

DP-23

JULIA BARLAS GROULX

BIRTH DATE: 1904

INTERVIEW DATE: APRIL 14, 1989

RUNNING TIME: 1:00:00

INTERVIEWER: NANCY DALLETT

RECORDING ENGINEER: UNKNOWN

INTERVIEW LOCATION: FEDERAL WAY, WA

TRANSCRIPT ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 1989

TRANSCRIPT RECONCEIVED BY: NANCY VEGA, 10/1995

TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

GREECE, 1917

AGE 13

SHIP NAME NOT RECALLED

DALLETT: This is the beginning of interview number 397 [DP-23] for the Ellis Island Oral History Project. My name is Nancy Dallett and I'm here with Julia Barlas Groulx.

GROULX: That's right. Barlas Groulx.

DALLETT: And we are located today in Federal Way in Washington State. Today is Friday, April 14, 1989 and we're going to be talking about Mrs. Groulx's experience coming through Ellis Island in 1917 from Greece, and we're starting this interview at about ten past five

in the afternoon. Okay. Let's start back at the beginning of your story.

GROULX: Well, I'll tell you why I was, my mother died when I was an infant about three months old, I'll tell you. and my father was in politics, never was home. I was raised by my aunt and my older sister Helen. As I got older, why, naturally, I wanted to have a home, and I didn't. And, uh, so, anyway, we decided that, my oldest brother moving into the house, to take the house over. My father wasn't there.

DALLETT: How many children were there?

GROULX: Nine, and I was the youngest. Nine in the family. So my cousin Jim Barlas, he had been in the United States, and he had returned to Greece. And I says to Jim, "I want to get away from here." He said, "Well, let's see." He says, "Maybe you can go. I'll give you the money, and you can get away, but you're too young. You can't go, you have to lie, say you're, if you go up there to make the report, you know, seventeen, you can go." So, exactly . . .

DALLETT: How old are you?

GROULX: I was fourteen, or thirteen. So he gave me the money. And he gave me the money, in fact, he went to Athens with us and, uh, we didn't have the money. I mean, I and my brother, we didn't have the money to get a hotel or anything. My brother was in the service. We slept under the table, somebody's table, I don't know exactly where, you know. And, anyway, so when I went to report to get out of there, why, I had to lie to get away from there.

DALLETT: Now, why were you so anxious to get away?

GROULX: Well, it simply was, my dear, because I just didn't like to live, I hate to say this, I never liked the Greek method, and I never had a home life, see.

DALLETT: When you say the Greek method, what do you mean by that?

GROULX: Well, I don't like the way they live. Even to this day I haven't changed, and I wanted to get away from there. I don't know why. Don't ask me that. I ask myself that. Why? To this day, my daughter can vouch for that, I don't like nothing about the Greece. Although it's a historical place, but I don't like it.

DALLETT: Was it anything to do with what opportunities you thought there were for you when you were a girl?

GROULX: Well, not exactly. The opportunity is very slim in Greece, my dear. And every young girl in Greece, unless you're rich, you don't get no education in my time. Maybe now, but even to this day, Greece is way behind. And I just couldn't cope with it. I wanted to get away from there. I just wanted to make a life for myself. And, uh . . .

DALLETT: And what had you been told about, what had your cousin told you about life here.

GROULX: Well, what my cousin told, I could get work here, to work and it's different. Of course, you know, he was already here about three or four years, you know, working in some factory.

DALLETT: Where was he in this country?

GROULX: My cousin Jim.

DALLETT: Where in this country was he?

GROULX: In, um, Massachusetts. No, what was it? Where are the most factories? Massachusetts. And he worked

there, and come back sick. Anyway, so . . .

DALLETT: He got sick while he was working? Do you know what kind of factory it was he was working at?

GROULX: Well, I think it was a cotton factory. You know, the foreign people don't really want to know what to eat. And the first thing, he was coughing, they thought he had T.B., but he didn't. And, anyway, I just wanted to get away from there. I didn't have no home. My father was never home, and all my rest of my family had gone, and I decided I wanted to get out of there.

WILLIAM SMITH: Julia, they weren't too nice to you there. Some of them weren't too nice to you also.

GROULX: What?

WILLIAM SMITH: They weren't too nice to you.

GROULX: I didn't hear what she said.

DALLETT: You didn't get along so well with your family, or your father.

GROULX: Well, yes, I never had any trouble with my family. I just didn't, I just didn't like to stay there because

my brother was snotty to me and my brother, my youngest brother and I, we both ran away from home. My oldest brother, I don't think you young people understand where the oldest brother takes hold of the house and he orders you around.

DALLETT: What did he have you doing?

GROULX: Well, anything he wanted to. Well, there was not much to do b there was no work in Greece like it is here.

DALLETT: But the older brother had the younger sisters sort of attending to whatever . . .

GROULX: Well, no, it was just me and my brother. The rest of them was all gone, married, you know, left home. Well, he had children, he wanted us to take care of the darn children, and we didn't want it. We wanted to go out and do some things. So that's one reason. And I thought, well, I wanted to get away from there.

DALLETT: Did you think about going anywhere else besides this country?

GROULX: No. I just wanted to come to America, and I did. When my father caught up I was in a little boat, you

know, close to the big boat, to climb the steps there, that my father got up.

