

EI-560

JENNIE MOUTIS

BIRTHDATE: MAY 15, 1906

INTERVIEW DATE: OCTOBER 26, 1994

RUNNING TIME: 53:22

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME

INTERVIEW LOCATION: SPRINGFIELD, NEW JERSEY

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: KIMBERLY MAIER

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: IRV SILBERG

GREECE, 1920

AGE 13

SHIP: "PATRICE":

PORT: ATHENS, GREECE

RESIDENCES:

- **GREECE: CASTORIO, SPARTA**
- **US: NEWARK, NEW JERSEY**

Historian's Note: Mrs. Moutis' children, Helen and George, are present.

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here in
Springfield, New Jersey, at the home of Jennie Moutis, who came from
Greece in 1920 when she was 13 years old. Today is October 26, 1994.
And you must be what, 88 years old?

MOUTIS: That's right. You're right. (laughs)

LEVINE: Well, I'm very happy to be here.

MOUTIS: I'm happy, too, to be here. An American. I'm very happy.

LEVINE: Let's start at the beginning. If you would say for the tape your birth date.
What's your birth date?

MOUTIS: My birthday is the Fif-- May the 15. I was born 1906.

LEVINE: What was your name when you were born?

MOUTIS: My name was Kounis.

LEVINE: Could you spell it?

MOUTIS: K-O-U-L--- L-L, no. K – is that K? Koukunis?

LEVINE: K-A-K-O-U..

GEORGE: N-I-S ...

LEVINE: M-I

GEORGE: N-I-S

LEVINE: N-I-F-

HELEN: S

LEVINE: And your first name? What was your first name?

MOUTIS: Jennie.

LEVINE: In Greek?

MOUTIS: Ioanna.

LEVINE: Maybe you could spell that.

MOUTIS: I always write Ioannaca.

GEORGE: I-O-, E-O-A-N-N...

HELEN: I-O...

GEORGE: I-O, yeah.

LEVINE: I-O...

GEORGE: N-N

HELEN: -A-N-N-A.

GEORGE: Yeah, okay.

LEVINE: Ion--.

HELEN: Ioanna. Ioanna.

LEVINE: Okay, Ionna. And where in Greece were you born?

MOUTIS: I was born in Castorio, Sparta.

LEVINE: And did you live in Cas--?

MOUTIS: Yes, in Castorio. A li--

LEVINE: Castorio.

MOUTIS: --from Sparta -- a little further out, about 15, 20 mi—minutes away from Sparta.

LEVINE: And you lived there the whole time until you were 13, until you left?

MOUTIS: Yes.

LEVINE: Okay. Good. Now, in your family was your mother, your father and did you have sisters and brothers?

MOUTIS: Yes. I have four sisters and three brothers.

LEVINE: And what were their names/

MOUTIS: My older brother is named Gus, then John, then Louis. Three brothers.

LEVINE: Three brothers. And how about your sisters?

MOUTIS: My sisters are named Stella – my older sister. And the next, I'm here. Then my other sister named Candula. And Catherine, the baby. Four.

LEVINE: And how about your mother and father? What was your father's name?

MOUTIS: George.

LEVINE: George, and your mother?

MOUTIS: Bessie.

LEVINE: And your mother's maiden name, do you remember?

MOUTIS: I think it was Mary.

GEORGE: No.

LEVINE: Before she was married?

MOUTIS: Ma-- Maria.

GEORGE: Skoros .

MOUTIS: Sko-- Skoros, yes. Skoros the last name, but the first name, my grandmother's, my gran-- mother was, I remember Mama used to say her name was Bessie or Stella. Something.

GEORGE: Besiniki.

MOUTIS: Besiniki is my mother.

GEORGE: That's what we're talking about.

MOUTIS: Oh, my mother's name. Bessie.

LEVINE: And how do spell her maiden name?

MOUTIS: S-C-O-R-A-S

GEORGE: [over-rides] S-C-O-R-A-S

LEVINE: Great. Now, what did your father do for work in Greece?

MOUTIS: He was working out in a farm. Yes.

LEVINE: And what kind of farm?

MOUTIS: Grapes. Olives. And wheat. Everything out in the farm, he used to work.

LEVINE: And did you have animals out on the farm?

MOUTIS: Yes, we did.

LEVINE: What kind?

MOUTIS: We had cows, goats, and we had lambs – *pos to le'ne arnee* --? How do you say?

GEORGE: Sheep.

MOUTIS: Sheep. All those. Chickens. Ducks. A farm -- ,yes.

LEVINE: Were you a religious family?

MOUTIS: Yes. We were. Very religious, up to now too.

LEVINE: Do you remember what kinds of occasions, religious occasions, how they were observed when you were a little girl in Greece?

MOUTIS: Oh, yes, I remember.

LEVINE: Which ones do you remember?

MOUTIS: The best. Our church – (our name church, St. George, that's the one next to our house) just half – not half a block, not quite half a block away from the house – that was my best place to go and play. And then we have school there too, the Greek school was right there. And we was playing outside, the garden, the church. That was my, I'm never going to forget that.

LEVINE: What church occasions? Do you remember how the church observed, how you observed different religious days?

