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GEORGIA STEVENS TASHO

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AGE 6

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RESIDENCES:

- **ALBANIA: Korçë**
- **US: ROCKLAND, ME; BROCKTON, MA**

Oral Historian's Note: Georgia Tasho is the sister of Pauline Curtis, Interview EI-215. Both sisters are present during the interview. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of Oral History, 11/7/1995.

LEVINE: Okay. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here in Brockton, Massachusetts with Georgia Tasho, on September 18, 1992. And we -- I just finished talking with Georgia Tasho's sister, Pauline Curtis, who is here from Rockland, Maine. Let's see. Georgia came through Ellis Island in 1930 when she was six years old from Albania. Well, I'm really happy to get to talk with you.

TASHO: Well, thank you, Janet. And it's a pleasure, too, to be here talking with you, because it's always been very dear to our heart, Ellis Island. I teach Ellis

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Island today in school. But going -- you want to go back now as a child when we arrived --

LEVINE: Okay.

TASHO: -- with our mother and my sister. It was a, it was a experience that was difficult in many ways. And we were looking for America, a new country, to see our father -- see this great land that everybody just thought was next to heaven. And yet it was very difficult because we left all our family behind. And leaving people that we -- that loved us -- and our aunts, uncles. It was, it was very difficult. Our uncle did take us to Bari, Italy and stayed with us till we got aboard ship. Once we got on board ship, then we were on our own. We traveled second class. And that was -- not being -- that was, I think we had some very good accommodations. But my mother was always seasick and so were we, so we stayed mostly in the state room. Very seldom did we stay in our room.

But there was an instant with this family that traveled along with us. A -- a gentleman with his young daughter who was -- brought her over here to marry her here. And this very old lady, whose son had brought his -- was bringing his mother over. She didn't trust anyone, so she had many skirts and many dresses. And she took all her money in her petticoats. (laughs) She tied -- sewed all her money in her petticoats. Wherever she went, all her worldly possessions went with her -- where she walked. So, she traveled third class. So we would go downstairs and bring her up so she could stay in the--. As long as you -- there was somebody in the second class, you could bring somebody upstairs to have dinner with you. And she loved it, because the food was better, it was much cooler, and she stayed with us the whole trip.

And the trip was very rough, as we said, we always seemed to be seasick. It

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was a long trip. When we arrived at Ellis Island, Paulie -- I think she was the first one to get the measles. And then it was soon -- later, I got the measles.

This meant that now we are quarantined. My father was going crazy because he was waiting in New York for us to, you know, disembark. And he, we had to be quarantined for ten days. Stayed at this little infirmary in Ellis Island. And, of course, my mother would come in dressed in this big white garment and something around her mouth, and we'd be --. "Well," she'd say, "Don't be afraid. I'm your mother. I'm your mother." (both laugh) But Pauli and I had two little beds next to each other. Then our half brother came and brought us two dolls, a blonde one for me, and a brown haired for my sister. And we thought that was the best thing that ever happened in the world. We didn't mind that we were sick or staying in those little cribs that they had for us. Stayed there.

And then after ten days we were released, and my father -- well, my brothers, too -- brought us home. And then it was in November, that's when we arrived. That was about time there was Christmas lights were being put up all over the cities. My mother wanted to see her brother in Buffalo, New York. So our father put -- we all went by bus from Rockland, Maine to Buffalo, New York, all through these different cities and towns. It was a overnight experience. Well, we were amazed at the beautiful, beautiful Christmas lights that were everywhere. We just thought we were in, in a world that had not existed even in our best imagination. So we got to Buffalo. And it was, it was, we had our Christmas there. It was an Albanian Christmas. You know, we just, it was nothing like having presents, or having any, it was a nice dinner, a nice dinner. It was a, a family day. But then, of course, then there was New Year's. And when New Year's came around, and all the bells were ringing, that was the high time of the Albanians. To a - - New Year's is a very important holiday. It's a, it's a, it's like Christmas. It would be a happy holiday, when people dress up, when they party, when they visit each other, cook, and make baklava, make kurabe. They make all

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these different pastries, and...

LEVINE: Could you spell that one? I'm not familiar...

TASHO: The baklava?

LEVINE: No. Ku...

