

EI-445
EUSTACE PHOTOS
BIRTH DATE: MARCH 24, 1904
INTERVIEW DATE: FEBRUARY 28, 1994
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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.
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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 3/1996
TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: IRV SILBERG

ALBANIA, 1920
AGE 16

SHIP: "THE THEMOSTICLES"
PORT: PIRAEUS
RESIDENCES:
ALBANIA: POLICHANI
GREECE: CORFU
US: BIDDEFORD, ME; DETROIT, MI

HISTORIAN'S NOTE: Mr. Photo's wife Catherine is present.

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I'm here in North Palm Beach, Florida, with Mr. and Mrs. Eustace Photos. Mr. Photos is a Greek from Albania who came here in 1920 through Ellis Island when he was sixteen years old. Well, I'm very happy to be here, and we'll start at the beginning. If you would say your birth date, and the town you were born in.

PHOTOS: Yes. I was born in, uh, a town by the name Polichani. That's where we pronounced that. And I left in 1904, uh, March 24th.

CATHERINE: You were born.

LEVINE: You were born.

PHOTOS: I was born, there. I'm an old man, you know, ninety years old. I cannot. And, uh, I left my home town, and I went to Greece. I had a sister there in Corfu.

LEVINE: When did you leave your town?

PHOTOS: In 1919, in, uh, June 15th, I'd say.

LEVINE: And then you were coming to America from there?

PHOTOS: No. And then I went to Corfu. I stayed there for a year.

LEVINE: Oh.

PHOTOS: See? And then from there I went to Athens, and, uh, another city, Patras, they call them, that, uh, was Italian embassy, or, what do you call the other one? Bucsanian.

LEVINE: The, the consul?

PHOTOS: The consul, yeah.

LEVINE: The consul.

PHOTOS: I was looking to get an Italian passport, because the Albania was occupied by the Italians then, see, until 1922.

LEVINE: Oh, okay. Well, let's start by talking about your life for the first nineteen years, before you left Polichani.

PHOTOS: Polichani, yeah. You have it there now, already?

CATHERINE: Oh, yeah.

PHOTOS: You should have asked me to talk that before, when we, well, uh . . .

LEVINE: What do you remember about the town?

PHOTOS: The town, I remember a lot of things. But, uh, we were, how can I say, my people was ranchers. You know, they had a lot of sheep and goats, you know. And, uh, the, as far as, we were pretty good as far as wealth, I'd say. We were the first ones in the town there, see. But, uh, because me and my brother, the family had twelve children, my father and mother. And me and my brother, we started to go to Constantinople. And because I was young, my, I had a sister in Corfu, she was married there. She took me there, and let my brother go in Constantinople, see. But in the home town, we didn't have much school, because they're changing the, I was born in the Turkish regime, in 1904, all right? And there were Turks were there until 1913.

LEVINE: How were the Turks treated, how were the Greeks in an Albanian town treated by the Turks?

PHOTOS: Well, see, the Greeks, they were practically all over the Mediterranean, say, from Romania to the Black Sea was Greeks mixed with the Turks in different nationalities, see. As I remember, the only time I seen a Turk there was a, every some -- month or something was passing there that they used to call them the 19th Regiment. I don't know, it was nineteen people, I think, or nineteen soldiers, something like that.

LEVINE: These were the Turks?

PHOTOS: Yeah, the Turks. And that's the - that's the only time I remember Turks. But there was, we didn't have no police - police department there or anything. A small town, see. They didn't have -- anything happen, for instance, we have to send a man to the bigger city, and if we need the police to come there, they bring the police and so on,

you see? Anyway, the Turks, I remember, it was in 1913, mostly, because there was fighting with the Greeks, and they lost the front there, how can I say, occupied by the Turks. (a telephone rings)

LEVINE: We'll stop for a minute. (break in tape) We're resuming now.

PHOTOS: Yeah, the Turks. In Albania we used to call the Muslims -- we are Christians, you understand -- we used to call the Muslims, Turks, yeah. And they still call them Turks there, because they are Muslims. But the real Turks was the government, the Turkish government, run by the sultan in, from Constantinople, see. So they was fighting the Greeks 1913, so they lost the war, and the outer territory occupied by the Greeks, but the Greeks didn't stay too long there. They stayed there till 1916. And then, uh, Italians came there, by all Albania, kicked the Greeks for certain places I can't describe you, and the Italians stayed there from 1916 to 1922. So . . .

LEVINE: Well, in Polichani. . .

PHOTOS: Polichani, yeah.

LEVINE: Polichani, um, were there Albanians living in Polichani as well as Greeks? It was all Greeks.

PHOTOS: All Greeks. There were certain towns of just Greeks, you know, talking Greeks, going to Greek school those days, because you had the right from the Turkish gov-- government to have Greek schools because of the patriarch in Constantinople. In other words, the Greek pope, let's say, put it that way, see. And we're not involved with the Turkish, or the Albanians didn't have no alphabet anyway until 1922.

LEVINE: Oh.

PHOTOS: Because there was not, they didn't have the right to have their own alphabet.

LEVINE: That was because the Turkish government.

PHOTOS: Yeah. Because the Turkish government. They consider them Turks, not Albanians, you understand? That's why they, like Bosnia today. The Serbians, they consider them Turks, the Bosnians. They don't consider them Serbs. You understand? It's the same idea. The population there was mixed. Because, like I say, the Turks was up to borderline in Austria in the olden days. I have a book here. This is the book I'm reading.