MOUTIS: Easter, Christmas, Christmas and Easter.

HELEN: And name days.

MOUTIS: And name days too. We celebrate the name days, the Greek people, not the birthdays. What was the name day. Especially the men. The men's nem-- name we celebrate all day long.

LEVINE: What did you do, when it was someone's name day, what did you do to celebrate?

MOUTIS: Ah, Mama was doing all the cooking. And everybody used to come in, the neighbors, and dancing. The girls was dancing downstairs out in the yard. We had big, big yard. I remember all that. Lot of fun. Lot of fun! Here, the

children they don't have fun. Even I'm here now, almost seventy-five years, not seventy ---- seventy-three, ain't it? I could see they don't have the life we had there. Even though America is the best place to live. But you always remember you, when you were young. When you used to come out from school and play.

LEVINE: Do you remember what was so much fun? What kinds of games you played, or what kinds of things did you play?

MOUTIS: Everything, with the boys, together. Everything, we used to play. Shuf-- ball, [not understood]], swings. A lot of -- anything you have here, we had it there too -- to play when we were small children. Very nice.

LEVINE: So on the name day, did people go to church?

MOUTIS: Oh, yes. The whole town. Nobody stay in the house. The bell goes on three times in the morning, around eight o'clock. Then ten o'clock. And then at twelve o'clock. Everybody have to be in church.

LEVINE: All three times?

MOUTIS: No. Three hours. If you couldn't make like eight o'clock, you go nine o'clock. But you stay after twelve o'clock when the church is out, then the

fun starts. We used to have a lot of fun. No more now, but those years.
That's seventy-five years ago.

LEVINE: And then did people cook certain things? And make certain foods for these occasions?

MOUTIS: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: What were the foods? Do you remember?

MOUTIS: Oh, especially the big holidays like Christmas and Easter. Easter, we roast lambs outside. We have place – place. We all go, the whole ah, village. They have one place – maybe two, three blocks – and then we would have good time there. The music and the roasted lamb, and they have a lot of fruit and dancing and plays. They boys used to play around all day long. Easter. Not one – not a one day, Easter. Easter we celebrate eight days. From Friday to next Friday. We had a good time, all the time. Well, Friday and Saturday, no. We just quiet because, and then from Sunday -- to next to the last Sunday come, we have good time. The music plays all around the village. You know everybody too. That's the more fun. Because you know everybody. We had a very nice time.

LEVINE: And how about Christmas? How was Christmas celebrated that's different from here?

MOUTIS: Well, Christmas, we don't celebrate like we do here. Now they do. Now they put down trees, Christmas trees in the house. We didn't know. No. We didn't know to put... But the church and the names. Anybody had Chris, we should go and pay a visit, then have a good time then and we go to the other house when they have a name, name Chris. Oh, we had to go. Mother with the children. And all the mothers and all the old ladies. Lot of fun.

LEVINE: And did you, what kind of clothing did you wear when you were a little girl?

MOUTIS: We used to wear, we used to wear good clothes. Mama used to make our clothes. Yes.

LEVINE: Do you remember what they looked like?

MOUTIS: Mama used to make those in (asks in Greek), how you say?

HELEN: She used to have a, like a mill, where, you know how they make the rugs and the woolens, those....

GEORGE: The weave...

MOUTIS: No, this way, that way. [Greek]

LEVINE: Oh, like a loom.

HELEN: A loom, exactly.

MOUTIS: Yeah. Mama used to make a lot of clothes for the little children.

LEVINE: She made the cloth, too. Wow.

MOUTIS: Yes, she did. And she used to have a room to cut it, by size, you know. All the girls used to wear. Of course, the older girl used to dress better than the little ones. Oh, all the time. Can't wear the same. No. No. Because the older girl have to dress better.

LEVINE: Why was that?

MOUTIS: Ah, because the older girls, they have to – you have to go first all the time. You understand? She have to get married first. The youngest should stay back. But no more now. Now, the girls... (laughing) like here.

LEVINE: So did your mother teach you some of these things, like sewing and making cloth.

MOUTIS: Oh, yes. A lot of things. Sewing on the machine. Oh, Mother used to... But I was too little. I was more playing girl. My other sisters, my two sisters, they knew how to sew and take care of the house. Make bread once a week. We had to make 15 -- 20 loaves of bread, once a week.

LEVINE: In your house?

MOUTIS: Every Friday. We had the oven outside. The oven far away the yar-- the yard. And Mama used to go down and light the oven. Make the bread first. But I never make bread cause I was too small. And Mama used to make it. And I had an aunt, who was helping Mama too. She didn't have no children but she was helping my mother very much, you know, to make 15 loaves -- those big loaves, not those little loaves. And we had fun. Because mama used to make the fire downstairs in the oven, get the fresh bread out, and we get the fruit. We have a lot of fruit in the village. Figs and grapes and everything. Pears and apples. Everything.

LEVINE: How about school? Now, was this a church school?

MOUTIS: No. No. We have separate school. Oh, yes. We have separate school. Special. With the boys, when they grown up, they had a -- then they have different teacher. And the girls were separate. They didn't go -- we didn't go to the same with the boys then, no. The boys were separate.

