

EI-568

MARIOLLA SPIRO

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

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ALBANIA, 1932

AGE: 16

SHIP: SATURNIA [PH]

PORT:

RESIDENCES:

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. It's Monday, November 22nd.

SPIRO: Twenty-one.

LEVINE: Twenty—21st. Sorry. Okay. It's the 21st of November, 1994, and I'm here with Mariolla Spiro, who lives in Win—Worcester, Massachusetts. Mrs. Spiro came from Albania when she was 16 years old in 1932. So I'm looking forward to everything you can remember and I'm very happy to be here. And we'll start at the beginning. If you would just say your birth date.

SPIRO: My birth date is August—August 16—no, I'm sorry. August 15, 1916.

LEVINE: Okay. And where were you born?

SPIRO: I was born in Korcha [PH], Albania.

LEVINE: And did you live in Korcha all—up until the time you left?

SPIRO: I left—I lived in Korcha till the time I came in this country.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And when you think about Korcha, at least up—at that time when you were growing up, where was—

SPIRO: Korcha is a city and it was pretty but kind—poor because lot of wars were before and they leave the country poor and the people, like the mans—the men of the house, they—they used to go and work. There wasn't much work over there so they have to go in other countries, like Greece and especially, mostly in America.

LEVINE: So w—would you say that the me—the k—

SPIRO: The men—then after the men settles even in America or in other countries, but mostly in America, then they take their wives and their children and they bring them in America.

LEVINE: And was that going on the whole time when you were growing up?

SPIRO: Yes, mostly. Yes. And, like, for instance, me—my—my father was here because, like I say, wasn't any work that the families—and then after, he brought me here.

LEVINE: Well, when did your father leave?

SPIRO: Well, well, I was born, like, 1916. My father had left before.

LEVINE: Oh.

SPIRO: Then he went and he got married and he left my mother there, pregnant with me. And he came back in America. Then my mother had passed away after I was born. I don't remember my mother. I must have been one year old. And after that, my father was—my father was there. He got married the second time. He had—because my mother passed away and he got marry here. He had two girls and the wife passed away, the second wife. So he got married the third time. Then he brought me here with the third wife.

LEVINE: I see. By then you were 16 years old.

SPIRO: I was 16.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Then—

LEVINE: Wait. Let me pause her just for a second. [tape off/on] Okay. We're resuming now. We turned off the coffeepot. [chuckles] So you were 16. So with whom did you live when your father was in America?

SPIRO: I lived with my uncle, my father's brother, and my grandmother, my m— my father's mother. They raised me.

LEVINE: Oh. And were there other children in the home?

SPIRO: Is my uncle's children.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: There were three of them, me, four, and a grandmother and my uncle and his wife.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: They raised me. My father was there. He wasn't sending much for me and we have little bit. "Why don't he take you in America with him?" And "Why he leaves—he leave you here? We can't raise you because we got our own." And finally, he got—because he wasn't citizen and it was kind—hard for then to bring children when you weren't citizen. That time, probably.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Maybe now it's different. So finally, he brought me here.

LEVINE: So what was your uncle doing for work?

SPIRO: Not much. He was working like [unclear], mills, in a factory, restaurants.

LEVINE: What kind of—what kind of mills were there there?

SPIRO: They—the flour.

LEVINE: Oh.

SPIRO: However you call it.

LEVINE: Like a—a gristmill?

SPIRO: Where they make the wheat, the flour, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: And, you know—I don't know how to say. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Yeah, I—I know what you mean. Okay, so—so he was doing a little of this and a little of that.

SPIRO: Yeah, and there wasn't much pay and it was big family and he was getting—he was kind hungry—angry with my father. “Why don't he take you?” And—but I think that time was Depression here too in the 1930—and so probably wasn't working good here and he couldn't send over there much.

LEVINE: Did—do—what idea did you have about your father? Because you had never seen him.

SPIRO: I—I didn't see my father. I don't know my mother either. Well, I wanted to come to my father but I—I was picturing America different. I—[chuckles] you know, I was young but I wanted to go in America, you know.

LEVINE: When—when you were picturing it in Albania, do you remember what you pictured it to be like?

SPIRO: Oh, big—big things. Oh, I go in America and I dressed up like this, like we used to say, some movies and some pictures in the magazines and things like that. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

SPIRO: But when I came here, I did—I have a little hard time with my stepmother.

LEVINE: [unclear]. Okay. Let's first keep talking about Albania and we'll go [unclear] in order of things. W—what was your uncle's name?

SPIRO: Aristo—Christo [PH].

LEVINE: Christo.

SPIRO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And—and your grandmother?

SPIRO: The name?

LEVINE: Yeah.

SPIRO: Alexandra.

LEVINE: Alexandra.

SPIRO: Right.

LEVINE: And do you remember things you did with your grandmother?

SPIRO: Oh, yes. She used to—I used to love her and she used to take me everywhere because I—like, I didn't have a mother and I was, you know, there all the time. When she go someplace, she used to take me too. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So she was—she sort of watched after you.

SPIRO: Oh, yeah. Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Because—

SPIRO: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: And the aunt, my uncle's wife.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: She raised me too because I was in the same house.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what was your aunt's name?

SPIRO: Griqiria.

LEVINE: Could you spell it? G—Gr—

SPIRO: G-R-I-Q-I-R-I-A.

LEVINE: And—and now, your uncle's last name. What was your maiden name?

SPIRO: Prjani.

LEVINE: Could you spell that?

SPIRO: P-R-J-A-N-I.

LEVINE: So your uncle's name was Christo—

SPIRO: Christo Prjani.

LEVINE: —Prjani. And—and so that was your aunt's last name. And your grandmother—

SPIRO: Same.

LEVINE: Same. Right. And [clears throat]—and how about your cousins? Were you close to them?

SPIRO: Oh, yes. Like brothers.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. There were three boys?

SPIRO: Like a brother. We used to fight [chuckles] because my grandmother used to give me more because I wasn't with—I was without a mother when we have meals at the table. And they used to say, "Why you give her more?" "Because she don't have mother. The father's not here." [chuckles] You know, kid's stuff.

LEVINE: So were your cousins boys? All of them?

SPIRO: Two boys and one girl.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Three of them.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what were their names?

SPIRO: If I say it in English or Albanian names. Eli [PH] is Albanian name.

LEVINE: Okay.

SPIRO: Eli and Gotcha [PH] and Violita [PH].

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And did any of them ever come here?

SPIRO: No.

LEVINE: I see. So tell me about your grandmother some more. What kind of a person was she?

SPIRO: Oh, she was sweet little—little one. She was little person but she was sweet.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what kinds of things would she do that she'd take you along with her?

SPIRO: Oh, well, she went visiting. She used to do a lot of visiting and she used to take me and, because, like I say, I was without a mother and she kind of protected me.

LEVINE: So when you would go visiting, these would be women, like her friends?

SPIRO: They—yeah, and her friends and her relatives. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Name days. They used to celebrate name days.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Albanians celebrates name days.

LEVINE: Tell—tell about name days, for the tape, what that—what that custom is.

SPIRO: Well, we go in the houses and especially the mens celebrates, not for the women.

LEVINE: Oh, women don't celebrate?

SPIRO: The men—no, for the m—the men—the men's name, like Louis or Christo or—

LEVINE: So in other words, you didn't celebrate it for your name?

SPIRO: No, not for women much. No.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Men was the—the men, the house. And we used to go in the houses and the lady of the house gives you a—entertain you with the sweets and coffee, [unclear]. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And it's because the name day is the name—

SPIRO: After the saints. We put the names—on a boy, we put the name after the saint. Like, Christo, it's Christmas. Christ. And Eli, it's—well, it's a saint too. Louis.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So—so that on that saint's day—

SPIRO: Yeah—

LEVINE: —is when—

SPIRO: It's dates. So Christ is the Christmas and Louis is the 20 of July.

LEVINE: Oh.

SPIRO: Every name—every name has got the date.

LEVINE: I see. Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Or James, it's the 26th of October.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And do you bring, like, presents for the—

SPIRO: No.

LEVINE: —person—

SPIRO: No, no.

LEVINE: —or anything like that?

SPIRO: No, just go visit and congratulate them and, you know, talk and—

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So would a lot of people come—

SPIRO: Oh, yes. Yes, a lot of people. Even here, years ago. Now, it's dying out a little bit because our children, they don't want to bother to celebrate name days because they got marry with a other, you know—

LEVINE: Other than Albanian.

SPIRO: Yeah, other than Albanian and it's going. But years ago, even here in America, oh, they used to celebrate and walking too to the other families because it wasn't—they didn't have cars like they have today. [chuckles] They used to walk.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Were there any other modes of transportation that people used in your—in [unclear]?

SPIRO: In Albania, no. Walking.

LEVINE: Walking.

SPIRO: No, no cars.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what were the streets—

SPIRO: They have carriages but not for people to go around.

LEVINE: Who would use the carriages?

SPIRO: Oh, they use it for—to move, you know, things or pick up garbage or things like that, not to go around with people.

LEVINE: I see. And were the roads—were there—were there roads that—

SPIRO: The roads, the main roads were good. The others were co—co—what do you call that?

