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ANTHONY ORPHANIDES

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LEVINE: Today is March 18th, 1999 and I'm here in Delray, Florida with Anthony Orphanides, who came from Greece in 1926, arrived in New York in—on August 8th in 1926 when he was 17 years of age, having come on the ship, the *Byron*. And this is Janet Levine from—for the National Park Service. Okay. Would you say where in Greece you were born?

ORPHANIDES: I was born—I was born—I was born in—in Samos, an island—an island in the Aegean Sea.

LEVINE: Oh.

ORPHANIDES: Samos. And I was born in a small village. We call it Arvinites. Arvinites.

LEVINE: Could you spell that, possibly?

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ORPHANIDES: A-R-V-I-N-I-T-E-S.

LEVINE: And did you—did you live on the island of Samos up until the time you came to America?

ORPHANIDES: Well, I lived for the most part. But in—in between, I went to Athens for awhile because an uncle of mine, who was a—who was a priest, he wanted to come here to join the archdiocese in New York. However, the—the bishop did not give him permission. [chuckles] They rejected his—his entry. And now, he's stuck in Athens because, without him, I couldn't come because—because of my age, whatever. So I had come back to Greece, came back to the island, Samos. And I started attending classes in—in the Pythagorean—Pythagorean Gymnasium.

LEVINE: Huh.

ORPHANIDES: Pythagorean Gymnasium, the ni—the equivalent of high school here.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And I—I attended there until—until I—I came here. I—and I graduated there in 1926 from the Pythagorean Gymnasium.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay, well, let's—let me just ask you your mother's name.

ORPHANIDES: My mother's name was Constantina.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

ORPHANIDES: Her maiden name was—maiden name was—I can't—it'll come to me. We can get back—

LEVINE: Okay, when it comes to you—

ORPHANIDES: Okay, okay.

LEVINE: —you can—you can mention it. And your father's name?

ORPHANIDES: My father's name is Harry—Harry or Haridimus [PH]. You want a Greek name?

LEVINE: Haridimus.

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ORPHANIDES: Haridimus.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: Haridimus Orphanides. And of course, he was born on the same island. Both parents were born on the same island.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So did both of their families go back quite a ways—

ORPHANIDES: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: —on the island of Samos?

ORPHANIDES: Yes, they did.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: Yes, they did.

LEVINE: And how about grandparents? Did you have any there?

ORPHANIDES: I have. Yes, my paternal grandparents. I—I—I do—or, well, my paternal grandparents—and the grandmother was—oh, gosh. Of course, my grandfather was Demosthenes. The grandfather was Demosthenes. This is my paternal grandparents.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And my grandmother was Aspasia [PH]. Aspasia. Aspasia, Aspasia.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: Yeah.

LEVINE: And how do you remember them? What do you remember about your grandmother?

ORPHANIDES: Oh, she was a very, very gracious old lady. She was, you know, the—the gentle type. Normally—normally, some of the people there on the islands where they work hard because they—they tend—they tended the fields and all that. But she was—she was home, for the most part. My grandfather was a butcher, and he used to go to Asia Minor and bring goats or sheep over from Asia Minor to Samos. And he slaughtered the animals and, of course, you know, he sold them as a—as—for meat. For meat.

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LEVINE: Hmm, uh-huh. And did he have a shop or how did he—

ORPHANIDES: Yes, he did have a shop in the—in the—in the main—main area, main square, the square they call the square. They used to have a big square and there were shops all around, a barbershop and the whatever, or coffee shop, which was typical of the—of the Greeks in those days. They had the real coffee. They called it Turkish coffee.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And—and people would go there and drink, would have some, you know, spirited stuff. [chuckles] The—the [chuckles]—whatever they call [unclear]. Ouzo. They called it ouzo, they had. And they made their own. You know, they produced their own in those days. There was no supervision because they would—you know, they were—the island was really—had just been liberated from Turkey a few years back. And—

LEVINE: A few years before you were born?

ORPHANIDES: Before I was born, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: Yeah. It was on—they call—it was—yeah, it was under Turkish rule. And I remember that very distinctly. But the—the Greeks were allowed on the island. They were allowed to—they have self-rule, more—more or less, but it was under the—the—you know, the Turkish government.

LEVINE: Were there many Turks on the island?

ORPHANIDES: There were no Turks when I—when I was born, when I was aware of it. There—there were—there—eventually, the Turks were—were—were chased away. In other words, there was a battle between the—you know, the—the men of the island—the island. And they won and they chased the Turks to the sea or whatever. They went—they went back to Turkey.

LEVINE: Um-hmm. And what else do you remember about Samos or the little village?

ORPHANIDES: Samos—the little village was just—well, it was—it was a small village, about 150 homes. And we have one church and we had

one school. And there were very graphic, beautiful gardens all around. They call *kipos*. *Kipos* means a garden. Yeah. And they—they—the individual families, they planted their own onions, their own lettuce and tomatoes—tomatoes and all that. And I remember that very distinctly because I used to go and [chuckles] whenever my mother wanted to have—make a salad, I used to go to my grandmother's garden and pick up a few—pick a few peppers, whatever. Cucumbers, whatever.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ORPHANIDES: And it—it was a nice life. I loved—I loved going to—going to school there because those were the—and my—the early—the early days of my Greek education then on the island.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And of course, we also had the—the main—you might call the capital of the—of Samos, Vathi, they call it. Vathi. Vathi. The—the meaning of the word Vathi means deep. It was a—it was a beautiful—a beautiful—you might say that it was—well, it was no longer—it was no longer a village. It was a city. And they—but it—it was like a—I remember, like a—like a horseshoe. And homes were built all around the horseshoe, of course, and—and of course, the at—the—the sea was directly to the—to the port(?). And I remember ships used to come over from a place over there and deliver goods back and forth. And was very nice. Of course, I was young. I enjoyed it. I was young and I—you know, I—participated with my friends. We went on—our—our teachers used to take us on outings to show us nature and teach us what the bees do and what the [chuckles]—not necessarily, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And it was—I'll never forget that it's—it was very picturesque and I have some very fond memories.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And it's—and they—when I went to the Pythagorean Gym—Gymnasium there in the same island in the—in Vathi, like I said before, there again, I—it was a—a new life. I was learning more—more of the Greek language. I was learning all about the—you know, the mythology and the history of the priests and all that. And were learning—I was—I was learning how to speak French.