LEVINE: What do you remember about your schooling there? What do you remember about school? What was it like for you?

MOUTIS: Ah, I remember I used to like school very much. Yes. And we girls used to get dressed and go to school and come home. And, like, I know more than you do. We used to read and write. A lot of fun, when you 10, 15. Then those girls, when they're 15, they don't want to bother with us. Like here.

LEVINE: Was school something, was everybody in one classroom?

MOUTIS: No. The girls, they start from four years old. Up to 12. But they had a separate room for the little ones, you know, first class. And separate room for the older girls.

LEVINE: Older ones.

MOUTIS: Yes. There was a lot of difference, I remember all those things.

LEVINE: How about grandparents? Did you have grandparents?

MOUTIS: Yes. My father's mother and father. Yes. Mama -- my mother's -- my mother's father I remember, not ha—Mama's mother. No.

LEVINE: What do you remember about your grandfather?

MOUTIS: Oh (sighs deeply), my grandma, special. She was a doll. She used to take care of us, all of us. If we don't show up, she get out and holler. "Why don't you come down? You didn't come! Are you all right? I want you to come down, tonight I'm cooking, we're gonna eat here." Oh, Grandma. She was a doll.

LEVINE: And what did you ever do with her. Did you ever help her do anything?

MOUTIS: Carried the wood, oh, yes. Carried the wood upstairs for the fire. Go for water. 'Cause we didn't have no water. We had the water out -- like maybe five minutes away, the water. We had to carry, carry the water there from the wells. Somebody had to get the water from the well and take it to Grandma.

LEVINE: You did that?

MOUTIS: Oh, yes. Many times. I did.

LEVINE: And where did the women wash the clothing?

MOUTIS: Oh, it was -- *pos to le'ne* [how do you say?] River.

LEVINE: Oh.

MOUTIS: The village, every Monday, all the mothers get together and we carry the clothes, and the (--Greek—*pos to le'ne* ---) ...

HELEN: The bucket where we warmed the water.

MOUTIS: Yes. And went down to the river. Only -- the young girls. I couldn't carry, 'cause I used to carry the bread and what we're going to eat. We used to spend the whole day. Oh, from morning to night there. We dry the clothes and then we take it in a bag -- mama used to take that, we couldn't. We'd take little things. And walk up to the village. It's about five minutes, ten minutes away -- the river.

LEVINE: So all the women would go on Monday?

MOUTIS: Monday.

LEVINE: And they would bring their lunch and they would spend their day at the river.

MOUTIS: Spend the... Yeah. The mothers used to. We had a very nice time. When I went back to see the river, it was not like the same. Like I left it. I went back with a friend, Helen. We went back (-- Greek --).

HELEN: 19 – 20 – 30

MOUTIS: Twenty si-- - oh twenty si—

HELEN: -- 32. 1932. With four children.

MOUTIS: I went back with the four -- --with four children. Yeah. My baby was four years old, Nick. The baby was four years old and --

HELEN: She stayed for two years.

MOUTIS: -- the other was, she was eight and Georgie was seven and the others...

LEVINE: So what was different when you went back in 1932?

MOUTIS: Lot of difference, yes.

LEVINE: Like what?

MOUTIS: People was different all together. It was not like the way I left it.

LEVINE: How did they change?

MOUTIS: Was -- the war (*polemos, pos to le'ne?*)--

HELEN: --The war.

MOUTIS: The war change a lot of people. A lot of people. You know, there was not family like I left it. You know? I used to tell my mother, I say, why? They don't come upstairs no more? Because everybody used to come, you pass, you walk upstairs to have a coffee or talk or something. For the children, a piece of bread and butter and cheese and fruit. But today, no. They see you outside, "Hello." That's all. "How are you?" They're not very friendly no more. Not only in our little town. All over when I went. When I go.

LEVINE: Do you remember the house you lived in?

MOUTIS: Yes. I remember very well.

LEVINE: Could you describe it?

MOUTIS: It was a lovely house. We had a barn on one side, far away, for the animals. For the cows and all that. And the other side was the house. Going up, we had a big porch. Big, big porch.

HELEN: Wrap around porch.

MOUTIS: (—Greek--) --

Helen: Balcony?

MOUTIS: --and balcony. We had just a big porch all around and a balcony in – in the front of the house. And down was the gardens, all the fruit and all that. That's very nice.

LEVINE: Let's see. How about any other social events in the town when you were a little girl? Were there any other times when people got together and...?

MOUTIS: Like the holidays. But I remember when I -- maybe I was eight years old -- the bells, the church bells. We have what, a little town, and have three, four churches. They all have bells. They was ringing and I was so happy. Jumping. And I went to my gran' house. I was jumping to go down to ask my grandma why the bells ringing? The church bells. So, "Yaya," my

grandma was Yaya, I say, "Yaya, why?" She said to me, she was crying.
Because (-- in Greek--)...

HELEN: They were rounding up all the young men, the ages for the war.

MOUTIS: For the war. And all the woman was cryin' and screamin'. All the young fellows they used to come from all over. They had to get in – get in -- in the trucks and they take 'em away. My – my mother was cryin'. My father went. My uncles. Everybody. The little, the village was dead after that. For long time. For long time. Nobody had a good time then.