LEVINE: Oh, the Balkans, since 1453.

PHOTOS: Yeah. And, uh, I read a lot of things here that I know only myself, I can express it. So the . . .

LEVINE: Would you say that the Turkish government was more lenient with the Greeks in Albania than with the Albanians?

PHOTOS: Yes, yes. Of course, the, like I say, the Albanians, they consider them as Turks. Us, they treated us different because of the patriarch in Constantinople, you know, as the Greeks. But after that things changed. The Turk was very bad, I mean, they had a war in Asia Minor and everything else, and they hated so much the Greeks, and the Greeks hate the Turks. But as far as then, we were all right with the Turkish government, as far as I remember. Because I saw them when they broke the front there, the Greeks, you know, and they just the Turks, and they come and they goin' in north of Albania, and they depart from some port there, the Italian ships, they pick them up and take them down to the Asia Minor.

So it was the soldiers without control, you understand? So they pick them up, so the Albanians start killing them, the Turks Albanian genoci-- kill them, because they - they thought themselves they are Albanians they not Turks. But it was Muslim just the same. Anyway, so, as far as I remember, the Turks was 1913, went through my home town as soldiers in , I don't know - in one division or, I don't know, three hundred or five hundred, I don't know how much. That's what I remember about Turks. Otherwise the police, the Turkish police, they was coming there once a month by, see, nineteen peoples. That's where they used to come, with the -- nineteen -- people.

LEVINE: Did you ever see any violence, any, um . . .

PHOTOS: No.

LEVINE: Fighting, or . . .

PHOTOS: No.

LEVINE: No.

PHOTOS: No, no. That was farther down, away from us. Those days we would count the, the distance by the walking, how long it takes you to go there. It takes you three days, you have to walk to go there, where is the violence, I mean, the fighting. But, uh, as far as violence, we had the, we had, it was Albanians, the Turks Albanians, the Muslims. There was bandits, you know. They stay some corner in the road, you know, with a gun. And if you was there coming from one town to the other one day, the other one would come down on the horse and, "Give me your money," or anything they have, they take you shoes, everything like that.

LEVINE: Really.

PHOTOS: Yeah. Those days was the rebels, the Albanians was. Because the Turks didn't have good control in Albania. I don't know other states, but I think it was all over the Balkan like that, but they didn't have a good control. So the Albanians was, how can I say, like in the olden days here, you know, the cowboys, you know. That's exactly was there. So . . .

LEVINE: How, were you a religious family?

PHOTOS: Yeah, a religious, yes. We were religious. We had, uh, you won't believe if I say, we had twenty-one churches in my home town, and there was about three hundred and fifty families. But not all the churches. It was, in my life was thirteen churches I left -- standing up. The rest was demolished for some reason, either the weather or, uh, God knows. It's been centuries probably, see. But there was twenty-one there, because I can count now. I know the names, saint this and saint that.

LEVINE: How did you observe, what did you do as far as your religion? How did you practice it when you were under nineteen, when you were in the school.

PHOTOS: When I was in school, going to school, I went to school up to fourth grade. We had the teacher, the teacher had to see us in the church every Sunday, see. He had the one boy checking in the line, we used to stay in line one side of the church, and the one boy checking everybody there. If he isn't sure if anybody's missing, he reported us to the teacher. In those days the teacher had a stick and bang here and bang there, you know, your hands, see. And that's the only way I remember the church. Of course, taking Communion every Easter, before Easter, or something like that. And also before Christmas we used to do that, see. But we were a religion people, you know. We believed . . .

LEVINE: It was a Greek Orthodox church.

PHOTOS: A Greek Orthodox church, yeah. And, I tell you, in the small towns were more religion people than you find in big cities, you know.

LEVINE: How about your mother? What was your mother's name?

PHOTOS: Euthemia.

LEVINE: Euthemia. And her maiden name?

PHOTOS: It's the maiden name, Euthemia, yes.

LEVINE: Oh. And her first name?

PHOTOS: That's her first name, and you call 'em was - was the last name.

LEVINE: How do you spell that?

PHOTOS: (he laughs) We're gonna spell it at the end.

LEVINE: Okay, we'll spell later, okay.

PHOTOS: Eh, my father's was -- name was John, John Photos.

LEVINE: Okay. And, um, what was your mother like? When you think of your mother when you were young, what are the memories that you have?

PHOTOS: My mother was very, very soft. She was about as short as, say, maybe five, five foot. My father was six-something, see. And, uh, like I say, my mother had twelve children. And we're a big family, and before that the family was together with, uh . . .

LEVINE: Grandparents?

PHOTOS: Mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law and everything else. That's the way it used to be. And, at the end, because of my father, I don't know, we had a misunderstanding with his father, and we separate, and he built his own house, a new house, see.

LEVINE: Do you remember your grandparents?

PHOTOS: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Tell me about them. What did you ever do with them, or what kind of things do you remember?

PHOTOS: Well, my grandfather was a, he was the type of fellow that he spoil his grandchildren, yeah. You know?

LEVINE: Spoil them. How did he spoil you?

PHOTOS: Because he loved them too much, see. Especially me, he used to carry me when I was, until five years, six years, five years old. He was carrying me around the neck.

LEVINE: On your shoulders.

PHOTOS: On the shoulders, yeah. He was a very good man. And, uh, how can I say? I don't want to tell you the whole story about Photos family, because nobody will - will know anything about it. Anyway, he was the top man in the - in the town there.

LEVINE: Your grandfather.

