

EI-378

ANGELUS COTSIDAS

BIRTH DATE: MARCH 15, 1900

INTERVIEW DATE: AUGUST 11, 1993

RUNNING TIME: 1:26:30

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPE 1: NANCY VEGA, 1/1996

TAPE 2: STEPHEN KEMPA 10/2008

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: TAPE 1: JANET LEVINE

TAPE 2: SIMAH KRAUS

GREECE, 1920

AGE 20

SHIP: "THE ADELINE"

PORT: PATRAS

RESIDENCES:

GREECE: PLEASAN

US: WORCESTER, MA

ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: Mr. Cotsidas' wife, Eva, whispers [prompting her husband to speak of certain things] at different points throughout the interview.

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I'm here with Mr. Angelus Cotsidas and Mrs. Cotsidas in Worcester, Massachusetts. It is August 11, 1993, and Mr. Cotsidas came from Greece in 1920 when he was eighteen years old. I'm sorry to have to start again. But, um . . .

COTSIDAS: Don't . . .

LEVINE: Could you say again, please your birth date, and the town you were born in, for the tape?

COTSIDAS: Yes. I was born in Pleasan [ph], 19 . . .

EVA: 1900.

COTSIDAS: 1900.

LEVINE: March 15th.

COTSIDAS: March 15th.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And you were saying that Pleasan was under the Turks until you were thirteen.

COTSIDAS: Until 1913. And then we got the freedom.

LEVINE: And tell me, now, the differences.

COTSIDAS: And then I went to high school in Corfu Island for four years. When I come back again home, I didn't know what to do. So I says to myself, "I think I'm gonna go . . ." A lot of my people was coming here. A lot of Greeks was coming to America. I says to myself, "It must be golden place there to go, a good place to go." So that's why I came here in 1920. And, uh, in the boat, while I was coming here, in the end of the boat, when we stayed thirty-one days in the (?) in the boat there, there was, uh, there was two doctors. When we go out to come to New York, there was two doctors there watching me. So they look at my eyes, they says, "You got trachoma." So they put a chalk on me and told me to go back to Greece. So I went out, I looked out on the (?), I took the chalk out. I went where the most people going. So I says to the guy, "Where you go?" He says, "To Worcester." "I'm coming with you," I says, "to Worcester." I was supposed to go to Boston. I had a cousin there that was in Boston. But I lost his address. I left my little valise I had there. He told me to go back. I says, "The hell with that valise. I'm going to try to go with the others to America." Because in this line, twenty-five guys go in this line, one guy maybe go here, you know. They find the trachoma, they was looking just in the eyes here, the trachoma and the nails. And so he says to me, "You're going back, you got trachoma." He put a chalk on me. So I went through the line, I look at them, they're busy, I says, "The hell with this. I'm going to go with the crowd." So I came with the line here. I was supposed to go to Boston, but I didn't go to Boston because I lost, I left my address in my valise there, so I asked the guy, "Where you go?" He says, "To Worcester." I says to myself, "I'll go to Worcester, too."

LEVINE: So you just took the chalk mark off?

COTSIDAS: Off, yeah. It was over here. I took it off. So I came here. Those guys were busy. The doctor was busy with the others, you know. They won't look at me. After they look at me, he says, "Go this way." I went this way, and then I went with the others. That's where I came. He says, "Where you go?" I says, "To Worcester." I says to myself, "I'll come to Worcester, too."

LEVINE: (she laughs) So you came to Worcester. And you would have never come to Worcester before.

COTSIDAS: No.

LEVINE: Well, let's go back a little bit . . .

COTSIDAS: And then I came to Worcester and, uh, and, in the station there. So . . .

LEVINE: Union Street?

COTSIDAS: Union Station. That's where we came, from New York. So I says to the guy, it was a couple of other guys, three or four guys there, I says, "Where you go in Worcester to?" Bucalis [ph] Market. I says to

myself, "I'll go to Bucalis Market." So from Union Station, I came to Bucalis Market on Mechanic Street. So I came there. There was a big market there, owned by the Bucalis Market, the Greeks there. I says to him, "Where do my people from home town live?" He says, "I'll give you my driver to take you there." So the driver took me, and he brought me with some people of my hometown there. They were here. So I went there. They glad to see me anyways. But I was supposed to go to Boston. I had a cousin in Boston.

LEVINE: Did you know these people from your hometown?

COTSIDAS: No. But I hear about them, they were here. I was young when they left and they came here. So I go in the house and I, they took me in the house there. They gave me dinner. And then I started talking with them. I says, "Where's my cousin, my young cousin," I says, "from Boston?" "In Boston," he says. "Are there many Greeks in Boston?" "We don't know," he says. "Any from my home town in Boston?" "No, just you." I said to myself, "I'm going to stay here with these people here that come from my home town." So that's why I stayed there. And then I says to myself for, I called my cousin, I told him to call my cousin. I called my cousin. I says, "I'm going to come to Worcester." So he came. That was Thursday. He came on Sunday. So he says to me, he was mad. "Why didn't you come to me? You come to these people here?" They didn't get along together with these people. "Well," I says, "I don't an explanation." He says, "Goodbye." He left me, gone. He got mad. I says to myself, "What can I do? I gotta stay here now. I can't go to him." So I says to these guys, "Any work?" "Well," he says, "one guy from the Bucalis Market works at the Little Prince Company." It was a screw shop. "Maybe he'll take you and get a job there." After I stay about, uh, a month without any work. So I went to Bucalis Market, and I says to the guy, his name was Peter Bucalis, I says, "Peter, are you working at the Little Prince Company?" It was four or five brothers and a father there, head of the Bucalis Market, on Mechanic Street. I says, "Can you get me a job in the Little Prince Company?" "I'm going to try," he says. "Come with me." So he took me, I went there, they gave me a job. So the next morning I started working at the Little Prince Company.

LEVINE: And what did you do there?

COTSIDAS: I was on machine that makin the screws. And you watch the machine. If it goes dry, you have to oil it once in a while. And the foreman was coming every ten minutes, watching you there. I had a little machine there, makin little screws. That's the way I started.

LEVINE: So how long did you work there?

COTSIDAS: I work there, uh, I work there almost three months. It was the week of Christmas, and you know the trouble with me, I was smoking every five minutes, three packets a day. So they caught me smoking. They says, "Look, if I find you again, out you go." And I says to myself -well, I couldn't stand it. I'll go five, ten, minutes I smoke again. I used to smoke, I don't know, three packets a day, like crazy. But I went so much, through all this stuff, you know. That's why I smoke so much. I was thinking all the time what to do next, what to do next. Smokin,

smokin, smokin, smokin. That was my second name, smoke. But anyways, "I'll give you," he says, "Till Christmas. If you don't stop smokin, out you go." I says to myself, "This guy means business." I went one day without smokin. But I almost died. I almost died. I says, "The hell with this job. They kick me out. I'm not gonna stop smokin." So the next time he come in, he says, "Out you go. Not now," he says, "I'll wait till Christmas. I don't want to throw you out now." He says, "Because I feel sorry for you. I'll give you a chance up to Christmas. If you stop smokin, I'm going to hire you again. If you don't, out you go." He caught me back again smokin, so he throw me right out. Then I stay with these people there. For a while I was doing the cooking for them, they was working, I didn't have a job. So after a while this guy that was from my hometown, he had a business. He had a bread business. So I says to myself, he had two, three drivers delivering Greek bread and Italian bread to Greek people and Italian people. So I went with the driver to help him out. I didn't want no money. But he gave me lunch one time, that's all. So I work with him twelve hours a day, ten hours a day. But I learned the route there, so then I wanted to get a license, and drive the car so I can get a job there. So I went, I got my license. I went to the YMCA. They, they taught me how to drive, and they told me all the questions they're going to ask me. They didn't ask much questions them days for your driver card. So . . .

LEVINE: Could you speak English very well at that time?

COTSIDAS: Well, on the boat while I was thirty-one day, I was reading, because I went through high school. I know a little bit French. I didn't know English, but I know French. And then I had, I had books there. And I was studying while I was coming here for thirty-one days. Almost understand a little bit. So I could find my way, if I got stuck someplace, I would ask somebody where to go, and what street to go. I put though all that. Because I know pretty good French, you know, because I went four years in high school there, and we took French, not English. But French there. Now they take English, no French any more. So that's why I could read the streets and everything else, because I studied, for all these thirty-one days I was working day and night to learn the English language. And really I could understand when I came here, practically.

LEVINE: Wonderful.

COTSIDAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: So, okay. So you got your license then.

COTSIDAS: I got my license. I got my license, and this guy says to me, I says to him, "How much you payin?" The guy says, "Forty-five dollars." "Pay me anything," I says. "I want a job there."

LEVINE: This is forty-five dollars a week in 19 . . .