LEVINE: Do you have any other memories related to World War I? Any other things that you remember related to that?

MOUTIS: Just – no. That's all I remember -- that year. I remember the day we left. My mother, we were sitting and the fireplace was cold. And she was asking my father, "You takin' my daughters now? What I'm gonna do without and you. And because Mama had two brothers here and they wrote to Mama, "Send your husband and the two girls now because war will start and they wouldn't be able to come up. It's gonna take long time." So my papa had a hurry to make the papers and make everything. And poor Mama was crying. Oh, she was crying. We left Mama there. We was cryin'. We went down to Grandmas. Oh, we just went for a little while. Then, that was, that

was a very sad. My dad used to love his mother. If he doesn't see his mother once a day, he used to pass there, "Hi Mom. Hello, Mom." But ah, that day, that morning, early in the morning, we had to take two horses to go up (-- Greek --)...

HELEN: Mountains.

MOUTIS: Mountains. Eight hours. To go to get the train to come to Athens. Eight hours. We used to walk, Grandpa and my papa was on the horses. Four girls was us. Two, and my father took two more other girls (-- Greek --) How do you say?

HELEN: He kind of adopted –

MOUTIS: He adopted.

HELEN: Two other girls.

MOUTIS: The same age. He had four girls. And walking to that mountain for seven hours. We start there in maybe ten o'clock. We got there, in the morning, walking, and we used to take our shoes off so (coughs) – excuse me -- (-- Greek --)

HELEN: Wouldn't wear 'em out -- the shoe leather.

MOUTIS: Four little girls walking with the shoes in the hand. So we got there. I remember....

GEORGE: That's when you came here.

MOUTIS: (-- Greek --) who's coming here?

GEORGE: You didn't answer the question though.

MOUTIS: Oh, I'm sorry. We was coming here. Yeah. Then, we was comin' here. But we got -- we got in a little (-- Greek?--)

GEORGE: Shack.

MOUTIS: Shack. And we had no place to sleep. My papa slept on a chair and my grandpa on the other side and we slept on the floor. Nothing. The horses was under. We got up. We didn't have no -- nothin'. We had a little bread and crumbs. Eating on the roof. We came to Athens. Bitter. Bitter for my father too. Because he had four girls to take care. So we got in the boat. That was worse. We got thirty days on the boat.

LEVINE: Wow. Well, before we talk about coming here, had you heard some things about America before you came? Do you know what you thought? Or what you expected?

MOUTIS: Yes. I expect -- because an old man came and was talking to my father, and he said to us, "You know, you go to New York and you gonna see black people." And then, I couldn't. "How black, I used to ask the old man?" "Black. *Mavros. Mavros.* You gonna be a-scare when you see 'em." Yeah. And I had that in mind. We're going to see the black people. And I had that in mind coming up for thirty day to come to Ellis Island, to see black people.

LEVINE: Do you remember when you saw your first black person?

MOUTIS: Yes. I couldn't take my eyes off. I said, "Do they talk, too?" I said to myself. I thought they didn't talk. But ah, I said to—"Ooh, they talk." They was nice to us. No. We was -- try to talk to us, but I couldn't understand. But the funny thing was when we got the Ellis Island, they took my dad away from the girls.

LEVINE: First, let's say, what did you bring with you? Do you remember what you packed up and took with you?

MOUTIS: What we could take. Couple dresses. A pair of shoes and a pair of slippers. That's all. Nothing else.

LEVINE: Now was it planned that your mother would follow? That your mother would be coming later?

MOUTIS: My mother?

LEVINE: Yeah. No? Was your father planning to go back?

MOUTIS: He did. He went back. He married us off.

LEVINE: Oh.

MOUTIS: That's why he marry us -- the two girls -- off and he went back.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. So, in other words, your father came with the two girls in order to marry you off?

HELEN: Oh, yes. That was the reason.

MOUTIS: Yes. That's how they come. Because there -- the girls that -- that time, they used to give --

HELEN: Dowry,

MOUTIS: -- dowry. And Papa had four girls. How he was gonna, where he gonna find the money to – to give it to the girls. That's why he rushed. My uncles, they told him, "You better bring the girls here now and work a little bit." And then, when we get married and all that – you know how. So, that's how.

LEVINE: So what was the name of the ship that you came on?

MOUTIS: Patrice [-- Greek --].

HELEN: Patrice.

MOUTIS: Patrice. A little – a little bitty ship.

LEVINE: A little ship?

MOUTIS: A small ship. We were sleeping on (-- Greek --)

HELEN: On the ropes.

MOUTIS: The ropes.

LEVINE: That were coiled around.

MOUTIS: Yeah. We were sleeping on there. For thirty days. And we had couple blankets. We took – we brought some blankets from there. I remember mama say, one blanket each girl. And we slept on that. We used to have hot tea every morning, nothing else. And piece of bread. Bread. They call 'em.

GEORGE: (-- Greek --)

MOUTIS: (-- Greek --) I know. They have some name, but no taste at all. Like you eatin' piece of wood. We had to dip it in hot water to eat it. And young girls, we had our teeth and everything, but we couldn't. And nighttime, they'd give us bean soup. I remember. I hate bean soup up to now! (laughs)

LEVINE: Was the boat crowded?