PHOTOS: Right, for ages. He was running the . . . (voice off mike) What did you say?

CATHERINE: [not understood] .

LEVINE: Was he also dealing with sheep and . . .

PHOTOS: He was. The whole family, great-grandfather. Before my grandfather was three, generations before was doing the same thing. Because I find now, I have another book there, somebody write it, and it mentioned my family there, see. Three generations before my grandfather, who was a, well, in those days, that's all it had to live, you know, and to be better than anybody else, if you had a lot of livestock.

LEVINE: So what would he do? What, as far as the livestock was concerned, he'd buy it, and . . .

PHOTOS: I tell you, my father was buying and selling. So the grandfather, as I remember, but we had it because they used to make cheeses, see. And as far as the family they had so much, uh, we had to follow just for a family to have, let's say, a hundred sheep or a hundred goats, see. Either one. Just to have milk for the family. We were raised on milk and cheese. More milk and cheese than bread. That's all we was eat in the house, see. And . . .

LEVINE: Okay, we're stopping here for a second. (break in tape)
Why don't you speak briefly about your family and their status in Albania?

PHOTOS: Well, like I say, my grandfather was a rancher, and my father was the same thing till, uh, I - I left in a way, I left him there with a, as a rancher. He had sheeps and goats and things like that, see, livestock around there, see, when I left. And, uh, my grandfather was, like I say, knowing in half of the Albania, because he used to go and buy and sell it, see. And he ship it to, those days to Greece, from Turkey to Greece, you know. He feel -- with the livestock, bought and sent them to some city in Greece.

There was a man there, he used to come and buy from us, you know, and that's what he was doing all his life. My father, he was having, serving the Greek army when they came there, with the meats, you know. He had a few people working for him, uh, kill the goats and, uh, sheep and cows, and feed the Greek Army. And when the Italian came, they -- he feed the Italian Army in a certain area, too, you know. But after I left it was, you know, something happened, and, uh, he brought all the livestock we had, he brought it home from other town that they was supply the Italians and, uh, that's when I left, from there. I can't, it's a big story as far as family, and I can't tell you one by one unless to stay all night, all day talking about it.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, why don't you tell me about what your life was like, then? Uh, you went to school starting when?

PHOTOS: Uh, I wasn't a good student.

LEVINE: You weren't?

PHOTOS: No. I was, uh, the worst one in the family, see. Because I think that's why my father sent me and my brother to Constantinople because both of us, the all of us - the sons -- that we weren't good students, because we was mixed with the livestock too, you know. We like it to be with herders and things like that. And, uh, well, I left the Greece because of that. It was Italian. And there was bandits, bandits, how do you call them? Crooks.

CATHERINE: Bandits.

PHOTOS: Yeah, all over. And they used to go to each town and ask for ransom, you know. They take the boys and everything. Oh, because my father knew us, he used to go around the ranches, you know, the herders and so on sometimes. Somebody will catch up saying he wanted their

monies. So he decided, besides that, he decided we were old enough to leave the home, because we big family, and we -- he didn't have a education because the, the country was changing from the Turkish to Greek, from the Greek to Italian, and become again the Greek, and so on. And we didn't go to school, although he had me in his mind to become a doctor, see. But because his, things changed in his mind, I don't know, his work, or anything else.

Anyway, so I left Greece, and it took me one week to go and left Albania. Excuse me. Well, It's gonna be a lot of mistakes. I left Albania and it took me a week to go to Greece, because it was the Italian country then, Italian nation. Albania, there was no transportation to go, and it was a half hour from Albania to go to Corfu, you know. But there was no transportation, no boat. Once in a couple of weeks. So, anyway, we waited there for a week, but no transportation, we took a canoe, see. Was a canoe that -- me and my brother, they took us right across there. Took, maybe, overnight, the next morning we were there. And I - and I stayed there in Corfu for a year with my, my sister's husband, he's making, he had a factory, of making cigarettes, a cigarette factory.

LEVINE: What was your sister's name?

PHOTOS: Olga.

LEVINE: And her husband?

PHOTOS: John.

LEVINE: And his last name?

PHOTOS: Sidiaku [ph]. Well, you have to have a, you know, if it was trouble here in America, if it's a German name, long, a couple of yards, you can pronounce. If it's a Greek, (?), you cannot pronounce it. (they laugh) Isn't it funny? Yes.

LEVINE: Well, and what was your brother's name, the one who went with you?

PHOTOS: Uh, Socrates, yeah. And . . .

LEVINE: You were the two oldest boys?

PHOTOS: Yeah.

LEVINE: The two oldest children?

PHOTOS: No, my two older . . .

LEVINE: Oh, your sister was older.

PHOTOS: Two sisters, yeah. So . . .

LEVINE: So were you happy to go to Corfu, or how did you feel about it?

PHOTOS: I didn't know any better. You know, happy, you know, a young fellow goes places is happy to change. He don't know if he has to work hard or have money or anything to me. I was working for an assistant, doing nothing absolutely, and I was making boxes for the cigarettes. They had a couple of women there, because the tobacco, you had to take it leaf by leaf, you know. Anyway, a lot of work to - to-- till you get cigarette. The tobacco, it takes a lot of work to become a cigarette. So I was helping on that, see. So after that I saw some people came from America that was from my home town, and some of them was distant cousins.