WILLIAM SMITH: They were ferrying them out to the boat.

GROULX: And, of course, he was disappointed I was getting away. But anyway . . .

DALLETT: Did you not tell him you were leaving?

GROULX: No, no, I didn't. Well, it wasn't that, but I just didn't want to say it. But he never was home, anyway.

DALLETT: Why was he never home?

GROULX: Well, he was in politics. You know, politician people, they're never home, and he never get got. And so that's it, the whole thing. So I was between my sister Helen, and my aunt, and that's how I was raised. And then when my brother moved into the house we had a different story. We had various sad situations. My little brother and I, we wasn't walking with the darn outfit. I shouldn't use that slang. Anyway, that my brother and his wife and their family wanted to have the whole thing, you know, and we just sit in the corner like two little puppies. So

we decided to move. You would too. And that's it. And my cousin, he came to my rescue and gave me the money, my cousin Jim Barlas.

DALLETT: Now, was, your cousin had lived in Massachusetts, and he had worked in the factory.

GROULX: Yeah, but for short times.

DALLETT: And then he was ill and he was coming back to stay in Greece.

GROULX: Yeah, he was still working after, he was living. Yeah, he did. Yeah. I'll tell you, there was several people in that same position. They inherit something in those factories, the cotton, or something like that, and they, coughing and, you know, they developed T.B. And I seen one of the men with T.B. I'll tell you, that's an awful thing, to see anybody that can't breathe. It's horrible. Yeah, he never came back. Yeah, that's my first cousin. So I came to, I was twenty-three days in the boat.

DALLETT: Do you remember when you actually left home? You didn't actually tell me where you lived in Greece. I didn't ask you that.

DALLETT: If you can spell it, Megalopolis. Spell it.

MARY SMITH: M-E-G-A-L-O-P . . .

DALLETT: O-L-I-S?

WILLIAM SMITH: Right.

DALLETT: Megalopolis.

GROULX: If you were French or Italian, you should pronounce it. (she laughs) (voices off mike) What next do you want to know now?

DALLETT: Do you remember when you were actually leaving? You must remember that point.

GROULX: Well, uh, we left, I think it was Thursday. I think the train, it just goes from Megalopolis to Athens every Thursday so we, my brother and I, we had a little money for that, and we made it, my cousin supplied that, too. And, uh, my youngest brother, Gus, he went in the service, that was the agreement. He went in the service, he wanted to go into the Greek service. See, the next year you're drafted, when you're eighteen. When you're sixteen or seventeen, I

mean, seventeen or sixteen, you volunteer which, he just recently died a few years ago, he went there and I come to this country. But we both slept under the table.

MARY SMITH: In a restaurant.

GROULX: Yeah. Oh, yeah. That restaurant. Yeah, definitely, so we could get a little food, too. (she laughs) And got a little food, too. But I wasn't a bad girl. I didn't do anything to be ashamed, never. But I had to get away from home. And I never forgave my brother, my oldest brother, I really didn't, because he wasn't nice to us.

DALLETT: And your father, your father caught up with you right before you left on the boat?

GROULX: Yeah, he did, but he said, "Well, I only hope you get over safe." And he says, "God bless you." And I remember that like it was today. You see, in Germany, there was a war there, you know. I remember that.

WILLIAM SMITH: Didn't he ask you why you wanted to go, or, what did, tell them about what he said when he caught up to you. You were on the boat and he was on,

she was on the ship, already there, and he was on a boat.

GROULX: Well, I was in a little boat coming over when my Dad came. And I bawled, you know, crying, you know how kids do, you know. But, uh, I thought he would have stopped them, but he didn't. But, see, Jim was now there waiting too, you know, so I think Jimmy kind of quieted my Dad down. My Dad was a down-to-earth smart man. He knew where he was going, you know. So that's one reason. And I really didn't like Greece, just didn't want to, to this day. You don't now what you got over here. This is a wonderful country. I love this country. I was by twenty-three days in the boat, and I had the best time of my life. And I, the first bananas I had, I went right out of the store, and everybody went, "Yuck, yuck." Not me. I chased after the cart. There was a, young children come, they had the bananas, I said, "Get me one." No worry. I just loved the boat and the Ellis Island. I would have stayed there my whole life.

DALLETT: What kind of passage did you have on the boat? Were there different classes?

GROULX: I came first class. My cousin Jim, he knew all about it, so he's the one who gave me the money because, he said the two other classes were on the water, and they're sick and everything else, but first class you're on top, you know, above the water. I had a good life.

DALLETT: And no authorities tried to stop you because you were a young girl travelling alone? Was that a problem at any time?

GROULX: No, I never, nobody bothered me, no. People can't believe it, I was young. Of course, I found my troubles in Ellis Island and I couldn't get out of there but, uh, no, they didn't. No, I was just whistling along just beautifully. I was so happy, I had a good sense. You wonder. No, I really enjoyed it. I enjoyed the trip. And then when I got to Ellis Island, there I was. Nobody to receive me. And, uh, this man, he says, "You have anybody here?" I said, "No." I didn't. Nobody knew I was coming. And he says, "How long you been, how many kids your family had?" I told him. And he says, "Well, this is, we're going to deport you back." And we were, I think, it

was with an interpreter, naturally. I said, "You see that water?" He says, "Yes." I said, "There. You'll send me dead, but you'll never send me back alive." Then he asked me, he said, "Why are you so dead against it?" "Well," I says, "you know, I didn't have no mother, no home." And I says, "I was just kicked from one place to another." And I said, "I don't want to go back." So he looked around. This was from the second or third month, I think.