LEVINE: Cow paths?

SPIRO: The stones. Stones.

LEVINE: Oh, cobblestones.

SPIRO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Most of the roads there like that in a coach. I—other towns [unclear] Tirana, it's the capitol city. They were better.

LEVINE: Oh, I see.

SPIRO: But today. But not years, years ago. Years, years ago, weren't bad—I mean good.

LEVINE: Was Korcha, when you—as you remember it, was it a small town or a medium size?

SPIRO: Well, city.

LEVINE: It was a city.

SPIRO: It was a city but not big city. The city. And they have good houses because, like I say, the—the man, they came in America, they used to send money and they used to build the houses.

LEVINE: What were the houses built of?

SPIRO: With bricks or with—what do they call it? Like a stone. Not real stone but—

LEVINE: Cement?

SPIRO: Yeah, like—like cement—

LEVINE: Cement blocks?

SPIRO: It's a different—

LEVINE: It different. They don't have—

SPIRO: Different name. Different name. No, there have it here.

LEVINE: They have it here?

SPIRO: I—I [unclear] but I can't say it—what kind but not—not woods, like there is here.

LEVINE: Not—

SPIRO: When—when you used to see pictures of the houses in America with woods. What kind of houses that? [chuckles]

LEVINE: Because everything was stone—

SPIRO: Yeah.

LEVINE: —in one way or another.

SPIRO: [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

SPIRO: [unclear].

LEVINE: And—and what was a typical house like? Could you describe what—

SPIRO: One family.

LEVINE: One—

SPIRO: One family live upstairs. Upstairs, my house was a pretty house. It was on inside painted with flowers.

LEVINE: Oh, painted on the stone?

SPIRO: On—on the—on the walls.

LEVINE: Oh the [unclear].

SPIRO: On the wall.

LEVINE: It'd be like stucco?

SPIRO: Stuc—that's right.

LEVINE: Like stucco.

SPIRO: Uh-hmm. And they used to paint it, flowers. And the—the main room when you entertain people, that was the pretty one. You have to have one room pretty, not to stay there, like a front room we got here.

LEVINE: But did you use that—

SPIRO: For the company.

LEVINE: That's the only time you use it?

SPIRO: Only for the company.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Yes.

LEVINE: And what would you have—

SPIRO: And bedroom being upstairs, all downstairs on one level. But you have to have one room like that.

LEVINE: What would be in the company's room? The room where you had your company?

SPIRO: Yeah, like the name days. Or—

LEVINE: Well, what would you be—what the furnishings be like?

SPIRO: Oh, chairs and some couches. The people who have more money, they buy more furniture. The one—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: They have just chairs.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: And little table and—and the room that we stay, like here, it's a den. Where you stay, the—the fireplace in the middle.

LEVINE: Hmm.

SPIRO: And two sides with a—with a mattress. Two sides, mattress on a floor.

LEVINE: Oh.

SPIRO: And one little one in the middle and the fireplace over there. And they stay around the fire and talk and eat.

LEVINE: And would you sleep around the fire?

SPIRO: Yes, yes. We used to sleep on those two mattresses. And if you—if you have another room you have a different—you have more mattresses and you sleep there. Then, after a while, they come to beds, real beds like they're here. But—

LEVINE: So—

SPIRO: —when I was growing up we didn't have beds.

LEVINE: You just had mattresses.

SPIRO: Mat—mattresses.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you—

SPIRO: And with those heavy blankets, then the women used to do them on the—
weaving. Those are heavy. [unclear] they keep you warm. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-huh. What would they be made from?

SPIRO: From wool.

LEVINE: Wool from a—a sheep?

SPIRO: From the sheeps.

LEVINE: And did you have sheep?

SPIRO: The—the villages have sheeps and they—they work that wool and the—the
the womens work it too, like maybe you've seen it how they work it.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: But, like my grandmother or my aunts or my great-grandmothers, they
work that. And then they weave it, makes those blankets or make
sweaters or dresses. We used to go to school. We used to go with heavy
dresses from wool because we used to work [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

SPIRO: And years ago, used to be more wintry, like here. It changed it now.

LEVINE: It—when you were growing up was the winter like the winter here is in
Worcester?

SPIRO: More, more.

LEVINE: Colder.

SPIRO: More cold.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Wool stockings, no boots. Those years when I was growing up there was
no boots, just shoes.

LEVINE: And where would you get your—

SPIRO: But the stockings, they keep you warm because were wool. You—you
don't get cold fast.

LEVINE: Were they made also by the ladies of the town?

SPIRO: Uh-hmm. They used to knit the socks and stockings for the men, for the kids, for themselves.

LEVINE: Hmm.

SPIRO: You—you don't go and buy in stores.

LEVINE: No.

SPIRO: No.

LEVINE: And how about shoes? Where would you get them?

SPIRO: Oh, in shoe stores. They used to bring them or the men who knows how to make shoes, he used to make shoes. Let's say you go and you—you take a—

LEVINE: A measurement?

SPIRO: —measurement and he makes the shoes for you.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Yes.

LEVINE: Did you have—

SPIRO: Yes.

LEVINE: —hand-made shoes like that too?

SPIRO: Yes, yes. You—yes.

LEVINE: Oh.

SPIRO: And they—in the summertime, they used to use those wooden, like in Holland—

LEVINE: Clogs.

SPIRO: Yeah, clunk, clunk, clunk.

LEVINE: Clogs, clogs.

SPIRO: Yeah. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Yeah.

SPIRO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: [chuckles]

LEVINE: Huh. Well, now—

SPIRO: Is pretty, the [chuckles]—

LEVINE: Yeah, they [unclear]—

SPIRO: When I think sometime now all—all of those things, all things, is—see, was pretty.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: You know?

LEVINE: Yeah. Can you remember anything else about the clothing?

SPIRO: Well, in the summertime we used to do it ourself from cotton dresses and slips underneath.

LEVINE: And you—you learned how to sew?

SPIRO: I went on—another woman was—she was dressmaker. So I went for couple years. But I was young; I didn't learn very good. Like they say, if you take the—if you know how to [unclear], then your experience. But I didn't went up to there. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Ah, uh-huh.

SPIRO: See? But when I came here I sew lot of—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: I know how to sew but, like I say, not a—

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Yeah.

SPIRO: —special [chuckles]—

LEVINE: So let's see. Is there anything else about life—you had the heavy woolen dresses and the woolen stockings. And would you have woolen coats?

SPIRO: Coats, yeah. They used to make some but not really, really heavy. That's—the coats, they were from material, heavy material.

LEVINE: Hmm.

SPIRO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And how about any kind of typical dress that you—things you wore in Albania that, when you came here you—you didn't—

SPIRO: No, I didn't bring any here from those. There was n—no different.

LEVINE: No, uh-huh. Now, getting back to the house again that you lived in, so people would sit around on the mattresses around the fire.

SPIRO: Uh-huh, yes.

LEVINE: And then at night th—someone would sit on those.

SPIRO: The night, you put the fire out a little bit and they sleep. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: The grandmother there, the son and the wife over here. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

SPIRO: Then you think, how [chuckles]—how they sleep like that? But they did.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

SPIRO: And there was harmony. They were—they were happy.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: They didn't have much but they was happy in the houses.

LEVINE: Yeah. What—what would be a typical meal that you would have there?

SPIRO: The meal was stew, mostly, with a lamb, pork. They used to prepare it on the summertime, like they used to kill a pig and cut it into pieces, put them on, like the dishes are, those big—what do you call those?

LEVINE: Platter?

SPIRO: They're from—no. [unclear]

LEVINE: You've got a little leeway there. You can—

SPIRO: You know, like this. [tapping sound]

LEVINE: Oh, like a crock?

SPIRO: Crock.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Big crock. They used to put it there, the meat with the salt and put it in there. And then you have that all winter. It didn't get spoiled. And you take a piece out of—how many you want and cook it different ways. And the lamb—lamb, you have to buy because lamb, you can't do—you couldn't do that. And the butter, they used to prepare butter too with the— with the salt. They used to put it on those things with the butter and that wouldn't [unclear] spoil too. So you have the butter in the house too for the winter.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: Or vegetables, cabbage, tomatoes, green tomatoes, peppers [unclear].

LEVINE: Would you grow those?

SPIRO: They grow on—on the garden. They have garden; mostly of the houses they have garden. But mostly, they came from villages too. Then you buy them. And milk. They used to keep a cow or a sheep and you have some milk.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Hmm. Oh. So let's see. How about cooking? How about the—the cooking in the house? What kind of a stove did your aunt and your grandmother use?

SPIRO: Over there at the fireplace.

LEVINE: Oh, the fireplace.

SPIRO: And on the summertime, we have a shade outside on a—outside the house, not in the [unclear] but outside. There's a shade there. Then there you have fire too, not like a fireplace but you make the fire there.

There's a place to make the fire with the stones so [unclear] spreads. And you have—what—like a thing that you put in on top of the fire. And you put the pot on the top. And—and it gets boiled.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. In other words, you suspend the pot over the fire. It's like an arm with a pot hanging on it.