And I ask him, "If I go to America, how much money I can make?" "Oh," he says, "around a thousand dollars a year." A thousand dollars a year was a lot of money for me, (he laughs) because a thousand dollars was making five thousand drachmas those days. The Greek money was solid in those days, you know. It was five for, five dollars in a dollar. And, uh, I was thinking if I make a thousand dollars, I'll go there, stay one, two year then come back. That's what I was thinking. I mean, he has, how many, seventy-four years now.

LEVINE: Did you have any idea what you would do there?

PHOTOS: No. Uh, I didn't. They didn't tell me what did they do there. I know mostly the people of my home town, people, it was in Biddeford, Maine. There was four hundred people from my home town in Biddeford, Maine, working in the mill.

LEVINE: A shoe factory?

PHOTOS: No, a mill making cloth, yeah. And, uh, I couldn't believe it myself when they told me, but I'm figuring now, I have a tape like this one here, and I find three hundred and seventy-five so far. But, including my time. Those four hundred people was just before my time up there. Every house has two or three sons, you know, in America. Of course, in those days, they come here, working for a while, and they used to be sixty dollars to go back, you know. They don't cost any more. And maybe had another hundred dollars in his pocket when he went back, you understand? Because, like I say, a dollar was a dollar in those days. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: When you say your home down, you mean Polichani ? You mean, in Albania, not in Corfu.

PHOTOS: In Albania. Yeah, yeah. All those people who come from my home, Polichani there, see. And one by one they left. By 1924, a lot of them, they went back, and they didn't come back. Because they passed a law here, in 1922. After, if you didn't have return (how can I say?) passport, let's say, you couldn't come back, see. And some of them was left there, huh. And after that they, because my home town was such a small, uh, as far as territory and earning, you had, all those people had to travel someplace. There was days that they used to go to Romania, see.

Was a day that they used to go to Constantinople, mostly Constantinople. My, prob--before what I -- before I was born, probably. But, let's say, great-grandfather, who was going to Romania, and my grandfather, they was going to the times I'm talking about, they was going to Constantinople, see. And some they spread to - to inside of the Turkish land up to Asia Minor, the Black Sea. I know a father was a rich man, he was doing the caviar in the Black Sea from my hometown. There was a lot of rich people, but, uh, at the end, they lo-- everybody went poor for one reason or the other one, I don't know. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: So did you leave for America from Corfu?

PHOTOS: No. I went to Athens, and from Athens I stayed there practically four, five months, six, I don't know.

LEVINE: Were you staying with a family member?

PHOTOS: No, no. And, uh, was lot of other people there, was my - my - my brother-in-law, he left Corfu and he went to Athens, and he opened a business up there, a, uh, like a (?), I'd say . . .

LEVINE: A supermarket?

PHOTOS: A supermarket, yeah. Something like that, yeah. A supermarket, wholesale and retail. And I was working there for a while, and I was trying to get a passport. It was hard. They didn't give us passports to come. So I got the Italian passport, and then I left in December the first, 1920, and I arrived here December 20.

LEVINE: Were you given examinations before you left?

PHOTOS: Uh, I don't, I got my own doctor, no examinations from the, uh, embassy, I say. My own doctor. They told me to move my eyes, so they don't want to send you back. That's why I had the fear of myself, because if I go to Ellis Island, maybe they send me back. I don't know what happened, you know. And finding something with the lungs and everything, you know. So finally . . .

LEVINE: Where did you leave from?

PHOTOS: From Piraeus.

LEVINE: Piraeus. And where did you, what ship did you go on?

PHOTOS: Uh, Themosticles.

LEVINE: And what was the voyage like? Tell me about what it was like on the ship, for twenty days, did you say?

PHOTOS: For twenty days. (Catherine coughs) And it wasn't only that, the fear from myself was if we're going to reach there, because the ship was so small, and it was packed with people. And, like I say, they used to feed us in the morning, tea, and Greek cheese and bread. That's all we had every morning. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: Did you bring this with you, or the ship supplied it?

PHOTOS: The ship supplied it. Me, I had some coffee and things like that for myself, extra, for instance. And, uh, in lunchtime they give us, uh, beans, or noodles, or, uh, (stragalia revisia)? Chick peas.

CATHERINE: Chick peas, that's right.

PHOTOS: Okay. I remember all those things. So . . .

LEVINE: Were you down in the hold of the ship?

CATHERINE: Oh, yes.

PHOTOS: Yeah, yeah, oh, yeah. I don't know how many floors it was down. (he laughs) But they one -- they was getting us up once a week, I think. Like I say, in the top, altogether, and fumigate the place, and we stayed there, I don't know how many hours. I was getting very sick, very sick.

LEVINE: Were most of, you were traveling alone.

PHOTOS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did you know anybody on the ship?

PHOTOS: Oh, yes. I met some people from my home town, see. But, uh, one of them was in America before, and he went there and he came back to America, see. And there was a couple of other women, and those women were screaming, they had, there were two women that had their children, about seven years old, daughters, screaming because they getting sick, you know. Everybody's screaming there, they won't let you sleep, because. (he laughs) So when we came to Ell-to New York we stay two days in the boat, because Ellis Island was so busy from all over the Europe, imagine, Russia and Poland and all those countries, they was coming, you know. And, uh, finally, after two days, we went through the Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Do you remember coming in, the ship coming into the New York Harbor? Do you remember seeing the Statue?

PHOTOS: Oh, yeah. We was - we was -- amazing to see all those high rise and buildings and everything, of course. We were so happy, too, but until we went through Ellis Island, see. And then, uh, of course, I passed the examination, and then they put a button here, you going in that direction, Springfield, Massachusetts, then to Worcester. I don't know, I was changing the train, I think, and the conductor tell, because they know, the conductor, what to do, yeah.