TASHO: Kurabe. It's K-U-R-A-B-E. Kurabe. And it's like Russian tea cakes. It's made butter cookies, but they're made with powdered sugar and butter. And these are the things that we would, these are special. Because we didn't have dessert, you know, with every meal. We had fruit but not dessert. So when you had something like this it was a holiday. So we stayed in Buffalo for a while. My mother was, of course, anxious to see her youngest brother. And he was doing very well. He had a business there, table top pies. And he had big trucks. It was the Depression. A time for that -- that, he was doing very well. And she was so proud of her brother, to think that he had come from Albania and started this little bakery business -- now expanded with trucks going to -- and National Biscuit Company, and so on to others. She was very, very proud. And, of course, she was very close to her family. So that whatever they did she, it was always bigger than life. (she laughs) So we stayed with our uncle Nucci [PH] for then, came back home again to Rockland, Maine.

Well, of course, Rockland was a disappointment to my mother. In ways -- the climate, for one thing, was much harsher than the Mediterranean climate.

There would be like in -- in Korçë. And, also, she was, her family wasn't here. She had no one here. Also there were, the language difficulty, the food was difficult. She was used to cooking her, you know, dish. And she couldn't get olive oil at that time, the basic needs. So we did have a relative in Boston. And my father would send a letter to him, please send us black

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olives, feta cheese, send us olive oil. (she laughs) Send us these things so we could have them for the, for the whole winter. And they would send us little barrels of these goodies from Boston, so that we could continue to have the food that we were accustomed to.

My mother every Saturday made what we call pite -- pie, spinach pie. And she would make these, we call them fasule -- beans. Like a -- well, like a bean soup. And home made bread. We never bought a slice of bread till after my mother died. And then we thought, you know, that was the greatest thing on earth to go to the store and buy a sliced bread. (she laughs) Because we've always had home made bread. She lived only five years. She died with cancer. And, very sad because she wanted to see her family. And the whole thing was to come here, stay awhile, while my father probably got a little more money so that -- he had built a brand new home in Albania. And we were planning, she left all the furniture, all, everything that --. We just brought the basics here, so that -- with the idea of returning. But, of course, she became very ill. Died.

LEVINE: Do you remember specifically what your mother brought with her?

TASHO: Yes. She brought a rug that we still have and I treasure and my sister treasures. It's in my sister's home now, because she has the family. It was all hand loomed by my mother sister. It's a hand made rug with a, with a design of Albania on. It's beautiful. It's many colors. The basic background is bright blue, but it has many colors in it. And her sister loomed this rug for my mother and she brought this. Also as Pauli said, my mother embroidered beautifully, did tack work. Table cloths. Our table cloths were always beautifully made, because she was so, never sat with her hands crossed. They were always busy either knitting or sewing or embroidering. She never worked outside. She was always at home. And, of course, we always -- when we came home from school -- we always came to a hot meal. The

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house was immaculate. She...

CURTIS: [not understood] she had nothing

TASHO: She would have, she would scrub, we had hard wood floors. And every Saturday she would take that yellow soap with a screen and scrub them and wash them, and then put our little oriental rugs like we had all over it. But the house was always scrubbed. She was an educator. She knew Greek. She knew Albanian. As Pauli said, she knew a little Turkish. She was learning English. She had gone to school – there was *Zonja* Kennedy.

CURTIS: That's who. I couldn't think of her name, Kennedy.

TASHO: *Zonja* Kenne, *Zonja* Kennedy means Mrs. Kennedy. They were missionaries from England. And they were there to teach the Albanians English, the ones who wanted to learn.

LEVINE: They were in Rockland?

TASHO: They were in Albania. That was before she came.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TASHO: So, she knew a little bit of English from that. But she was still learning English, more English here. When I was very sick with tonsillitis or fevers, whatever, my mother had -- told us all of the Greek myths. When I went, took Latin in high school, I would always excel in Latin only because I had had these as a child. How you would tell, you know, Grimm's fairy tales, Mother Goose stories, my mother did the – the Greek myths.

LEVINE: Hmm.

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TASHO: She was a very religious woman, and a very devout Orthodox. Kept our family, her biggest treasure were our, the family. Always told us to -- always support each other -- to be close to one another, no matter what the world would bring up. That we were a family, and to be united. And I think that always stayed with us. To this very day we're very close. Our children are bonded. My son has now died. But even when he was younger, they were all very close. They were not like first cousins, they were more like brothers and sisters. So I think that the thing that I really love about my mother, and I've said this again and again, that I've gone (of course we've all gone to college, now, because we made sure that education was a very important factor). That we came to this country, and we were going to give as well as receive.