WILLIAM SMITH: Julia, tell them about your brothers that were here. You had two brothers here.

GROULX: Yeah, but, you know, Bill, now, you see, I didn't know a thing about the brothers, they tried to send me back. I had two brothers here, but they didn't know it. And, in fact, my brother, they're both dead now, in twenty years, twenty-five years later my oldest brother says to me, "You know, we tried to send you back." That really made me mad. Oh! That really made me mad. I could bawl, because I didn't want to go back there, no. So, anyway, and I says, "You won't send me back alive." He says, "No?" I said, "No." So he, as I say, I enjoyed staying there. It wouldn't

hurt my feelings if I could just . . . Like, you see, those pens, they had a picture of

WILLIAM SMITH: .

DALLETT: What was that?

GROULX: You know the big pens, you know, they cook for food, you know, and then I used to be, once in a while, you know, slip in one down this. And there was a young boy, I don't know who the heck it was, I hit him in the face. (she laughs) Oh, I had a ball.

DALLETT: Tell me. Tell me about the time at Ellis Island. How long did you spend there?

GROULX: Well, I'd been there practically almost three months, about two months and a half, you have no idea. Finally, it was really not quite three months but, uh, they decided they had to get me out of there, because I was going to go back. So . . .

DALLETT: You mean, I'm sorry, I don't understand. You were being detained there because you, no one was there to receive you.

GROULX: Yeah, that's right, that's right. Nobody there.

DALLETT: Did you have to go through a hearing, or . . .

GROULX: Oh, yes, a lot of them who, why are you here? Why are you coming? How old are you?" It was this and that. Oh, don't talk to me about that. (voices off mike)

WILLIAM SMITH: They want to know about it, Julia. Tell them.

DALLETT: That's what I'm here to find out.

GROULX: Well, that's what I say. It was a lot of red tape. And finally they had to do something with me. And one of the men, he said, "Well, I think we know a Greek family here, and they're very particular. They're not going to put you out." For instance, the young men there, you know, even if he was Greek, no, no. So they got this man, Zolatas, and he was a married man with his family, and they had a sister and there they was. They came to try to get me out of there, you know. And they lived in New York for a little while, and then I moved to New Jersey. And I worked in a factory, and that's about it.

DALLETT: For the time that you were at Ellis Island, you spent a lot of time there, you were just waiting to see what

was going to happen.

GROULX: Yeah, well, you know . . .

DALLETT: They put you to work, though. You worked there.

GROULX: Yeah, I worked there. That's all I did. And there wasn't a lot of work to me because it was play. I enjoyed that. Because, you know, now with you, now there would be a lot of work, and with me, too. But when you're young, is nothing. It's really different. You look at her laughing.

MARY SMITH: You're insinuating Nancy isn't young.

(she laughs)

GROULX: I was enjoying that. That was something new. See, I lived in Greece. I know what work is in Greece. You work in the field, or you work on a thing, you cut the, everything, you know, move around. I know what that is, and there it was no work. No, no.

WILLIAM SMITH: What did you do in the kitchen?

DALLETT: What kind of work did you do at Ellis Island?

GROULX: Anything. I washed dishes. I waited tables. I got

the pens, as I say, once in a while, and that's it.
(she laughs) And the whole thing. But it was so nice to me, I hated to get out of there. I really did, because it was so nice, nice people. Then when I got out of there, well, I . . . You wanted to know that, too?

DALLETT: Uh-huh.

GROULX: Well, I was supposed to go to church and I played hookey. I didn't go to church. I went to Seventh Adventist people that was working to try to learn to sew so I could get a job in a factory. And then there they got me again. I was too darn young, and a German woman, Rhoda, I can't remember her last name, she West German, she took me under her wing, and she told Victor to give me a job. He says, "She's too young. Too bad. She's a nice little girl." I said, "Give me a job to tie ribbons." I needed money, really. But I did learn to sew a little bit in the Seventh Adventist factories, there was openings, see, on Sundays, instead of going to church. You wouldn't do that, would you?

DALLETT: Is this in New York?

GROULX: Yeah, in New York City. Now, don't tell me what street or anything. Just, you know, I was too young.

WILLIAM SMITH: They changed her name from Angelique to Julia because they couldn't spell Angelique.

DALLETT: What was your name when you came from Greece?

GROULX: Well, my name, it was, what do you call, Angelique. It means, well, it would . . .

MARY SMITH: Little angel.

GROULX: But it's hard to pronounce it and, uh, in a factory, in Ellis Island, I don't know if it was in the Ellis Island that, the German woman who says, "It is Julia." And I remember that. A very great, big woman. So that's close enough. I didn't want to change my name, no. I'll tell you. This, uh, most of the people, most of the foreign people, they change their names, but mine is short and I'll keep it like that. Okay, next.

DALLETT: Tell me some more about Ellis Island. I don't think I've ever talked to anyone who's spent so much time there.