SPIRO: Well, no. You can't—you—you set it on the—

LEVINE: On the stone?

SPIRO: On that iron thing. There's iron thing with a three—three legs.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

SPIRO: You know, there's—

LEVINE: Yeah, I know what you mean. It's like a trivet.

SPIRO: Yeah.

LEVINE: I think it's called.

SPIRO: Yeah, and then you set on the part there and holds that. And whatever you're cooking, it boils.

LEVINE: How about bread?

SPIRO: Bread, they used to make it themselves. They have a big wood thing, like a pan but big, from wood, made it from wood.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: And they put the flour there. Then you mix the bread. And then they made them rounds—round breads. And they have a piece of board, long board and they—they put—for six bread on that board. And then they take it—it—a bakery where he bakes bread. There was a special fireplace there. Maybe you've seen them, how they—

LEVINE: Well, I've seen pizza ovens. I suppose—

SPIRO: Oh, like them. Yeah, like that. And you bring yours. I bring mine. Everybody brings the bread on the—on that board.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: And the man in the bakery, he puts them on the oven and bake them. Then you go and get your own again. You know which one was it.
[chuckles]

LEVINE: [laughs] How can you tell your bread?

SPIRO: Oh, they—they can take by the board and you—you—you—they can tell. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So, was—what was the bread like? What kind of bread was it?

SPIRO: Wheat.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Wheat.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Yes. And the people then, they didn't have much wheat. They mix it with some corn.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: Corn and wheat. We used to do it. Like I say before, we didn't have much. We used to mix it. And she used—my aunt, she used to make from corn too, only from cornmeal.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: She used to make some breads. And they were delicious.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: When I think, a lot of time they were delicious. Even sometime you complain when [chuckles] they—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: With cheese—we used to use lot of cheese. Cheese.

LEVINE: Did you get cheese from your—either your—your sheep or your cow?

SPIRO: Well, they—they bought—they bought it from the villages. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: Because we—you—you have to have play—good—convenient things to make the cheese. You can't—

LEVINE: Hmm. So you—so the bread would be done every week? Is that how—

SPIRO: Depends on the family, how many are in the family, how much you use. Maybe a family wasn't crowded and make once a week. But if there—you were many in the family you make two, three times a week. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Beside, we make those pies.

LEVINE: Oh.

SPIRO: Which you call them laclor [PH]. And Korcha we call them direk [PH].

LEVINE: What—what are those?

SPIRO: Those were the—we—we make the dough. Then we work with butter. We made the dough. Then we open them, layer. Then you put butter. Then you cut pieces on the top of each other and you make two, one for the bottom on a pan and one for the top. So you make two of those. Then you make filling after with leeks or with spinach.

LEVINE: Hmm.

SPIRO: You make—you make the filling with spinach, eggs and cottage cheese. Then you—you layer one on the pan, one layer of that dough. Then you put filling. Then you put the other one but with a stick. You work with—you open it with a stick, with your roller.

LEVINE: A rolling pin.

SPIRO: A rolling pin.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Oh, boy. That's—

SPIRO: But you have to—we made it big. So that, we used—a lot of people, we don't have—we didn't have that fire outside on the shade. They used to bring it to bakery to—to cook it. The people who have that in the house, they used to cook it over there, but not on the top of the one when you make the stew. You do the fire but then you—you put it out a little bit, not that hot. Then you made the [unclear] on a—then, they—another one, I think like a—like the top of that part, the big, big—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: And then you put it on the top of the pan. Now, there was hot with a—with a—with a f—wood or I mean with the fire.

LEVINE: The embers? The—the coals?

SPIRO: With the coals. There were, you know—

LEVINE: Was burned down.

SPIRO: Had burned down.

LEVINE: Yeah.

SPIRO: Then you put it on top of there. Then when you put it on top of the pan where the pie is—

LEVINE: Oh.

SPIRO: —and baked.

LEVINE: Oh, I see.

SPIRO: Yeah.

LEVINE: So it got heat from the top and—

SPIRO: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: —heat from the bottom.

SPIRO: And then it bakes.

LEVINE: Oh, it sounds good.

SPIRO: Yeah. [chuckles]

LEVINE: So—so that would be one filling, the spinach, cottage cheese and the egg.

SPIRO: And the other one is leeks.

LEVINE: And also cottage cheese and eggs?

EI-568/SPIRO

SPIRO: Uh-huh, also in that, cottage cheese and eggs. Yes. Then we—we made it with the squash, with hamburg—meat. Yeah. Yeah, there are a lot of kind.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

LEVINE: Now, was that something you would do? Would you make those pies at a—

SPIRO: I do now but not when I was young girl.

LEVINE: Yeah.

SPIRO: You have to learn those. And my mind was to go outside and play.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: My grandmother used to say, "Come on now. We're cooking and you've got to stay here to learn because someday you're going to be a housewife." Me, I wanted to play outside. I never learned. But when I came here, I got marry. I have to cook for my family so I learned.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, when you would go and play outside, what kinds of things did you play when you were young?

SPIRO: We used to play hopscotch, how you call it—

LEVINE: Oh, yeah. Uh-huh.

SPIRO: And with—with marbles. [chuckles] And sing outside with the girls and boys, mixed up.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Did—can—do you know Albanian songs that you sang at that time?

SPIRO: Oh, yes. [chuckles] But now, I don't remember them very good but—

LEVINE: I would love if you would sing it on the tape. Would you? Could you remember any one?

SPIRO: [chuckles]

LEVINE: So your grandchildren—we'll have you singing on the tape.

SPIRO: Ah—

LEVINE: It'll be nice.

SPIRO: It's—I don't know. The flag—the flag song, I know better. The flag song.

LEVINE: Oh, okay. Do you want to sing that one? [laughter] I'll be a good audience.

SPIRO: [laughs]

LEVINE: You don't have to feel embarrassed.

SPIRO: Oh. All right. You got it on?

LEVINE: Yeah.

SPIRO: [singing in Albanian].

LEVINE: Oh, very nice.

SPIRO: [unclear]. I don't ever—

LEVINE: What does it say?

SPIRO: [unclear]

LEVINE: What does this song say?

SPIRO: Like the—you got here in America, [unclear] the—the flag.

LEVINE: Right.

SPIRO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Ah—

SPIRO: [unclear]. Flag—

LEVINE: "The Star Spangled Ban—Star Spangled Banner."

SPIRO: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

LEVINE: Yeah. So it—so this came when? This was something you sang growing up or—

SPIRO: They—we used to sing in the school. In the school.

LEVINE: Every morning?

SPIRO: Every morning, uh-hmm. Hmm, yeah. Every morning when you open—the teacher opened the class. Yeah.

LEVINE: Now, des—des—

SPIRO: The start.

LEVINE: Describe what school was like. Now, you would go there in the morning and the teacher would—

SPIRO: We stay—we stayed till noontime. We go in the morning, eight o'clock. Then we stayed till noontime, 12. Then we would go home for dinner. Then we'd go back to school in the afternoon, a couple hours in the afternoon.

LEVINE: Wh—when you started in the morning at eight o'clock, the teacher was—was this the first thing you'd do is sing the—

SPIRO: Sing the—yes.

LEVINE: And then what would you do?

SPIRO: Then it's different classes, different—

LEVINE: Subjects?

SPIRO: —subjects. History, arithmetic or sewing.

LEVINE: And how old were you when you started?

SPIRO: The school?

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: I must have been six years old.

LEVINE: And—and were you in the class with just children who were starting or was it older children too?

SPIRO: Only the—the girls—the schools over there were—the girls were separate school and the boys, not mixed like here. They were separate, girls

separate, boys. But the teachers were mixed, either if there was a man or a woman.

LEVINE: So you would—how many children would be in your class, about?

SPIRO: In a room, about 20 or 25.

LEVINE: And they'd all be studying the same thing?

SPIRO: Sa—that hour was for history or—then the different hour, it was for different.

LEVINE: And did you have the same teacher the whole time?

SPIRO: No, different teachers.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: And music. We used to learn music.

LEVINE: Did you have a favorite teacher or a favorite subject?

SPIRO: Yeah, the music teacher, I—I didn't like. He was a man and he was tough. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Was he—how was he tough?

SPIRO: Oh, well, I suppose we didn't listen to him and he used to hit us through the violin, because he was playing violin, I remember. And he used to hit us with the—

LEVINE: With the bow.

SPIRO: Yeah. [laughs]

LEVINE: [chuckles] And [clears throat] did you—did you have, like, best friends that you hung around with?

SPIRO: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. You used to pick your friend and I had [unclear] girls, my friends, which I seen her when I went in Albania. And I seen her and she's still living there. And we talked. I used to run, going up in school there and to go back to have dinner. And she used to rush more—walk faster than me and I couldn't walk faster, and we used to yell at each other. So we were thinking when I was—when Albania, were thinking of those things.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Hmm. What was your friend's name?

SPIRO: Pandora [PH].

LEVINE: Pandora, hmm. Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: [chuckles]

LEVINE: Wow. So did you—did you write? Once you got to this country, did you—

SPIRO: No.