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You know, we took French courses and all that. And you start—I was getting older and became more sophisticated and—

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And of course, at the time, I did not—I wanted to stay there. It would—It would seem that there was a time when I wanted to go to the—to the Greek—Greek Academy, naval academy. But my father had other plans for me. He wanted to come to the States because, in those days, if you were past seventeen, you had to go to—attend—you have to have—attend military service before you can go anywhere else outside of the—outside of Greece. So that didn't materialize. I was disappointed but I learned to live with it.

LEVINE: What—what happened?

ORPHANIDES: Well, he was concerned that if I—if I stayed here—if I stayed in—in Greece, I had to attend military service and he didn't want that. He wanted me to come because he wanted the family together. Remember, he was all alone here.

LEVINE: When did your father come to the United States?

ORPHANIDES: Oh, I think he came here in 1917. 1917, during World War—just before the World War I was termin—was terminated.

LEVINE: Oh, he—he w—he was able to get across the ocean even though the war was on.

ORPHANIDES: Yeah, he was able to get across the ocean.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: Yeah, he made it across the ocean. I don't know all the details but he was able to come here.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, what did your father do when he was in Greece?

ORPHANIDES: He was—he was a watchmaker—watchmaker—jewelry, watchmaker. He was also a mechanic for the Singer [Sewing] Machine Company. He used to repair machines. He used to go all over the—he was—he worked in Asia Minor. I mean, he operated from Greece, from—from Samos and he worked in Asia Minor. And then, of course, he went to—then he started working fr—from Egypt. He working—he was working in Egypt. And from there, he extend. He went out to the—the—like the so-called Asia

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Minor. The villagers and all that called—the people calling. They wanted to have the machine fixed and all that. And in Asia Minor, I was—I was conceived in Asia Min—in—in—in Egypt. I was conceived in Egypt but I was born in—in—in Greece.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And my sister was conceived in—in Egypt and she was born in Egypt.

LEVINE: Oh.

ORPHANIDES: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: [unclear] her name was Helen.

LEVINE: Oh.

ORPHANIDES: We also had a younger brother. He's [unclear]. His name was—is Emmanuel. He's—he's gone now. He's dead.

LEVINE: Was he also born in Greece?

ORPHANIDES: He was born in Greece, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: He was born on the island of Samos. All three of us—you might say that—well, with the exception of my sister—she is supposed to be an Egyptian subject.

LEVINE: Oh.

ORPHANIDES: But of course, you know, in those days, they didn't—they didn't delve into those things. She came back to Samos and that was it. She's a Greek.

LEVINE: Oh.

ORPHANIDES: A Greek subject.

LEVINE: Now, how did—how did people contact your father for him to come and fix their Singer machines?

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ORPHANIDES: Well, you know, in those days, they had the mule service.

LEVINE: What was—what was that?

ORPHANIDES: Well, I mean, they—they had donkeys. They used to go around. I remember he said used to go—but I—I don't know whether there was a railroad. I really have no conception. In those days. We're going back in 19—

LEVINE: Before 1917.

ORPHANIDES: Before 1917, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: [unclear], before. In fact, he used to go there even before I was born. Before I was born. He was a young man. He was 18, 19 years old. He went to Asia Minor—he—with—with an uncle. He worked with an uncle of his, who was, you might say, he knew all trades. And that's how he—that's how he started. Then, of course, when he went to Egypt, because he was working for the—from the Singer Company, he met my mother. As a matter of fact, my mother lived there with—with her sister and they were working for—for a very wealthy home there, rich home, whatever it was. And my—my mother [unclear] fell in love with my father. He was very handsome. I could show you some pictures.

LEVINE: Oh, good. Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And her sister—she was the older—the older of the two—she—she didn't—she didn't like my father. She thought that he was out to—you know, to get what he can—you know, to—to do things with—with my sister. My mother let her go. So finally, they settled—they went to the patriarch—patriarch in the—of—of—in Egypt. I was I think the patriarch of Jerusalem, I believe it was.

LEVINE: Oh.

ORPHANIDES: And they got permission to get married. And my—my—my older aunt made sure that they wanted to get—to get married. Because she was mar—she was married to these Greek Orthodox people. And thereafter, of course, then the family started coming up. I was first, my sister second, so on all the way down the line.

LEVINE: Um-hmm, um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: Yeah.

LEVINE: Wow. So [clears throat] was your family religious?

ORPHANIDES: Yes, very much so.

LEVINE: Do you remember any of the religious occasions? Any ceremonial kinds of things in Samos?

ORPHANIDES: Well, in—yes, I remember—I remember weddings. Prior to the wedding, of course, you know, they had preparation. They had the—the bride had to be entertained by the bride—bridesmaids and all that. And it was an all-night vig—vigil, you might say. And then, of course, the next day they had—had—it had to be on a Sunday, of course. They were married the next day. The—the groom—when—when they started—when they started going for the procession to be—for—for the marriage—marriage ceremony, someone very close to the family, they carried pistols. And they—they started shooting the pistols. And that's supposed to give enthusiasm to the—to the—to the—to the occasion. I'll never forget it. I remember listening [chuckles] to the pistol shots.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And then, of course, the baptism. Of course, it was some inside affair. They usually—you know, they—in the Greek—in the Greek church, we—we baptize with immersion—immersion. And the rest of it, of course, is you had to follow the rules, the canons, more or less, for the Greek Church, for the Greek religion.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And I couldn't say too much about that in those days but I can tell you more about it now.

LEVINE: Okay.

ORPHANIDES: Because I attend the church here.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. Now, was everyone in Samos Greek Orthodox?

ORPHANIDES: Everyone. Everyone, for the most part. There may have been some Turks who may have accepted to live under the Greek rule. But that's—that's not to my knowledge.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: We did have—we did have some French people there living because there was a French church there. And they had a school. They called it—sisters, you know. The sisters, the Catholic church.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Catholic church.

ORPHANIDES: Catholic church sisters. I remember that thing. And other than that, everyone was Greek.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And, of course, I assume they were all Greek Orthodox. Yes.

LEVINE: Now, you were saying you learned Greek in school. Did your fam—your family spoke Greek at—at home?

ORPHANIDES: Everyone spoke Greek—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: —at home, yes. My grandmother, of course, you know, she made sure that I learned the phrase words. You know, [unclear] and all that. But in other words, I started my gra—my—my school education in Samos.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: Started with the primary grade and all the way through. When I finished the—the sixth grade, they—we—we—we graduated by the public school, the local public school on the sixth-grade level. And after that, we entered the seventh grade into the—into the high school.