LEVINE: Tell me what your impression of Ellis Island was like, and the description of it, as you experienced it.

PHOTOS: My experience was like, I tell you, I felt like I - I was going to pass through a jail or something like it, all those fences inside, you know, divided, divisions, people. My God! There was a lot of people hold in there, too, besides going through, you understand, because examinations. Besides our boat that I came, there was a lot of other boats from different countries probably. There were a lot of people there. There was, like 42nd Street in New York, madhouse was inside there. Anyway . . .

END OF SIDE ONE BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

PHOTOS: Uh, once I pass, and they put me in the ferryboat to go to Grand Central Station, you know, and they put me in a, goes to Albany, I think, the train. That's where I was.

LEVINE: So nobody had to meet you.

PHOTOS: I tell you, I met an Albanian fellow, a Muslim, and become very friendly with me, in the boat. And I couldn't trust him, because he Muslim, see, really. But, uh, he was very friendly, and he told me, "Where are you going in Worcester? I'll take you." He says, "Which one, who -- whom you know in Worcester?" And I told him so-and-so. And he says, "I know the fellow." He - he was there before. And he took me to the Greek restaurant there, and that fellow, I met him five, six years later or more, in Detroit. See, the men, they had the restaurant. Anyway, so he took me down there, and, uh, he took me to the restaurant. This fellow give me pork chops, I remember. (they laugh) And I ate the pork chops there.

LEVINE: That was your first meal in America?

PHOTOS: First meal in America, and the first time I ate pork. Yeah, we don't eat, in my country we eat the lamb. Lamb, goat, something like.

LEVINE: Do you remember the name of the Greek restaurant that you went to in Worcester?

PHOTOS: Uh, yes or no, I don't know, I think the Paradise Restaurant, they used to call it, yeah. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: How was it that you went to Worcester?

PHOTOS: I met the, I met fellow, he was from Worcester, in Corfu. He was a single man. He came and he got married. He was from Albania, too. He got married in Albania, and he stay in the Corfu, I don't know, for a couple of months. And, uh, because me, I was going back and forth, you know, walking in the front of the business place. And I say, I hear them singing in Albanian. And I stay there watching. And, uh, this fellow says, "Who are you? Where are you from?" I tell him, I'm this and that. His father was the best man of my father, and he was from different town. And his father was that. Anyway, and anyway, I went home, and I told my sister that this happened, I met somebody that he knows our family and his father was the best man. He says, "Why don't you bring him over?"

So I talked to him, and I invite him with his wife to my sister's, see. They have something -- entertain them. And then we become friends, and I told him I'd like to come to America, and he says, "Why don't you come with us?" But, to go to with them, I had to have a passport and everything ready, but I had anxieties. Anyway, and that's the way I went to Worcester. So I got a job in Worcester, and another thing is, those days was a, the Greeks there fighting with the Turks in Asia Minor. Now, the psychology of the person. And I got a job in some factory there, used to call them Reade and Prince [ph] Manufacturers. They used to make screws, screws and bolts. But, you know, they had to, they had the wires around, like a tire, a big wire thing, around and around. That's what they're making these screws, from the wire, you understand? But those wires, they had to throw in the acid, wash 'em.

And me, sixteen years old and was a Turk there doing that job, he was about thirty-five, and he was big fellow. (he laughs) So we lift that, I couldn't lift the damn thing, you know. Finally, you know, I worked there with him, but I got scared. And he askin' me, "What's your nationality?" And I told him, "Albania." I didn't tell him I was a Greek, or a Greek from Albania. I was afraid, I had to, to find, find out he was Turkish. Because the Turks was fighting, and I say, maybe he'll grab me and throw me in the ashes by mistake, you know, if something happened, you know. So I quit the job. I was afraid after that.

And, uh, I thought about, I had an aunt in Maine that, uh, my mother's sister. She was from Rhode Island. Her husband die, and had the four children. And, uh, because she had nobody, she had cousins in Maine, first cousins. So they went there and pick her up and brought her to Maine from Rhode Island. And, uh, I thought about going to Maine. So I find out that, the address in Maine, I didn't know anything like that, but some way we find out about there, and I went to Maine after that.

LEVINE: How did you go?

PHOTOS: Uh, train.

LEVINE: Train.

PHOTOS: And, uh, (he laughs) they put me in a train and, uh, the train stopped someplace to get off, to change, transfer. I didn't know. So I went farther down. When conductor -- conductor comes in and see my ticket again, I should get up. They stopped the train and got me out. (he laughs) Got me out, anyway. So somebody picked me up for the next train. And, uh, I didn't have no money. I mean, what I had, enough to go there, because I forgot to tell you, when I came to America I had eighteen dollars in my pocket. So when I went to Maine, I worked there for almost three years, see. I worked in the mills. I was sweeping the looms, you know, making the cloths, yeah. And, uh, in order to learn how to work the looms you have to steady there.

So for me it was easier to sweep the way I was sweeping, and then I change from there, I work with (?) shop. The manufacturer of this cotton mill was a yoke manufacturer, you know. And then I went to a shop that there was making the frames and send them to Japan, frames for the mills [not understood] Japan. And, uh, sometimes they made a mistake, and they -- Japan sent it back. And the place went out of business. (he laughs)

LEVINE: Huh. Then what did you do.