LEVINE: —stay in correspondence?

SPIRO: No, no. Like, me, I got busy being a housewife. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh. Yeah. So how about religion? Was your—

SPIRO: Religion is orthodox.

LEVINE: Albanian orthodox?

SPIRO: Yes.

LEVINE: And [clears throat] was your whole family religious?

SPIRO: Orthodox. Yes, yes.

LEVINE: What did that mean? How did they observe the church, the young, religion? Did they go to church or—

SPIRO: We go—yeah, we used to go in church every Sunday and holidays.

LEVINE: Can you think of any holidays that have to do with Albanian orthodox religion that you celebrated over there?

SPIRO: Everyone. Christmas. New Year is—we got the name of Vasid [PH], Bill in English.

LEVINE: Oh.

SPIRO: The following week, the New Year, is the name of the Vasid. And we celebrate that too. Then after—all the Januarys got name days. Legora [PH], Finas [PH], all kind of names, saints' names. And, well, not me going to church but the—the grandmother and aunt, the older people

mostly, but not the kids but mostly the older people, they used to go in church every saints—

LEVINE: Oh.

SPIRO: —celebration. And then comes Easter time, which follows different, either May or April or—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: And we celebrate the whole week for Easter.

LEVINE: What would you do for Easter?

SPIRO: Well, first Sunday is the Palm Sunday, what you call it here. And then Monday is different reading all that week. Then Thur—Thursday, it's the 12th Bibles that you read.

LEVINE: Hmm.

SPIRO: It's Thursday night. Friday night is the—when they crucified the Christ. Then Saturday night is the—[unclear]—you know, the Easter—the—the God is raised—rised. We celebrate the God's rising, Saturday night.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-hmm.

SPIRO: Twelve o'clock at night. We used to go nighttime. Then Sunday, it's the second rising, which we go Sunday afternoon, all dressed up, new clothes, which we prepared from long time before to make for Easter. We—you—you have to have something new for Easter, shoes and dress or—all—all—the whole—but something new.

LEVINE: Hmm.

SPIRO: And that was pretty.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

SPIRO: And we—Thursday, we colored the eggs on Thursday. Not any other day.

LEVINE: Thursdays the—

SPIRO: That week before Easter we color red eggs to have them for Easter.

LEVINE: Just red.

SPIRO: Just red.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Now, Thursday—

SPIRO: Us, it's red. Here, they do 'em different color. But it's red you have to color them, by rights.

LEVINE: You said Thursday was the day of the 12th Bible?

SPIRO: Bible. We—they—the priest say the 12 Bible at—on [unclear].

LEVINE: You mean the Bi—when you say the 12 Bibles, you mean like for the 12 apostles?

SPIRO: Apos—yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: Yes, yes. And, like, even now, every Sunday is one Bible for w—which one—a—

LEVINE: Oh.

SPIRO: —apostle you celebrated. Sure. But that night is the 12th. And on the six—it reads six first. Then they—they get—they—they got the Christ. They put him on the cross. Then he—he—he said the other six. So then is dead. Then Friday night we bury him.

LEVINE: Do you actually enact that in some way?

SPIRO: Enact and we—we got different on altar, [unclear], they call it, which is the 12th—it's painted with a picture of the 12th apostle and the Christ there. And you raise that for boys or men. They all—that—like a casket.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: And they go outside to church, make believe they—they bury him.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-hmm.

SPIRO: So Saturday morning, it's nothing because the Christ is dead. And Saturday night, we go into church.

LEVINE: Midnight.

SPIRO: Midnight, a dress too. And for Saturday night—

LEVINE: Oh, you dressed up for that too.

SPIRO: Uh-huh, because the Christ going to be raised. Then it's—you read that he risen. The Christ is risen. Then everybody buy a candle. When we go into church we buy a candle because we're going to light it for the Christ where he is going to be risen. So after everybody's in the church the priest opened the altar door and he start the mass. And he says, "Christ is risen," and everybody lighting that candle. And they rush, which one's going to be the first to—to light that candle. Of course, only one is going to light first. That—

LEVINE: [chuckles] They're lighting it from a candle that's lit?

SPIRO: From the candle the priest holds. He's got three candles and he raise—and he says, "Christ is risen." So that's very—then after, he starts the mass, you know, the church.

LEVINE: Hmm.

SPIRO: Then we get communion, special for Easter. You get communion. Then we go home. We come home after the church, midnight, which we got prepare—Saturday. We got—prepare lamb and soup. And we come from church and we eat because we haven't eaten for six weeks, meat. Now, those days—not today—today, they eat. They don't keep it. But—

LEVINE: So everyone gives up meat for six weeks.

SPIRO: For six weeks.

LEVINE: For Easter.

SPIRO: Easter.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Lent. You got to keep Lent.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: And then—oh, [unclear]. And we eat at the house, you know, or if you want to invi—I mean, invite somebody. We eat meat and soup.

LEVINE: What's the soup they had?

SPIRO: Soup, we made it from the heads of the lamb or from the intestines. They used to make—they cleaned the intestine and they roll them and they make soup.

LEVINE: Oh, yeah. Hmm.

SPIRO: So, but I—I—even now, I make the soup and the lamb every Easter.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Was Easter—oh, I guess Easter and Christmas were the really big—

SPIRO: But see, our orthodoxy, we celebrate more Easter, maybe wrong. I don't know. Christmas, not much, which here, Christmas is more. And I think—I think we were wrong because you—he's got a born first, then he died or he risen.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: But—but maybe because of the summertime. [chuckles] I don't know.

LEVINE: [chuckles] After the cold winter.

SPIRO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Have a nice celebration.

SPIRO: [chuckles]

LEVINE: Yeah.

SPIRO: So—

LEVINE: Well, so, and then when you came to this country, did—did the Albanian community pretty much celebrate it in the same way [unclear]?

SPIRO: Uh-huh, yes. Like I say before, now it's dying little bit but before it was more. More.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

SPIRO: More. Now, like, for—for instance, my son is married and from different, you know. And it dies down. I keep it.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: But after I go, maybe they won't keep it. I hope they do.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. So—so when you—what happened? Was it that your father finally was able to send you money to come this country? Is that how it got decided that you would come here when you did in 1932?

SPIRO: Well, he have to send me money, yes. But then he has to raise me too, more, you know, because I was only 16. Then it comes time to—to get married. It's expensive. Prob—probably he was thinking that. And probably, the—my stepmother, maybe she didn't want me. That's why he's putting it off. Finally, I—I wrote to him. I says, "I—you have to do something by me because here it's—he can't keep me anymore, my uncle. He's got his own and it's expensive. And you're supposed to—to take me."

LEVINE: Well, now, had you stopped school by the time you were 16?

SPIRO: I went to the sixth grade. That's all.

LEVINE: So what would that make you?

SPIRO: If I wanted to go more, it was going to be expensive.

LEVINE: Oh, was it—did you have to pay to go to school [unclear]?

SPIRO: No, but you—no, but you have to buy the books and clothing. And you grow up; you need more clothing and—

LEVINE: So you—so you had been not going to school for a couple of years before you came to this—

SPIRO: No, no. Wasn't—I—I finished the sixth grade and [unclear]—

LEVINE: And soon after, you—

SPIRO: Yes.

LEVINE: I see. So was it the fact that you stopped school, you think, that made you write the letter to—to say that—to your father that he really should take you?

SPIRO: No, like I say, he has to take me. I was his daughter, not somebody else's daughter.

LEVINE: Was your grandmother still alive when he came—

SPIRO: No, he die—she died.

LEVINE: When did she—

SPIRO: After. Then [unclear]—oh, no, no. I'm sorry. She died when I was there. No, she was still—

LEVINE: Oh, [unclear]

SPIRO: —living when—uh-hmm.

LEVINE: So then had you been writing to your father?

SPIRO: Yes.

LEVINE: Yeah.

SPIRO: Letters, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: And—and did he tell you anything about coming here?

SPIRO: Not much. He says, "Soon, soon, soon." He was putting it off. Finally, I says, "You have to." Then, like I say, he wasn't citizen. Probably was kind of hard for him too to bring—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: —his children. Then I came August, the end of August here. Then on November 25, I got engaged.

LEVINE: [chuckles] Well, tell me about leaving Albania. When you left Albania, what—how did you leave and did you—what—

SPIRO: I—

LEVINE: What was done in preparation?

SPIRO: Well, in preparation was that somebody was—from here was over there on a vacation, a man and a wife, which was a relative to my mother's side. And they say, "Well, long as they going on America, you go with them to

be with somebody.” So I came with them, man and wife. And I had a—my grandmother, she packed me a suitcase and some clothes and a lorenza [PH]. My mother, [unclear] blanket, old blanket.

LEVINE: Oh.

SPIRO: She says, “Take these because it’s going to be cold on the way down.”

LEVINE: This was a blanket that belonged to your mother?

SPIRO: Yes, from her—from—

LEVINE: Hope chest?

SPIRO: Hope chest.

LEVINE: Now, what was your mother’s—

SPIRO: A hope chest.

LEVINE: —maiden name? Do you remember that?