LEVINE: Oh.

ORPHANIDES: That's what they call that the gymnasium, the so-called.

LEVINE: And that's when you went to the cou—the capital city?

ORPHANIDES: Yes, Vathi. Yeah, to the capital. That is where the—the high school was—was located.

LEVINE: Now, did you have to live there or did you come back—

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ORPHANIDES: Yes, I had to live there. I had to live there. My mother had to pay—had to go—had to pay to some—I remember some—the relative or something that she do. She paid for—for my tu—for my tuition. Well, my tuition was free, of course. But she paid for my food and—and lodging and all that.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And until I found—until I finished.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And then the rest of the children, of course, they stayed in—in Arvinites. That was the—the little village that was down [unclear].

LEVINE: Oh, Arvinites. Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And that's—that's about it as far as that goes.

LEVINE: Well, how about—how about any kind of social events or—or social customs?

ORPHANIDES: Well, okay. The—in Samos and perhaps—and I assume that's the place all—all over Greece—on Sundays, the people—the people always, after church, they went to the *kafenion*—café place. They call it *kafenion*. And they had their—you know, their—the Turkish coffee. They actually—when they say Turkish coffee, it's—because I think the Turks introduced the Turkish coffee. I'm not sure about that. But they called—so someone said recently, "What do they—what do you mean by Turkish coffee?" He says, "This is Greek coffee." They make—you know, they make—they smell—they smell cups and all that. And it's very rich and I think—[chuckles] I call that potent coffee.

LEVINE: [chuckles] Very strong.

ORPHANIDES: As—like—as by comparing them with American coffee.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, was this mostly men who went to the—the *kafenion*?

ORPHANIDES: M—Mostly men, yes, in the *kafenion*. The women went home to prepare the dinner for the—you know, for the—for the Sunday dinner. But then in the afternoon, after dinner, they used to get—maybe—we didn't have any local musicians in—in—in where—where—where I—when I—where I lived. Then they used to call to

another village. They used to—they used to—I think there was telephone—telephone communication in those days. And they used to call and say, “Now, we would like to have the organist and the guitarist and the violinist to come over, because we’re going to have ent—entertainment—entertainment,” because the Greeks call it *diaskedasi*. *Diaskedasi*, it means entertainment, literally translating. And of course, then the men with—you know, with the—the musicians would start playing this. You know, you—you [unclear]. You—you’re Jewish, right? Okay. Okay. And of course, they—you know, they used to hora dance and all that, a lot of colorful dances. The Greeks have a lot of colorful dances and I think the Jewish people have some of them that are comparable and all that. And then they would get the women. Then the women would come along and stand—stand on the side like. The men were—were the—the big cheeses. You know, they—they were drinking. They were getting into the—into the mood and then they started dancing. But then there’s a dance that the—the women—all the women, now, they call the women. The men call the women down. And then they would get in line and they would hold on each other shoulder. See, the—the men at the front of the—of the dance, he was doing all the—all the tricks.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And the women would just—you know, just hold each other and sometimes they used to put their other arms, you know, on the side for the—for the waistline. Just hold each other together.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And they would follow the steps, but not as colorful as the—the men in charge, the men in the front.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And those—that’s where they—that’s—that—that was the extent of that. In other words, the men—the men, during the week, they worked in the field. They worked hard and all that, and they went to relax. They had a little ouzo and they got in the mood and they were dancing. And they, of course—to make it more colorful, then the women came into the—into the [unclear]. The women were on the sidelines. They were not—they wouldn’t go in there and say—just like we do here, women, men, just—it was—it was very—you know, there was a—well, it was tradition, I suppose. The men was—the men was the men of the house.

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LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: The men was in charge. And the women, of course, they—they did the side—you know, side duties, which are very—were just as important as what the men were doing in the field.

LEVINE: Well, did you—as the first son, did that—did that bestow any privileges or responsibilities on you?

ORPHANIDES: Well, they did—they did look to the firstborn to be the—you know, the exponent of, you know, the family's—family's ways of, you know, the—showing what we—what—what goes on in the family. In other words, I would—for example, when my father came to the States, my mother looked upon me as her—as her—her guide because whatever she wanted to have done, she looked to An—to Anthony to help her out.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And of course, as I went—as I progressed in education, then I took over all the—all the—all the accounts, all the—all the problems of the family.

LEVINE: I see.

ORPHANIDES: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. How about the difference between your upbringing and your sister's, let's say. What—what was the difference between the way boys—

ORPHANIDES: No—

LEVINE: —and girls were—

ORPHANIDES: No, there was no difference—

LEVINE: No difference. Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: —in the way—we were all treated equally and we were loved equally.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: Well, sometimes, parents do sort of spoil the—the firstborn.

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LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: My mother tried to do that. Of course, when I got older I said, "Mom." I said, "Don't do that." I said, "We're all your children." And she says, "I know." But she says, "There's something about the firstborn," she says, "that mothers, they sort of have a special attention. We do love all our children." But she says, "The firstborn, there's a special affection."

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: I remember she—I remember that. Says, "There should be no harm in that." [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-huh, interesting.

ORPHANIDES: [chuckles]

LEVINE: Interesting that she said it.

ORPHANIDES: Yes, she did. Yes, she did.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: Yeah, because when I—when I went to—when I went to high school and she—she pointed to me, you know, that this fellow is—is replacing his father in duties for the house. And you know, the—and—and he says—she said, "Well, Anthony is my boy, you know, my firstborn." And then I interceded and I said, "Mom, don't say that anymore." I said—

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: "I'm one of your children. I'm the oldest. You look to me to help out with family problems and all that. I will do so." But I said, "Don't." So she stopped.

LEVINE: Hmm, hmm.

ORPHANIDES: I didn't care for that because I figure my sister—my sister and my brother, they—you know, they—they began to realize what was going on. They would realize and say why are we the exception, that [unclear] exception. So we stra—we straightened that out.

LEVINE: Oh, good.

preserve figs. And they used—they used to dry them in the sun. And then, of course, they—I don't know. They—I think they dipped them into some kind of a—a—I don't know what it was. And they—they were preserved through the—through the—through the winter months.