COTSIDAS: '20. This guy was makin. He says, "I'll start you with ten, twelve dollars a week." "Okay," I says, "start me with twelve dollars a week. I don't care. I got nothing." So that's why I started. We

opened another route to, to, we're selling Greek breads to the Greeks and Italians, and then I says to him, "What do you say if we go to the Albanians? I'll go and sell his business with the Albanians," I says. So he give me a route. I got my license. He gave me a car, so I went and sell his business, and I start with Albanians. I got all the Albanians. They wanted, they wanted Greek bread and Italian bread. So that's the way I started. And then, coming from, no, we want to see if, we had a farm in West Boston. We're selling all the stale bread there. All the stale bread we have we used to sell it to the farm there. They had chickens. So one afternoon the boss, myself, I drove him to go to the farm there. Going straight, I was going about thirty miles an hour, thirty-five. "Turn", he says, I turned the car. Tipped over. Truck tipped over. Tipped over. I says, "You leaving'?" He says, "I'm leaving'." "I'm leavin' too," I says. So, I went a little farther there was a gallery station. I says to the guy, "I tipped over. Will you come and help us get a few guys there to lift the truck?" They come in. They lift the truck. I had a flat tire. They fixed the tire. But when I gave the stale bread, and come back again tonight. All night I couldn't sleep any more. I was so excited. So I says, "I'm not gonna drive no more car." You know, and all this and that. But the next morning I went back again (laughs softly). I like to drive the car. So that's the way I started.

LEVINE: (she laughs) Well, let's go back to, uh, Greece again, okay?

COTSIDAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: And tell me, because there's parts of the story to fill in.

COTSIDAS: Uh-huh. Okay. (voice off mike)

LEVINE: Well, let's say, the town you were born in was what?

COTSIDAS: March 15th.

LEVINE: No, the town.

COTSIDAS: Pleasan.

LEVINE: Pleasan. Uh, in Pleasan, tell me what it looked like, the town.

COTSIDAS: It was about, uh, three thousand, two or three thousand population. It was a all Greek town. We had a Turkish town, Albanian Turkish towns, we had Greek towns. Our town was all Greeks, Christian Greeks, Greeks. The next town was Albanian Turks, the next town Albanian Turks, because all them towns were Greek, but the Albanians took it over.

LEVINE: I see.

COTSIDAS: 18 something.

LEVINE: Was it an agricultural town, Pleasan?

COTSIDAS: Yes.

LEVINE: You grew, what was the . . .

COTSIDAS: Wheat and all that stuff.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Olive trees?

COTSIDAS: Olive trees. We had plenty of olive trees. You know, we had a, we had a, uh, in the beginning we had a grape tree, grapevines. So the grapes was, the wine wasn't so high, so the order was we'll put olive trees, we'll take all the vines, we'll put olive trees there. (Dr. Levine laughs) I was small, but I remember all this stuff.

LEVINE: Yeah. What did your father do?

COTSIDAS: My father was a merchant. He was getting, uh, the skins of the, of foxes, and, uh, all kinds of skins.

LEVINE: Fur?

COTSIDAS: Furs.

LEVINE: Of foxes.

COTSIDAS: And skins, and they dry them up, and they send them to Austria. They used to sell them in Austria. They was making dresses and that stuff with the skins there, making the leather, skins, and all that stuff. But we get all the, the, how do you call them, the unfinished . . .

LEVINE: Hides?

COTSIDAS: Hides, and we send them to Austria.

LEVINE: And how would he get the animals?

COTSIDAS: We kill the animals, and we get the meat out of it. And a lot of hunters, they kill the wild animals.

LEVINE: And then he, they would bring them . . .

COTSIDAS: They bring them to my father, my father was drying them up, drying them up. And then make big packages. After two, three, four months, we had plenty of packages, and then we send them to, to Austria.

LEVINE: Oh. What was your father's name?

COTSIDAS: Nicholas.

LEVINE: Nicholas.

COTSIDAS: My son is Nicholas, too.

LEVINE: And your, and your mother? What was her name?

COTSIDAS: Alexandra.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

COTSIDAS: Ninos. N-I, N-I-N-O-S.

LEVINE: And, uh, what was your mother like?

COTSIDAS: My mother looked like, a little bit like me, but better looking than me, a little better looking than me.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And do you remember any experiences?

COTSIDAS: She had a, she had a light eyes, I got brown eyes. She had very light eyes. Color like, uh, very, light blue eyes. I had black eyes. I take after my father. My mother had different. All of us, we didn't take her eyes at all. We took all father's eyes.

LEVINE: How many children in the family?

COTSIDAS: Three boys and a girl.

LEVINE: And what were their names?

COTSIDAS: The first one was John. The next one is Peter. Myself, Angelus, and a sister, Paraskvy, Friday, we call her in English, Friday is Paraskvy.

LEVINE: Could you spell Paraskvy?

COTSIDAS: Yeah. P-A-R-A-S-K-E-Y, V-Y.

LEVINE: V-Y. Uh-huh. Well, uh, were you closest to any particular family member?

COTSIDAS: Well, over there? Yeah, we had a lot of, a lot of cousins there.

LEVINE: Did you have grandparents?

COTSIDAS: I didn't see my grandparents. They didn't live where I knew something. I remember something about it, but not too much.

LEVINE: Were you a religious family?

COTSIDAS: Yes, we were Catholics.

LEVINE: Do you remember any celebrations, religious observances?

COTSIDAS: Huh, (laughs) we used to have every week one. A lot of, a lot of holidays in Greece.

LEVINE: Do you remember any, like, ceremonies, or any kind of customs that revolved around these holidays?

COTSIDAS: Well, my name was 25th of March, it was a big holiday.

LEVINE: Angelus.

COTSIDAS: Angelus.

LEVINE: (voice off mike) It was the holiday, what holiday was it? The independence of Greece?

COTSIDAS: No. (pause)(disturbance to the microphone) We had a lot of holidays. We had a holiday for my name, a holiday for Paraskvy's name, holidays for John's name, holidays for Patrick, Peter's name. We don't work, we don't do nothing them days. They don't keep them here.

LEVINE: What, how did you get to have that name day? I mean, was that the day, how did you get a name day? In other words . . .

COTSIDAS: Saint, Saint John, or Saint Nicholas or Saint something. That's how we got the name.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Because you were born on that day, or you were, what, baptized on that day?

COTSIDAS: Baptized on that day. Baptized after three days or seven days. But my mother told me I was baptized in three days because I was kind of sick. They baptize me before I died, see. They had to baptize right away, and, when you're sick, because they're afraid you die without a name.

LEVINE: OH.

COTSIDAS: See? Got to get a Christian name before you die so they can bury you. Otherwise they won't bury you if you're not baptized. They can't bury you there. You've got to go with the Turks. (he laughs)

LEVINE: Oh.

COTSIDAS: Ah, you're not Christian.

LEVINE: What's the difference? Yeah, I am.

COTSIDAS: We are Christians. The others, they're not Christians.

LEVINE: I see. So, uh, you would be buried in a different place if you were baptized.

COTSIDAS: They bury me, they don't want me in the town. They got to go in the mountains and throw me somewhere there because I wasn't Christian. (he laughs)

LEVINE: Okay. So, tell me more about how you celebrated the name day.

COTSIDAS: Well, we celebrated like Sundays here. We visit, every name, you know. My name, they visit me, I visit you, with that name, with the name they have, if you're a John, St. John, they celebrate, they visit house to house and give us some drinks or some sweets.

LEVINE: Was it, was it for girls, too?

COTSIDAS: Huh?

LEVINE: Did girls have name days?

COTSIDAS: The girls?

LEVINE: Yeah.

COTSIDAS: Sure they have name days. Sure.

LEVINE: Wow. Do you remember any other, like, ceremonies or rituals or customs that were observed in your town?

COTSIDAS: Well, we have, uh, we have, uh, we observe all the name days. And then we had Easter, we had, uh, three or four big holidays, the whole town celebrates.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And was there anything special you did on Easter that maybe we don't do here? Anything that you did in Greece for Easter?

COTSIDAS: Well, us boys, we had the red eggs, and we hit each other, and if I break you, I take the egg away from you. (he laughs) That was it. That was the system there.

LEVINE: So you colored the eggs red?

COTSIDAS: Colored the eggs red, and we visit, we visit the house on Easter, they give us red eggs in every house we went. And then we go out the boys together, and they hit each other. Some they're getting all the eggs, you know, they had a strong egg. Some they had artificial egg, and we didn't know about it. So they broke the eggs. (they laugh)

LEVINE: You know, so you would hit the eggs together?

COTSIDAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: And then whatever broke.

COTSIDAS: If I broke you, I take the egg away from you. (they laugh)

LEVINE: You'd do that here, too?

COTSIDAS: No. (the sound of keys jingling is heard on the tape) No, over there. (Ms. Levine laughs) We don't do here.

LEVINE: What else?

COTSIDAS: We're Americanized here, now.

LEVINE: What about births? When somebody was born, were there any, uh, any kind of customs around when somebody was born?

COTSIDAS: Somebody's born, it was nice for the family, but after they're baptized, it's the time they celebrate the name.