PHOTOS: So then I decide to go to New York.

LEVINE: What, meanwhile how were you learning, were you learning English?

PHOTOS: I didn't learn . . .

LEVINE: How was that to you?

PHOTOS: I didn't learn five, five words of English in Maine, because it was all Greeks.

LEVINE: Oh.

PHOTOS: Greeks or Albanians, you know, or French, see. And working in the mill, all that noise, you couldn't hear anybody. You had to talk to somebody in here, you know.

LEVINE: Oh. And this was Portland, Maine.

PHOTOS: No, Biddeford, Maine.

LEVINE: Biddeford.

LEVINE: Biddeford, and Saco -- is the bridge divide them, see. And from there, then I decide to go to New York. So I figure maybe I get a better job as waiter or something like that. I went to New York. I stayed there about a month. And we had to go in the agency to pay to find a job for you in those days, see. So I didn't know anything, they find me a dishwasher job. And I say, "I'm not gonna work dishwasher." (he laughs) So, anyway, I pass my time there. I had some money, I spent it. And, uh, I was lucky, yeah.

LEVINE: Did you have relatives in New York?

PHOTOS: No, I had friends.

LEVINE: Friends.

PHOTOS: From my hometown. Was few there, five - five, six, maybe. And I stay with them. I didn't pay no rent or anything, but I had to eat. And I spend my money. And then I wrote again to, because I was - Rhode Island-- to this cousin of my mother's, and he sent me . . .

LEVINE: Rhode Island?

PHOTOS: No, in Worcester. I mean, in Biddeford, Maine, yeah. And he sent me a hundred dollars. And I took the train, and I went to Detroit. I heard I'm going to go and work at Ford's, see.

LEVINE: What had you heard about Ford?

PHOTOS: Ford's, I tell you. I work, I went there to get a job, at Ford's, and, well, he didn't hire for a long time. He didn't hire people. And we used to go there, I went there in 1924. And, uh, I started going in January, let's say, first or second, and standing in line, five o'clock tonight till tomorrow morning the office open eight o'clock, and then we went through, it was about, how you say, [not understood] were five thousand people, Polish and everything, all nationalities, looking for a job. Nothing today, nothing today. Meanwhile, I used to say, they told me to say, "Punch press or drill press." I didn't know what the hell was that. (they laugh) "Nothing today, nothing today."

LEVINE: And you would do that every day?

PHOTOS: Every night, five times a week, uh, six times week, because those days we had Saturday, too. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: What year was it by then? What year was that?

PHOTOS: In 19, uh, 1924. In 1925, in February 28th, I got the job. Two months I was standing in line every night. Five o'clock tonight, to eight o'clock tomorrow. There was five thousand people. You had to go there, you'd be first. And I was young. And, uh, I was, sent the guy next to me to get a coffee, he had to work fifteen minutes farther down, then I was getting the coffee [not understood] people, and so on, every night, the same thing. And I had a friend of mine, we used to stay together, a friend from my home town, I say, and we used to sleep together in one bed. Those days it wasn't what they do now, where they say. We were friends, good friends, and we help each other. And this guy, he crossing himself like a Christian. And he says, "Thank God, we got a job, you can pay our rent." We didn't have no money any more to pay the rent.

So I got the job in February 28th, and he got the job in March, some time the fourth or the fifth, something like that. So he was working in a - in a foundry. Me, I was working in a machine shop. So the factory, the Ford factory was big. It just moved from Island Park to River Rouge. And as you go in, he had a badge, he had to show the badge every day. And this fellow, he used to say to me, "I don't know what it says." It used to say, "Danger" here, "Danger" there, a lot of places. Danger was, he explained in Greek, something like a, a pot, he would say. "It says pot here, pot there," he says to me in Greek. He couldn't speak English. He was like me. I couldn't speak English. Anyway, I work for a year there, and then I quit. Some friend of mine told me to work in a restaurant. A restaurant, uh, he used to say, easy -- easy - easy restaurant, selling hot dogs and hamburgers. And, uh, I quit the job. I

went there just to learn, uh, English and learn the business, and, uh, he might be in the business some time, like I did. So I worked a lot of -- long time before I . . .

CATHERINE: [whispers] (?) Ford.

PHOTOS: Oh, yeah. Well . . .

CATHERINE: [whispers] Tell them.

PHOTOS: When I was working at Ford, we were five, six guys working one type of work, one, everybody had six machines, six guys there, working. And we drilled the flying wheel - balance-- that the flying wheel. So, there was a lot of Polish people there, big fellows, you know. And when we used to, when I stop there, I started with a hundred pieces a day. And every five or six people, he had a foreman there, and this foreman he had a stick, and he comes there and he push you right there, and he says, "You see that guy? He got more than you." So I produce some hundred. When I left it was four hundred pieces. Every day I had to produce more, because the other guy was producing. Those guys was working longer than me, yes, but it was a big problem, too. So I did. So I left not because of that. I used to hate Ford for a long time, because that's the way he was for everybody there. I saw a fellow, you know, when the assembly line gone by, and the guy was under it, you know, screwing something, another car comes, he was producing about ten million cars in those days, a year, see? And, uh, when I saw those guys working like that, my God, this is a hell here, you know.

CATHERINE: [whispers] You didn't buy a Ford.

PHOTOS: I didn't buy no Ford for a long, long time, because I used to hate him, see? Yeah. And, uh, when I bought the Ford it was about six years, eight years ago, didn't it?. I bought the first Lincoln. I used to buy a Cadillac, and I switch from Cadillac to Lincoln. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: So then you went to work in the restaurant.