LEVINE: Hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And figs—the same thing applied to raisins. And of course, we used to get walnuts. They had a lot of walnut trees on—on the island. I remember that. And they—they used to dry them out, let them dry out and then we—we'd get them and we'd used them during the winter—winter—winter months very sparingly.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And so those are the things that I remember. I do remember very distinctly, there was—sometimes some people that had—they were wealthies, by comparison. They were able to get some flour. You know, just like happens now. Politics and all that. And I used to do some errands for the—for the neighbors who were very wealthy. They had a big home and all that. And my—my grand—my—my—ours was a very [unclear]—I forget the word—[unclear] was not the [unclear] house and say, "Hey, this is a big house."

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And the—they used to give me—I remember used to give me a half a loaf of bread. And of course, I shared that with the family.

LEVINE: Hmm.

ORPHANIDES: I did ch—I did ch—errands.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And that's the—the rest of it is—after—after I finished high school, like—like we said before, it was—it was a time for me to go. I—I—I—I, more or less, experienced some life in—in Athens when the—my coming here did not—did not become a fact. And after that, I forgot what was going on. In other words, you forget the privations when something—something nicer, more produc—more attractive comes—comes along.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. How about during World War I? Did you see anything of soldiers or any of the—

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ORPHANIDES: No, no. No. No, there were no—

LEVINE: No wartime—

ORPHANIDES: No, I don't remember. They—they have been—they—I think they—well, where—where I lived, we had the police. In fact, it was the police from the next village, which was great. We had any problems, you know, like problems of any sort, there was—the police would come over and interfere and—and settle things for us.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: The police, in those days, they were—they were judges and the jailers and administrators.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: Yeah.

LEVINE: And what—who else were the sort of key people in the village? The—the police person?

ORPHANIDES: Well, the—they called the—the mayor.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: They call him *dimarhos*—*dimarhos*. He is the—he is in charge of the *dimos*. *Dimos*, of course, means the village, the town, really. And—and he was the one that we had to go to him for—you know, to—any problem that we may have had. He, in turn, contacted the—you know, the—well, the—the police or the—what the—the court. There was a courthouse in the—in the—in Vathi where I—I attended high school. And of course, then there was a judge over there and then district attorneys and all that. Of course, there were—there—on occasion, there were some—something was going on. Someone was hurt. Someone was killed. In those days, the—the way the villages—they had—they—they—they prepared their gardens. It was—it had to be—in other words, “Here's my garden. Next over there is your garden.” And of c—everyone knew the—you know, the—the—the—

LEVINE: The boundary line.

ORPHANIDES: The boundary line. They knew the boundary lines. And someone—on occasion, somebody would go and steal. And they

had a man—they had a—they call it [unclear], like a [unclear], a night watchman, a night watchman who went all around during the night to make sure that our—our property was not—was not violated. In other words, they didn't steal potatoes or tomatoes or whatever. But once in a while the—the gun went off because the guy tried to run away. When the man said, "Stop," didn't. And of course, that had to be settled in a courthouse. And that's where—that's where we went to the—to the main—to the—to the capital of the—of the island.

LEVINE: [unclear]

ORPHANIDES: And settled all those things. Those things, I remember.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: I remember attending some of the—you know, some of these cases.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: Whatever I could understand. But there was law and order there [unclear]. As time went by, of course, everything was more or less modernized, more—more means of communication, et cetera, et cetera. I know now in 1972 I made my first trip back to Greece. You had to be under the—at the village to see—it was on a Sunday. The Sunday—this was the night before the Sunday—the day before Saturday, I called my uncle and I said, "I'm coming out tomorrow first thing." That time, we had—we had automobiles and we would come by car. And on Sunday, before going to church, there was a congregation outside of—outside of the church. There was a courthouse. And they come—they—they said [unclear] Greeks. [unclear]. "Now, I'm done. Here's Anthony. Here's Anthony." And they came over and they grabbed me because they hadn't seen me. They hadn't seen me all those years, in 1972. And I left—I left in 1926.

LEVINE: How did you feel, going back?

ORPHANIDES: Oh, I thought [chuckles], 'Hey, there must be something on this earth.'

LEVINE: Oh.

ORPHANIDES: Must be—well, actually, those are the—the boys and the girls that I went to school with. They were my schoolmates.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And I—it was very emotional for me.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And—

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And that's—and that's it. Then I went back again in 1981. In 1981, the—I was—I was teaching here. I was teaching modern Greek since 1977. The archdiocese gave me—gave me a certificate to—to teach here in America. And I could teach anywhere in America under the archdiocese.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And I lost my train of thought there for a moment. Why did I say that?

LEVINE: You were talking about when you went back and you were teaching Greek—

ORPHANIDES: No, in 19—in 19—in 1981. The archdiocese called up on all the—all the places here in the States that there was Greek being taught, and they would like to have the—the teachers to go to Greece for a seminar. It was 1981. And of course, I was—I was—I was selected also. And I went to—I went to Athens and I stayed there with the—the—stayed at the University of—of Athens, because, you know, they—they don't—

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

ORPHANIDES: —sects, religious denominations could go there. And they have seminars, religious seminars. So then I went there and I spent a few days over there. And I remember I liked that very much. I liked Crete, v—very colorful.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And I also liked the wine. They had—

LEVINE: Oh.

ORPHANIDES: They had—Crete makes ex—exceptionally tasty wine, red wine.

LEVINE: Oh.

ORPHANIDES: I remember my—I went with—I had another friend—friend of mine that we went together over there and we—we [unclear]. [chuckles] We took it and I—we didn't take advantage but we did—we—more than our share—

LEVINE: Share. [chuckles] Okay. Well, let's talk about [clears throat] why it was decided [clears throat] that you would leave when you did. You said it was time because you didn't—your father didn't want you to go into the military?

ORPHANIDES: That's correct. Also, he—he felt that, in other words, he wanted me—I was skinny [unclear] and I was going on 17. And he felt that it was—it was a good time for me to—for me to get—to get to the States. The others were younger, two years younger. My sister was two years younger and my brother was four years younger, by comparison. And in the meantime, my sister went to the Catholic—to a Catholic seminary. The—the—they call it—in other words, the nuns. It was run by nuns.

LEVINE: Oh, the French nuns.

ORPHANIDES: On the island of Tinos—Tinos. That's also an island in the Aegean Sea, not far from—from—not far from Samos.

LEVINE: But this was the Greek Orthodox or—

ORPHANIDES: No, no. This was—

LEVINE: Oh, it was a—it was Roman Catholic.