LEVINE: I see. And how about, uh, other occasions, like weddings. Were the weddings any different?

COTSIDAS: Oh, we celebrated the weddings very much.

LEVINE: Like what did you do?

COTSIDAS: Oh, we, we, uh, got the orchestra. We sing. The bride, we go and get the bride from the other house. All our friends, singing and dancing, go to the other house to get the bride, to get the bride again, singing and dancing, celebrate for three days for that bride.

LEVINE: Wow. Hmm. And, um, and what about the groom? Was the groom with the other guys going to get the bride?

COTSIDAS: That's right. The groom was ahead with the other guys to get the bride. Big celebration we had, three days lasted.

LEVINE: And how about funerals? Were there any particular observances about that that were different than here?

COTSIDAS: Well, we, uh, we kept it more there than here. You know, for a week nobody eats meat or anything like that, and we be crying, and all the hometown visits were in the house.

LEVINE: Oh. And is, like, the casket's in the house and everybody comes?

COTSIDAS: No, no. The casket is buried, but for forty days they come and visit you and say, to say my deepest sympathies.

LEVINE: For forty days?

COTSIDAS: Yeah. The whole town is coming. On forty days, you come today, somebody comes today, but for the forty days they comin, they got the right to come and visit you and feel that they sorry.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Wow. Um, let's see. So did you go to school at all in your . . .

COTSIDAS: In my hometown?

LEVINE: Yeah.

COTSIDAS: I went up to fourth grade.

LEVINE: And what was school like?

COTSIDAS: We had two schools, one for the girls and one for us. We had, uh, we had two big rooms, and a place to, to go out, one to go outside, and the other to go to the bathroom, and two, two teaching rooms there. One for the grammar school, one for the higher grammar school. One for the beginners, one for the high. And then we go to Corfu Island for high school.

LEVINE: High school.

COTSIDAS: We didn't have no high school. We have (?), which is in Epirus, my hometown, but it's far away. That day we didn't have no roads, we go with the horse. It took two days to go there. So we go to Corfu Island because it was closer.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, were there any automobiles in your town?

COTSIDAS: No.

LEVINE: No.

COTSIDAS: No automobiles. We had horses.

LEVINE: Horses. Did most families have a horse?

COTSIDAS: Practically every house had a horse. We couldn't do it without horses. We had to go distance, you know. The roads, we didn't have no automobiles, we didn't have no trains. We didn't have nothing like that them days.

LEVINE: How about like in the homes? Was there running water in those days?

COTSIDAS: No. We go and get the water. We had a place where the water comes, about ten minutes from the house.

LEVINE: So when you were a young boy would you go and get water and bring it to your house?

COTSIDAS: My, the women go and get the water, not the men.

LEVINE: Oh! (Dr.Levine laughs)

COTSIDAS: Then.

LEVINE: What did they get it in? What did they carry it in ?

COTSIDAS: They carry it in little barrels out on their back.

LEVINE: Like around their neck.

COTSIDAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did they have, and the two barrels. And, uh, like, who would go? Would your sisters go? Would your mother go?

COTSIDAS: My mother goes, my sisters go, but the men don't go for water. Men do the other stuff in the, in the fields.

LEVINE: Well, tell me what jobs the women had, and what jobs the men had.

COTSIDAS: The women had to take care of the house, that's all, no other, no other job. All day, they ain't supposed to go outside and work. That was a shame. A woman should stay home, not to go out looking for a job.

LEVINE: How did, how did somebody feel, I mean, what was, what was the feeling about, like, say, your mother wanted to go out to work. What . . .

COTSIDAS: It was a shame to go to work. We wouldn't let them go to work. My father works harder, but never let my mother work outside the house. (traffic noises can be heard in the background on the tape) It was a terrible thing to see a woman go outside.

LEVINE: Yeah. It would be embarrassing. What about a woman who didn't have a man to provide for her?

COTSIDAS: Everybody help her.

LEVINE: Oh.

COTSIDAS: We used to help everybody.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So, okay. So the men would go out to the fields. The women would take care of the house.

COTSIDAS: That's right.

LEVINE: And how about, like, washing clothes?

COTSIDAS: The women do that.

LEVINE: How? Where? How would your mother wash clothes?

COTSIDAS: Well, they took some over here, and then they go to the, to the, to the fountains and clean them out.

LEVINE: Oh, so, at the fountains the women would come with their clothes, too?

COTSIDAS: Yes. Fountains, we had four fountains in one part of the city, and four fountains in another city, and two fountains in another place. We had a lot of water.

LEVINE: So in other words the fountains were man-made. They built these fountains just for that reason.

COTSIDAS: For that reason, yeah. It was four or five faucets in each round, and they bring the clothes and rinse them there.

LEVINE: So would the women get together? Was it like a social occasion?

COTSIDAS: Oh, sure, they can social.

LEVINE: When they would go wash the clothes.

COTSIDAS: Oh, yeah, sure. They stay there for hours talking.
(they laugh))

LEVINE: And what would the men do, when they got together, to socialize. Where would they go?

COTSIDAS: They sing, they dance, they do everything like that, you know families get together, especially on the name days. We all get together and celebrate.

LEVINE: Did people play instruments?

COTSIDAS: Oh, yes. Some people play instruments, too. Mandolin, guitars, and banjo, violins. We had a lot of guys from our hometown playing that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

COTSIDAS: We had to pay when they come to play for us, unless he was with us, in our crowd. (the sound of keys jingling is heard on the tape)But if he wasn't in our crowd, we had to pay. Ah, a small amount.

LEVINE: Now, what, what did you do as a young boy, uh, for fun, besides, like, what games did you play? Do you remember?

COTSIDAS: OH, we played a lot of games.

LEVINE: What?

COTSIDAS: With a ball, you know. We play a lot of ball. A guy came from, I remember in my days a guy came from Romania and show us how to play a lot of games.

LEVINE: Oh. Ball games?

COTSIDAS: Ball games. It was nice.

LEVINE: How about your sisters? What did they play?

COTSIDAS: My sisters, they wouldn't go out of the house, I told you. They're supposed to stay in.

LEVINE: They don't go out?

COTSIDAS: No. The woman is supposed to stay home, not to go outside and look for work or anything like that.

LEVINE: No, when they were little and they were playing, could they go out and play?

COTSIDAS: Oh, yes. They go to the girls' school until they finish grammar school. And then they had to go out of town to get education, if you could afford it.

LEVINE: How about your sisters? Did they have dolls? Do you remember what games they played?

COTSIDAS: Oh, sure, they had dolls. They had a, they get together all the little girls sing and play and do a lot of things together. Girls with girls, and boys with boys. Not together, never.

LEVINE: They didn't play together.

COTSIDAS: Never. (disturbance to the microphone) Not allowed that. (He laughs.) They wouldn't allow us to do that.

LEVINE: In other words, you wouldn't even play with, like, your sisters, in the house?

COTSIDAS: I can play with my sisters, but not with strangers.

LEVINE: Oh. (she laughs) Yeah.

COTSIDAS: Unless it was a first cousin, it was like a sister. But farther down, couldn't do it. Couldn't mix. Couldn't mix.

LEVINE: Yeah. Were girls treated differently than boys growing up? I mean, were there, like, certain things that boys . . .

COTSIDAS: Oh, yes. Girls, it was just teaching to take care of the house. But outside us, we go to work, when we're even eight, ten years old, help the father or somebody else, learn some kind of a trade, either tailor or carpenter or something like that. We all do something to get . . .

END OF SIDE A, TAPE 1

BEGINNING OF SIDE B, TAPE 1

LEVINE: Did you learn a trade, when you were little?

COTSIDAS: I go to school.

LEVINE: Oh. If you went to school, then you didn't.

COTSIDAS: I didn't have no, I couldn't work. No, I had a lot of work in school. When I went to high school in Corfu, I stayed four years there. Boy, I had six hours work in the house. They kill us.

LEVINE: You mean homework?

COTSIDAS: Homework.

LEVINE: From schoolwork, you mean.

COTSIDAS: Oh, Christ. They kill you the homework.

LEVINE: Really? How . . .

COTSIDAS: Holidays, when it was holiday, they give you to write about almost a book. So they keep you home to work. That's why they give us a lot of work on holidays, not to hang around.

LEVINE: How many boys in your class in Corfu?

COTSIDAS: In Corfu? Well, they came from a lot of places there, well, about five hundred guys.

LEVINE: Oh!

COTSIDAS: Yeah. A hundred and, a hundred and forty guys in first class.

LEVINE: What's the first class? What does that mean?

COTSIDAS: You know, high school had four classes, first, second, third and fourth classes. After that you go to college. You got to go to Athens for college. But I didn't go to college. I went through high school, but not, I came here.

LEVINE: So were you the only one in your family who went to Corfu for the last year?

COTSIDAS: Yeah, I'm the only one.

LEVINE: How come you got to go and the others didn't?

COTSIDAS: They didn't want to go.

LEVINE: They didn't want to.