And, but I always feel that the training that our mother gave us was so thorough, was so -- what can I say? -- so in depth. To have feelings for others, to have respect, to be productive. The best teacher in the world was my mother. The very best teacher. I've had a lot of professors since then. But when I think, I think back -- as if it really -- and today I think some of that is so important in life. I wish more children would have that same kind of --. I wish --the -- I wish the economy and opportunities for children to have their parents home, to stay at home. And to, you see, at that time we weren't rich by any means. But we were never poor or felt poorness in us. We never felt any poorness. We always felt that there was a warm house, it was a clean house. And she, my father could bring a leg of lamb, and we would have it in five different ways. All week long. Different stews, or soup, or baked, or make it with vegetables. But we never where -- there was always-- dinner at night, there was always a plate that was full. The bread was always home made. And they, both my father and mother worked very hard. My father worked out and she worked inside the home.

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LEVINE: Do you know the story about your, your father meeting your mother, or choosing your mother, or was it a match made by families, or...

TASHO: Hm-hmm. Well, it's, from what I recollect is that he was a widower. And he had brought his family to America. Then his wife died, his first wife had died and was buried here in Rockland, Maine. And, and then his son died that he loved very dearly. So he thought maybe that he would keep the other boy with him, being a boy. But the girl, the daughter, he would send back to Albania, so that she could be reared and brought up with his sister-in-law. So that's why she stayed. And, Mike stayed here in – in Rockland, Maine. And then my father went back to see the family, to see his daughter. And at that time he was a very handsome man. He had made quite a lot of money. And coming from America everybody thought gold was where you found it. You just picked it up. It was, so they, matched mate. They arranged this marriage with my mother. Well, of course, my father was much older than my mother. However, being -- you know -- being strong, good looking, he didn't look his years. And ---

CURTIS: He never looked his years.

TASHO: Never looked his years. So, they, they were married. My mother's family was a well-to-do family where my father's family came from a village. So they didn't always, some of -- my mother's family didn't think that was quite the right thing to do. For a person who had come from a reasonably well-to-do family to marry somebody that had come from up in a -- cutting wood. Up in, way up in – way up in the mountains. But, of course, he had left fourteen. And he hadn't been -- he had come back and forth -- but mostly his place was over here. So he married her.

CURTIS: [not understood] silver dollar.

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TASHO: Oh, yes. And he married my mother, and built a home there. And there was well furnished. They were very much in love even though they were; there was, you know, about seventeen years difference in their ages.

LEVINE: Was that, was that unusual for him to build a house there and, and furnish it, and then -- being that he was going to come back to America?

TASHO: I think the idea was to build a home in Albania. Come back to America to, to complete whatever he was doing, to make more money. I think that's was the idea. And then they -- he would settle back to Albania and live there more comfortably because, of course, the American dollar stretched quite a ways with the Albanian economy. So, I think his idea was to come back here and work a while. But when he came back he wanted to bring -- he missed the family. 'Cause now when he, he stayed in Albania for a few years, we were born. Then he wanted to bring my mother back here, and us, because he missed the family and he wanted us to all be together. But he was not an American citizen, so it had to be my half-brother who would bring us over here. He was able to bring my mother, because being his step-mother -- at that time the immigration laws were that you could bring your family. But you could not bring your half-sisters. Then it was by number, by number that we --

CURTIS: Quotas. Quota system.

TASHO: Quotas. So then I was -- my mother came. Then the quota was for -- my mother would not have come without her two daughters. So then, it was so that I could come. Then later on Paulie's never came in. That's when we all arrived here in America. I think all I can say is that coming here is the most wonderful thing that could happen to a lot of people. I know there is a lot of sadness leaving your family behind. But America has so many opportunities. And lives that, oh, well, I teach this, and I, I just can't say enough good

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about this country. We're here now, and I didn't have the experiences my sister had about racism. I was blonde, blue eyed.

LEVINE: Hm-hmm.

TASHO: So I fitted quite well with the, with the community that we lived in. So I didn't seem to have that, those feelings in school or with my teachers.

LEVINE: Can you remember anything about, in Korçë, what, your life there? Or are there experiences that you recall from your first six years in that town?

TASHO: Well, I do remember. Now, I don't know if I remember or my mother, you know, refreshed my memory. "Don't you remember this?" But I remember I went to primary school. And my teacher was a very nice teacher there. And all the seats were like on a, like on a, they were like on a stadium. You...