SPIRO: My mother’s name was Clarinechi Carrecho [PH].

LEVINE: Carrecho. Was it—

SPIRO: Carrecho.

LEVINE: Was her full name.

SPIRO: Her last name, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

SPIRO: Yes. And my mother died on—influenza, 1917 was the influenza—know, after the war, First War.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, you probably don’t remember the influenza epidemic.

SPIRO: No, no.

LEVINE: Because you were too young.

SPIRO: No, no, no.

LEVINE: Yeah.

SPIRO: But that's what she die, three days. Every—they were dying, lot of people, two, three days.

LEVINE: Do you remember any epidemics when you were in—in Albania that happened?

SPIRO: Yeah, we used to get the whooping cough, chicken pox, those things.

LEVINE: Do you remember how things were treated? Do you remember any kind of care that you [unclear]?

SPIRO: I remember—I remember when my—my uncle's—he had another daughter and she died from a coma. She went in a coma.

LEVINE: Hmm.

SPIRO: So I remember they used to [chuckles]—they used to take manure from the cows and put it on her head.

LEVINE: On her forehead?

SPIRO: On her forehead. Yeah, and I say, "Why?" And I used to smell and I used to say to Grandmother, "Why are you putting that? The house smell." She says, "This is going to make her come out." But it didn't. And there weren't many doctors so she died.

LEVINE: Hmm. How about birth? Do you remember—

SPIRO: Birth.

LEVINE: —when somebody—

SPIRO: I remember my—my—I was a little girl and I remember my aunt. She was pregnant and sh—the time came to have the baby. So she told my grandmother, "Come, come. Hurry up because I think I'm going to have the baby." So like I say, I was after my grandmother, so I was after her. And they don't pay attention because you're a kid. You're not going to see or—so I was after her and they went upstairs in one room. And she had the baby there. I was there. [chuckles] I was there and she had the baby. Then something else. She had something else too. And I was thinking, "Two babies?" But there was the platanza [PH].

LEVINE: Placenta, uh-huh.

SPIRO: Yeah. [chuckles] That's what I remember. Then she get up. My grandmother called my uncle, the husband, that sh—they—she had the baby. Then my aunt, she get up and she went in the bed. Nice. She had made the bed nice. And she went, lay there just for a day. And the next day she get up and working around the house. That's—this is I remember like I'm—

LEVINE: Hmm.

SPIRO: —there now.

LEVINE: Wow.

SPIRO: Yeah. But I—I seen the baby and I seen the other thing.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, now, did—did your grandmother or did anyone else—

SPIRO: No, it's just my—

LEVINE: —explain—

SPIRO: Just my grandmother was there—

LEVINE: Helping.

SPIRO: —helping her.

LEVINE: Did anybody explain to you the facts of life or what was happening or anything?

SPIRO: No, no. No. Like I say, they don't pay much attention. See, today, yes. Today they're ex—they explain everything.

LEVINE: Hmm.

SPIRO: [chuckles]

LEVINE: So—so were you helping? Or you were just sort of watching what was happening?

SPIRO: No, was just watching. Probably, they were pushing me but I didn't go away. [chuckles]

LEVINE: So—so let's see. So births were done mostly at home.

SPIRO: Home.

LEVINE: Or no?

SPIRO: Home, home.

LEVINE: All, uh-hmm.

SPIRO: Home, yes. Home with another friend or—or the mother-in-law, another friend. They used to call them a babo, like a doctor.

LEVINE: Oh.

SPIRO: Like you know a little about birth and, “Oh, let’s call her now because we’re going to have the baby.”

LEVINE: B-A-B-O? Babo?

SPIRO: Uh-hmm, babo.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And how about funerals and deaths? Do you remember what happened then?

SPIRO: Funerals—funerals. When my uncle died, not the uncle I was living. Another uncle, my—my father brother. He was very sick. He was in America and he came in Albania and he got very sick with pemonia [PH].

LEVINE: Pneumonia.

SPIRO: Pn—pneumonia. So the doctor came and he says, “You put him upstairs on that room upstairs so will be fresh air.” So we make like a bed upstairs. They make like a bed and they put him there. And he was very sick. The doctor came again and I remember the grandma saying, “Well, how is he?” “Ah, he’s going to get better. He’s going to get better.” But, you know, not quite. Finally, the doctor left the ni—that night he got worse. My grandmother and his wife were by his bed. And he—he was dying. Like I say, I was right there. They were pushing me. I was right there. But, like you push a kid to go away, that—and he was getting worse. And when—when somebody die, we used to light the can—candle.

LEVINE: In the home?

SPIRO: Yeah, just, you have to have a little candle. When somebody is very sick, you carry because you say, "Well, you might die. I have to have candle with me." And they light the candle when he passes away. I—that's the custom. [chuckles]

LEVINE: And you [unclear]—

SPIRO: I remember and he went three time [gasping sound] like this, you know. And he was gon—

LEVINE: [unclear]

SPIRO: And he was gone. And right away, they—they lighted candle and they embraced him right away because they say after—if you get cold you can't—you know, you can't embrace then, [unclear]. Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

SPIRO: To put some new one. See, and that's what they were doing, my—my grandmother and his wife.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Wow.

SPIRO: Then they—they dressed him with another clothes, good one or—if you have some. And then the next day you have to bury. They don't keep them too long because there's not—like here. [unclear] to take—

LEVINE: They're not embalmed, not embalmed.

SPIRO: That's right. That's right.

LEVINE: So—so then—

SPIRO: Then they—they make the casket, like here, but not fancy like [chuckles] there is today.

LEVINE: Like a wooden—a wooden casket?

SPIRO: Wooden casket, yes. And they carried the dead person to the cemetery. People carried them.

LEVINE: Oh.

SPIRO: Then they buried them.

LEVINE: Is there any church involved?

SPIRO: Yeah. Yeah, we do church and then—then the grave.

LEVINE: Hmm. Were there any ceremonies at the gravesite?

SPIRO: No, no, no. We didn't have ceremony.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: No, I don't remember ceremony.

LEVINE: Yeah. Hmm.

SPIRO: Well, then after, was so crowded we didn't have a—a lot, big lot. So you—after three years, if somebody dies on the family, you have to take that, the bones, the person out of that grave to put the other one, if it's a family.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: Then you gather his bones on—and then you put him in a little box, then put them again on the top of the other one on the same grave.

LEVINE: I see.

SPIRO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Hmm.

SPIRO: That—that I know. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. Huh. Well, [clears throat] so when you were going to leave, do you remember saying goodbye to your grandmother?

SPIRO: Yes, I said good—goodbye and crying and everybody's crying. My uncle, my mother's brother, he took me to Tirana with a big truck. They used to call them camion [PH]. [chuckles]

LEVINE: It was—it was an actual truck? It wasn't a horse and—

SPIRO: Like a closed truck. You know, this—

LEVINE: It was—

SPIRO: There was for business back and forth.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: But there—there was no cars so finally, somebody was going for business in the capital city. So my uncle got that guy and, “We going, Tirana. Can’t you take us? You know, because my niece going”—and that’s where we went, in Tirana. And the next day, I went to Duris [PH], which you take the—the sheep for Italy.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. Duris?

SPIRO: From Tirana, the capital city, you got to go to another city, which is the—the port.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Then you get the ship to go, Italy, Nabari [PH]. Then from there you get the ship for America.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what was that journey like?

SPIRO: The journey from Duris to—to Italy, it was very rough because they were small—

LEVINE: Small boat.

SPIRO: —boat. And I got sick, throwing up [chuckles] everything. And—

LEVINE: Okay. I’m afraid—we’re going to pause here so—because we’re at the end of the tape. But I want to just say that I’m speaking with Mariolla Spiro and this is the end of tape one.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B]

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A]

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine and this is tape two. I’m—I’m speaking with Mariolla Spiro and we’re here at her home in Worcester, Massachusetts on November 21st, 1994.

SPIRO: [whispers] Auburn, Auburn.

LEVINE: Oh, I’m sorry. It’s not really Worcester. It’s Auburn, Massachusetts. Let’s pick up now where we were before. We were talking about—you were saying that it was a rough trip when you had to go to the—

SPIRO: From Duris to Bari [PH].

LEVINE: Bari.

SPIRO: Is that Bari or Napoli [PH] first?

LEVINE: I'm not sure.

SPIRO: I—I'm not sure but whatever. [chuckles]

LEVINE: It was rough because it was a small boat and—

SPIRO: That's right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And how did you feel while you were leaving, when you were leaving [unclear]?

SPIRO: Oh, I was feeling sorry because I'm leaving my people, the one I was growing up with, my, especial—my grandmother.

LEVINE: Yeah.

SPIRO: And crying all the way. And I didn't know where I was going and—

LEVINE: Were you traveling alone?

SPIRO: No, with this—

LEVINE: Couple.