ORPHANIDES: This was strictly with the Catholic, Roman Catholic.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And of course, my—my father—he was close—he was—he was deciding all these things. My father went—had to go and learn, you know—learn, you might say, continental ways.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

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ORPHANIDES: And she got an education in—in—in French. And she speaks French and she—you know, she—she's still alive.

LEVINE: Hmm.

ORPHANIDES: She—she will be, next month—let's see, in May—in May, she will—going to be eighty-eight.

LEVINE: Eighty-eight, uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And she—she lives Upstate New York.

LEVINE: Oh.

ORPHANIDES: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So—so he decided for you that you should leave. Now, how did you come? How did you—

ORPHANIDES: Well, like I said, I came—I—I had—he had a—he had a friend on the—on the—on the steam—ship, *By—Byron. Byron*. And he used to come too because my father had a jewelry store in—in—in New York. And this man used to go there and they became friends and he said, "I want my son to come here." He said, "I want you to be the—the guar—the guardian for him." So when my papers were prepared, I had to go to—I had to go to Athens, you know, to that—I had—we had, well, sort of—I had relatives in Athens.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: But they were distant relatives. But they—then more or less, I stayed with them until my papers were prepared in the—in the—and of course, the—the department of whatever it was.

LEVINE: Immigration.

ORPHANIDES: Immigration accepted—decided that it's okay for us to—for me to come to the States. And of course, in response, the—the United States said there's—there was clearance because my father was—was a citizen. And he was—he—he had the—he was able to bring all his family here.

LEVINE: Hmm, um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: Yeah.

LEVINE: So you were the first—

ORPHANIDES: I was the first.

LEVINE: —that—to come.

ORPHANIDES: Yeah.

LEVINE: And do you remember leaving? Do you remember leaving Samos to le—to come, or you—or you never—did you—

ORPHANIDES: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: —just go to Athens, get your papers—

ORPHANIDES: I remember leaving Samos.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: Leaving for [unclear], you know, there—there was also another—another deal over there. You know, emotional things and all that. And my mother, of course, would want to see me. Of course, my mother had to stay behind with the other two children. And well, you know, once you leave a spot you forget. You—you—new things are beginning to—to—to show in the hor—horizon. And you forget what happened yesterday. You don't forget. But in due time, you remember. And some of the excitement of seeing the unknown, seeing America, seeing, you know. Of course, I know about Athens. And in Athens, of course, it was just a matter of waiting until the—my papers were prepared in both ways, in here and—and in Greece for my permission to get here. And the—the man, of course—when I—when I left Samos—when I left Piraeus—Piraeus is the—the port of Samos.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: Port of Athens. There, the—the friend of my father—of course, he called for me and was understood—it was understood that he was going to be my guardian through on until I—I got to see my father. And of course, he took care of me on the ship because, you know, those—those boats in those days, they didn't have the balancing stabilizers. And I was sick most of—most of the time.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

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ORPHANIDES: And—but finally, I got here.

LEVINE: Do you remember when the ship came into the New York harbor?

ORPHANIDES: Yes, I do. I do. It was just like a dream but I do remember that. Not very clearly but I—I do remember that.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And then of course, I think we—we—I think we got on the barge.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: Barge, whatever, yes. And we came to—

LEVINE: A small tender, probably.

ORPHANIDES: Ye—yes, tender. And we came to Ellis Island.

LEVINE: And what was your experience there?

ORPHANIDES: In Ellis Island. [chuckles] Well, I was scared and I was happy because I knew—I was scared because I thought they might send me back.

LEVINE: Why?

ORPHANIDES: I don't know why I felt that way. It was—there was a—a difference of—of age. There was two different [unclear]. And of course, my—my—my parents—I think my mother said—had said that I was born in 19—1911. And it—then the baptismal paper said 1909. And of course, they had to go by—by that—by that doctor's [unclear]. But it was close to the military service and I think whatever they did over there to make sure that I was within the—the age limit, the age limit to be permitted to get to—to avoid military service in Greece. And of course, [unclear] I was asked a lot of questions over there. I tried to use—before I came here—before I came to—came to the States, I was taking lessons in—English lessons in Athens for the period of time, because I think it was a couple of months before I—I was able to come. And I remember learning some phrases. I tried to re—to memorize them. And when they asked in the office at the—at the Ellis Island, I—I was able to respond up to a point.

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LEVINE: Um-hmm. Do you remember any of the things that you learned that you could say to them at Ellis Island?

ORPHANIDES: Oh. Well, I think the—the—I think the—the—I don't remember going through the various stages, but the—the main [unclear]—it was a tall officer over there. He was asking the questions. He said—I remember him saying, "Do you have any money with you?" I said, "Oh, yes," because my father had already given my friend money to make sure they have [unclear] they know then. Supposing my father died before I get here—would be in charge of the—of the—of the country, right. So I had—I showed him the money I had in dollars, whatever I had. I don't remember. I also showed him my papers, my—you know, my identification papers. I had to have all that ready for me. And I mean, I was advised in advance what to say, what to do. And—but I don't remember too many things. But whatever little I said, I—I remember the officer was smiling. And I said, "I wonder why." I said, "That means they're going to keep me here. They're never going to send me back."

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: Because he was—he was severe, then I'd say, "Oh, they don't want me here."

LEVINE: Uh-huh. But you could speak a little English.

ORPHANIDES: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: I could. Yeah.

LEVINE: And you mentioned in your questionnaire that you learned to sing a song on the—on the ship—

ORPHANIDES: Oh.

LEVINE: An English song?

ORPHANIDES: Yes. [laughs] I was play—I remember these—these fellows. I got to know some young fellows who were coming back for—they're

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coming back, you know, to go to school. They were on a trip to—to Eu—wherever—Greece. And I remember they taught me—they taught me, “I have no bananas today.”

LEVINE: [chuckles]

ORPHANIDES: And I was singing that. I was singing with them. And I will never forget that. Someone asked me—I don’t know when. And I tol—I think it was when I re—revisited Ellis Island. I said, “I remember.” I said, “I used to sing.” [chuckles] The guy, whoever—no, he was a ranger. There was a meeting. A lot of—a lot of the people—lot of people that came to see—to see Is—Ellis Island—some—they were—they had gone through Ellis Island. Some of them, they had their families with them. And they—when they heard about me, everybody was clapping. This was—this was b—this was in 19—1990, 1990—’97, I think I came—

LEVINE: Oh.