CURTIS: Steps.

TASHO: Steps, like. You sat there. And you had to recite...

CURTIS: They were in a half moon.

TASHO: You had to recite.

CURTIS: Going up the stairs.

TASHO: She would stand like on a podium, on a, with a, with a, with a stick. And she would...

CURTIS: And she had a slate.

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TASHO: And she had a slate. We...

CURTIS: And the kids had a slate.

TASHO: Hm-hmm. And she would teach us by rote. And we would have to repeat after her. I remember, we were very small children. So, of course, this was the way. And then the bathrooms were two holers, as I remember. And it was right in back, the school was right in back of S—*Shën Gjerj* [St. George] church. There was a church. So the school, excuse me, was right next to the church. So, and I just for some reason remember that school and loved it. And I think the first day that I ever went there I loved school, and to this day I, I do.

LEVINE: Well, it sounds like your mother was a wonderful teacher and you had a wonderful initial school experience.

TASHO: Oh. Oh, yes.

LEVINE: And now you're a teacher. What do you teach?

TASHO: I teach now fifth grade. And I've been teaching twenty-one years. And I find that it's the job, the profession, a job, a work that I love. And I teach social science. I got my Master's in reading [ph], and I do social science. I teach all the social science in my, in my building. And also I work on the curriculum in social science. And, of course, when it comes to immigration, (she laughs) it's my, my favorite subject. And when I think of a hobby -- other people suffered and came here, yes, we all suffered. But we all suffered in an ethnic way. Because everybody grouped themselves with each other, and there was support to one another. The difficulty with my mother was that in Rockland there weren't that many AI -- Albanians. But, you know, when we, over here in Worcester there are a lot of Albanians.

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They just lived -- you know -- with each other and gave each other great comfort in times when -- you know -- they didn't know how, where to shop, or how to shop, or how to buy. The, they, they had each other.

LEVINE: Hm-hmm.

TASHO: Where my mother -- of course -- was, there was a very few people there.

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah. Let me just go back now. What is your birth date?

TASHO: November 25, 1925.

LEVINE: And is there anything else that you can remember about the house you lived in in Korcë?

TASHO: Hm-mmm. Oh, yes. The house was brand new, built brand new when my father and mother were married. It was a, it was a brick house of two stories. And on the back, we had an orchard. And on this orchard they had these beautiful plum trees. They had --

CURTIS: And quince.

TASHO: And quince. When the...

CURTIS: And pomegranates.

TASHO: When the, these plums became ripe they were so juicy that we could open

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our window and pull them in from our bedroom. The bedrooms, the bathrooms were upstairs, and we slept downstairs. Down, and, of course, there was no, there was a big fireplace that heated the house. There was no central heating.

LEVINE: And you heated it with wood?

TASHO: With wood --

CURTIS: And coal.

TASHO: --- and coal. Hm-mmm. (a telephone rings) And then outside we had this little place like, like a kitchen, outside. Then you had a courtyard. And a -- and a wall all around it with a big gate. And you opened this big gate coming to the court yard. And inside of that, inside the court yard there was a little room where my mother would do the baking. This is a -- was never done in the main part of the home. It was always done in this house, this little small house. And they had a hearth there, and they would make their pies, and, you know, they would make their bread, and cook it there.

LEVINE: So she cooked essentially in a fireplace?

TASHO: In a, in a fireplace. In a hearth, like. And they would have these heavy, heavy, oh, *bäker ështe* -- what is? -- copper. Heavy copper pans. And they would put coals on top of it. The pie would -- like, the pie would be a round disk. And then on top of it would -- you, you'd make the pie. Then put this heavy disk on top of it. Then you put the coals on top of that, and

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underneath, and that would cook the pie. Then, of course, on every street, at the end of the street there was a baker.

Now this is where if you wanted to make casseroles and you didn't want to use your hearth, you would go, and you had a little disk. And you put your disk into your casserole or whatever you were cooking, and that is your -- family's disk. So when you went there you gave him twenty-five cents for cooking it, and he would know which was yours. He would put the water, and they do it to this very day. They, I went then, I said, "Do you remember my mother who lived on this street," because we had been there back three times. And he says, "I certainly do." And he says, "This has been here for many, many years, this little bakery." So if they didn't want to cook at home, every street at the end of the street had -- had a bakery.

