino then. Looking back over your twenty-six years working in the forest, can you say you enjoyed the work?

If I never enjoyed it, I would never have gone back after the operation.

That's right.

Some time I still think about going and giving a hand to my nephew. I've gone up some time more or less, but where I saw the machinery going up forty-five, fifty degrees, you think - everybody has to think: it's a job for young people. For over sixty, you can't make it any more. You can do it a bit in the flat country sort of thing because you have think all the time about if something happens - brakes. Sometimes you have to jump out of the skeeter very quick smart. I can't jump any more.

It's a young person's job. What did you do after you stopped work?

My daughter saw in the newspaper a bit of a job in the yacht club - maintenance: mow the grass around and do this bit here and there. I did that for a few years. Even sometimes

now I go - Wednesdays when they've got something to do with the beer delivery or whatever, I go around there and I help a bit, but very little, probably five or six hours a week or something - just to stay away from home.

You don't like not being busy.

Really, before I go completely retired I go, Forestry No, I go really by myself, my idea was to go and see the ... because I want to have - before I started with the yacht club - I wanted to have a job again, not easy, not hard. I went to see the Employment Department in the Plaza and I said I was looking for a job. I explained to him what had happened, what sort of job - probably a clerk or a driver for the government - a worker for the government. And they send me one day to go to the government doctor in Civic - the Employment Department. They give me the name and address and I go into Civic. The doctor looked at my record and said, 'You have had a broken hip replaced. Do you know where your job is?' I said, 'No.' He said, 'What happened if you go [inaudible]. If you've got a fire, you have to run.' I said, 'I can't run much. I'm lucky if I walk.' He said, 'It's all right if you run for a little while but not for Your job is behind a desk, pushing a pencil.' I said, 'I'm sorry, I'm Italian, I can't get to school here. What sort of job is there for me?' He said, 'It's very tight.' This is the last time I went looking for a job.

Do you miss working in the forests?

I miss it a lot. But even if I got a different job with the government to do a bit of like what it does - use a chainsaw to trim a few trees along the street or what have you - I wouldn't mind that at all.

What does your wife think about your time in the forests? You said something before about

She was not happy at all.

She wanted you to give it up.

Yes, she was worried about Really, I don't know if it was my idea or in my mind to work all the time in this sort of job, but I never listen much to her. I look always because there were three in the family - a nephew and a brother - and it looked like to me when I left a bit guilty or something [to] not be in a job with the family because we went along all right.

You still like to go up to the forests sometimes.

I like especially early in the morning when I hear all the birds and magpies and [inaudible] all singing - I like it.

What's the most remarkable memory you've got of your work in the forest? What's the thing that stands out in your mind most about your time in the forest?

It was always in my mind when I was in the forest to have at least - sometimes I'm dreaming all night - to have at least logs in the stockpile for a week ahead all the time.

Sometimes, even now and I left the job nine years ago, I still dream. Do you believe it? You don't believe it? I've been for twenty-six years and I get up in the morning four o'clock and then now after nearly ten years I left the job, four o'clock in the morning.

Wake up.

I never woke up but I know I had to get up. It was a bit of I enjoyed the job. It was a nice clean job, fresh air and you work on your own, no boss behind you, nobody complained about what we did.

That's all important, yes.

This is important. It's very important because if you've done something wrong or you're not happy in the job and this is no good and that's no good you have no happy life, anyway - if you know what I mean.

Yes. Is there any one incident that you remember that stands out more than anything else?

It was one accident, too, when I cut my knee but

But any one event or any one happening that stands out in your mind?

No.

Nothing in particular.

Actually, a bit of a scratch but it's superficial, but no stitches. I got a stitch here and the hip in twenty-six years; it's not bad. I've got a good record, actually.

Yes, that's not bad. I take it from what you've been saying that you have no real regrets about emigrating from Italy to Australia. You're happy to have come to Australia?

I've been back home twice, after ten years in 1956 and in 1980. Because in 1980 actually I go back because one of my brothers died - the second oldest brother. He started with a heart attack and [inaudible] he had been sick for a fair while and [inaudible] to go and see him because we were brothers. I look at the other of my brothers and my father what he does after many years. They reckon he does good, but it was not good enough compared with Australia.

Were they just still farming?

Still farming but you had to work hard just for living and put nothing aside where we come from. I don't know, some

other parts of Italy might be richer than where we come from, but where come from just on the border just between Venice and Yugoslavia, just there.

Do you still miss Italy?

Not at bit, not even dreaming. I got one of my nephews, the builder, he goes back this Christmas past and for a couple of months you can't talk to him. He looked like he's dreaming: Italy here, Italy there, I go back. When he said to me like that I just laugh because I said I've been there for a couple of times and I never see any improvement. Maybe, this is what I say, maybe in Milan or Rome or some other country, I mean some other town, maybe it's all right, but where I come from, I've still got other brothers there and, 'Oh, if you're coming home, why do you go there? You've got to sell your house there in Australia and you can buy a house here.' And I say, 'What am I doing after? Work with pick and shovel twelve hours a day to make a living.' And the wages there are not that great anyway compared with Australia - one house is next to the other.

You haven't got any room.

You have no room and here you can You know yourself anyway, I don't have to say. It's different. I never dream of Italy.

Just before we finish up I was just wondering, is there anything else that you think is important from your work in the forests that you'd like to tell me?

Every time - very important, really important - every time I go and see the operation now in the forest I never cry because they waste in the forest.

So much waste now.

Too much waste. I never cry but I feel like crying. From when we started up to now I feel like crying. A few months ago I met Bill Bates in Fyshwick, I was there in Dunlop to change a few tyres in the car and probably for a service there, and just as we were talking of a few things about the forest. And Bill Bates said - he's one of the Forestry; he's the manager now up in Stromlo - he said to me, 'Frank, things change a lot.' 'I know, Bill,' I said, 'I know.'

Is this because you think the ...

'And the people,' he said, 'they don't understand any more.' They said to bring down the wood instead of from up the hill and down, it costs money and after they leave it there in the ground to go rotten.

This is the contractors doing this?

This is the contractors doing this. This is what he told me. He said, 'You can't say nothing to them because they don't care.' I said, 'Why are there no chances to tie them up a bit. If you don't do that, you get a week off or something - what they were supposed to be doing many years back.' He said, 'We've got no control any more.' This is what is happening in the forest now. I like to go, but I like sometimes to stay far away from where they work because you see big piles everywhere of good wood.

You're saying that there's not enough control over the contractors now.

Over the contractors - maybe there's too much pressure: a lot of money to pay for the machinery and they have to keep going all the time. But it doesn't work. If you think back it doesn't work at all ... because I remember some time in the early stage of when we started with the horses, if you were a bit greedy and you tried to smack the horses, the horses got frightened. And by the time you were behind the horses and hook them up to the logs the horses were frightened and they started running and it's hard to catch him. You think you are doing more but you do less because by the time you spend the time to go and catch the horses when they start to go It doesn't work.

You've got to be careful.

In the logging you have to have a lot of patience and spend your hours and do the right thing with the logging system. This is what I've got all the time in here but now This is life.

That's it. Okay. I've enjoyed this very much.

I thank you, Brendan, I've enjoyed it, too, because if you describe it to somebody they think you are telling bullshit, but it is a true story. It's true like Jesus Christ.

Well, thanks very much, Frank. It's been a pleasure talking to you. Thanks for the time.

My pleasure.

END OF INTERVIEW