ORPHANIDES: —or went to Ellis Island. And I—I mean, every—everything I went through, I went—you know, the ranger took us all around over there. Everything seemed to be familiar, as if I was there before, as if—I remember they had bunkers. They—they used to have us to sleep over there. I remember the structure over there of a lot a wiring stuff over there and they had bunkers—bunkers across. I said, “I think I remember us sleeping on one of them.”

LEVINE: Well, now, why were you detained? Why did you have to sleep there? Do you know?

ORPHANIDES: Let’s see. When I—when we came, I think—I think it was a matter of—of timing when I came there. I don’t—I don’t exactly remember why but—wait a minute. I don’t remember sleeping there.

LEVINE: Maybe the—the bunk—actually, the bunk beds in the dormitories at Ellis Island are very similar to on the ship.

ORPHANIDES: Yeah. Yes. I said—I said—I said, “These are the bunks that the people were sleeping in but I don’t remember sleeping there.”

LEVINE: You yourself sleeping.

ORPHANIDES: I—I—I d—I wasn’t—

LEVINE: Oh.

ORPHANIDES: —sleeping there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: I think I compared them with the bunks on the ship.

LEVINE: The ship, yeah.

ORPHANIDES: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, when you left Ellis Island, now, was your fa—did your father meet you?

ORPHANIDES: Yes. As soon as we came over, you know, the what do you call it—the—they—they bring you to the—to what—downtown New York?

LEVINE: Battery Park?

ORPHANIDES: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: What park [unclear]?

LEVINE: Battery Park.

ORPHANIDES: Battery Park, over there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And my—my father—it was raining. He's standing there waiting—waiting for me.

LEVINE: What was that like when you saw your father?

ORPHANIDES: Oh, well, I hadn't seen my father. I—I bare—I remember my father but he got changed, of course. He was getting older. I hadn't seen my father in, say—in 17 years. Maybe even more. Well, yes. And that was very emotional, of course. My father, I remember—of course, I—I was very happy because this, my father. Because I—I knew—I knew that someone be—would be here to take care of me. And I was very happy about it. I—they—but we—both of us were very emotional, especially my father. You know, Greeks—Greeks can become very emotional.

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LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. You—did you recognize each other?

ORPHANIDES: [chuckles] Yes—yes, I did, from—from photographs.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: From photographs, yes. From photographs. He—he—he was sending photographs down there. Yes, I remember that very distinctly.

LEVINE: Yeah. And then where did you go with your father?

ORPHANIDES: Well, he—this was—I forget the date. August the 8th. I don't remember date was—I think it was a—I don't know, was a Monday or—or—or a day or Sunday. I—I don't remember. But he took me to—to his friend's home. They had friend—he had friends here. And we had dinner there. And then, of course, at the end of the—you know, we—we spent the day. I was eating all kinds of—you know, the Greeks have so-called baklava and—are you familiar with that word, baklava? And all that stuff. And—and of course, I—what I—what I appreciated would be abundance, the abundance of things. That was my first impression. He took me to a—a thing that's—a place where they—you know, they used to have fruit on the stand—on stands, you know, around. Canal Street and all that. He took me to all tho—all those things. And I said, "God." I said, "This must be a very rich place." You cannot eat any fruit whatsoever—fresh fruit over there in Greece after—after September because, you know, everything's p—picked up and consumed. They used up—was sent to the—and I saw all those things. And I said, "Gee, in—in the wintertime—sometimes in the wintertime, they have a—some kind of a vine, grapevine, which—which grows—continues right through the early—through the—the fall season.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And I remember because there was big bunches of stuff. And what they used to do, they used to cut them not quite ripe. And they used to hang them in the—you know, in the—in the basement. And they—this way, the tem—the temperature of the basement used to—would ripen them. So we did have grapes on occasion. There—say, Christmas time or something like that.

LEVINE: Um-hmm, um-hmm. And how about other first impressions those first few days and weeks in America?

ORPHANIDES: I was—I was in—I was in cloud nine. Yeah, because all this—I mean, you know, you c—we c—I remember—I don't remember the exact streets. But I remember going to an uncle of mine. He was a—sort of an uncle, my father's third—second cousin, whatever. And he had a stand. They used to have a—a—used to have juices, grape juices and all that. And I never—I could never—I could never drink enough of his grape juice. It had all sweet—sweet [unclear]. And of course, I remember the hot—hot dogs. And I mean, something different, something new, something we didn't have in—in Greece in abundance, wherever you went to see there. All you need is—is a few—few nickels. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Where was your father living? Where—where did he settle?

ORPHANIDES: My—living—he live—he was living in Astoria, Long Island. Astoria. A cousin of his—actually, yeah. They were related. It seems that his sister, my father's sister and the—and the—and the—the man that owned the house, they were—she was married to the priest, the priest that was supposed to bring here to the States. And they—they were related through marriage. It was a marriage relationship. Actually, there was no blood relationship. And we stayed there because she had the apartment. There were—these have two-family homes in those days in Astoria. And we lived in the upper—the upper floor. We—we lived there and we—of course, we—we lived there for—for m—for a number of years.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And—

LEVINE: And what was it like getting used to being around your father after all that time?

ORPHANIDES: You know, I was—I was acting more like a—like a little boy and I was—at 17, when I was on the isl—[unclear], I was the man of the house. And there I was h—there with my father here now. And I—my—my affection for him was so intense that in—in time—later on in time, I said, "Why do I feel like that?" Because I always wanted to have my father. And I was a kid and I didn't have my father then. And now I have him to my—to me, to myself day in and day out. And there is your—there is your—

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LEVINE: Hmm.

ORPHANIDES: —your reaction.

LEVINE: Um-hmm, um-hmm. So did you work soon after you came?

ORPHANIDES: No, no. I went—I went to school. I went to high school. I went to George Washington High School. They—they took me there right away because I had my certificates from—from gymnasium, Greek gymnasium. And of course, I was learning English and before that, before I actually enrolled in the high school, I—I had a private tu—tutor—private tutor. He was teaching me English. I had him for, oh—and I also went to Columbia University. I was taking extension courses there.