LEVINE: Did the bakery sell bakery goods, or --

TASHO: No.

LEVINE: -- it baked --

TASHO: He baked your goods.

LEVINE: He baked your goods. Uh-huh.

TASHO: Yes. You could see who -- what you were having for dinner that night, or what your neighbors were having for dinner. Because they would come down carrying the bag, whatever they had. Meatballs, or spaghetti, or maybe a

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dish of whatever they had planned. You could always tell or smell it coming down the street.

LEVINE: Oh, my goodness.

TASHO: And---

LEVINE: How about ---

TASHO: --- he would --

LEVINE: Oh, I'm sorry.

TASHO: Excuse me. He would -- the bakery, it was like a huge oven. So they would feed it with wood. And then these ovens were hot. So you would bring your, whatever you were going to cook -- casseroles. Put them in then he'd bake them and cook them for you.

LEVINE: How about water? Was there a town, either a fountain or water, a place where the women went?

TASHO: All right. That's interesting. That's in the village, but not in Korçë. In ë we had a great, big granite tub - like, in the courtyard. And then we had a pump. So you went to the pump. There was no hot water. You heated your own hot water. But we had our own pump in the courtyard. And the courtyards were always very pretty. They would have, you know, like, they would have stones, and they would be designed, and then we had lots of pretty flowers --

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CURTIS: And they all the grapes growing...

TASHO: And grapes over...

CURTIS: ...over, so you had the vines all like archways, but they were all grapevines.

TASHO: Hm-hmm.

LEVINE: And did most houses have a little courtyard?

TASHO: In our neighborhood they did. Now if you went into the villages that would be a harder life and a different life. Then they would go to the, right to central part of the town and pump the water and carry it home. But not in our, not in Korcë. Not where we lived. The water's very good there, because it's mountain and it's a lot of spring water. So it was good. Even in August it's cool and clean and ---

LEVINE: Hm-hmm.

TASHO: ---.very pure.

LEVINE: Do you remember, like, what you would play as a child in Korcë. I mean, did you have friends and do you remember the kind of games played, or...

TASHO: Hm-mmm. I think, I don't remember because we were quite young. I don't

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remember games except that we played with each other. But I don't, no specific games. I know that everyone did a lot of singing, whether it was at home or outside. Or when you were -- and they all liked to dance. The -- the line dancing. And these were the -- the so -- if they had a name day, because every -- in those days it was Orthodox. Now, of course, it went Communist. But when they were Christian --- when Christianity was allowed to be Christians they would have -- everyone's named after a saint. So when your saint's name came up, you would have a big celebration. It's like a birthday. Birthdays were minimal. You didn't celebrate a birthday, you celebrated your name day that was named after a saint. And people would come in, and they would bake and cook and clean the house. And it would go on for a week. Dancing, they would dance, they would sing. They would bring *bazookis* [banjo-like instrument]. It was a very, as I say --

CURTIS: Their own good time ---

TASHO: Made their good time, but it would last for a long time.

CURTIS: --- they made their own good time. (laughs)

TASHO: And the families, the neighborhoods were in and out. Your neighbors came in all the time. They didn't have to ask to, you know, are you home. They just came in, or you walked in their home.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now what about your, your saint that you were named after.

TASHO: I'm named after Saint George.

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LEVINE: And --

TASHO: And that comes right the week after Easter.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TASHO: Hm-hmm.

LEVINE: Now does that, does that have any, does that mean anything specific for you because you were named after that particular saint, or?

TASHO: No, I think, no. We were named by god, we have godparents. And the godparents give you the name. The parents have no choice in it. You don't, the parents do not give the name. Your godparents do. After forty days when you were born, then your *cumpari*, the godparents come in and, and then it's a surprise to everyone what the name is. They have the name. It's kind of nice. Then, when they, when the mother hears for the first time the name of her child then she throws all these quarters and coins and things to the children as a celebration of the new name.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TASHO: But it's, and of course, they have the -- the big christening ceremony. Everything is ceremonies -- whether it's a christening, a wedding, or whatever it may be. It's a, there's a lot of, a lot of people coming together, people sharing in the good time, and interacting with, and even today we still

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do a lot of that.

LEVINE: And mostly the ceremonies have a religious theme.

TASHO: All the time.

LEVINE: Always.

TASHO: Yes. Hm-hmm.

LEVINE: Do you remember what you had heard about America before you came here, what you expected?