COTSIDAS: I wanted to go. They didn't want to go.

LEVINE: But did you like school?

COTSIDAS: I did. But my oldest brother didn't like school. My sister liked school, but she had only, she couldn't go out of town because she

was a girl. They wouldn't let her go out of town. She had to stay home. So she learned what she could there. Here's my hometown, too. That's where I born. (shows a picture)

LEVINE: Oh. Oh, so it was hills all around.

COTSIDAS: All hills around.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Oh, that's beautiful. So you, so your sister, was she, um, did she come here?

COTSIDAS: No.

LEVINE: Your sister who didn't go to, uh . . .

COTSIDAS: No. Nobody came here from my family. No. She marry in, and she stay in Athens.

LEVINE: So, um, let's see, so did you learn any kind of a trade before you left Greece?

COTSIDAS: No.

LEVINE: No?

COTSIDAS: I was in high school. I left high school, and I came here.

LEVINE: But you learned how to make shoes?

COTSIDAS: No. (voice off mike) But my hometown knew how to make shoes. The whole town was making shoes, you're right.

LEVINE: Yeah.

COTSIDAS: But I didn't go to that, because I was busy with high school. And from high school I came here.

LEVINE: Yeah. Tell me how, like, uh, how would most people, uh, get their shoes? In other words, how often would people have shoes, and . . .

COTSIDAS: Every Easter we had brand new shoes, everybody. You couldn't go out unless you had good shoes. You see what I mean? It was the style then to have good shoes to go out, and good dress.

LEVINE: On Easter.

COTSIDAS: On Easter.

LEVINE: Everybody got in a new outfit.

COTSIDAS: Oh, a new outfit on Easter, you know. Everybody was crying for that, and save for that. Easter was something.

LEVINE: So what would you do? You'd go to a shoemaker, and you have your shoes done. And would you go to a tailor, or would you get ready-made clothing?

COTSIDAS: No, no. You have to go to a tailor, and you have to go to shoes to take measures, and make your shoes. We didn't have everything at any length, no. No such a thing. You had to go to the tailor, you have to go to shoemaker to make the shoes.

LEVINE: And would you, would you have, like, a hat?

COTSIDAS: A hat?

LEVINE: Would you buy hats?

COTSIDAS: Yeah, we buy some kind of a hat, but we used to have the Turkish hat, they call it fez. It was red, a red thing, all red, or all white, either red or white. The Christians wear more red. The Turks wear the white hat.

LEVINE: Huh.

COTSIDAS: No Greek wear a white, a white hat, because the Turks got the white, we had the red. (he laughs)

LEVINE: Well, did you know any Turks? Were you, were they, like, around? Did you have anything to do with them?

COTSIDAS: It wasn't in my home town, but I knew them from next town when every Thursday, from all towns, seventy-two towns were coming in the town there, they call it Foliates [ph]. There was big business there. You sell shoes, somebody sells this, somebody sell the other, like we got bazaars here.

LEVINE: So that would be in your town every Thursday?

COTSIDAS: Every Friday.

LEVINE: Friday. And people would come . . .

COTSIDAS: People would come from other towns there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

COTSIDAS: And they buy stuff, and they bring stuff to sell, and so forth and so on. Big business, that day.

LEVINE: Would your father have any buying and selling when . . .

COTSIDAS: My father, no. My father was in a different business. He was picking up all the wool and all the skins from the things and send them to Europe. He was a, he was a kind of (?). He, most of my people was making shoes. (the sound of keys jingling is heard on the tape)

We had about twenty, twenty-five shoe stores there. And, uh, every Thursday we'd go to next town, when seven new towns was coming that day, and we sell all the products we had. If you sell dresses, sell shoes, she sells something else, and so forth and so on. But we couldn't sell them in our own town, to our people, but we was next town, which seven new towns from the whole thing was coming every Thursday. Big business there, and you sell whatever you got. Somebody sells shoes, someone dresses, and so forth and so on. Somebody sell onions, somebody sell oranges and so forth. That's why. Big business in that town, which was not a Greek town, it was a Turkish town. But that's the biggest place we, everybody was coming on Thursday. We had a little bit on Saturdays in my hometown, but, uh, not many people was coming. Thursday, in that town there, everybody from seven little towns be there on Sundays, on Thursdays. Big business. Whatever you want to sell and buy, you better go there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you remember the house you lived in?

COTSIDAS: Who, me?

LEVINE: Yeah.

COTSIDAS: Sure. I went and see it, too.

LEVINE: Really? What did it look like?

COTSIDAS: How you call it? The Germans burned my hometown, and my father built, rebuilt it again, my hometown, and someone else, somebody else, too. It was about one-third built now, in my hometown. Last time they didn't bother, they went away.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. How big a house was it?

COTSIDAS: See? (he shows photographs) That's the houses.

LEVINE: So they're made out of, uh, stone?

COTSIDAS: Stone and, uh, and ceramic, yeah.

LEVINE: Stone and what?

COTSIDAS: Stone on the top with ceramic.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. The roof, uh-huh, uh-huh.

COTSIDAS: See, all stones. We got a lot of stones there. See, all the mountains is a lot of stones there. We go on the mountains and take the stones out.

LEVINE: What did your mother, uh, what did your mother cook on?

COTSIDAS: Cook on? Meats and everything else. We had a lot of stuff like that. Meats, we had a meat every day.

LEVINE: Well, what kind of a stove did she have?

COTSIDAS: A stove?

LEVINE: How did she cook?

COTSIDAS: We didn't have no stove. We had a fireplace. She had a thing with three things there, and she was puttin the stuff on top.

LEVINE: And what did you burn? Wood?

COTSIDAS: All wood, and coal.

LEVINE: Coal.

COTSIDAS: Mostly wood, though. We had a lot of wood there.

LEVINE: And, of course, there was no refrigeration.

COTSIDAS: No. We keep fresh every day, no tomorrow. We buy meat today and cook it today. (voice off mike)

LEVINE: Did you have any chores in the family, like, that you had to do every day?

COTSIDAS: Yeah. I had to go to the store every day myself. My sister had other chores to do.

LEVINE: What would you do? Would you buy the food, you mean?

COTSIDAS: I go in the store and buy anything I, anything they need in the house. That's my chores. (voice off mike)

LEVINE: And did your father have sheep?

COTSIDAS: Yes. We had about three hundred, three or four hundred.

LEVINE: Oh. Now, did you have to work with . . .

COTSIDAS: No, we had guys who, that guy, we used to pay them, you know, four or five guys had sheeps. Two fifty, you have two hundred, the other guy have fifty and so forth. And one guy takes them in the mountains and feed them in the morning and bring them back at night. We pay him, anyways. And we pay for the, for the food the animals eat, too. We have to pay for that, for the grass they eat outside.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh. Uh, let's see. So, how did Corfu differ from the town you came from?

COTSIDAS: Oh, the town we came from was only three thousand population, but Corfu was twenty-five, thirty. It had a high school, it had a gymnasium, we had everything. We didn't have, we only had a grammar school there.

LEVINE: And did you like being in Corfu?

COTSIDAS: I love it. A beautiful island there. But one thing, I was missing my mother and father all the time. You know, I was young. But, uh, I like the school there, and the people.

LEVINE: Were there other kids that you knew, young men that you knew from . . .

COTSIDAS: Very few I knew.

LEVINE: So it was unusual for you to go to Corfu, to high school.

COTSIDAS: No, no. No, no.

LEVINE: No? A lot of people . . .

COTSIDAS: Some go to Athens, some go to Corfu, some go to Patras, different cities. Some go to Janina [ph] in the same name, which was a couple days away with a horse. So some go to Corfu, some go to (?), some go to Patras and so forth and so on, and Athens.

LEVINE: So when you went to Corfu you stayed there?

COTSIDAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: You just stayed there for a long period of time, before you would come home and visit?

COTSIDAS: Stay on holidays, coming back on holidays. That's all. The rest of the time I stayed there in Corfu. I paid rent in a house, private homes. They gave me a room there, and food, and I pay so much every month.

LEVINE: I see. So, then, you finished and you graduated.

COTSIDAS: Graduated from high school, and then we had to go to Athens for, uh, a big education, but I came here instead.

LEVINE: So did you go back home for a little while?

COTSIDAS: Oh, yes. I used to go on all the holidays home.

LEVINE: Yeah. So what, now, what made you decide then to go to the United States.

COTSIDAS: I didn't know what to do with myself. So I hear over here there's plenty of jobs and they make good money. At that time you went to eight hours, I hear you work only eight hours here. Before it was ten here, and twelve, but afterwards when they became eight hours the whole Europe knew about it, and everybody wants to come here, eight hours work.

LEVINE: So how did you get your ticket?

COTSIDAS: How? Uh, I wrote to my cousins here. I had two cousins here. They sent me the money. They sent me two tickets. One I sent back, and the other one I took it. When I came here I pay 'em back.

LEVINE: Did anybody else want to go in your family, want to go to the United States?