MOUTIS: Yes.

LEVINE: Was everyone from Greece on it?

MOUTIS: They had... Yes. All Greek people. I remember they had two cows and they kill 'em on --. They knew they gonna take so long to come to America. They kill the cows. I remember, watch 'em. Used to boil the meat, give us little soup. We couldn't wait to come to America.

LEVINE: Was there anything pleasant about the trip?

MOUTIS: No. No.

LEVINE: No. It was just long and --

MOUTIS: Long, long way --

LEVINE: --you couldn't wait to get here.

MOUTIS: Long and --.and, boy. We got dirty. We had nothing to wash up. We didn't have hot water. Didn't have no soap. Nothing. We have long hair and we have bugs in our hair. Ah. All the girls used to set -- the other four girls -- they used to come and pick up the...--. My poor aunt, when we came here s he had a hard time to clean our heads. Yes.

LEVINE: Do you remember when the boat came into the New York harbor? Do you remember what you saw when you first came in?

MOUTIS: Yes. It was nighttime, was coming in. And we see the lights. Ahh! (gasps).
And I say lights! They stay in the water! I couldn't believe myself. To see
water and I see (--Greek --).

HELEN: Statue.

MOUTIS: The Statue Liberty. Yes. Then we got there. We stay overnight in the boat.
The next morning was when a little boat came and we got in. And we went
to Ellis Island. But the Ellis Island was just little room. That's all.

LEVINE: What else do you remember about being at Ellis Island?

MOUTIS: I remember I cried because they took my daddy away. My father. He had
some kind of sickness in his eyes. Those – those years, they lookin'. Not
today. Today, they br—keep bring everything in. And they took papa in for
two nights. In the hospital. They say he's goin' to the doctor. We cry. I cry.
My sister, no, she didn't cry. She said, "I think they gonna let papa come."
"Maybe papa die!. And what we gonna do?" We cried. We went to sleep
without eatin'.

LEVINE: They didn't feed you at Ellis Island.

MOUTIS: No. I remember. We were hungry. We couldn't sleep on the long chairs. We slept – good thing we had our blankets. We carry our blankets. The other girl and I had a big, big blanket. Carrying it all around. So then I saw a friend of mine. Because I -- we got friendly in the boat so long, on the other side. They had ropes. They didn't have no gates. They had ropes. I have a sign here, where I'm going. I didn't take the sign off us, when I got on the boat to come out here. Big sign, where I go. Two -- 52 William Street. I remember that. (they laugh)

So I went down to the rope to see my friend. She was on the other side. (gasps) One man came, he grabbed me by the arm. He was told me, you don't belong. Where you going? All that. I couldn't understand, I just tell him, I want to go see my friend. Was talking to him in Greek and he was talking to me in English. I cry. He turned me back and I went back and I say, "I want my father, I want my father!" In Greek. He didn't understand me. Nobody no pay no attention at all. Let us two girls crying. And the clothes we got out from the boat, we tried to be a little clean but was dirty. Thirty days.

END SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

LEVINE: What did your grandfather do? He went as far as Athens? And then he went back?

MOUTIS: Oh, no. Not Athens. We got on the train in ah (-- Greek --) the train was passing, seven hours away from Sparta.

GEORGE: Kalamata?

MOUTIS: Not Kalamata. No. No.

HELEN: [not understood]

MOUTIS: No. No. Argos. Argos. The train was coming. (gasps) When we see the train. We want to get on there. Was hollering from far away. We couldn't wait. (-- Greek --) Grandpa.

GEORGE: (-- Greek --) What happened?

MOUTIS: Grandpa took the horses and went back.

GEORGE: Oh, OK.

LEVINE: He took the horses, I see.

MOUTIS: Yeah. Grandpa took the two horses. And he went back to the village.

LEVINE: Do you remember him leaving?

MOUTIS: Yes. We cry. Yes, I remember Grandpa was crying more. It was something.

LEVINE: So then, describe what happened when your father came back at Ellis Island. Came back to where you were.

MOUTIS: Yes. Well, around in the afternoon, I think, he came down. So he say, "I'm fine, don't worry. I say," Papa, how do you feelin'? Are you sick?" We didn't know. He was not sick. The eyes. He says, "I'm fine. Don't worry. We going to go out pretty soon. We're gonna go." So his brother was here. He came, with his brother. He couldn't come upstairs. Nobody allowed to come in. And he came with a boat, outside. We were looking. "Uncle Peter! Uncle Peter!" He sent us some fruit up. Oranges and apples. We throw a rope down and he tie it in a bag. And we brought it up and we ate some oranges, I remember. And pears.

LEVINE: You mean you were, were you on the boat that you had come in on?

MOUTIS: No. No. On the island. On the island. We couldn't get out. Was water all around.

LEVINE: But your uncle came on a little boat?

MOUTIS: A little boat -- a little *barca, pos do le'ne*. Yeah. He came to see us, but they wouldn't let him upstairs. So he was hollerin', by the names. So somebody said, somebody's watching you, want you. So we ran by the window, then we see Uncle Peter was waiting for us. "Don't worry about. You're going to come out tomorrow." and all this.