LEVINE: Hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And, of course, the—they had those—those nice teachers, the—you know, more or less elderly teachers. And they had that nice diction over there and th—they—they had—they were there, it seems, specially to teach the foreigners.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And I learned—I learned—I learned the—the pronunciation there. And of course, I—I was learning the language. In other words, I did the—my father did everything he could to make me begin to get me to the language as soon as possible, because he wanted to go to high school.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And was a matter about—I think about less than two years, I was able to enter high school.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And thereafter, of course, I finished George Washington High School. And then I went to City College of New York.

LEVINE: Oh.

ORPHANIDES: I was there—I finished City College of New York. And then I remember World War II started. Now, prior to that, I did work in—in the summertime, in the summertime. I worked—I remember I was a soda jerker.

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LEVINE: Oh.

ORPHANIDES: I was taking care of the—you know, in a—in a—in a—in a—in the pharmacy in the—in the drugstore.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And I was taking care of—taking care of everything over there while—I had to take—deliver ice cream to the—the, you know, neighboring apartments and all that. I did that—I did that in the summertime.

LEVINE: Now, what was your father doing in this country?

ORPHANIDES: In this country, he was—he had a—he was a—he had his own store. Of course, prior to that he was working for someone. He worked during the war, during the Second World War. He worked in—up in—in Connecticut. He was working in defense plant over there. He was doing precision instruments. He was taking care of precision because of his—of his knowledge of watchmaking.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: Yeah.

LEVINE: Before the war? Was he doing watchmaking or machine—

ORPHANIDES: Yes.

LEVINE: —repairing?

ORPHANIDES: No, no. Before the war, he was doing watchmaking, yes. He was working for some—for some people. Yeah.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: But they had—they—he was working down Wall Street, somewhere over there. They had a lot of jewelry stores over there. Actually, they had the—these—they used to—they had a—jewelry stores. We used to take a lot of orders from various parts of the city. In other words, or watch holders. Watch repair. You know, these whole jewelry orders over there. They used to repair them and then the stores—the stores would send someone to pick them up and give them to the—to—give them to the customers.

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LEVINE: I see.

ORPHANIDES: And he wor—in other words, he worked for somebody, for—for an outfit that were doing watch repairing on the wholesale basis. You know.

LEVINE: I see.

ORPHANIDES: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now, how about the Depression? How did that affect you and your father?

ORPHANIDES: Well, the Depression, I remember that was in 1929. Was it not?

LEVINE: Yeah, and through the '30s.

ORPHANIDES: [chuckles] Yeah, through the '30s too. Well, of course, I was working. I worked for a year. In 1929, was it? October, 1929, I went to work for National Biscuit Company. And I went as a clerk. And then through the years, of course, I was promoted. I went into production. You know, I became an or—a foreman, production foreman, then became a department head. And I think I stayed like that. I stayed there un—until 1974 when I retired.

LEVINE: Oh.

ORPHANIDES: I worked for 40—41 years for the company.

LEVINE: After you finished City College, you went to work for National Biscuit?

ORPHANIDES: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: Yeah.

LEVINE: Wow. Wow. And when did your mother and—and your sister and brother come over?

ORPHANIDES: Well, they came eventually. My sister, when she—I don't believe she graduated the—the half-Catholic school. So she came here, possibly, I would say, about three years after I was here.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And then my brother came eventually also, just a matter of a couple of years. And then my mother came last. My mother came last. And let me see. Yeah. I don't remember the dates.

LEVINE: Well, that's okay.

ORPHANIDES: But it was just a matter of a few years when all the family got together.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: And we lived together.

LEVINE: And how did you meet your wife?

ORPHANIDES: Oh, yes. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: Let me see. Of course, in the meantime, I went in—I went in the service in 1942.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: Yeah. And I came back in 1945, November, 1945. I was—I was released from the service.

LEVINE: What's—what—what arm of the service?

ORPHANIDES: I was—I was the Army Air Corps. And I was the—I was a specialist there. Oh, I could write a book about that too. I was a specialist there. They sent me to school. They sent me to radar—no, radio school. And then they sent me to radar school. Radar school was down here in—in—down here in Boca.

LEVINE: Oh.

ORPHANIDES: There was a radar school down here. When I graduated there, then of course, I went on the—I—I had to join an outfit because I—I was through with all the training they wanted me—but then I had to go and pre-flight planes. We had the P-38 planes. They used to go and take photographs of enemy territory.

LEVINE: Oh.

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ORPHANIDES: And they had to depend on those—those radio—radio—radios because if they didn't—they didn't function properly, the moment they came into our territory, they used to—we used to shoot 'em up, shoot 'em down. So it had to be—had to be very, very critical. And they made sure that we knew what we were doing. We had to pre-flight to make sure the plane—the plane—the—the—the—the equipment on the plane responded to the code we had, you know—code, the—the friendly code.

LEVINE: Wow, uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: So that's what I was doing. And I did that throughout until I finished. We—of course, we, after the war—was it in 19—what—wait a minute. When was the war over, in 19—

LEVINE: '45.

ORPHANIDES: In 1945—1945, I came—yes, I came back to—I think I—I came back to New Jersey. And from there, of course, I—I was get—I got my papers released, the—you know, I was—I was released from the service. And I came back here.

LEVINE: Were you married at that time when you were in the service?

ORPHANIDES: Oh, yeah. Okay. No, I was not married while I was in the service. Yeah, I know. I—so you have to allow for the 90-year-olds. They—

LEVINE: It's okay.

ORPHANIDES: They lose their train of thought.

LEVINE: I do it myself.

ORPHANIDES: When I came back from the service, it was in—was in—in November—November, 1945. I lived with—I—I lived with my sister and—my sister and my mother. [unclear]. And we—they took me around to meet some of the people over there. And of course, someone decided that Anthony—it's about time for Anthony to get—get—get himself a girl. And we—I went to a Greek affair in the—dance affair. And I met—I met this girl. And it—it was—it was prearranged that I should meet this girl. The people that I was with, the friends and the relatives, what were they, they made sure I met her. And I danced with her and then we—we—we made dates. And the first thing you know, it was—it was in July—July 6th that we—we were—we were married.

LEVINE: And what was your wife's maiden name?

ORPHANIDES: Her maiden name was Mary Rimos. R-I-M-O-S. Mary Rimos. That's her maiden name.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And how many children did you have?

ORPHANIDES: We had two children.

LEVINE: And their names?

ORPHANIDES: A girl and a boy. Their name—the name—the first name is Alexia. And the boy's name was—is Paul.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ORPHANIDES: They're both living. Of course, they—and they have their own children. They have children. I have six granddaughters, four from my son and two from my daughter.