COTSIDAS: No. My, my oldest brother didn't want to go. My youngest brother, he was young. So I'm the only one. My younger brother come in and visit me, and I went back and visit them too, you know. In 1932 I went back again and visit them.

LEVINE: Well, in other words, like your sisters, they wouldn't have even considered going?

COTSIDAS: No, no. The girls wouldn't have left the house unless they get married.

LEVINE: So, uh, you were sent the tickets for what was the name of the ship?

COTSIDAS: Adeline.

LEVINE: Adeline. You were sent tickets for Adeline?

COTSIDAS: No.

LEVINE: No.

COTSIDAS: They sent me the money.

LEVINE: Oh, the money.

COTSIDAS: And with the money I buy the tickets. When I went to Patras there, to come here.

LEVINE: That's where you left from?

COTSIDAS: Yeah, Patras was getting the boats there at that time, not from Pireaus, Athens. We used to get them from Patras. The only place all the, all the ocean lines was coming in Patras. So that's the place I took. So in Patras, again, I had some, my own people. All right? (referring to the tape recorder)

LEVINE: Yep.

COTSIDAS: I had some people there, in Patras. So when they hear, I go to United States. He says, I came with an Italian passport. I was Italian citizen. I didn't come from my Greek citizen, because I had to go in the army. Get the idea?

LEVINE: No, tell me.

COTSIDAS: I didn't have Greek passport to come here. I had Italian passport. I had a guy in Corfu Island who went to school with me was, his father was in the thing there. I says, "If I make the papers, will you have your father sign it?" "Sure," he says. "I'll go and put the stamp there and give it to you." So the boy, he took the paper, I make the papers to come in this country, and he took it, put the Italian there, I came as Italian citizen, Corfu Island. In Corfu Island there's a lot of Italians live there, too, go back and forth, the rich guys. They got the rooms, one in Italy, one in Corfu Island. Corfu Island is the, the most beautiful island in the world. It is.

LEVINE: Well, now, would, you wouldn't have been able to get it for a long time, if you had tried to get it as a Greek citizen?

COTSIDAS: What?

LEVINE: Oh, tell me about going in the army.

COTSIDAS: Well, that's why I came here. I didn't want to go in the Army.

LEVINE: I see. So you would have had to go in the army if you stayed.

COTSIDAS: That's why I make Italian passport. Greek passport, they get me in the army fast, and then you come here. So I was about to go Italian passport.

LEVINE: I see.

COTSIDAS: From Corfu Island, so they won't, all Corfu Island was a lot of Italians living there back and forth, you know. So I came with Italian passport from Corfu Island, not from the Greeks. I was a Greek. I came as Italian citizen here. (voice off mike) What?

LEVINE: Tell about the blackmail. Was there somebody who tried to blackmail you?

COTSIDAS: Yeah, in Patras there. They tried to blackmail me, you know.

LEVINE: What happened?

COTSIDAS: So I gave him some money.

LEVINE: Well, what did they say to you? What did they . . . (voice off mike)

COTSIDAS: We're going to go to the police and tell them that you going to America with a, some other, different passport, not Greek passport. I says, "What you want?" "Give me, give me . . ." I had two tickets then. Somebody sent me two tickets. One I use, and the other one I didn't use. I pay all these guys in Patras, so they let me go.

So the last minute I was going to go a guy come in, he says, uh, "I got my, my wife sick," he says, "and my sister sick. You gotta give me some money." I says to myself, I had thirty dollars to show here. You had to show thirty dollars when you come in this country. I got thirty dollars. I says, "Take it. I'm gonna work," I says, "in the boat." So I gave the money there, and I went in the boat -- the last minute, too. I had the thirty dollars to show here. So I went in the boat, I asked the captain there to give me a job, so he give me a job, get up three o'clock in the morning and clean them boats, clean all the surface in the boat. From three o'clock up to seven o'clock every day I do that. So my shoes, gone -- from the water, from the seawater. I didn't have no shoes. So I found a sailor there, I says, "You got any extra pair of shoes?" "Yeah." I said, "How much you want?" "Ten dollars." I gave him ten dollars, I got a pair of shoes, second-hand shoes, and I came here with good shoes. But otherwise, all gone, my shoes, from the salt water. (voice off mike)

LEVINE: So how, so you earned enough money on the boat to get . . .

COTSIDAS: To get here?

LEVINE: To show, when you came?

COTSIDAS: Sure. I make fifty dollars on the boat.

LEVINE: So you paid ten dollars for shoes.

COTSIDAS: I paid ten dollars for shoes, and I have forty dollars left. I showed here.

LEVINE: And plus you were learning English on the road, on the boat.

COTSIDAS: Huh?

LEVINE: You were learning English as well.

COTSIDAS: That's all I was doing. I had a book there and I was studying Greek, Greek and English.

LEVINE: Wow. So you got up at three in the morning, and how long did you have to work on the . . .

COTSIDAS: Four hours.

LEVINE: Four hours.

COTSIDAS: Up till seven o'clock. Seven o'clock people come in there, so I stopped. But I clean everything.

LEVINE: Wow. Well, tell me about the Adeline. What kind of a ship was that?

COTSIDAS: It was a freighter.

LEVINE: What were they carrying? Do you know?

COTSIDAS: Carried soldiers.

LEVINE: Oh, soldiers.

COTSIDAS: Yeah, from America to France.

LEVINE: Ah. I see. So, uh, did it stop in a lot of places? Is that why it took thirty-one days?

COTSIDAS: Yeah, I stop in a lot of places, in Italy, in Portugal, everywhere.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And, so, were there a lot of, uh, people who were immigrating on the boat?

COTSIDAS: Full.

LEVINE: Full.

COTSIDAS: Full.

LEVINE: And were you in what they call steerage? Were you down in the bottom, in the, in the hold of the ship? Were you sleeping?

COTSIDAS: No. I was in the third class. First, second, third.

LEVINE: You had a little cabin?

COTSIDAS: Little. No, everybody was having open beds, you know, hanging beds, and everybody's sleeping in the beds, like thirty, forty guys.

LEVINE: Oh.

COTSIDAS: That was third class.

LEVINE: And were there, and were there, how was the food? Do you remember anything about that?

COTSIDAS: The food was terrible. You know what I eat? Bread and cheese every day. I couldn't eat the food. Terrible. The food was terrible. I don't want to taste the food any more, I hate it so much. Bread and cheese, that's all we eat, nothing else. The food was terrible.

LEVINE: So, uh, anything else happen on the ship that you remember?

COTSIDAS: Yeah. We stop in, someplace in Portugal, I guess. And the boat caught fire. So a lot of them jump, and it was far away, too. A lot of them jump, and about ten guys died, because they d'know how to swim. I stay, I stay right on the top there waiting the last minute to jump. I didn't jump. I almost jumped, but I didn't jump. I waited the

last minute. They put the fire out, so they says, "The fire is out," so, and then I was all right. Otherwise I was gonna jump either. I don't want to burn, I might as well die in the sea. It was far away, the darn thing. It was too deep to, I didn't know how to swim. (the sound of keys jingling is heard on the tape) It was terrible there. I got scared, I'll tell you. I got so scared, you got no idea.

LEVINE: Well, how did you feel when you arrived in the United States? What were you thinking?

COTSIDAS: I feel like a million dollars, like I was in heaven, was the way I felt about it.

LEVINE: Did you see the Statue of Liberty when you came in?

COTSIDAS: Sure I saw the Statue of Liberty. Sure I saw. I stayed in Ellis Island, uh, overnight. They take all your clothes and clean them before, before you come in this country, so you don't bring disease in. You got to take showers and baths and all that junk there. A couple days we stayed there. Cleaned us up, everything, even the shoes went through the laundry, everything. To come here you've got to be up to date, so you don't bring no disease. You see what I mean?

LEVINE: So what was Ellis Island like? How did, how did . . .

COTSIDAS: Gee, I don't remember much about it. We had a, we close in the room there, we didn't know too much about it. We didn't see too much about it.

LEVINE: And you had a physical exam.

COTSIDAS: Physical exams and showers. Take all the clothes to be . . .

LEVINE: Uh, fumigated, or . . .

COTSIDAS: Fumigated, fumigated, you're right. That's what I was going to say. All fumigated, before we were, they give us the robes. They do a good job there.

LEVINE: So was the food any better?

COTSIDAS: Ha! The food was terrible.

LEVINE: Also there it was terrible.

COTSIDAS: Even here I didn't like it in the beginning but, gradually I went to the Greek restaurants and eat here. I learned the Greek restaurants. I couldn't afford to go in the beginning, but when I got a job, I went to the restaurant.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you showed your, uh, your money, and then, and then, did anybody meet you?

COTSIDAS: No.

LEVINE: No.

COTSIDAS: I told you, I'm supposed to go to Boston.

LEVINE: Right.