PHOTOS: I work in restaurant, yes. And I worked there quite long. And I quit from there. And then I, I knew how to drive. I learn because my, my mother's cousin had a grocery in Biddeford, Maine, and he bought the first car. Was about five, six cars those days in Biddeford, Maine. So he was learning, and I was learning with him. And I got a job as a driver working in, uh, selling bread house to house, see. And I did that, and then I did another job the same thing, in a restaurant, selling bread. And then I went to - again - to restaurant myself working for other people. And then I opened my own. I opened a place, uh, with another guy. It was a school across the street, they had all those school kids there. And it was, uh, Blind Pig. You ever heard that word?

LEVINE: Blind Pette?

PHOTOS: Used to be -- yeah, it was a bootlegger place.

CATHERINE: [whispers] Ooh. (she laughs) Blind Pig. That was your place?

PHOTOS: Behind my place there. And I was doing business with them. When they close, I closed. (he laughs)

LEVINE: This was in Detroit?

PHOTOS: In Detroit, yeah. I went there. I stayed in Detroit till 1948 when we get -- got married and left there.

LEVINE: Tell me how you met your wife.

PHOTOS: Uh, that is . . .

CATHERINE: He had a nice place in Detroit, too.

PHOTOS: Well, I had a, I had a place in Detroit, a hot dog place, and then I had a restaurant and bar.

LEVINE: And what was the name of that?

PHOTOS: Uh, New York Grill and Bar, Bar and Grill, something like that.

LEVINE: New York Bar and Grill, uh-huh.

PHOTOS: In a good section, Cadillac Square, right down in the heart of the town. Once side was the county building. The other side was City Hall, there. And Woodward Avenue was the Main Street of Detroit.

LEVINE: What is?

PHOTOS: Woodward Avenue. That was the Main Street of Detroit, with department stores, J.L. Hudson, and the pride of the Detroit was J.L. Hudson, and now they tell me all the stores around there are closed, because of shopping centers and things like that that I guess. Anyway, I haven't been to Detroit now for a long time. Uh . . .

LEVINE: So how did you meet your wife?

PHOTOS: By mistake I meet her. I went to New York for some convention.

LEVINE: A restaurant convention?

PHOTOS: No. It was a, again a . . .

CATHERINE: Political.

PHOTOS: Political, Albanian and Greeks. I was pro-Greek, you know. And, uh, after the convention, uh, I was going to come back, and some friend of mine, he was Detroit and he lived in New York back there, and he heard that I was in convention, he was looking for me, but they was -

was the last day. And when he came there, I had another cousin from the Boston area that we went to Philadelphia the day before, and we come, and the next day we was going to leave from New York, but he was going to go to Boston, and I was going to go to Detroit. This guy caught me, this friend, caught me there the last day. He says, "You have to go to Philadelphia to meet my brother, my friends and everything." I say, "I was there just yesterday. It's easy for me to go there." And he had his mind to meet somebody in Philadelphia, some girl, I think that's what he had. So, anyway, we went to his brother-in-law house there, we had a dinner and so on, and they talk something like, in the kitchen, both of them, and what do we take this fellow for looking for a bride.

CATHERINE: (?)

PHOTOS: And the fellow over there told him the best girl is the priest daughter. Her father was a priest. And they told me, "We're gonna go visit some people here, and first we go to the priest -- priest house." And the priest was Albanian, and me, I used to hate Albanians. (Catherine laughs) And I say, "You're going to take me into the priest's house. I don't like the priest. He's Albanian. I heard that he's a fanatic Albanian." So finally I went down there. And then she brought coffee or something like that, to see her. And when I went out, "They -- you like the girl," they told me. "She was all right, but I don't like the priest." "So you came for the priest."

So finally, I took the plane the next day. I went to Detroit. In the meantime I wrote a letter to my cousin, that he came from Boston. I say, something went in my mind, I says, "I'm gonna get married. I met a girl, and she was this and that." And that's the way I met her. So we had the wedding. I went back again a couple of weeks later. I met her, and we went out and everything else. And then, uh, of course, we liked each other. It looks like it? (Mrs. Photos laughs) Do we? Did - do we? Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, how did the families, how did the families feel about the mix?

PHOTOS: The families, I didn't have the family. Her brother had. And we had the wedding in Detroit, see, in, uh, what you call . . .

CATHERINE: Bucala [ph].

PHOTOS: Not Bucala, the . . .

CATHERINE: Oh, Whittier.

PHOTOS: Whittier.

CATHERINE: Whittier Hotel.

PHOTOS: Whittier Hotel we had it. And, uh, we take her to the, we went for honeymoon in . . .

CATHERINE: Mackinac Island.

PHOTOS: Mackinac Island. You ever heard of Mackinac Island? Up there they didn't have no automobiles, horses only, see. And, uh, finally, from there, we had the business in, like I say, in Detroit I had the business. We stayed a year, and then, uh, we went to Philadelphia, in different business, a summer swimming pool. It was owned by McCloskey and McShane, two big builders in, uh, from Philadelphia. They built it in Danguno [ph], in Danguno [ph], in Washington, DC. Pentagon.

LEVINE: Oh. (a telephone rings) Okay. We'll stop for a second. (break in tape) We're resuming now.

PHOTOS: We, have we said that there?

LEVINE: Uh, you went to Philadelphia in another business?