GROULX: Well, you know, you just spend time, if you're working a little bit, you know, and that's all I know. Everybody was so nice and kind to me.

MARY SMITH: Mother, tell her how different it was from the way you lived in Greece.

GROULX: Oh, well, Greece is nothing, I'll tell you. Greece, well, you know, you know how the Indian people . . .

DALLETT: Was it one of the largest buildings you had seen?

GROULX: Oh, yeah. I should say, well, I just looked at this building up there, I didn't know where it was at all. Well, you know, Greece, if you want, they had a, in Greece, the place that I was born, this little place, a very small place. And, just like I told my daughter here, and Bill, I says they live mostly like the Indians over here. They have houses made of mud and straw junk. Not all of them. I mean the poor people. We wasn't poor, but we weren't rich. We were right between, and the stove and, uh, we didn't have the things they have here.

MARY SMITH: A dirt floor.

GROULX: Well, we had a concrete floor on the porch, was nice and cool. Till late years my Daddy had, what do you call, a wooden floor. And then Jim, my cousin, my father, it was my father's only brother he had, and that was his boy's brother. His father died. He built a beautiful home, and I used to envy that. That was a modern home, all lumber. I used to go up there on those steps and I'd slide down. I was a mischievous little kid. I wasn't nice. But Ellis Island was really nice people, everybody. I wish, I just wish I could talk English to understand them, you know, but I couldn't, and it was a sad situation. But they did want to send me back, and I refused to go back, so it was the Lord that got me out of there, you know, after. But I didn't want to go there, even. I didn't want to. I wanted to stay there. I just wanted, if I had a choice, I could stay there.

MARY SMITH: Mother, it was the first bathroom you had seen.

GROULX: Pardon?

WILLIAM SMITH: The first bathroom.

GROULX: Oh, yeah.

MARY SMITH: And the first bed by yourself.

GROULX: In Ellis Island? Oh, yes. It was, they didn't even, the modern stuff, I think it was there, the standard. I think it was okay. To me it was absolutely fine. It's just like they take you from here and put you someplace they don't have this and that, then you go to a place where they have everything, boy, you enjoy everything. You just don't know where to start in. No, Ellis Island, I think it was a wonderful, and I just love it.

DALLETT: Well, you got a chance to see, if you were there for so long, you got a chance to see what happened to a lot of other people.

GROULX: Yeah, well, yeah. That's true. A lot of people. A lot of people, I'll tell you, a lot of people escaped the old country, they got away to come over here, they had some bad records, you know. Some of them, they do that. Well, I didn't have that. I was just a kid, you know. A lot of people tried to dodge the service, you know, to go into the military, or they had a lot of debts which I know, I heard about, my cousin Jimmy used to say, you know, people used to do those things,

but I didn't. Not with me. I was just a child, and I just wanted to get away from home. And to this day she went to Greece (indicating her daughter, Mary Smith) she became, she bought a ticket, she wanted me to go, but I can't. I said, "Never." And m brother, he wanted me to go for the next, you know. And I says to Nicole, "No." That's the time I discovered they wanted to send me back. Hmm. No, I wouldn't go back. I have no desire. The only thing I would like to do, if I was a little bird, to fly over just to see exactly. I can remember that little church they have, you know, there. But the rest, you know, dear, I've been here so long, I don't have no idea at all what is going on over there. And I don't care. There. Now, that's all over now. (they laugh)

DALLETT: You've moving much too quickly.

GROULX: I'm finished. But Ellis Island was a wonderful place to live. And if I, I was just wondering, if somebody was going to come get me, could I stay there? What would they do with me? Work there. Now, you said people were working there.

DALLETT: Well, they did have a big staff, that's true,

but . . .

GROULX: Now it's all closed up, isn't it?

DALLETT: Well, it's going to be opened as a museum.

GROULX: Well, I mean, historically, yeah. Because now . . .

DALLETT: Tell me what the process was that you saw other people go through?

GROULX: Oh, I don't know. I don't know really very much. There was a lot of people. A lot of people had to go back, and if they find out anything wrong with you. One particular lady, you know, when she was coming in she had her finger in a handkerchief, and there was nothing. My God, they took her through the doctor and everything, and she was there for a long time, too. Oh, they check you for everything. And they had a very close observing there, you know. And, uh, you see, we came through with a boat, you know. Another doctor on the Ellis Island said, "What is that?" Gibraltar. It was a French name. Oh, boy, that was really something.

MARY SMITH: She came from Gibraltar.

GROULX: What was that? I can't hear very good. When you get past eighty, you can't hear, that's it. No, I think, I enjoyed staying there, myself. But, as I say, a lot of people, if they had any sickness, they wouldn't let them go through. I think there were some people, it was a Greek boat, and then they'd pick up some other people, different races, you know. And, uh, I think there were several that went back, for what reason I don't know. I was too young to remember. But, I'll tell you, I remember, when one would die how they'd fix it.

DALLETT: How?

GROULX: You want me to tell you?

DALLETT: Uh-huh.