LEVINE: So when did you actually leave? The next day?

MOUTIS: Two days we stay there. Two days. Two nights and a day and a half when we left.

LEVINE: So was that the only food you had? Was what your Uncle Peter brought?

MOUTIS: Ah, they give us some kind, was so funny. They give us ice cream. And we couldn't, we didn't know how to eat that. They was bringing out with a cone, ice cream. And I said, "My God, there's an egg. How we gonna eat that?" I thought was an egg on the cone. (laughing) So we try. "Go ahead. Eat it. Eat it." So we try. I remember we had the ice cream cone and a piece of bread that night. We slept. Now it's beautiful there. When I went and I look all those... God bless America, beautiful. People were suffering.

LEVINE: What was it like to go back and see it now? What was it like for you to visit it?

MOUTIS: Uh? Uh?

GEORGE: Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Ellis Island.

MOUTIS: I went! I was there.

LEVINE: How did you feel when you went back there?

MOUTIS: I could not... I was telling my daughters -- my daughter-in-law and my daughter, Peggy -- and I said to them, "My God." Well, they have a room from 1920 -- how the people used to come in, the pots they had to cook and all that. They have a lot you could see from -- from the windows. How they -- and where we sleeping.

GEORGE: How different was it? Was it different?

MOUTIS: Different. Of course. My God! Oh, different. That was from morning to night. From day -- day to night.

LEVINE: So when your Uncle Peter came and then you left Ellis Island, then where did you go?

MOUTIS: We came to 52 William Street. (laughing)

LEVINE: Is that Newark? (they laugh)

MOUTIS: Newark, yes.

LEVINE: And what did you see there? What was it like when you got there? How did you find it?

MOUTIS: Well, my Uncle Peter came and pick us up.

LEVINE: And did you go by car?

MOUTIS: Yes, he had somebody else' car and the other guy was driving and we went there. And my aunt, my uncle's family was there too. Oh, they... (-- Greek -
-)

HELEN: Reception. Nice reception.

MOUTIS: Oh. They couldn't --

HELEN: They received us --

MOUTIS: They couldn't --

HELEN: -- so graciously

MOUTIS: --have, they couldn't have enough of us. They put us in a tub, took a bath right away, of course. We had new clothes on. Come out and they put so much food on the table. I remember I said to her, "We going to eat all of this?" My sister she could understand a little better because she was older. And I said, "Estelle? We're gonna eat all this?" "Shh. Keep quiet. Don't talk -- too loud." She -- she used to say to me. And all the relations, cousins and all, they came in that night. We had a nice time. From then on, it was nice. But I -- all the things I left forc-- for and I remember -- up to now, I remember everything. And I did -- I want to go back so bad. I've always want to go back. And I took the four kids. When I got married, I took the four kids and I went there, and I stay two years in the village.

LEVINE: Really?

MOUTIS: Yes. We had a good time.

LEVINE: What struck you as different, when you first got here, when you first came to your Uncle Peter's house in Newark? Do you remember things that struck you as very different, that you had never seen before?

MOUTIS: Water in the house. Hot water, take a bath.

HELEN: Toilet.

MOUTIS: Toilet. And the fire, the stove was going on. Get up in the morning was nice and warm. The car, my uncle had a car. And I thought the car, you don't have to put nothing in. I used to say to my uncle, "Uncle Louis, how's your car running?" "Oh, it runs." he said. He didn't say to me he put gas in. And I had that for a long time, I thought the car was working with – ride with nothing. (both laugh) Lot of things.

LEVINE: Did you, was the food, were you mostly having Greek food when you were here?

MOUTIS: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Everything.

HELEN: You stayed with your aunt, who wasn't Greek?

MOUTIS: Well, most of the time, I used to cook too. Remember, he had the butcher downstairs. And my aunt, my uncle's wife, she was American.

HELEN: German.

MOUTIS: Yeah. And we could -- Uncle Louis used up to come and explain to us. And I remember the first time he started to talk to me. And then he's talking to his wife in English and then talk to me Greek. And I thought he had two tongues. So surprised. I said, "Uncle Louis, how do you speak Greek and speak English the same time?" That was -- it was so ---. And I was a big girl. I should know. But village girl. Dumb, too 'little dummy'.

LEVINE: No. No. No. I don't think so. So what happened then? Did you go to school? Did you work?

MOUTIS: I stay --. No. I stay with my aunt. She had a baby after, I don't know, six months. And help her. And went little bit to school. And then after, she was going downstairs and work -- helpin' my uncle, the butcher store. And I used to take care of the baby. For two years. And then the third year, I got married. This guy came along (laughing), he asked my father, "Can I marry your daughter?" My father was very happy because he knew everybody.

He knows his parents. He knows his father, my husband. And they never ask me.

LEVINE: But did your sister get married first?

MOUTIS: Yes. Two months before me. She was seventeen. And I was sixteen.
That's right. Seventeen.

LEVINE: Now, did your father arrange that?

MOUTIS: Yes. Oh, yes. Papa give us a good wed-- wedding. A nice wedding. Yes.

