

EI-374

YANNA VASIL THANAS

BIRTHDATE: AUGUST 13, 1901

INTERVIEW DATE: AUGUST 10, 1993

RUNNING TIME: 17:10

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME

INTERVIEW LOCATION: ILLYRIA GARDENS, WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: JOHN MURIELLO, 12/1995

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: CHARLES MITCHELL, 5/2009

ALBANIA, 1935

AGE 34

PASSAGE ON "THE REX"

RESIDENCES: KORCE

SOUTHBRIDGE, MA; WORCESTER, MA

LEVINE: ...Janet Levine, and it's August 10th, 1993. I'm here at the Illyrian Gardens in Worcester, Massachusetts. And I'm about to speak with Yanna Vasil Thanas...

THANAS: Yeah. That's very good.

LEVINE: ...who came, was married in Albania in 1935, and came...

THANAS: Over here.

LEVINE: ...to the United States...

THANAS: Come over here in 1935.

LEVINE: Okay, came to the United States in 1935...

THANAS: Yeah. '20 marry...

LEVINE: ...you were nine...

THANAS: '20 marry, Korce. In Korce.

LEVINE: Oh, you were married in Korce.

THANAS: In Korce, '20.

LEVINE: In 1920?

THANAS: 1920.

LEVINE: Okay.

THANAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now you were nineteen years old when you came here?

THANAS: No.

Voice off-mic: No.

LEVINE: How old?

THANAS: (Albanian)

LEVINE: You were about thirty-four years old.

Voice off-mic: That's right.

THANAS: Yes.

LEVINE: Okay. And you're ninety-three years old now.

THANAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. You're birthdate was, is, was August 13th, around 1901?

THANAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay? Okay, now where were you born in Albania?

THANAS: Viskouch [PH]. (she laughs) In Viskouch. Viskouch. (voices off-mic)
Yeah.

LEVINE: Could you spell it? (voices off-mic) Oh, you can spell it. Okay, and did you live there all the time before...

THANAS: No. Young girl. Nineteen, make marry, Korce.

LEVINE: Oh, I see.

THANAS: Yeah. Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. So before you were nineteen you were, you were in that town?

THANAS: Yeah. That town.

LEVINE: And what do you remember about the town where you grew up?

THANAS: Work, work hard. Lots of, lots of go outside, corning season...

Voice off-mic: Working in the field.

THANAS: The field. And the home, lots of work. Got too much outside. (Albanian)
(voices off-mic) Yeah, field, lots, lots of work.

LEVINE: Did you go to school at all?

THANAS: No.

LEVINE: No. Did...

THANAS: Six months in the school starting, my father say got lot of work now.

LEVINE: Okay. Did, what was your father's name?

THANAS: Vasil. Vasil.

LEVINE: Vasil.

THANAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: And your, and your mother's name?

THANAS: Marina.

LEVINE: Marina. And what was her maiden name, before she married your father?

THANAS: I don't know. Don't remember.

LEVINE: Okay. How about...

THANAS: Who can remember?

LEVINE: ...how about, did you have brothers and sisters?

THANAS: Yes. Two sister and one brother.

LEVINE: And their names?

THANAS: Old country. Yeah, my brother Thossi [PH], my sister Nastasia, my sister Elizabeth.

LEVINE: And were you the oldest or the youngest?

THANAS: Me young.

LEVINE: Youngest?

THANAS: Youngest me.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

THANAS: My sister the me live. My brother die, my sister old country died.
(unintelligible) live me there my sister.

LEVINE: I see. Did, did you, what did you do for enjoyment when you were a little girl? What do you remember as being a good time...

THANAS: Joy, play, friend, that's all. (she laughs) Joy after. Work hard in old country.
Ten year start for work in the house. (Albanian) Korce. Everything.

LEVINE: And were you a religious family? Was your family very religious?

THANAS: Yes. Yes. Yes.

LEVINE: And what did you do, what, can you remember any of the customs, any of the things that...

THANAS: Yes.

LEVINE: ...you did for celebrations.

THANAS: Yes, (unintelligible) celebration, happy everybody. Go vacation, my father go, and my sister, yeah. Or we come, they come in me one, one boy got me. One boy, one girl.

LEVINE: Oh.

THANAS: Yeah. My sister marry in Washington, Virginia.

LEVINE: Oh.

THANAS: My daughter. The boy live in Cape Cod. Me live (unintelligible) I like it over

here the best.

LEVINE: How was it decided that you would marry your husband?