GROULX: It'll make your hair . . . (she laughs) I was not supposed to be out. It was restricted to be out. But (?) noisy little Julia. They'd put him in flannel with the black, what do you call it, it's a black cloth, and they'd get it all tied here and then, and they'd tie a big like a medal, like a basket, and there you'd go, in the ocean. And I was still, I went

back to the room and I called out and I scared those poor people to death. Ahhh! I said, "What?" I says, "He's resting in peace." That's when you're young, you see. I had a, and to remember that, that's something, too. No, I enjoyed, I enjoyed. This is the best country in the world to live. Anybody tells you, I had a lot of fights to defend my country. This is my adopted country, and I love it. And I had been working all my life and somebody says something bad about the United States, boy, I just flew all over. So, I . . .

DALLETT: So after some time you got word that you could be released from the island into, like, the custody of this family. What was the name of the family that you stayed with?

GROULX: Zalotus.

DALLETT: Zalotus. And they lived in New York?

GROULX: Pardon?

DALLETT: And they lived in New York.

GROULX: In New York, yeah.

DALLETT: Do you remember where in New York they lived?

GROULX: Lived in an apartment. I can't tell you that, even. I can't even spell it. And I had it first because it was in New Jersey, but they didn't know anything about it, and they didn't want it. And on my mother's side, and then I lived with relatives, you know, after I moved out from New York I went to New Jersey and I stayed with Louie and Mary Pullus.

DALLETT: What was it like when you first stayed with the Zalotus, wherever that was in New York?

GROULX: Pardon?

DALLETT: What was it like when you first were in New York?

GROULX: Well, I thought it was wonderful. Did you ever take a kid, oh, seven, eight years old in the big city and they gaze around to look at all the buildings? Well, that's me. Yeah, I should say. I had this just wonderful, just wonderful feelings, you know. I still admire it to this day. I think it's just, I just, I hope the American people appreciate this country.

DALLETT: Did you have any difficulties trying to get adjusted?

I mean, it must have been so difficult.

GROULX: No. No, no, no.

DALLETT: How about with the language? How did you learn the language?

GROULX: Well, the language was kind of difficult. I would say that. But, you know, I didn't mind that, even. I'll tell you the truth, I wanted to go to school and my, well, I shouldn't say this, my brother wouldn't let me go to school. He said, "Speak your own language." No, it wasn't so easy. My brother was bent against my going to school. But what little I have learned is my own and, uh . . .

WILLIAM SMITH: One day of school. You went to school one day.

GROULX: One night.

WILLIAM SMITH: One night.

GROULX: And I learned, what little I do, is all my own. My brothers, one in particular, was going to get me a book and all this. I never got it. But anyway, they're resting. I don't want to, both of them, they're dead, my brothers. And, you know, you can

make yourself as big and good as you can, and you can make yourself as rotten as you can. You just make up your mind. and if you have faith in other things, take it from me. If you have faith in God, He will give you strength to go through anything. That's what I tell people. Have faith in God, and He'll lead you out. That was my greatest faith. I'm Greek Orthodox and, uh, I have lots of faith in God. No, I didn't, but in a lot of ways that was difficult. I spent half a day to convince my brother that the other woman, she didn't like his wife. Half a day. I couldn't get it through, but I finally made it. (she laughs)
That's true.

DALLETT: Tell me more about the first job you had. It was, was it in a factory, or . . .

GROULX: No, the first, on Sundays I was working Seventh Adventist. When I worked in a Jewish sewing factory, after I learned how to use the machine a little bit, and that's where I met Rosie and George. Oh, I had a love affair, but I got more (?) than you, I think.

DALLETT: Now, what kind of a machine did you operate, that you learned to operate?

GROULX: I operated a hemstitch machine, a buttonhole machine and a special machine. And I was getting twenty-five dollars a week. That was . . .

DALLETT: What was the third one? The hemstitch, and the buttonhole, and what was the other one?

GROULX: You know, the one . . . Oh . . . But you have in your clothes, instead of the ravel, you know, the stuff inside, they loop it over. It's a, three machines. And I was making more money than my cousin who was working there for a long time. I made, I was good in there. I'm mechanical minded. Because, then when I had took this scarlet fever, I got sick, they had to get a man to do that, yeah. Because those machines they shake, like this, awful hard. Yeah, that's my first job I had, in the factory, and I stayed there. All the time I was there working. They was awfully nice to me. And, uh, they was making, they had a looms upstairs, where they were making the actress clothes, you know, making the material, and downstairs, I can remember, Charlie was cutting huge patterns with an electric machine, you know. And he just, you know, he was a cute little fellow. And, oh,

the beautiful clothes, you know. And he cut it and then we sewed it. And the embroidery. Oh, a lot of things. We did it very good with the machine, very good. And I worked there all the time I was living. And I made good money, and I paid my debts back to my cousin, and I sent a little money to my Dad. And then I bought some bonds, and not much. I was stingy. No, I, this is a wonderful country, but people don't even know it. But we have a lot of trash here now. The trouble is, young lady, that most of the foreigners come here, they make money, I don't say exactly what it should be, but anyway, they get their belly full, then they kind of take that money and they go to another country, and that's wrong. That's one thing I can say for my brothers. They had a lot of faults, but every money they had, they invested in this country. They stayed here, and until, I tell my daughter-in-laws, because this is the best country to live in.

DALLETT: Tell me more about the conditions in that first factory that you worked in. How old were you when you had that first job then?

GROULX: Pardon?

DALLETT: How old were you then, when you had that first job?