LEVINE: Wonderful! Well, when you think back about coming to this country as a 17-year-old young man, and you think of your life after that, do you think coming here, immigrating here, made a big difference in the kind of person you became?

ORPHANIDES: I think so. I think so. In other words, well, let me say the one thing. Now, how do I speak? What's—now, remember, I came here. I was 17 years old.

LEVINE: Right.

ORPHANIDES: But—

LEVINE: You speak very well.

ORPHANIDES: —my ambition was for me to become—so that people would not make fun of me.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: I was going—I was going to high school [unclear]. I was—I was the—the part that—the party of—of the class. Every time I said something, you know, I said it wrong, I remember somebody saying—somebody said about Schenectady. I used to say

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Esconnecteddy. You know, they roar. Everybody roared in the classroom.

LEVINE: I see.

ORPHANIDES: And things like that. But I made certain—and then, of course, I never stopped—I never stopped going to school. After high school, I—I went to Mechanic's Institute. I became a draftsman. Then I went to—in Brooklyn—Brooklyn—in the Brooklyn school. I became a chemist down there in what's—what's the name of Brooklyn School?

LEVINE: Brooklyn College?

ORPHANIDES: Brooklyn College. They were—it wasn't college in those days. Then it became college.

LEVINE: Oh.

ORPHANIDES: Oh, I can't think of it now. I—I b—I wanted to become a—a research chemist because, in the meantime, I was working for the company. And I wanted to get into the chem—chem—the chemistry department. Because, you know, the—when you make—bake cookies, you have to do a lot of chemistry work.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, do you think it was because you were an immigrant that you—I mean, had you stayed in Greece, do you think you wouldn't have—

ORPHANIDES: Oh, okay.

LEVINE: —gone to school—

ORPHANIDES: Okay. I'm coming back to that. Yes, I think, for the moment, I got away.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ORPHANIDES: There were times when I—I regretted leaving Greece. See, the Greeks have a—an easy life down there. I mean, they—for the most part. They—they don't rush the way we rush here.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: I mean, you rush here. You got to eat breakfast [unclear]. The—the life was altogether different. It was a life—a life of—well, you

might call it—I cannot think of the word. In other words, I liked to be—I wanted to be an officer in the—in the—in the—in the what do you call—Navy. And that was—that was checkmated for me. And I was dream—and I was—I wanted to be something other than what I—what I am here. Here, it was necessary for me to—to become gainfully working, because my parents—my father was not a weal—wealthy man. And when the time came—his time came—when the Depression came, he had to close the store, had to return all the merchandise he had on consignment. And then, of course, he—he—he didn't have hardly anything. Then I had to support—I was supporting the family. I was supporting my brother. Well, my brother was working as well too in the meantime. I was supporting the whole family.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: Mother, father and sister.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: Yeah.

LEVINE: Um-hmm. I see.

ORPHANIDES: So—so—

LEVINE: So that made a difference in what you did.

ORPHANIDES: That [unclear]—in other words, I had other dreams when I was 14, 15 years old. And then you had to more or less a—you know, change or accept the [unclear]. I had—I had to accept reality. Over there—down there, I was dreaming—I was—was in a dream world. I wanted to be an officer. I wanted to have all the shiny things and all that. And those things had remained for me for a period of time. But as time went by, I said, “I like—I love Greece because this—this is the place where I was born. But Greece is not for me.” In other words, I accepted the fact that this—this is my country now. I wor—I—I went to work to—to—working for this country. And—and I'm an American citizen. What does that mean? Nobody here is a native, except the—you know, the redskins, so to speak. So I mean, I had to face reality. And I like the system here. I like the way people work here. It—it was up to me to make something out of myself.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

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ORPHANIDES: Circumstance—I think the Depression changed my—some of my plans. I wanted to continue going back to—going to college and all that. It didn't work out. I had to go to work.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And then, of course, no sooner I finished with Pratt—Pratt Institute.

LEVINE: Oh.

ORPHANIDES: No sooner I finished with Pratt Institute that I have to go to—in the service. I was the—I was the—the—I was family supporter and they—they kept me out of service for a while. But they came—that they said they needed more people. They needed more people because then Germany got—we got—got involved with Germany, needed more and more person—people here. So I had to go in the service.

LEVINE: You were—you were drafted?

ORPHANIDES: I was drafted, yes.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: I was exempt for a period of time but then I was drafted.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: And that's how it went.

LEVINE: Well, what would you say are some of your—or your greatest satisfactions over your life?

ORPHANIDES: Well, inasmuch as I—I'm—I was—I'm far—so far—so many years away from Greece, I feel this is—this—this is reality for me. In other words, I—I became—I have adopted the—the way of life here. And it was as if I never left America. Gr—Greece is just—just—Greece is over there someplace. Once in a while, I—I think about it. I become nostalgic. But that's it. I mean, I accept the fact that I'm of Greek descent. But what does that mean nowadays? Nowadays, the whole world now is—is, you might say, homogeneously now.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

ORPHANIDES: So, you know. And of course, this—at this stage of the game, I have to think that way. But I love it here. I love my—my children. I have two beautiful children, my—I don't know. You want me to show you my dau—my—

LEVINE: Yeah, we're just at the end of the tape now.

ORPHANIDES: Okay.

LEVINE: So I wanted—I want—

ORPHANIDES: Okay.

LEVINE: —to say I know there's so much more, your teaching of Greek.

ORPHANIDES: Oh, yes. I teach Greek. I have been teaching Greek now since 1977. I teach here in St. Mark's. I am director of the adult Greek—Greek classes.

LEVINE: Wonderful.

ORPHANIDES: Hmm.

LEVINE: I'm afraid the tape's over but—

ORPHANIDES: Okay.

LEVINE: —I want to thank you so much for—

ORPHANIDES: A pleasure.

LEVINE: —a wonderful interview.

ORPHANIDES: Well, I've been—I have been writing. I have been writing my—my memoirs—

LEVINE: Oh.

ORPHANIDES: —but I didn't finish them yet.

LEVINE: Oh, well, maybe you'll let Ellis Island have some for your—their file there.

ORPHANIDES: Okay, why not? If I can get—if I know how to get to them, why not?

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LEVINE: Okay. Okay, this is Janet Levine signing off.

[END OF INTERVIEW]