TASHO: Well, of course, again we were quite young. And we just knew that America was a great country, and that it was a very rich country. And that people came here and prospered. And they came back and lived back home again. But I wouldn't, I wouldn't trade America today for any other country in the world. I love my roots, and I'm proud of my roots, and I treasure all the background -- heritage that we have. But I think we have now assimilated into this country, and with the people. And I think it's, I think it's been the best of the world, the two worlds.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TASHO: I think we have had a very rich experience being Albanian. Being, being brought up humble and with great respect for family, religion, relatives and our culture, and yet also appreciate the greatness of this country. The

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democracy, the government, the opportunities, how you can really achieve goals that you wish to achieve if you want to work for it.

END SIDE ONE

BEGIN SIDE TWO

LEVINE: So you, you went through high school in Rockland, too.

TASHO: Yes.

LEVINE: And then you met your husband in Rockland?

TASHO: Well, yes. I met him in Rockland. He came hunting to Rockland, Maine. (she laughs) He was -- he was going to woo another girl but the girl wasn't around. And I happened to be there. And it came so that -- and then I was going with, dating someone else. So I had really no great interest in my husband at that time. But he came again, and we went out for dinner at the Sanaford[ph] Hotel, and then sent me a dozen roses. And then after that I said, "Oh, I think," (she laughs) the one that -- [not understood] -- the roses, but just his general, general, and then of course we dated for a long, for a while, and---

CURTIS: And he was Albanian, too.

TASHO: He was Albanian. And I liked his family. I liked him.

LEVINE: Now was your father alive at that time?

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TASHO: No. My, I, neither our parents saw neither my sister or I married. I'm sure they would have been very pleased to think that I had married an Albanian.

LEVINE: And what, and what was your husband's name?

TASHO: His name was Christy.

LEVINE: Christy.

TASHO: Hm-hmm.

LEVINE: And you had children?

TASHO: I had one son, and he lived to be seventeen years old and was killed in an automobile accident going -- he was on his way for a college interview. And it was very tragic. Hard.

LEVINE: What was his name?

TASHO: His name was Paul.

LEVINE: We, we, I, I never really asked much about your father. What kind of a person was your father?

TASHO: Oh, oh, he was...

CURTIS: He was a saint.

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TASHO: What can you say about a man that brings up two children and gives his whole life to those two girls, to those two children and to others, too. But he was a living saint. He was always looking for our interests. He was always at home. He worked very hard. As I said, we had now a food store. He worked in that store from seven in the morning till twelve midnight seven days a week. We always were, his concern was us, to make sure that we always showed respect to people. I remember that time during World War Two. There were a lot of sailors around. He says, "Look," he says, "I don't want you going around with sailors, because someone will see you. And they'll think you're dating any person." (she laughs) He says, "I want you to be ---" you know (she laughs). Never to be, you know, running around here, or I would sit in the bar stool. He says, "Be always make sure that you are, you know, proper in every way." (she laughs)

But he gave us a lot of love, and a lot of -- we -- a lot of security. A lot of meaning. He was always with us in every way. My father was a wonderful father -- as much as my mother was. He was older than my mother, but he lived eleven years longer than my mother did. But we never felt -- how -- what can I say? In school, we never felt that we were without parents. We always had my father. And he tried to be both a mother and a father. Every year that I can remember -- and Paulie will agree to this -- starting in Memorial weekend until Labor Day, we had company every weekend that came from Massachusetts. (she laughs) They came every, and stayed with us. And we loved it, because this was after my mother died. (she clears her throat) Excuse me. He would, they would cook, and stay there. And we, there was always people coming in our home all the time. It was open

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house. It was with relatives, of course, because we never, ever went to a restaurant to eat. We would think of putting a relative in a hotel. That would be, you know, like you didn't want them. So, I don't know how many times we slept on the floor. (she laughs)

CURTIS: That was against out protocol.

LEVINE: And your father, did he keep up a lot of the ways?

TASHO: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Every Sunday morning he would have, say our prayers in the dining room. We had our little icon. And he would say all the prayers. He'd say them in Albanian. He would say them in Greek, because he was fluent in both languages. And then we could go to any church or place where -- that we -- synagogue with our friends. (she laughs) He always thought that God was God all over. That he said we have our religion, but respect everyone. We went to the Episcopal church there. Was raised really in the Episcopal church. Although we were raised Orthodox, he felt that we should go into some, go into some church would be better that not going anywhere at all.