GROULX: Well, I must have been around sixteen. Yeah, sixteen there. Boy, that was hard work.

WILLIAM SMITH: That can't be. That cannot be true. She was fourteen, because she was there three months.

GROULX: I know, but . . .

WILLIAM SMITH: That was your first job. You didn't spend two years before you went to work, did you?

GROULX: Well, I know. But I worked. I had to lie to get a job.

WILLIAM SMITH: Well, I know, but a whole . . .

MARY SMITH: Well, you don't have to lie any more.

GROULX: Well, I must have been around fourteen.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DALLETT: This is the beginning of interview number 397 [DP-23],

Ellis Island Oral History Project, with Julia Groulx.

GROULX: That's right. Well, you know, when I came from East, out to West, my brother had a little house. He didn't have anything. He was just a wreck. My oldest brother, Nick Barlas. So I had a little bonds, and as I say, a little money saved up. And we bought a couple of cows for my brother, and I helped him and we bought some clothes. And that's the honest truth. And then, we were here for a little while. I took my brothers up to Oroville, Washington.

DALLETT: Wait. Take me back. Start it a little bit sooner, because when we started, when we stopped on the other side, you didn't already tell about how you discovered that you had brothers here.

GROULX: Oh, well, I didn't know that, practically, till I went back to New York. I was there for a long time. Finally I knew I had brothers over here, but I didn't know they were trying to send me back. You see, that's the truth. And I didn't want to go to my brothers. I just wanted just to make a life for myself, and that's exactly what I did. And then my brother, my youngest brother, came back to New Jersey,

and he was out of a job, and I had to support him for a while. Then '18, '19, or later, 1919, why he decided to move back west, to come over here where my brother Nick was. And, uh, so that's where we bought the cattle, and helped my brother. Then we, also he went to Spokane.

WILLIAM SMITH: He lived in a tent.

GROULX: And worked with my brother in the restaurant for Bob Hope. Not the actor, but he was an Englishman, in the restaurant. And I used to go back and forth and work, and make a little money, and send it to my brother Nick to buy more land, and so forth and so on, you know, till '26 I wanted to, I didn't want to stay with my brothers, neither one of them, because I didn't feel welcome and I wanted to go away. And I had a little money, and one of them coaxed me out of it. So that's the time I come to the conclusion, I knew my husband was my brother's best friend. And he was a French, he was a very nice man, better than I was. So I thought this is my, my marriage life. I thought, well, I couldn't be any worse than I was. If I married, I could get away from my brothers. I says,

even in twenty-four hours I can divorce, I had that in my mind, too, and get the heck out of that, I should put it that. And you don't know what I went through. Anyway, so that's why I married my husband against my brother's wish. He wanted, but then after I married him, he don't want him, and he wanted me to leave him and come home. And I says, "Are you kidding?" I says, "I go so darn far away that it will take a hundred dollars to send me a poster card." I says, "I am marrying for better or worse, Justice of the Peace at the Okanogan County." And I says, "I want to stay." And that's it. That's my life. So my brother wasn't so nice anyways.

DALLETT: What kind of work did your brother do?

GROULX: My brother Nick?

DALLETT: Uh-huh.

GROULX: Well, my brother Nick, at the beginning he was a construction foreman, back to Illinois, back way, oh, no, let's see, what do I, yes, in Illinois. He used to work in a factory. Then he broke away from it. He worked for the railroad, you know. And that's how he

picked his little English, and he got away from it, then. And he got married, and then they got up in Idaho and he met some people there, you know, and they invited him for dinner and that's where he met his wife. He was going to marry the youngest girl, but he married the oldest sister, anyway. Her name was Wagner and, uh, then they homesteaded, and we sent him money. We bought a lot of land we had over there, one thousand two hundred acres.

WILLIAM SMITH: What did he do on the railroad?

GROULX: What?

WILLIAM SMITH: What did he do on the railroad?

GROULX: Oh, Nick, he was the foreman, was construction.

MARY SMITH: Construction foreman.

GROULX: Yeah. And, uh, he was, Nick was a smart man. He was a good man, too. (voices off mike)

GROULX: I mean, we had a little restaurant, and I worked in a tailor shop in Spokane for a short time. And, uh, there, and that's, I can't tell you any more. Really, that's all I've been, my profession.

DALLETT: Was it a Greek community that . . .

GROULX: Oh, no, no, no. Not at all. In fact, I never went a Greek community at all. And I never went with a Greek boy in my life, I would be here, no.

DALLETT: And your brothers hadn't settled in a Greek community?

GROULX: No, no, no. And my brothers, neither one married a Greek either. They were more Americanized than most of the Greeks. That nephew she spoke about, he's a thoroughbred Greek. Yuck. Sickening. I don't like that.

DALLETT: So when you say Americanized, what do you mean by that?

GROULX: Well, I mean they're more broad-minded, they're more like an American, as I say, than foreigners. Would you like to live the Russian way if you was a Russian? Naturally, if you were in Russia, you would. But if you had Russian blood would you like to live like the Russians do, or the Americans? What would you do? You would live like Americans, wouldn't you? If you're living in this country, you should try to live

in this country. And I think I'm right, there. When you live in a country, no matter what country you live, try to adopt their ways and support it. I had a big fight with a Jehovah Witness over that not very long ago, too. And you'd agree with me, you wouldn't. If you were in Russia you support Russia. Over here you're American. And if you don't support your country, you're a darn poor American then.