COTSIDAS: I left my valise there, because my eyes was no good, they told me to go back. So I follow the guy, and I says, "Where you go?" I says, "To Worcester." I says to myself "Well, I'm going to Worcester." But I know there were some people from my home town here. So when I came here, Union Station, they took us, the taxi took us, and brought us, "Where you want to go, to Bucalis Market?" I wrote there my thing. He brought me to Bucalis Market on Mechanic Street here, in Worcester. So I went there. I says, uh, he says to me, "You want to, you're gonna live with your own people?" I says, "Sure." There were some people from my home town here. I didn't know them, but I says, I don't know them. I know they were here, and the names and everything, but I never remember them. I was young when they left, they came here.

LEVINE: So first you worked in the screw factory, then you got the route for the, um . . .

COTSIDAS: And then they throw me out, and I can't smoke it. And then I work for this guy here, for the driver. I was, he was giving me fifty cents a day to work with him. So I was helping him out. And deliver Greek bread to houses. I learn all the route and everything else. Three months later or two months later, I got a license. And I got a job there, too, delivering bread.

LEVINE: Then you got the route for the Albanians to sell.

COTSIDAS: Then I got the route for the, I started the route for the Albanians.

LEVINE: Yeah. And then what did you do after that?

COTSIDAS: The first, the first day I went out in my truck I tipped over. I tipped over. I told you about it. So . . . (voice off mike)

LEVINE: Oh, thank you.

COTSIDAS: So they helped me out, and I was all right. My truck was all right. I had one flat tire. They fixed it. It went all right. After that, I says to myself, "I'm not gonna drive any more." But take it or not, I says to myself, "what else can I do? I might as well make your mind and drive carefully." So I started driving, driving carefully. But when the snow started, ooh, that's the time I had an awful time. I was going this way, all of a sudden I turned this way. A lot of ice and snow. We had the goddamn car tracks, remember?

LEVINE: The what?

COTSIDAS: Car tracks. I'm . . .

LEVINE: Oh, yes, the trolley car.

COTSIDAS: The trolley car! Oh, what a time we had. It was slippery like anything there on top of them. And winter time, special when the ice was coming. It was terrible.

LEVINE: So what did you do after you did that, for work? After you drove the truck, what did you do?

COTSIDAS: He gave me a job there, selling bread, deliver bread.

LEVINE: Yeah.

COTSIDAS: So inside was another guy working for this guy who was delivering bread, too. So I got together with him, I says, "We're crazy," I says, "we're working for this guy. What do you say you and I open a pastry shop selling American stuff, not Greek stuff?" I says, "We could sell to all Americans." There was about two hundred and thirty Greek restaurants here in Worcester them days, selling American food. So I says to, I says to him, "What do you say we make pastry and sell them to the restaurants? I know all the restaurants," I says, "over here, and I know all the guys, too." Because in the, when I was in the bread business, working for the bread, I used to go every Sunday house to house to collect the money for the bread they took all week. You get the idea? I'm leaving your house three breads a day, and you had a card there and mark them down, see. And so forth, then every Sunday I go and collect the money. So I knew all these guys had the restaurant. I says, "What do you say, you and I start in the, in the pie business, pastry pie business?" "Oh," he says, he says, "you think we can do it?" "I know every Greek," I says, "that got a restaurant or store." I says, "I know them all. I think they're all gonna buy from me." He says, "How you sure?" I says, "I know, because they like me." I was young, you know, I was the youngest Greek here. So everybody feel, feel sorry for me. They felt sorry for me. So I knew I could do it. So that's the way I started in the pastry business and pie business. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: Well, how did you, who made the pies? How did you get all set up?

COTSIDAS: Him and I.

LEVINE: You made them?

COTSIDAS: We made them and sell them. He goes to the stores, I go to the restaurants. Deliver, make them and deliver. We start one o'clock in the afternoon, and I work till eight o'clock, and I go home. He works up till ten o'clock to finish the whole stuff. I start in the restaurants three o'clock in the morning, four, and he starts in the stores eight o'clock, seven o'clock in the morning. He goes to the stores, and I go to the restaurants. That's the way we started.

LEVINE: Did you know how to bake?

COTSIDAS: No.

LEVINE: Was that something you knew before?

COTSIDAS: No. We had one baker. I had one baker. So in a month time, we throw him out, my partner learn how to do the inside, and I stay outside. Inside, outside afterwards. I go all the outside, he goes all the inside. He had a little help, we give him a couple dollars a week, you know.

LEVINE: So when you began, how many pies were you selling, about?

COTSIDAS: In the beginning, I didn't make no pies. I make just pastry.

LEVINE: Pastry.

COTSIDAS: I went with the pastry, you know, turnovers, éclairs, all that stuff. All, all, uh, pastries. And then 1940 comes, all the young guys went in the army. All the young guys went in the army. Now what do you do? Throw all the pastry out, start on pies only. We went to Connecticut, there was a place in Connecticut there. We bought some pie machines there, and we started the pie business. The little ones, we sell them for a nickel, and the eight-inch pie and the ten-inch pie for the restaurants. It's the way I started in the business, and I sold my business for twenty million dollars.

LEVINE: Well, tell me, uh, why did you start with pies only when the young men went in the army?

COTSIDAS: Because the pastry requires a lot of handwork, while the pies, we bought a couple machines, it was going straight line. You put the, you put the plate there, the crust comes, we put it on, and then you put the filling, there it goes to the conveyor, cooling off up and down, and then you bring them down, put them in the package, and put them in the trucks. We make a straight line operation.

LEVINE: Yeah.

COTSIDAS: After we lost all the girls. We stay, we stay in, just in pies, nothing else. No pastry, nothing. Pies, which was making easy, you know, two guys making, three guys run the machine.

LEVINE: I see.

COTSIDAS: I bought a machine, straight line machine, and three, four guys was running the machine, making over a thousand pies an hour.

LEVINE: Wow.

COTSIDAS: You know what I mean?

LEVINE: Okay. We'll pause here for a minute. I want to change the tape.

COTSIDAS: Okay, sure.

END OF SIDE B, TAPE ONE BEGINNING OF SIDE A, TAPE TWO

LEVINE: Ok we resume now on tape two. I'm speaking with Angelus Cotsidas in Worcester Mass. And it's August 11, 1993. Mr. Cotsidas is 93 now. Ok well tell me, you were saying that you were really very ambitious.

COTSIDAS: Very ambitious. To be somebody. To get somewhere.

LEVINE: Do you know where you got that from? How are you--?

COTSIDAS: It was coming to me.

LEVINE: (laughing) Uh huh.

COTSIDAS: Everybody goes to coffee house. I wasn't going to coffee house. I started English. Even over here when I was here I had time. I went to school and they throw me back, says, "Go home." I fall asleep there. The [not understood] was about eighty five, ninety, I don't know but I almost sleep there. So the teacher come in says, "Go home and sleep in your house." I says, "Thank you." I left home, I says, "No school because I fall asleep." I start getting the books and study myself. Although I couldn't stand very good because all the month, thirty one days, that's all I was doing, working and studying in the boat. Sleeping six, seven hours, that's all. Always working in the morning and then studying in the afternoon. Lay down a couple hours I feel sleepy and then I get up and started again. I got a my method there. Greek and English. But it was pretty good because I went through high school I wasn't dumb, you know, I knew something. I knew French.

LEVINE: In high school you learned French.

COTSIDAS: Yeah. But that time French was the international language. But after that it went off.

LEVINE: So how did you meet your wife?

COTSIDAS: How I meet my wife? I don't even know how I meet my wife (laughing). How I meet the wife, you tell her. You tell the story.

EVA: [off the mike] They want you to talk.

LEVINE: Why don't you say it for the tape if you -

EVA: Alright. A friend of ours, you know how you meet people and they introduce you. I didn't know if I was going to ever see him again you know, but then it developed that I did, I admired him because he was really working hard. Three o'clock in the morning until whatever time he'd finished, didn't matter. He would deliver one pie in the afternoon; I worked with him for awhile, that's why I saw how wonderful he was to his customers. No wonder they liked him. He would call up in the

afternoon, "You need a pie?" And he'd make one pie delivery to all these places that needed it. He continued to do, you know, be like that.

COTSIDAS: I was good to them.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

COTSIDAS: They good to me, you know. I had to be good to them.

EVA: : They stood by him when his pies were not perfect. And when he finally hired a man and said nothing but fresh, because his partner didn't know, you know, how to make things. They were using Chinese eggs and this and that, so the minute that man -

COTSIDAS: I'll tell you how it is, the stuff that, the stuff that he was making it was not as nice at all. We did not know what the hell was the trouble. Accidentally one day we left something, we forgot something to put in the dough and the dough came perfect.

LEVINE: Oh (laughing).

COTSIDAS: So I says to my partner, "Come here," I says, "Look at me, somebody brought you here some new flour and I tried. The crust there, in the [not understood] put it in the pie and it rise right up." I says, "I got it." He says, "What?" I forgot to put that stuff inside! I says, "And that help the crust to rise." Since then, the crust rising in the oven and bake right through. Before it was staying together it just [not understood]. And it was doughy. Since I got that business won, I couldn't buy, I didn't have enough money to buy trucks so fast. Business come up. That little secret there. A little stuff that I forgot to put 'em in the dough.