SPIRO: —couple that were relative of ours, a man and a wife. And they were coming America because they were in Albania visiting, for a visit. And—

LEVINE: Did they tell you anything about America when you—

SPIRO: No, but the funny thing was—in Italy then was—is we [clears throat]—we were crossing one large street there in Bari or Napoli—I don't—I don't remember where because from one—either the Bari you started. Then you go to Napoli to get the big boat to come here. So we're crossing—we're walking and we're cr—we're going to cross, like a [unclear]. And this man—they were walking with their horses, big horses on a boulevard. And this woman that I was with, she start to cross the street and he—he wants to tell her don't. And he hit her with a—what you call that? A—hit the horses.

LEVINE: Oh, with a—a—like a whip?

SPIRO: Yeah, with a whip. And he hurt her. He was saying, "Stop, don't cross." And he was hitting her with that. And she says, "Don't!" You know. And he's—keep saying to stop but he was hitting her. So then she says, "Huh!" She says, "If you were in America"—she says, "I'll fix you!" [chuckles] But she says, "I'm here in a strange country." [chuckles] [unclear] said, "Why you did that?" That was terrible.

LEVINE: Yeah.

SPIRO: Yeah. That wasn't nice. But then she said, "Ha!" She says, "If you were—if you were in America, you know, there would been different," because you were arrested in, right? [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Wow. So you must have had some ideas about America by the time you got there.

SPIRO: Well, like I say, thinking what I was going to be in [unclear] and I'm going—dressed up this way and what I'm going to do, going to school or the—to go, still continue to—to learn for sewing and ideas. But not for marriage. I didn't have idea for marriage. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Okay. So—so once you got to, Napoli?

SPIRO: Well, where you get the big boat. I—I don't know now, in Bari or Napoli.

LEVINE: W—well, what was the name of the ship? Do you remember?

SPIRO: Saturnia.

LEVINE: Saturnia. Uh-huh.

SPIRO: There were two, Saturnia and—and Volcania. So we—we were in the Saturnia.

LEVINE: And—and did you have any trouble or anything happening—

SPIRO: No.

LEVINE: —when you got—before you on the—

SPIRO: No, that was beautiful. You eat all day long.

LEVINE: Where—what [unclear]—

SPIRO: And I was on the third—

LEVINE: Third class.

SPIRO: Third class.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Oh, there was some Albania from other cities, from Albania. And we didn't know them but they were on the second class. So we got friendly and we were going up and down. And we talking, "What you have for dinner?" And they say, "This, this." And we say, "Well, we had the same." So there was no different from third to second class.

LEVINE: You had a different dining room, did you? Were you in a different dining room?

SPIRO: Oh, yeah. They were eating in the second class—second—[unclear] what floor was, and we were in the third class, the—the lower—lower. You know, less money, I suppose.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

SPIRO: But when we're talking what you ate for dinner and we—we ate in the same thing. We says, "Oh, but we ate that too," the same meal.

LEVINE: So what—what did you do on ship?

SPIRO: Oh, look at—see—they were showing movies and drink all the time, the juices and fruits and, oh, there was—oh! I didn't got sick at all. No, I was just—wishing to stay there all the time. Beautiful. Beautiful, was. And this s—the restaurant, the way they serve, you know. They're serving macaroni, Italian ship. Anyways, so they're saying, "You want more?" And in Albania when you say yes, you go like this. You go—

LEVINE: Oh.

SPIRO: —different.

LEVINE: You shake your head no—

SPIRO: You shake—n—yeah.

LEVINE: What we call no and you say yes.

SPIRO: Yeah. So I says, "No," and they're putting more in the dish. [chuckles] We didn't know how to say no, yes. That was funny. Then I came to New

York and stopped in New York. My father was waiting for me in New York—

LEVINE: Well, now, [unclear]—

SPIRO: —with an agent.

LEVINE: Do you remember when the ship came into the New York harbor? Do you remember coming in?

SPIRO: Well—well, they—[unclear]. Well, we—we made it six days.

LEVINE: Do you remember Ellis Island?

SPIRO: Yes, I remember.

LEVINE: Te—tell me what—

SPIRO: I remember—

LEVINE: —you remember.

SPIRO: —where we stopped there and they took us to Ellis Island—

LEVINE: Ellis Island.

SPIRO: —to check us if we were in good health, if we didn't have anything in the hair. They were checking us. Then they let us go. Then I meet my father.

LEVINE: D—did you—h—tell me how you recognized him or what [unclear] looked like—

SPIRO: I didn't—I didn't recognize him but he came to me. You know, he—like, he introduced himself to me because I didn't—but by pictures, yes. You know, but—

LEVINE: What—what did he say? Do you remember what it was like?

SPIRO: Well, we kissed each other and, you know, not much. You know, when you're not growing up with the parents, it's different, very different. You know, you don't—see, when you—you raised with the parents, you—you grow that love from the beginning. But when you come to your father and mother all grown up, it's like a—somebody, friend or—it's not the same. But then you get—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: —close after that.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about Ellis Island? About the examination or any—anything?

SPIRO: Well, that's all I remember. They took us in one room and they examine us from head to toe. And that's all. They let us go.

LEVINE: And so your father—

SPIRO: My father was the agent, Albanian agent, minor. They—there—he was—he had this agent bring the people.

LEVINE: The—well, what did the a—tell me what the agent did because I'm don't—I'm not sure about that.

SPIRO: Well, I don't know. I don't know what he did but you have to have agent, especial when he wasn't citizen.

LEVINE: I see. So—so the agent—

SPIRO: He was with him at—there to—to greet me.

LEVINE: And he was an Albanian man, the agent?

SPIRO: Yeah, yeah. That—that's—was his business.

LEVINE: Oh.

SPIRO: Yeah. But he was Albanian guy. So this way, my father, I suppose, picked him because he was Albanian.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: And then we went to—from there, we went to some friends' house for—for supper, or dinner.

LEVINE: Where—where was that? Where was—

SPIRO: New York, there.

LEVINE: In Manhattan?

SPIRO: I don't know at that time.

LEVINE: You don't, uh-huh.

SPIRO: New York. And there were—they didn't have no—bachel—they were bachelors, these guys there, we went. They didn't have family. But they had cooked dinner. I remember it was a pork chop and sauerkraut.

LEVINE: [chuckles] How did it taste?

SPIRO: Good. [laughter] Good. We ate that.

LEVINE: Now, were you with the couple that had c—had been visiting [unclear]?

SPIRO: No, no. They spread.

LEVINE: Okay.

SPIRO: They—they went their way and I went with my father.

LEVINE: Now, was your father's family there?

SPIRO: With the suitcase and the blanket, tie up outside the suitcase. Me, I brought it home and I never used it because here it was warm. [chuckles] And on the ship was warm too. I didn't use it.

LEVINE: What did you do with it in the end?

SPIRO: Oh, I got it here.

LEVINE: You do? Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Uh-hmm. I got it. Yeah, I took it from my father. I says, "I'm going to take this because I brought it from Albania with my suitcase." [laughs] Drag it.

LEVINE: So did your father's—now, your father had a wife at that time when you came.

SPIRO: Yes.

LEVINE: And he had some children?

SPIRO: Two.

LEVINE: Two,

SPIRO: Two, yeah.

LEVINE: Now, was his wife and two children there at the bachelor's place where—

SPIRO: No, they were here in Worcester waiting.

LEVINE: Oh, they were in Worcester.

SPIRO: Yeah.

LEVINE: I see.

SPIRO: She was home, yeah.

LEVINE: I see. So you went there and you had a nice dinner. And how did you—

SPIRO: Then—then we stay a little bit. Then we—we took the bus to come in Worcester.

LEVINE: I see. Well, what was it like for you during that dinner? How did you feel?

SPIRO: Well, like stranger. [unclear], some [unclear], some [unclear]. You know, I was too young to—but I enjoyed the dinner. [chuckles] [unclear]

LEVINE: Were the bachelors Albanian?

SPIRO: Yes, they were Albanian.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: And my father knew those people. So—

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Yeah. Well, did you feel glad you had come or you—you—you—

SPIRO: Well, I'm glad [chuckles]—glad and—and thinking what I liked in Albania, the ones—I was growing up. Then we too—

LEVINE: Took the bus.

SPIRO: Took the bus and we came to [unclear] Street in Worcester, [unclear] Street and Hemmen [PH] Street. My father was living at Hemmen Street. The bus stops at the [unclear] Street. And then we walked to Hemmen Street. So I—and then my—I says, "Well, where you live?" And he says, "To that house over there." He pointed the house. That house was—was a four—tenements and tenements with four floors with five in the basement. So I says, "Oh, all—all—all that house, you live in?" It looked

big to me. And he says, “No, no.” He says, “Only upstairs.” Then I was thinking, ‘How they live upstairs [unclear] that house?’ So there was a cloudy morning, raining. The train was going by. It looked terrible. There, I got disgusted. Up to there, I was all right. Then when I got there I was—I was crying. I say, “Where I came here?” The train was going boom, boom, boom, boom. The smoke. As we went upstairs on the back door, the stairs over there, the—the dirty piazzas, junks on the piazzas, I says, “Where am I?” I [unclear] beautiful home. And we were going upstairs. Then we were in—then my—my stepmother greeted us. Oh! [chuckles] Then I—I looked—that house. It didn’t look right. [chuckles] No, it didn’t agree with me.