DALLETT: But a lot of people can feel both Greek and American and feel loyal to their Greek heritage and be American when they're here.

GROULX: Well, I'm loyal to my country. I mean, I wouldn't do anything to hurt it. But if there was a war I will defend my country. This country, here. This is my adopted country. To me, I don't care what you or they say, that's my opinion. I got my own. This is my adopted country. When you adopt a child you'll love it or you will hate it. If you hate it, well, that's me. I'm different. I'm not like the Greeks. I think I'm crazy, but that's okay. No, I have a different, a different. This brother of mine, here, we get along fine, but I was a mother to that boy, and my other

brother. Any time they was in a mess, I had to get them out of there. So, no, I haven't done very much. I had to work on the farm. And then when I married my husband I worked, and I worked in the warehouses. After he passed away, he didn't want me to work. Warehouses, the fruit, you know, you pack and you sort in there, you know.

DALLETT: In the apple country?

GROULX: Oh, yeah.

DALLETT: What did you do there? What were the jobs you did?

GROULX: I worked in the warehouse. Sorting, packing the apples and cherries. You do that, too, you know, you fix it. Yeah, I worked there for thirty-two years. I got my social security from that, you see.

DALLETT: What was that like when you would pack the apples? How would you do that?

GROULX: The apples, you fix your top, your paper like this, and you throw the apple right, wrap it up, and you put it down.

DALLETT: Each one was wrapped in a piece of paper?

GROULX: Oh, yes. In the early days, yes. And now we have a case. It's a regular apple case. You go by the size, you've got to have eighties and hundreds, and so forth and so on.

DALLETT: What does that mean, eighties and hundreds? That's the size?

GROULX: Well, that's the size of it. They'd be size three, and so forth and so on. Then you'd put it in, like this, and you'd just wrap the top.

WILLIAM SMITH: It's the number of apples that'll fit into a case.

GROULX: You wrap the top.

DALLETT: So you had to visually look at them and see which one was which size.

GROULX: Well, no, no. You're wrong there. When you're sorting, the machine that's on the grader, this is the grader and that's the machine there. The apples, according to the weight, they drop, you see? They drop individual and, you know, they have pretty big size. Sometimes they get mixed up. And then if your

packing is low, you've got to pick an apple bigger, or more paper, to bring it up. Otherwise, you put it down, they have to re-pack it. So I know that. I've known that for years.

DALLETT: Now, would you get paid by the number of apples you would pack, or an hourly wage?

GROULX: No, by the box.

DALLETT: By the box.

GROULX: And sort, you're paid by the hour.

DALLETT: Which one? By the hour, or by the box?

GROULX: No, when you're sorting apples you're paid by the hour. Packing apples you're paid by the box. But at the present time you're paid just the same. It's five-and-a-quarter, and that's all they pay all the warehousemen now, packing and sorting are the same. But when I used to sort and pack, it was different. See, I haven't worked for several years.

DALLETT: Was that all women that would do that, the packing?

GROULX: Oh, no. Oh, no. There were men. Men used to be

excellent packers. Heavens. I know several, not several, a couple of men who would make two hundred dollars a day just like that. You know, old man Cog, you know, or Mr. Thrasner [ph]. Yeah, boy. Men were faster packers than the women lots of times, you know. Yeah, I lived in the apple country, you know. And that's all the work there is after a while. She sorted, I mean, not sorted, she thinned, which I never thinned, sixteen foot ladder, go up and thin the darn apples. When she was . . .

DALLETT: Your daughter.

GROULX: Yeah, my daughter, when she was thirteen, fourteen years old. That's something I never did. I couldn't do that. And she thinned pears. She was a good thinner. I couldn't do that. But they all, just think, go around. Oh!

DALLETT: You didn't want to go up on the ladder and do that.

GROULX: No, I've never done it. I'm allergic, sort of, to poison oak, which I don't think you know anything about it. It's some kind of weeds in the fields. I break out awful, so I never go there. No, I never

did.

DALLETT: What other jobs were there that women could do in the . . .

GROULX: Well, in the early days, up to most, I used to work for Dr. Tyler. I used to go out and work for his sickness. I used to go take care of his sick. If they had any children, confined cases, I used to work for him, and I'd get paid for it. And, uh, so, and then I done dry cleaning. I done everything.

DALLETT: Dry cleaning?

GROULX: Yes, by hand. Uh-huh. I done that. I used to dry clean for the custom houses, you know, immigration men and, uh, I got paid for that, the schoolteachers. There wasn't work lots of times, for men. I done all that to make a living. I make a living all my life.

DALLETT: How about during the Depression?

GROULX: Huh?

DALLETT: How about during the Depression? Did you have difficulty then getting work?

GROULX: Well, that's when I was working. No. And I raised chickens and I raised turkeys, a little for ourselves, a garden. But I used to, we never went hungry. I used to leave my girl, I used to out and cook for the thrashers. You remember that, dear? She looked like Little Orphan Annie. Yeah, I just, I got a lot of work in my life. And now is the lazies time in my life. And, you know, people say, "Oh, I'm so tired." She doesn't know what tired is. I used to get up at four o'clock, three thirty in the morning. I don't regret it, I just . . .