LEVINE: So how did you meet your husband, then?

MOUTIS: How did I meet him?

LEVINE: How did he come along? How did you first meet him?

MOUTIS: (laughing) So funny, you want to laugh? Ah, my father he was a shy man too. He didn't want-- so he told my aunt. He said to my aunt, "You know Peter?" My aunt knew that guy --my husband. And, "Peter's gonna come up tomorrow to see Jen. You want to tell her?" So my aunt said to me after a while, said to me, "You know who's gonna come? Remember his

parents?" I remember his parents and he had two sisters in the village. We came from the same village. "That's why. So he likes to come to ask you how is everything is in the village and all that."

But he came to see me, he didn't came to ask how's his parents and all that. But -- anyway -- when he left, my aunt told me. "He came for you." I said, "For me? My sister just got married two mo—two months ago." "Oh," she said, "he's a good boy, and that your daddy likes him very much." My papa didn't say anything to me. So one day, I went down and sleep in the same house with Papa. He woke me, he came to my room and said to me, "Now I want to tell you something." In Greek. Was sad. He didn't cry. He said to me, "It's -- it's hard for me to explain to you. If you have you mother was better, for you and for me."

And I remember Papa was crying. He said to me, "This fellow here -- I can't now -- I'm getting old and I don't want stay in America. And I want to go back because you're Mama's all alone with a load of children. And this fellow, he's very nice. You won't be sorry. I want you to say yes." I didn't look up. My father was crying. I said, "Papa, I'm too young!" "You'll grow up with him. He's young too. You're gonna grow up with him." That's all. I couldn't say nothing else. I couldn't say no. No. My sister didn't say no either. So thank God was a good fellow. My sister's husband was, very

nice. And her daddy was excellent husband. Was he Helen? Your daddy was...?

HELEN: The best.

MOUTIS: The best. The best. No make it better.

LEVINE: What was your husband's name?

MOUTIS: Peter.

LEVINE: So did you get married then, right away?

MOUTIS: No. We got engage. We got engage. We had a good time. With all the friends, and had a little party. And then of course, after I got engaged, July, in October I got married.

LEVINE: And did you have a big wedding?

MOUTIS: Big wedding. The whole wedding. My husband pays everything. He told my papa, he said, "I don't want you to spend a nickel." Because Papa say, not right--. Wait. Because I just marry one of the girls, he explained to my

husband. He said to me, “No I don’t want you to spend a nickel.” He took me out to buy wedding gi—wedding dress, everything. Shoes.

GEORGE: See the custom for the bride’s father...

MOUTIS: Yes. Oh, yes. But Papa pay for everything. The wedding and everything. And he was fixing his little store he had before he married me. We went away, for a whole month.

LEVINE: A honeymoon?

MOUTIS: Yeah. Because the store was not fix to go right in He said to me, “What are we going to stay? Because now I can’t get no job no other place. I wait for my store.” So we stayed there. A restaurant business was it, yes.

LEVINE: So where did you go?

MOUTIS: Went to Washington for two weeks and Atlantic City two more weeks. I was a baby, too.

HELEN: You don’t get that kind of a honeymoon today. (they all laugh)

LEVINE: So then your husband opened a restaurant.

MOUTIS: Yes. From that time, up to all the children came up. And Georgie took it, when papa come out.

HELEN: Retired.

MOUTIS: He retired, the two boys took it over. Just George and Helen's husband.

LEVINE: In Newark?

MOUTIS: Yes. In Newark.

LEVINE: So the idea of the dowry, was that dropped once people came to America? Then they didn't have to give a dowry here?

MOUTIS: In Greece? Oh, here? No. If you have, you help. You know? If you have money you could help them. But no. They don't ask for a dowry here. But in Greece, even now they ask for it.

GEORGE: They keep on doing that in Greece.

MOUTIS: Poor fathers. You know how bad it is for the father to have two, three girls? Yes. Very bad.

LEVINE: So then your father stayed through the time you were married, then he went back?

MOUTIS: Yes. He stayed. Helen was born and Peg and George, too? Remember? And he went back and he came back when I had Peggy. The two children, he went back. And he came back and he stayed with me seven years. Then we went back to-- all together. Yeah. I left my poor husband alone, closed up the house. He was all alone for two years.

HELEN: It was Depression time. That was the best decision to do that.

LEVINE: I see. So then your husband stayed here and then did he come over too?

MOUTIS: No.

LEVINE: You just stayed two years and then you came back.

HELEN: But we were going only for the summer. We didn't go for two years.

MOUTIS: We just went for the summer, but Depression was very bad.

GEORGE: Things weren't getting better so we stayed there.

LEVINE: So that's 1932?

MOUTIS: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

LEVINE: And what was life like for you, were you already a citizen when you went back?

MOUTIS: No. I was not citizen. But the children was born here. Yes. You want to laugh? When we came back, we came back with the Saduria – Sanduri--

HELEN: The Saturnia.

MOUTIS: Ha?