LEVINE: And then, so were you then working in the store when you met your husband?

TASHO: Yes. Yes, I was. And then, I didn't, I didn't go, I went to high school. Then my father died and he left us the store, and left us. And we just carried on. And a few years later, my sister was married. She was married first. And then later on I married Christy and came here. And I didn't go to college until

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after I was, my son was five years old. I went to Bridgewater, got my degree, got my Master's and I got my C.A.G.S., and been teaching ever since. But I really was one of those late -- people that went to college later in life. There were -- we didn't have the opportunity to go when we were young. We had to help in the store. We had to help, you know, with my father.

CURTIS: Your dad was sick when you were --

TASHO: Yes. Yes he was.

CURTIS: --- scholarship to Colby. And that could not -- you see it. In fact, I actually had to give it back because we had to work in the store, and our dad was home sick.

LEVINE: Well, so your father was sick for a while before he died?

TASHO: Yes. Yes, he was. And --

CURTIS: He got sick when I was about a sophomore in high school.

LEVINE: So then you went to college when your husband was working ---

TASHO: Yeah. He was an executive. He was here. He had a business in, here in Brockton and he had a business in Boston. And I had time on, time on my hands. Once my son went to school, then I wanted to do something. I just went to college because I want to take literature -- the European novelists. And started that way with a friend who said, "Well, look. You only have one

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child. I have three. Let's start from the very beginning and go, go all the way." I had gone to business college in Rockland, Maine, but they didn't accept any of those business courses here. I really started from -- from square one. And, and I love it.

CURTIS: --- liberal arts school, that they had at that time. It was like [not understood].

TASHO: And then, then my husband encouraged me. He always felt that if that is what I would like to do, to go ahead. I went nights. I didn't go days, I just went nights. But I made a lot of nice friends. When my professors see me they say, "Are you still here?" Because you know I went sixteen years through the night. I says, "Yes, I think I'm a museum piece here now." (she laughs) But it was a rewarding experience.

LEVINE: Yeah.

TASHO: One that I feel was -- was the best thing that could have happened. That I would -- always wanted to do was to be a teacher, and this is what I am doing now.

LEVINE: Wonderful. What would you say that you're proudest of, that you've done in your life?

TASHO: Oh, I think, I don't know, I think my family. That, that we are, our families are close together. We've done a lot of things. But I think the fact that our families are so close. My nephews are like my own children. My niece is like my own daughter. That we travel together. We've gone all over Europe

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together. We have a summer home, and we live like one family. So I think the proudest thing is that the love and respect that the children have for each other, for me, for their mother, their par-- father, that they've done well in life, and I guess that's -- that's the biggest, proudest moment. I'm also very proud to think that I got my degrees, because I did them after my son died, was killed. And that was a hard time to do it. But maybe it was the thing that kept me, you know, from falling apart, too. And I'm teaching subjects that I love. I love my job. And I have the interaction of good friends. These are all part of the -- part of the, I guess -- the whole facets of life, that put together.

LEVINE: Well, you must have, when you moved to Massachusetts then, there must have been a larger Albanian community...

TASHO: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: here.

TASHO: By far. In fact, the bishop of the cathedral was the one who married us.

LEVINE: Oh.

CURTIS: His name was Bishop [not understood]

TASHO: [not understood] Today he's very much revered by the -- the people in Albania and the people here. He was a great scholar. He gradua-- he graduated from Harvard. Did the whole translation of Beethoven's work into Albanian -- music, into the church music. He has, he was a brilliant man.

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And I will always feel very proud to think that he was the one who married us -- with the, you know, two crowns. The Orthodox, we don't tie hands. We just have the crowns that -- that are tied with a ribbon. And it was a very beautiful ceremony.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, maybe this is a good place to stop. I thank you very much.

TASHO: Hm-hmm. Well, thank you, Janet for coming here. And I just can't say how pleased I am, because it's very dear to our hearts. Ellis Island has got to be dear to every person. And tomorrow we'll be there, and I'll think of you. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Wonderful. Okay.

CURTIS: Or if you're in Brockton, come down and visit with us.

LEVINE: Okay. Be good.

CURTIS: We'd be happy to have you.

LEVINE: Okay. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. And I've been talking with Georgia Tasho in Brockton, Massachusetts on September 18, 1992, and I'm signing off.