MARY SMITH: You helped Daddy in the shop.

GROULX: What, dear?

MARY SMITH: You helped Daddy in the shop.

GROULX: Oh, yes. I used to help her father, you know, Al, in the shop.

DALLETT: What kind of shop was that?

GROULX: He had a welding shop and sort of a blacksmith's shop and, uh, stuff like that. I'd drill holes, I'd haul iron. Boy, I'll tell you. If I go all into that, I'd

write a newspaper, so I don't pay attention. No, I have done a lot of work. The only thing that I haven't done very much is, like, office work and stuff. I don't have the education. That's the reason I gave my daughter a good education. I told my husband, I says, and my brother, they didn't believe in education. I says, "I do." I says, "That's one thing I . . ." I says, "You know, your money will go, but the education, unless they throw it away," I says, "will stay with them." I says, "She get an education." I took in washing by hand to give her music. And I'm not ashamed of it. And I've been up there for sixty-seven years in that same college of people. They know me. No, I just, uh, I don't know where I get this and, as I say, I'm ashamed to admit it, that I'm a Greek and I have no desire to go back. I don't. No. I'm different, but old.

MARY SMITH: Well, you're proud of your heritage.

GROULX: I am. I'm proud.

MARY SMITH: But you just don't want to go back and live.

GROULX: No, no, no. I wouldn't want to. Because they don't

have a good life. I don't like it. Well, she went to see my cousin, my niece, I should say, my grand-niece. Yeah, she has wealth, but we was, we were not too poor when I was, you know, just between. And especially in my time, you know, it was different. But not having a mother makes lot of difference. And you know something, I told I think Bill, over here. I said I'm glad I didn't have a mother. I think I would have disappointed her, run away from home. Maybe I wouldn't have run away.

DALLETT: Maybe you' wouldn't have run away.

GROULX: Yeah, that's true. But, uh, I don't know. I'm a loner, dear. But I would say this much. I was good to my brothers over here. I was very good to my brothers. And I'm good to all people that I got that connection. Dr. Tyler used to say I was the best nurse in the world and I said, "Good." And he says, "Now don't say you don't take the money. Take the money!" I hope that thing didn't go in there. Did that go in there, too? Did it? Oh, dear.

DALLETT: Don't worry.

GROULX: well, it was nothing.

DALLETT: I think I've asked you what I need to unless there's anything else you just want to add.

GROULX: I don't know, dear. I don't think so. And, uh . . .

MARY SMITH: You became a citizen twice.

GROULX: Pardon?

MARY SMITH: You became a citizen twice.

GROULX: Oh, a citizen. Oh, well, of course, I didn't try to hide that. We went up to, well, when Al and I was married, he wanted to go up to Canada to get rich. You know, Canada's highly advertised.

DALLETT: Canada's what?

GROULX: Highly advertised, you know. And my husband, he had a lot of machinery, and we took it all to Canada. So we, I had my first papers before I married Al. And I was, how dumb, I didn't even know how to report it. So, anyway, Al decided he didn't want to stay up there any longer. There was nothing there to make a living. So he decided to come back. And then they stopped me

in King's Gate. She was about six months old. And this, Al reported me coming back to the States. And they says, "You got a wife?" "Yeah, and I got a little baby girl, too." They said, "Bring your wife in." So I came in, he says, "Mrs. Groulx, where was you born?" I says, "I'm born in Greece." He says, "In Greece?" I says, "Yes, in Greece." He says, "I can't believe it." "Well," I said, "it's true." "Well now," he says, "we have to get the consul." The Greek quota was filled. So, anyway, uh, you know, Al, he said, "If she can't go through, I'm not going to go through either." So anyway, finally they let me come through. Then those papers were out, and I couldn't vote, so I went back and I got my second papers, took another fifty dollars. And my husband, he said, "But you don't need it." I says, "Al Groulx, you're not telling me what to do. I'm telling you. I'm voting." I says, "This is my country. I'm going to vote." And I did. That's it. (they laugh) That's it. I bet you think I'm crazy.

DALLETT: Not at all. What was the first election you got to vote in, then?

GROULX: Oh, let's, it was '32. I know, now, wait a minute, wasn't it, President Roosevelt was in.

DALLETT: Uh-huh. '32.

GROULX: I voted before him. And I went back to Illinois, I was the vouch. I vote. School election and everything. now, that's enough.

DALLETT: Thank you very much. And that's the end of interview number 397 [DP-23].

GROULX: I hope I didn't discourage you with my speech.

DALLETT: No.

GROULX: It's really and truly, you don't stop and think of all the things you know. But when you see them together, I didn't have a bad time. Just like I was telling Helen. I says, "You know, Helen, I could have, you know, a young kid like me, I could get into a lot of things, you know." But I do, really, dear, I have faith in God. I think He's the one that put me through and I'm just telling you to this day. And just like my husband passed away, I tell you, about thirty-six years ago, and we had debts over hills,

too. But anyway, through my faith, and I lost my brother first. And that was bad. And, you know, through my faith, it pulled me through. Otherwise I couldn't live. I think you'll always have faith in God, and He'll give you strength. Okay. It was nice to meet you, anyway, even if I am crazy.

(she laughs)