LEVINE: Was it like baking powder? Or -

COTSIDAS: Some like that. Something like that, something like that.

EVA: (whispers)It just stuck together.

LEVINE: How long were you selling the pies before you discovered that?

COTSIDAS: I was selling most pastries, little pies, not much pie. But after that.

EVA: He wasn't in the pie business.

LEVINE: Oh.

COTSIDAS: I used to leave ten pies and they come short, "Call another ten." Before I leave ten pies they sell one. I couldn't sell.

LEVINE: I see.

COTSIDAS: That crust saved my life.

EVA: (whispers) That raised it.

COTSIDAS; It become crispy right away, you put the pie in the oven, that was melt in your mouth.

LEVINE: Uh huh, great so that-

COTSIDAS: Then I says to myself, "That's the secret!"

LEVINE: Pies.

COTSIDAS: Pies. Then the pies went and I sold for twenty million dollars.

LEVINE: Wow.

COTSIDAS: Five years later, six. Everybody call me. I went even out of town. I went to Providence, to Boston - my pie was the tops. Nobody could make pie like that! The crust was crisp. Crispy, crispy.

LEVINE: Did you make all flavors? Apple or --

COTSIDAS: All flavor. Twenty six flavors. Twenty six flavors.

LEVINE: Uh huh. Tell me about Worcester when you first came here, what was it like as a town?

COTSIDAS: Well I like it because I live in Corfu Island for - for four years there. And then in Athens I stay about a month anyways before I came here. And I - I knew lot about cities. When I came here, well it looks small, you know, compared to Athens, that I was lately. But anyways, I like the city here because it was quiet and I got the job there delivering. I says to myself, "I'm going to get a license here and I think I'm going to stay here," I was supposed to go to Boston, I had a cousin there. But I, and I come to Ellis Island I left my valise there, I follow the guy and I came to Worcester. So my cousin come in on Sunday to visit me, I call him up that I couldn't make it there because I told him all the story. He come here and he got mad at me. He says, "Why you didn't come to me?" I says, "To hell with you! [not understood]" I says, "Wait 'til I tell you what's happened. How it is, I don't know." He was, he had a lot of money, was an independent guy. I says, "To hell with you." I says to myself, "If you feel like that, I'm going to make my own living."

LEVINE: Do you think you would have gotten into the pie business if you'd gone to Boston?

COTSIDAS: Oh no! If I got to Boston, I'd be a waiter. That's all you was, a waiter there. There was a lot of money waiting business, but I didn't like that business, waiting, waiting the customers, no. I hate that business! Even now. Because tell you, people tell you, what to, why you didn't do this, why you didn't do that.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

COTSIDAS: I don't like that at all.

LEVINE: So do you think there are some ideas or values that your mother and father had that they passed along to you?

COTSIDAS: My father was a good messenger, you know. He was making big money, too. But a, he bought, he bought another house in [not understood], we had a small house, and then we grow up, we couldn't, we almost end up with the others so he had to buy that next house. So it cost him a lot of money, the poor guy there. So that's why I left high school and I came here, I was supposed to send him in Athens, you know. I went to Athens, and I went to [not understood] school they call it. But there, ninety percent they make priests there. So when I saw making priests there I says to myself, "I can't stay nothing to be a priest!" I says to myself, "I'm going to come to Corfu Island and go to high school there, I'm not going to be a priest!" I was afraid they'd force me to be a priest if I get through but it wasn't so. I didn't know that. In the fourth year you could leave the school and go to another, another school. But I didn't know that time. I was afraid they'd force me to be a priest and I didn't want to be a priest.

LEVINE: Did you know what you wanted to be?

COTSIDAS: I didn't want to be a priest anyways! Anything else but priest.

LEVINE: Why were you so upset by priests?

COTSIDAS: I didn't care for priests! I didn't care. I was afraid of them and I didn't care for (laughing).

LEVINE: Oh.

COTSIDAS: I was far away from priests, I never go near a priest. I don't know them [not understood]. The minute I saw a priest I go the other way, I don't know why.

EVA: He's with the priests all the time now.

LEVINE: Now you like priests, right?

COTSIDAS: I love them now. (all laugh) I understand. I understand they're not bad. (all laugh)

LEVINE: Well let's see-

COTSIDAS: [interposed] I used to see 'em bury people, you know lot of people that's why I hate 'em. That - that gave me the thing there that the priest is to bury people. That's what I thought. (he laughs)

LEVINE: Funny. Funny. Well let's see, are there any customs that you keep that you hold on to that are from Greece.

COTSIDAS: Oh the dancing.

LEVINE: The dancing.

COTSIDAS: Yeah. Do a good dance, even my wife knows how to dance Greek too.

EVA: He's a good dancer.

LEVINE: What - Why did you like your wife? Why do you think you-

COTSIDAS: Why she likes me, but - she likes me, I like it. (all laugh)

LEVINE: I'm sure there were lot's of girls who liked you. How come you chose your wife

COTSIDAS: Well I'll tell you, at that time-

EVA: (whispers) In 1932 ask him why he went to Greece.

COTSIDAS: -At that time the Greeks come here alone. They bring no wives. 'Till they make some money. And then get a house and move out there and live in the finest room, trying to make some money and then bring their wives down. When I came in this Worcester here, only three guys had wives. Everyone else was single. They stand five, six years and make some money. Go to the old country. Stay a year or two - back again. That's all they were doing. 'Till after the war, World War II and then we settled here. Wherever you was here you stay. Wherever - they don't come anymore like they used to come. See.

LEVINE: So did you think you would go back to Greece. You would stay here awhile, go - when-

COTSIDAS: [interposed] I went 1932 back to Greece. I came 1929 - in '32 I went back. I went there. And eh, to see my folks. I got a hernia. And he told me to stay for six weeks. And [not understood] stay here I might as well go to Greece, see my folks. I had a little money. I had about ten thousand dollars made already. So I went to Greece there and I knew my wife - I was engaged with you wasn't I? So I told her that I'm gonna go see my folks and, on account of this I says. And then I'll be back and marry you. I don't know if she believe me or not. But anyways that's the way I told.

MRS. COTSIDAS [whispers] There was a woman on the ship before.

COTSIDAS: What? Tell her.

EVA: [whispers] The woman on the ship that showed you the picture of a girl.

COTSIDAS: Oh yeah. [not understood] This lady there showed me the picture of her niece, niece is there. Eh, I looked at her and I didn't care for her [not understood]. My mind was on her anyways.

LEVINE: Somebody wanted to match you up-

COTSIDAS: [interposed] Yeah.

LEVINE: -when you were on the ship going back?

COTSIDAS: Yeah.

EVA: [whispers] And I was with him, talking to him that lady she wanted a picture.

LEVINE: So here's you wife, who was then your girlfriend. And she's with you waiting for you to go on the ship and someone shows you a picture to match you up.

COTSIDAS: Yeah, in front of my wife. In front of her. She wasn't my wife then.

EVA: (whispers) She thought, she thought I didn't understand Greek.

COTSIDAS: So when you go down and say, you see this is her niece or something. So I went there. I stayed three months there. I really enjoyed there. I saw my father and mother.

EVA: [whispers] Tell her about Holy Week when you went to your father's and you asked for the money.

COTSIDAS: I can't understand what you saying. Go ahead talk.

LEVINE: Yeah go ahead.

EVA: Tell her about Friday night when you got to Greece. Holy Week. And you asked your father for some money.

COTSIDAS: Oh. I went home - big Saturday you know, Holy Saturday. So I was supposed to go to Church twelve o'clock. It was about eleven o'clock. Boom boom the things was . I says to - I says to my father "I'm going to Church. You got any money? I says "Yeah. Five drachmas now." A drachma was sixty dollars - uh sixty drachma. One dollar - one dollar was hundred drachmas. No, one dollar before I left Greece, came here was five dollars. And this time when I went there a dollar was hundred drachmas. See the difference with the Greek money was down to nothing. So one dollar it was hundred drachmas - one dollar, one hundred dollars in Greek. So my father needed five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, now no - eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, enough no! I'll tell my mother - sixty, seventy, eighty, hundred. I show my mother again. No, I says not enough. Hundred drachmas, what's hundred drachmas. One dollar is one dollar. [laughs] I says to myself I'm not going to throw one dollar there for I've been so long I've got to give at least ten dollars. But I fooled myself what the hell I wanted the Greek money, I could give American money. I didn't think of it either. So, he gave me about ten dollars in Greek money. Christ, I took all his money

and then they were disappointed. He didn't know if I got any money or not. That's why I was looking to my mother to give him - to me or not to give it to me. So then, anyways, I gave him a fifty dollar bill. [not understood] Fifty - American money. He opened his eyes, he opened his eyes like this. [laughs] So I was broke.

EVA: (whispers) He thought he was broke.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

EVA: (whispers) He thought he was broke.