THANAS: (Albanian) (voice off-mic) Huh? Me, me old country, my husband over here. Engage my father over here, then my father-law. They engage me and my husband. Come in old country, make marry. I no see, no see me. (she laughs) They no see. Me no see, they no see me.

LEVINE: So you, you were, you were in your country and your husband was here?

THANAS: Yes. Fourteen years...

LEVINE: Then he came back...

THANAS: Fourteen years old coming my husband. (voices off-mic) They, yeah. Friend my father, my father-law, we friend, America. They say, me got one girl, one, you boy, engage the other. Coming, for two, three, two, three years they come in Korce, make me marry. (she laughs)

LEVINE: What did you think when you saw your husband?

THANAS: Me no...

LEVINE: When you met him?

THANAS: Me, I did no see my husband (unintelligible) Yeah. Good, no good. (voices off-mic) My husband, very, very husband. Good husband. Good life. Yes. Nice.

LEVINE: So, so you married your husband, and then you lived in Korce...

THANAS: Korce. Live me Korce, I say sixteen years.

LEVINE: Yeah.

THANAS: My husband coming back one time. Me (Albanian)...

LEVINE: Who did you, who did you live with in Korce when your husband was back here? (voice off-mic)

THANAS: Coming, make marry Korce my husband, come in America. Make marry. After stay two years my husband, make one boy. They come in big, my husband (unintelligible). Me stay (unintelligible) my father-law, my mother-law, my sister-law, everybody happy. I no (unintelligible). Me happy. (They laugh)

LEVINE: And what, and what did you name your children?

THANAS: Saine, Sortira, Sainey [PH], my son. Saine. My daughter, Dorothy. Dotty.

Yeah. (voice off-mic) Yes. Got seven grandchilds [sic]. (unintelligible)

Voice off-mic: Boys.

THANAS: Boys. Seven...

Voice off-mic: Seven boys.

THANAS: ...grandson. One daughter. One grand, one grand daughter, one grand, grand daughter. Yeah.

LEVINE: Now, when you, when you, when your son was born...

THANAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: ...did you, did he, was he christened, and then he has a name day?

THANAS: No, no.

LEVINE: No.

THANAS: Born, born now, born now. (voice off-mic) (Albanian)

Voice off-mic: She didn't understand.

THANAS: No, no, no,

Voice off-mic: He's christened.

THANAS: (Albanian) (voices off-mic) Yes, yes. Christened, yes. Oh, in two, three day in old country christened. (Albanian)

LEVINE: Tell me what it was like to have a name day celebration.

THANAS: I like it, (unintelligible), now in August. The sixth August name day.

LEVINE: And what did you do in, in...

THANAS: Cook, liquor, sweets, everything. Everything in old country. Make party, make...

LEVINE: One day?

THANAS: One day, coming all week people. Not one day make. Everything. Yeah.

LEVINE: And how about wedding celebrations? What were they like in Albania?

THANAS: I like, yes.

LEVINE: What did people do?

THANAS: Sing, bands, everything.

Voice off-mic: Drink.

THANAS: Drink. Sure. Yeah.

LEVINE: What, what do you remember about Albania, what makes you happy when you think about life there?

THANAS: Me like it Albania too much. Come over here, cry. After I like it America very (unintelligible).

LEVINE: What didn't you like at first? What made you cry?

THANAS: Miss everybody. My father, my mother, sister, brother. They cry. Over here only my husband and the one boy over here. The girl born over here, my girl. Yeah. Over here.

LEVINE: So, so you were on the ship The Rex. Is that the name of the boat?

THANAS: Yeah, Rexi [PH]. Rex. Rexi. (voice off-mic)

LEVINE: Oh, Rexi.

THANAS: Rexi, yeah. Rexi (unintelligible)

LEVINE: And, and do you...

THANAS: First class.

LEVINE: First class?

THANAS: First class.

LEVINE: It was very nice?

THANAS: Very, very nice.

LEVINE: Do...

Voice off-mic: His husband is American citizen.

THANAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: What did you take with you? When you came here what did you bring?

THANAS: My, my son.

LEVINE: Your son.

THANAS: Wait my husband over here. Come in New York, my husband take me and my son.

LEVINE: What did you put in your, in your, in your suitcase to take with you from Albania, to bring to the United States.

THANAS: I didn't know if we, huh? (voices off-mic) Clothes, everything, clothes. Oh, bring too much clothes. (Albanian) Everything, everything. (voices off-mic) Rug.

LEVINE: A hand made rug?

THANAS: Lots antique, antique. Lots antique. (voices off-mic) (Albanian) Big, big box.

LEVINE: What kind, what kind of antiques? What were they?

THANAS: Make old country lots of thing.