PHOTOS: Yes. Uh, McShane and McCloskey, he was dividing the business. There was a big building, I'd say. Like I say, they built the pentagon, you know, in other business, in other buildings. So, because they divided, they wanted to sell the swimming pool. They had a swimming pool business, too. And some uncle was working there in the concession. They had the concession, you know. And they knew that they didn't want to sell it, so they told her father maybe I was interested to buy it, the swimming pool. And they called me, and, uh, I bought the swimming pool with my brother. And I saw the place in Detroit, and I run the swimming pool for, for fourteen years.

The swimming pool was a public swimming pool. You had to pay to get in there, see. And, uh, we bought it for a hundred thousand dollars. And we did pretty good. We was working in the summertime, and relax in the wintertime. For three months, we was working. We used to put there, the highest I put there was fifty-five hundred and fifty-two people, one day. Fifty-five hundred fifty-two people, because we had the tickets and we had to pay tax. And, uh, we knew how much we were selling every day, you understand? So we used to be there, about a couple of thousand every day, and we, when it was good weather, but the highest was that much, I remember. See?

LEVINE: Then did you stay working at that until you retired?

PHOTOS: Yes. Uh, no. After I sold that, then I went to McDonald business, and I went back to Maine, by mistake, see. I brought a nephew from the other side, and he was with me there in the swimming pool, and then he went to Chicago, and he worked there. And in some way with another cousin I brought from the other side, I brought five relatives from the other side after that. And they were in Chicago there working, and somebody told them I bought a McDonald's. McDonald's was a beginner in those days, 19, uh '54, see. They started in 19, uh, '55, I think, '54 or '55. Anyway, so, 19, uh, he opened the place, he got this, these two fellows, they opened the place with another fellow in Utica, New York, a McDonald's. So I went there and saw it. Although I thought I was going to be retired from the swimming pool, I saw something different.

I didn't like the restaurant, after I sold the restaurant before, and I didn't like anything in the food business. When I saw the McDonald's, I say, "This is a place that I don't have to see the people, the customers, from the window." They come there and buy, you know how a McDonald's is. So I like it. And I went in New Jersey someplace and I check another place like that. So I decide to go in McDonald business. But, uh, it took me four years later to get the place, because McDonald's didn't have the money to spread thin itself, you understand? It didn't have no credit. And he wanted to have the -- the building himself, and rent it to the customers, you know, franchise. That's what he is doing, in McDonald's. So finally we had to put four thousand dollars down. For four years they kept four thousand dollars from me, you know, without any interest or anything like that. So I waited four years, and I went in the business. They told me if you want to take Maine. The whole Maine. I had the whole state, yeah. So I took it, and because I knew Maine from the previous years back in the '20s, you know. So I did -- made pretty good. I opened four places in Maine.

LEVINE: Where in Maine?

PHOTOS: Portland, Bangor, and Lewiston and, uh, what's the other one? Yeah. It was an air base, a Navy base there. Brunswick.

LEVINE: Brunswick, uh-huh.

PHOTOS: Yeah. Four places. So . . .

LEVINE: And did you stay with that until you retired?

PHOTOS: Yeah. Five years I stayed with that.

LEVINE: Okay.

PHOTOS: So . . .

LEVINE: We have about three minutes left, so let's say, um, would you say your wife's name and maiden name, and any children, if you have children.

PHOTOS: Catherine, uh, Condidy [ph]. Catherine Condidy [ph]. And my, I had a son that I lost -- twenty years old, John. And, uh, I have two daughters, Irene and Victoria. And because of John, I sold the place after that because I lost my son after five years, and I sold the franchise I had, two McDonald's yet. So since then I did nothing, and that is my history.

LEVINE: Tell me what you're most proud or satisfied at having done in your life.

PHOTOS: Uh, you mean in the business?

LEVINE: Any way.

PHOTOS: Well, the best thing I did was the wife I have. We are forty-seven years married, and I was four years sick, and she take care of me. And I just begin to feel myself now. I had a carotid artery, see.

CATHERINE: Carotid.

PHOTOS: Operation, you know. And that run me down too long, because they cut from my leg a vein, and put it up there. Anyway, and the next thing was, uh . . .

CATHERINE: (?)

PHOTOS: I said that.

CATHERINE: Yeah, (?) you're proud. You're proud of your children.

PHOTOS: Of course I'm proud of my children, but I'm proud of my wife first. I developed angina, angina, and that kept me down so much. And I don't know what happened. Now, since last July, knocks wood (sound of knocking) I feel good, better.

LEVINE: Great. Well, um, the fact that you were born in Albania and came here and started really over, your life over, what influence do you think it had on you immigrating to this country and then . . .

PHOTOS: Well, everybody going to America. I told you, was four hundred people from my home town. And if they coming and going, and I used to, uh, when I was a kid, see them coming there, and have a good times, dancing, getting married, and singing and everything else. Well, that was the happiest things in -- happen, you know. And I say, "I'll be one of them when I come back," but I never went back. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Well, I think this is where we'll stop.

PHOTOS: Okay.

LEVINE: I want to thank you very much.

PHOTOS: That's all right.

LEVINE: I've been speaking with Mr. Eustace?

CATHERINE: Eustace.

LEVINE: Eustace Photos, and we're, it's February 28, 1994, and you're about to turn ninety in March.

PHOTOS: March 24th.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, you look wonderful.

PHOTOS: Yeah, thank you.

LEVINE: So it's nice to be here, and I thank you very much. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm signing off.
EI-445/PHOTOS