COTSIDAS: He thought I didn't have any money. But when I gave that money there, aach, the man is changed day and night. I says to myself, what money does.

LEVINE: Well he must have been proud of you then.

COTSIDAS: Damn yeah.

LEVINE: Well tell me what you're most proud of that you've done in your life.

COTSIDAS: Most proud?. I marry my wife. [laughs]

LEVINE: Oh, that's lovely..

COTSIDAS: Yep, I marry nice wife.. A nice partner.

LEVINE: Tell me your wife's name and maiden name on the tape.

COTSIDAS: First name Eva..

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

COTSIDAS: Biggoga.

LEVINE: Could you spell it?

COTSIDAS: Biggoga.

EVA: [whispers] B-I

LEVINE: B-I-G-

COTSIDAS: -G-O-G-A. Biggoga.

LEVINE: And do you have children?

COTSIDAS: I have a son.

LEVINE: And his name?

COTSIDAS: Nicolas. And a daughter Valeri [not understood] - Valeri. In Greek they call her Vasilikii . And 'eh another - another-

EVA: [interposed] [whispers] Daughter we had.

COTSIDAS: Huh?

EVA: [whispers] Alexandra.

COTSIDAS: Alexandra died. She got killed.

LEVINE: So does your daughter Vasiliki have a married name?

COTSIDAS: Alexand..

EVA: [whispers] Pappas.

LEVINE: Pappas.

COTSIDAS: Pappas.

LEVINE: Her married name?

COTSIDAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: So you have grandchildren?

COTSIDAS: I have three and a girl at home. And from the boy we got - two.

EVA: [whispers] No we have seven in all.

COTSIDAS: Seven in all.

EVA: [whispers] Three from Nicolas [ph] and four from Valerie.

COTSIDAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Seven. Uh-huh.

COTSIDAS: Seven.

LEVINE: So uh, how's this phase of your life?

COTSIDAS: What?

LEVINE: How is this phase of your life. As you're - you're older, you're retired.

COTSIDAS: Oh I always - always go happy and always had a lot of money.

EVA: [whispering] It's wonderful

LEVINE: Yeah.

COSTIDAS: [not understood]

EVA: [whispering] Grandchildren, and the children.

LEVINE: What makes you happy now?

EVA: [whispers] Grandchildren.

COTSIDAS: 'Cause I got my health that's why. My wife's got the health. What else I want?

LEVINE: Yeah.

COTSIDAS: My son's alright. My daughter's okay. Everything is perfect.

EVA: [whispers] We're close to our children.

COSTIDAS: . God gave me everything.

LEVINE: Yeah.

LEVINE: Good.

COSTIDAS: I'm very happy.

LEVINE Good, good. Okay well is there anything you can say about - you know coming here as an immigrant and starting a new life and making your life here. Is there anything?

COTSIDAS: Well it was hard in the beginning. You know I wanna go home all the time. I wanna go home. I wanna go home. I - I made - I made passport two three times and I [not understood]. I didn't wanna go home again - because I didn't know what to do there if I go - if I couldn't go to college what else would I do [not understood] high school. What kinda work we do - nothing. What over here we got a the factories. And then I went in the bread business. I become a good salesman. And then I become the boss. Start the pastry business and then the pie business. I had a good luck in my life because I started this and I continue. I never stop any, I never [not understood], I always onto the other. I wouldn't stop I had to work I had to do something. I had to - had to be somebody. I didn't want to be nothin. I wanna be somebody. I want people to say, "Here's, here's Mr. Cotsidas." I want to say, "He's another bum." I was proud of my family. And she - she was a good wife. In the beginning we work together. She worked too. So that's why we make it.

LEVINE: Yeah.

COTSIDAS: I live in - off Belmar Street [ph]. What you call the street?

EVA: [whispers] Yeah Catherine Street. [ph]

COTSIDAS: Catherine Street [ph] off Belmar Street. [ph] I lived there for awhile and then I built this house. 1920 I build this house myself. 1940. 1940 I come in here in this house.

LEVINE: Well. Can you think of - this is sort of a big question - but how has the country changed?

COTSIDAS: Huh?

LEVINE: The United States.

COTSIDAS: I love working in the United States from the beginning to the end. Because, if you work you got everything you want here. But in Greece you couldn't find no work to do. And if you get a work would you get nothing to amount to anything. But over here you get in dollars.

EVA: [whispers] There's more opportunity here.

COTSIDAS: What?

EVA: [whispers] More opportunities here.

COTSIDAS: Oh big opportunities here. If you want to work and if you want to be somebody you could do it. I could see that. I could see that. Because I wasn't a dumb, I was through high school and I knew something about life. I read - I read too much. I was reading all the time. Never stopped reading. Because I know the only way you better yourself is learning. Learn and learn. I went to school - she's throw me out because I fall asleep. I get up 3:00 o'clock in the morning I couldn't help it. It was 7:30 when I fall asleep the night - it was eighty five inside the school there. So she says go home and sleep. "Thank you". I says to myself, "what I'm crazy" I says going to spend the time there I says when I can spend the time myself. I wrote in New York I got all kinds of books and I started working by myself every night two, three hours, four hours, five hours, six hours, in the house.

LEVINE: To learn English?

COTSIDAS: Huh?

LEVINE: Uh English?

COTSIDAS: On English. I wanted learn the language because I wanna go some place. Without language, who wants? Nobody want.

LEVINE: Did you become a citizen?

COTSIDAS: I become a citizen 19- uh, 19- uh, when I was four years here. After four years.

LEVINE: Was that a happy day for you?

COTSIDAS: Beautiful day. I'll - I'll never forget it. I feel like an - I go to another life. To become American citizen. I was proud. Very proud.

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you remember any historic events that happened while you were here in this country that made a difference?

EVA: [whispers] Oh we built the church.

COTSIDAS: What?

EVA: [whispers] He was involved in building the church on Russell Street.

COTSIDAS: I built the church here with my partner.

EVA: [whispers] Not by himself but you know.

COTSIDAS: And for six months I go house to house and collect money for the church so I wanna pay cash for it not to have any mortgages. That's why I built the church here. I don't know if you know it's on a - St. [not understood] Church on-

LEVINE: Yeah.

COTSIDAS: You know that church there?

LEVINE: Yeah, that was - yeah.

COTSIDAS: Yeah my partner was the - two of us. And another couple of other guys - four of us. We did it and I was out every night six months house to house collecting money. And we pay cash for the house we did. No mortgage. For the church. No mortgage.

EVA: [whispers] The community center.

COTSIDAS: We pay, we

EVA: [whispers] [not understood] we have the people.

COTSIDAS: Some doctor - some doctor held the property and we were friendly with that doctor, American doctor. So he had the building there and all the rest there were put up for thirty five thousand dollars. He give it to us for thirty-five thousand dollars. We throw all that down. And we built the church. And later we build the other house, how do you call it?

LEVINE: Community Center?

COTSIDAS: Yeah.

EVA: [whispers] He was a good salesman.

COTSIDAS: But I worked hard though. I worked very hard.

EVA: [whispers] He had the customers.

COTSIDAS: But nobody refused me. I remember going on - on Change Street [ph] there was two Greek places. This fella there I says to him "I ain't got nothing." I pass by him and I went to the other. "Hey," he says. "Come [not understood]." I says "What's the matter?" "I wanna put a - a brick in a house too," he says, "come on in." He gave me two hundred dollars. I was surprised. I wasn't gonna bother with him - I thought he didn't have any. But the poor guy. "I wanna put a brick in the house too," he says. See the enthusiasm was so good. So I says to myself, "He gave me, he gave me a lot of courage then." Then I go house to house and collect money for him, regardless if he had money or not I go. And I get something. I was foolish to say this guy, this guy and this guy. Everybody had money so then house to house. Wherever a Greek was there I was go out and get money. Six months time I got all the money to build the house - the church.

LEVINE: Wow, wonderful. Okay, well is there anything else that you can think of that you'd like to say. Maybe advice to immigrants coming into this country now. Is there anything that you would advise?

COTSIDAS: Well that they - they live better now in the - in Europe then they - they don't have to come here. And then - not many coming now. Except Chinese and Japanese that's all. But Greeks they don't come anymore here, unless they come for visit. But they got everything there now. In Greece is - they got a factories they got everything.

LEVINE: I see.

COTSIDAS: They don't come anymore in this country.

LEVINE: Okay. Well I want to thank you very much.

COTSIDAS: You're welcome dear.

LEVINE: This is a wonderful story and I'm happy it'll be preserved now at Ellis Island as part of our collection.

EVA: Thank you. It's nice that it'll be recorded and he'll be-

LEVINE: Yes it is. And then I'll send you a copy. So this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I've been speaking with Angelus Cotsidas and his wife Eva Cotsidas. And we're here in Worcester, Massachusetts and it's August 11, 1993. Mr. Cotsidas is ninety three at the time of this interview. And I want to thank you and I'll sign off.

END OF INTERVIEW

EI-378/COTSIDAS