HELEN: Saturnia

MOUTIS: Yeah. From la-- from Italy, we took the boat with the four of them. We came to New York, and they took my kids out. The baby was -- Nicky was five years old then. And "Mama, you come too!" They didn't speak any English at all, it was Greek all the time then. So, the nurse said to me, you should be ashamed yourself to have four kids and you not an American

citizen. You have to stay back. And I start crying. My, the father was waiting outside for the children because he knew we was coming in.

So, the little one, he didn't want to go. I said, "You go. You going to see your daddy". "No! I want you to come! No." She locked the door and she locked me in the room. She didn't want me. For five minutes only. So then, they opened the door and I went out. I met, my husband was downstairs. He had the four of them around him. It was a lot of fun, then. Yes. But then when the rest, the two girls got married. My husband and I, we went there for seven months. Then we had a good time. We did.

LEVINE: Now, so your husband stayed in the restaurant business, the whole time?

MOUTIS: Yes.

LEVINE: What would you say you're most proud of? In your lifetime? What makes you feel really proud?

MOUTIS: My husband, and my family. My husband, he was my proud, and my family. I have good girls and they marry nice boys. And my other son, and George. I have four kids. I'm proud up to now.

LEVINE: Why don't you say for the tape all your children's names? The names of your children.

MOUTIS: Shall I start from the...?

LEVINE: From the oldest down.

MOUTIS: That's Helen, and then George, then Peggy, and then Nicholas. Two and two. Yeah.

LEVINE: And you have grandchildren?

MOUTIS: I have great grand children. I have grandchildren. How many Helen?

HELEN: I lose count.

GEORGE: A hundred.

MOUTIS: I have grandchildren. Eleven great, great, eleven. Give me that. My granddaughter, first granddaughter, bring it in here.

LEVINE: Great granddaughter?

MOUTIS: Great daughter, her daughter. She's eighteen years old now. She goes to college, and my first grandchild. The others. They're all grand, great! Great. Eleven.

LEVINE: So how do you find this time in your life? In your old age?

HELEN: You're bored!

LEVINE: Oh, my goodness.

HELEN: This is when she was eighty-five and we celebrated and all the children and grandchildren. But now there are more. There are more grandchildren.

MOUTIS: I want to see Alexa.

HELEN: What are you having?

GEORGE: Gotta add a couple more now.

MOUTIS: That's four or five here. When I was eighty-five.

LEVINE: Wonderful.

MOUTIS: Yeah. This is all my great grandchildren.

LEVINE: Beautiful family.

GEORGE: How many grandchildren do you have?

LEVINE: Eleven?

MOUTIS: Great, great.

GEORGE: No. No. Grandchildren.

MOUTIS: Grandchildren. Greg, Barbara, Peter, Christopher, Gail, and Sandy. Six.
Six. Grandchildren. The others, they're all great, great.

HELEN: I don't know where you have Alexa's picture.

MOUTIS: No.

HELEN: Doesn't matter.

LEVINE: Tell me for the tape, how do you find this old age phase of your life? How
do you feel about life at this time?

MOUTIS: Very nice. I miss my husband, that's all. You know when they all get together, we all miss Papa. That's the only thing (tears) otherwise, I'm very happy.

LEVINE: Well, when you look back on your life and the fact that you started out in Greece and lived most of your life here, do you think that made a big difference? How did that make a big difference in your life, do you think? The fact that you started out some place else and then changed countries?

MOUTIS: Well, I find Americans the best. American -- every place, others, not like America. No other place. God bless America. I went back, but I couldn't wait to come here. I went back just for visit. I didn't want to stay no more in a year or two. I went there and stayed two years because account of the Depression. And Papa had everything there. You know, the farms. They have everything. And um, I came here. I'm very happy. Very, very happy with my family. Just -- getting old now, that's all. I have little aches and pains, but those, it's nothing. No?

HELEN: God has been good to you.

MOUTIS: It is. God very good. Yes. God is very good to me. Very good. When I turn around and I see everything here. When we get together, we can't sit

in one house. This guy here, this guy here, he's got a great big house.
That's her son. Gregory. Then we all celebrate in his house.

LEVINE: Oh, in Maine.

MOUTIS: Yeah. Very nice up there.

HELEN: We're going to do the same thing at 90.

LEVINE: Oh, great. It's coming right along.

HELEN: A few more years.

MOUTIS: Well...

LEVINE: Wonderful. Is there anything else you can think of maybe, that you
remember about your childhood or coming here, or getting settled here.
Anything else you can think of before we close?

MOUTIS: Honey, what can I say?

HELEN: You feel very lucky.

MOUTIS: It was very, very like all these years with me what I came here. Yes. I met nice people. Have nice friends. I have a lot of friends. And I'm very happy up to now. Yes. First with my family, they're nice to me. What else can I ask? What else? Can't ask any -- nothing else. Of course, I'm not rich, rich, but go by.

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

MOUTIS: You're welcome, I'm sure.

LEVINE: Lovely interview.

MOUTIS: Than you for you to come in. I would make a cup of coffee. Go ahead, Helen.

LEVINE: Let me sign off. I've been speaking with Jenni Moutis.

MOUTIS: Yes.

LEVINE: And ah, this is October 26, 1994, you're eighty-eight years old at the time of this interview and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm signing off.

MOUTIS: How nice. Thank you.

END INTERVIEW