LEVINE: What looked—what was it about it that—

SPIRO: I don’t know. It—it wasn’t good enough for me. What I left, I didn’t compare it to my house. And then, like I say, it was early in the morning. So they made some tea. [unclear] tea. So anyways, they made some tea and my father says, “Oh, my—my feet hurts.” [chuckles] So my mother—my stepmother [chuckles], he—he brought some r—[unclear] and he put his feet on [unclear] to get some relax [unclear]. [chuckles] Then that’s all. We sit there and talked for a while. Then we went to sleep for a while because we were tired.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you remember any firsts? Any things that you saw for the first time when you first came that struck you as different?

SPIRO: Well, I didn’t go much out because she was a stepmother anyways. I had a very hard time with her. But sometimes, she’s—she’d take—she used to take me downtown on the stores. And I see these big store and bigs building, which is—I was amazed.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: Yeah. But not much. And then she bought me some material to—to sew. So I made a coat for myself, a winter coat because winter was coming. And I made a coat. And then, November, I got engaged. They knew this boy, my husband. Then they say is a good boy for me. Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Now, did you—did you work at all [unclear]?

SPIRO: No, I didn’t go to work. I didn’t go into school.

LEVINE: No, uh-huh.

SPIRO: No, I start to go, night school, but then I got engaged and I—I stopped going.

LEVINE: So how was the—how was the match made then?

SPIRO: The match made [chuckles] was funny because one day she says, “Well, they’re”—they must have talked with his relative and my father and my stepmother. They’re—it’s good for this boy because he didn’t have no family here, no mother, no father and he’s just good for me. And she says one day, “Put that coat that you sew and we’re going downtown.” But they—they didn’t say downtown those days. They say the street. “We’re going down the street.” [chuckles] So we—we went. We were going the [unclear] Street and there was a Albanian market there. And she says, “We’re going to stop here in this market first.” Then my husband, he was waiting there for us to meet but probably we were late, and he was going out of the store to go out. And we were going in and she says—she touched me and she says, “Did you say that boy?” She didn’t say nothing to me at home. What are we going to do? And I says, “No, what boy?” And she says, “That boy.” I says, “I don’t see no boy.” So we went to that store and he came back. And she says, “Yeah, that boy.” So I look at him.

LEVINE: What’d he look like?

SPIRO: And that’s all. He—he was nice but I didn’t know for what to look that boy. Then I says, “Yeah, he’s—he’s nice.” I mean, the Albanian language.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: And that’s all it was. We went upstairs because this guy there owned the market. He was living upstairs in that—that building. We went upstairs and that was all fixed up. And I got engaged. [chuckles]

LEVINE: You got engaged that day?

SPIRO: Not—in the—congratulating and it’s all, “You’re going to be engaged to this guy.” And that’s all—

LEVINE: Well, how did—well, that must have been a shock.

SPIRO: Sh—I was young and no—I didn’t get shocked. [chuckles] I didn’t get nothing. So—

LEVINE: Well, how about him? Was the in on the whole thing or was he shocked too?

SPIRO: He—he—he was older than me so he knew better than me. Oh, and he must have liked me and everything, must have [unclear]. They must have

asked him, "Do you like?" But they didn't ask me. That's all, though. It's all done and then on February 12th I got married.

LEVINE: So how long after was that that you got married?

SPIRO: From November to—

LEVINE: November to February.

SPIRO: Well, '33.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: 1933, was February. Lincoln's birthday, I got married.

LEVINE: [laughs] So—so [clears throat]—

SPIRO: The snow was way up—

LEVINE: So what was it like, getting to know this—this person, this fellow?

SPIRO: Well—

LEVINE: You were going to marry him.

SPIRO: Well, then he—he used to come in our house two, three time a week. He used to come and he used to work—work in the bakery and he used to bring pies. [chuckles] And that's all.

LEVINE: So did you like him?

SPIRO: I liked him, as a—16 years old, not, not thinking further.

LEVINE: Yeah.

SPIRO: And I got married and it was good. I—I had a good life. I had a good life.

LEVINE: Hmm.

SPIRO: Yeah. But—

LEVINE: So it turned out that you—that you—

SPIRO: Then, like they say, you—you start to love after that too, not only before.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: And we had a good life. And he stuck by me, even that I didn't have a good to—my stepmother. He stuck by me. We got marry, as I say, not as she say. You know. So there—

LEVINE: Yeah.

SPIRO: [unclear].

LEVINE: Now, what was your husband's name?

SPIRO: Pandi.

LEVINE: P-A-N—

SPIRO: D-I.

LEVINE: D-I. Pandi. And—and he had come from Albania before you—

SPIRO: He had come before. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Then he—but he was here by himself.

SPIRO: By himself. Yeah, and he—he used to work good. He had money. He had a car. Yeah.

LEVINE: What did—

SPIRO: You know, I got marry. We open our own house with everything.

LEVINE: Well, now, when he was—was he working in that Albanian market when you first got here?

SPIRO: No, no. He was working in a bakery.

LEVINE: Oh.

SPIRO: They used to call Manning's [PH] Bakery.

LEVINE: I see.

SPIRO: Yeah.

LEVINE: So—so then, he—he—he stayed at the bakery until after you were married.

SPIRO: Yes. Then he got hurt, his foot. Something drop, a piece of iron or something. Then he—he quit that job. Then he work for something else for another Albanian people. They used to sell oil and woods and lumber, called the Pier [PH] Brothers.

LEVINE: And then—and then did he stay at that?

SPIRO: They stay a few years there. Then—no, he stayed quite a few years. Then he open his own business with oil with another partner.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, and is that what he—

SPIRO: Yeah.

LEVINE: —stayed doing? Uh-hmm. Wow, wow.

SPIRO: [chuckles]

LEVINE: So then you had how many children?

SPIRO: I had two.

LEVINE: And what were their names?

SPIRO: My daughter, I had right away when I got marry. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: I wasn't young for that. [laughter] And a son. After 12 years, I had a son.

LEVINE: Wow. What's your daughter's name?

SPIRO: Diana. But she passed away three years ago.

LEVINE: Oh, I'm sorry.

SPIRO: And my son, Tommy, is—is married. He's got three sons. And he lives down the Cape. And my daughter, she left three daughters. Two, they're married. One, she's single but she's engaged—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: —to be married.

LEVINE: I see. So you have six grandchildren.

SPIRO: Six, three boys, three girls.

LEVINE: Oh, nice. Three [unclear]. So how about—how about you? How did your life change? I mean, you got married right away.

SPIRO: Right away. I had my daughter right away and I was inside. It was hard for me for the language to learn because I couldn't go anywhere. I was raising my daughter and I was talking to her in Albanian. So when she went in school she didn't speak enough English because at home that's all she was hearing, Albanian. So when my son was born she was 12 years old. And she says, "You better talk to him some English because I had a hard time in school. The kids were making fun of me." She used to say. "So talk to him in English." So I start talking more English.

LEVINE: How did you pick up English? How—

SPIRO: Just like that, pick, pick.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

SPIRO: No school.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: It was hard because we used to go shopping, things like that. It was hard but—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. So once you got married, were you—were you—did your feelings change about being here? Being in this country?

SPIRO: Well, yes. After a change, we met people. Then you get warm with other people. So—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. So y—did you mostly associate with people from the Albanian community?

SPIRO: From Albania, mostly, because they—years ago, they were even more closer, the Albanians. Like, a—it's a street, Beacon Street in Worcester. It was all Albanians there. That's where they want to live, from—you know, to ea—next to each other.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: Then, those days, now, they spread.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

SPIRO: So that was nice.

LEVINE: So do you—do you have any idea about why the Albanians settled in Worcester to begin with?

SPIRO: Because, you know, to be near each other, close to each other.

LEVINE: So some of them settled here and then others came because there were Albanians here.

SPIRO: Yes, even in Boston. Even in Boston.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: And there—there were factories. They went—you know, work on factories.

LEVINE: Yeah. So—so you were a housewife?

SPIRO: Housewife.

LEVINE: Housewife, yeah.

SPIRO: Then I started working, oh, after my son was born. Quite a few years after him, I started working.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And how was that?

SPIRO: Well, in a factory I worked.

LEVINE: Did you enjoy going out and—

SPIRO: Yes, and I knew when—more the language.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: You had to. And then after—after working the factories, I worked in the School of Nursing for 10 years, City Hospital School of Nursing, Worcester. I lived near there so it was nice for me to go.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: And I was a housemother at the school.

LEVINE: Oh.

SPIRO: Yeah, but I was working night shift, 7 to 11—I mean, 11 to 7.

LEVINE: I see. So you'd be there at night but you lived nearby.

SPIRO: Yeah, but my daughter was married that time when I was working in nights and my son was grown up.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. So how did you like being a housemother?

SPIRO: Oh, very, very nice. Oh, I had a lot of fun with the girls. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Yeah.

SPIRO: [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: I used to, you know—

LEVINE: What—what did you like about it? What—what—what made it fun?