Voice off-mic: Weaves.

LEVINE: Weave, woven...

THANAS: Weave, yes. Beautiful. Mayflower. Everything, this rug. (she indicates)

(Albanian) Lots of thing, lots of thing. (voices off-mic)

LEVINE: Let's see. What else, when you came to this country did you come right to Worcester?

THANAS: No, Southbridge. Southbridge, it's a small town.

LEVINE: Sallbridge [PH]?

THANAS: Southbridge, yeah. No, (Albanian) (voices off-mic)

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about Ellis Island?

THANAS: (voices off-mic) Oh, oh. Come in one (Albanian).

Voice off-mic: ...if you were a citizen...

THANAS: He's a citizen, my husband...

LEVINE: Oh, so you didn't have to go because your husband...

Voice off-mic: Was a citizen...

LEVINE: ...was a citizen.

THANAS: Yeah. See. Yes. Come in my son.

LEVINE: Yeah. (voices off-mic) Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

THANAS: Yes. Yes, yes, yes. Everything. Nice.

LEVINE: What did you think when you saw it?

THANAS: Oh, see me, nice, nice. But my place, for my (Albanian).

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what, and what about the ship itself? What do you remember about the voyage?

THANAS: Nice?

LEVINE: Nice?

THANAS: Nice. Very nice. Sometime me no feel good for heat, but the best. My husband, putting first class, but me, no feel me good. They say, no, that's better first class. (unintelligible) The best.

LEVINE: And when you first, your first few days and weeks here in this country...

THANAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: ...do you remember things that you saw that were very different that you hadn't seen before?

THANAS: Sure, little bit different.

LEVINE: What?

THANAS: Say me better, say, cry, they say better Korce. (she laughs) Better Korce, say all time. Say it's small town in Southbridge. Not look the good so Korce. Korce is the best. And me cry, cry (unintelligible). (she laughs) After say better, better, make my husband, new house, make everything, buy everything, make house, feel good after. Yeah. (voices off-mic) (unintelligible)

LEVINE: Then you had another child...

THANAS: Other one, (unintelligible) one girl, make one girl over here, and make happy, forget. (she laughs) I forgot after, old country.

LEVINE: Did you ever go back to visit?

THANAS: No, no. No go me. No go, sick my husband. Fourteen year. Fourteen year sick, then no goes. (Albanian) No go. Now everybody go. See. Me no, no go.

LEVINE: What, what makes you happy about this time of your life?

THANAS: Happy all the time. (unintelligible) my husband a little bit. Feel sorry. (voice off-mic) Got nice son, got nice daughter. The best daughter, my daughter (unintelligible) five years, die my husband (unintelligible) my daughter. They go, stay five year my daughter. They come, (unintelligible) my son twenty year over here in Worcester. Got twenty-five, twenty-six live over here in Worcester. Before live in Southbridge. Living in my husband fourteen, fifteen year over here, then my son.

LEVINE: What are you proud of that you've done in your life? What makes you feel proud?

THANAS: I'm proud. Feel good. Come kids, good, liking, take caring my kids, I'm happy.

LEVINE: Is there anything you would say about being Albanian, living in the United States?

THANAS: Yes. Go see, I like it Albania, got lots of people. Nephew, niece, you got lots of, lots of. Old country, I like old country, too. No go, I can't go to old, old people now. I no want, no want to die in old country. Want to die over here, got my husband, got my children see me. No want to die. Over here like it apartment, got nice house, nice friend, everything. The best. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Is there anything else you'd like to say before we stop?

THANAS: No, honey. Thank you very much.

LEVINE: Well, thank you.

THANAS: No want to say nothing. (Albanian) (she laughs)

LEVINE: Okay, very nice.

THANAS: (someone applauds) Oh, thank you, thank you.

LEVINE: Okay, thank you. I've been speaking with Yanna Vasil Thanas.

THANAS: Yanna Thanas.

LEVINE: Thanas.

THANAS: After, after, after Vasil. Vasil my father. Thanas, that's my man...

Voice off-mic: My husband.

LEVINE: Right.

THANAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay, and we're here in Worcester...

THANAS: My husband, Philip. My husband.

LEVINE: Your husband Philip?

THANAS: Philip, yeah, my name.

LEVINE: Okay. Okay, so...

THANAS: Philip Thanas.

LEVINE: ...this is August 10th, 1993, and you're ninety-three years old now.

THANAS: Yeah, now. (voices off-mic)

LEVINE: And I want to thank you very much.

THANAS: Me, too. I thank you.

LEVINE: (she laughs)

THANAS: Thank...(tape ends)