SPIRO: Well, because they used to come with boyfriends and they used to ring the bell to come in. And they're still outside. I says, "Come on in now." "[unclear] a little bit longer." I says, "Come on because I'm going to put you down that you came late." "Oh, Mary. A little bit longer. Didn't you be young sometime?" I says, "Yeah, I was young but not like you. I didn't stay like that." [laughs] They used to laugh at me.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: And I—I worked 10 years there. Yes.

LEVINE: Hmm. So, now how about this time in your life? What's this time like for you?

SPIRO: Well, this time, my husband has been dead 14 years. And I—then I was on the King Street near the City Hospital. I sold it because I couldn't handle it. You know, a lot of work for the woman to keep three-decker house with the tenants and everything. And I wanted house either near the bus or near my daughter so I have a—you know, because I didn't drive. So I found this house here and which was across the street from my daughter. And I was glad to buy it. I sold that and I bought this.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: And—but I didn't have luck. My daughter got sick and she passed away three years ago after suffering four years. And I'm here now alone.

LEVINE: Are you near the bus?

SPIRO: I'm near the bus, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: And near the stores. Abbenmall [PH], they call it. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: Which is—still, I'm getting [chuckles] old. I can't go around much.

LEVINE: Well, you look—you look very well. And—

SPIRO: And—

LEVINE: What about your activity with the Albanian community?

SPIRO: Well, I'm very—with the societies, you know, in the church.

LEVINE: And tell—

SPIRO: That—they take—I need a ride so they pick me up. [chuckles] So—

LEVINE: Oh. Well, good. So tell what your—what your—what your office is in the—in the Albanian Society.

SPIRO: Well, there's no office. Just, we're a committee, you know, like in president and all that. You know, and we meet at the church all—that's our office. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Well, tell me what—what your title is. You're president of—

SPIRO: [unclear], we call it. But Albanian American—Albanian Women of America.

LEVINE: Albanian Women of America.

SPIRO: Worcester, from Worcester.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. So that must keep you quite busy.

SPIRO: That—there was a—in 1946, we started it.

LEVINE: Were you in on the beginning of it?

SPIRO: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: Yes. I've been twice in Albania invited from Albanian Women of—at—you know, from Albania.

LEVINE: Hmm.

SPIRO: We were invited and we—

LEVINE: Wonderful. So did—does your—does your—your job as president of the Albanian Women of America, does that keep you very busy?

SPIRO: Busy, yes. Busy. We have meetings and we have—you know, we do function, you know, like, last Sunday with a dinner. We—we do bake sales. We do—we used to do comedies—

LEVINE: What were they like?

SPIRO: —which I directed.

LEVINE: Oh.

SPIRO: And years, years ago, we used to do lot of—we—we—we used to have a Dautadistria [PH] Society.

LEVINE: What is that?

SPIRO: Another club. Dautadistria, we used to call it. Then we used to make—do dramas years ago. But then some people were—they knew Albanian had died. And young generation, they couldn't speak good to—to do plays, to do dramas. But now, we do some comedies. We've been doing some comedies, which is—if you make mistake, it's not the—[laughter] very bad.

LEVINE: I see. [chuckles]

SPIRO: And—

LEVINE: So does your interest in drama go back a long ways? Is that—

SPIRO: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: How did you get interested in that?

SPIRO: Well, I was—belonged to this society [unclear] Dautadistria and we used to [unclear]—

LEVINE: So do you act—did you act in [unclear]?

SPIRO: Oh, yes. We'd do—we did "Carla Topio." [PH] We did some Albanians with that title, Albanian title, "Othello." Oh, we used to do it. Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Wonderful.

SPIRO: Oh, yes.

[END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE B]

LEVINE: Well, so, how do—what do you think, having come here as—as an immigrant in the '30s, wh—what difference do you think it made, the fact that you started out in Albania and then you changed your life and came here and lived a long—most of your life here—what difference do you think it made, the fact that you started out somewhere else and then came here?

SPIRO: Well, I have to say, now, I'm on—I'm—I feel that I've been here in this country all my life. That's the way I feel, like you—not that you forget your country. You know, you never forget. But I suppose, coming so young and most of the time, like, on—I brought up here.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

SPIRO: And I brought up with my husband. [laughter] Right?

LEVINE: Yes, uh-huh. [laughter] Yeah, yeah. What kind of a man was your husband?

SPIRO: He was very quiet man, very good. You know, houseman. You know, not go around and I had a good life.

LEVINE: Okay, okay.

SPIRO: Even though we—we didn't fall in love, like there is today. But like I say, love comes after, too.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: And all the children. And he was a—he worked hard. He work hard.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: He worked hard. He used to save.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, yeah.

SPIRO: So then I'm glad because I am—now, I'm having a good life now. But I think of him too because he worked for the one I'm enjoying now.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: But what are you going to do? This is life.

LEVINE: Yeah.

SPIRO: I miss him because he was the head of the house. And now, you're alone. You—you wish—you know, I wish [unclear] to be here.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. Do—what customs? You mentioned some before but there are some Albanian customs that you keep in this country.

SPIRO: Well, like I say, we keep the—you mean the churches?

LEVINE: Well, I guess church. And how about foods? Y—you—

SPIRO: Foods, I—we cook. I cook our food. I don't cook like Amer—well, we do some American food, a way, but mostly, I do the pies, the stews.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-huh.

SPIRO: Bread. Not all the time because, you know, you got to have a lot of convenient. But for Easter, for Christmas; like holidays, I make bread.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: And the kids like it and those pies, my son's kids, oh! They love it, even my other granddaughters.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Oh, yeah.

SPIRO: So now, for Christmas they coming. I have to start cooking. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Oh, good. Uh-huh, uh-huh. So is there anything else you can think of that—that was a big change for you?

SPIRO: Well, I'm glad because here, I got everything. God bless America. This is the [unclear] to say it. But I—

LEVINE: Yeah.

SPIRO: Because the way they suffering over there. And always, they've been suffering because, I say, my country all the time has been somebody [unclear], you know, like war, like no work. And I'm glad that I'm here. I feel sorry for them but how—how lucky I am that I'm here on this country.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: I have everything.

LEVINE: Yeah. But maybe you could say, because you were talking about this before we started the tape. Maybe you could just say a little bit about the heritage of your country. What—what—like you were just saying now, what—what it's been like since, what? 1912 was the—

SPIRO: Well, I don't know that time. But, like, since I was born, all the time there wasn't much there. [unclear] for the mens to come—to go outside the country to work and send money over there for the wives to live. Always—

LEVINE: So—

SPIRO: —poor.

LEVINE: So mostly, most of the men were actually gone.

SPIRO: Yeah. Well, not mostly but—

LEVINE: A lot of them.

SPIRO: —a lot of them. They used to go, even Istanbul, Turkey. That's right.

LEVINE: They'd go to the Greece. They'd go to—

SPIRO: To Greece and then—

LEVINE: —Italy and then go to Turkey?

SPIRO: Well, mostly into Turkey. Not in Italy.

LEVINE: No.

SPIRO: In—In Italy, maybe the ones that were ever to learn, like singing, or schools, something like that. But for work, America and Istanbul, the Turkey and Greece.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. And so, you were saying that the soldiers would always be coming through there.

SPIRO: If there was war, yes. Yes, be—all the time that they used to go through there.

LEVINE: Do you remember that?

SPIRO: No, no.

LEVINE: You don't remember it personally?

SPIRO: No, no, no, no.

LEVINE: You just know that.

SPIRO: No, no. Uh-huh. No. I don't remember any war. No, no.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, can you think of anything else that you'd like to say before we close?

SPIRO: I don't know what to say.

LEVINE: How about heroes? Do you have any heroes that you—people you looked up to in your life that you—

SPIRO: Heroes. Well, heroes, when—when it was those—like I say, we—we put the flag out first. There was this Major Malley [PH]. Skanderbear [PH]. Skanderbear was the first hero.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

SPIRO: Years—a century ago.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: And then he—he—from the Turks, he raised the flag. We win. He win the war.

LEVINE: You win independence.

SPIRO: Yeah, and he raised the f—flag on [unclear]. That's where he's—where he was staying on that city, [unclear]. So after that, again, war. Then this other fellow, Major Malley, he raised it in 1912, the flag. Then—then he declared the independent.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: Then from there was all right, were, you know. So then became communist after that. I mean, in 19—after the Second World War.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: The—Albania became communist country. It was run by [unclear]. Then from that till three years ago, there—now, Albania became—they—he died and they became democracy.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: So it's been three years now, Albania's democracy.

LEVINE: Hmm.

SPIRO: Then where another [unclear] what she was a [unclear] probably [unclear]. He was a—he was a politician person. But then after, he became bishop, priest, then bishop. So he was for—for the Albanian.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: He worked for Albanians.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: Be—before he became bishop.

LEVINE: Well, why do you think it's important for—for the Albanian customs to be carried on?

SPIRO: Wh—why is it?

LEVINE: Yeah.

SPIRO: Because you like to leave it to the children, every—you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

SPIRO: You like to leave the—you know—

LEVINE: The customs, the way of life.

SPIRO: Because—yeah, you have to leave it to your children. That's my—I—I love it to leave it to my children. I—I think it's beautiful that we got beautiful cus—you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SPIRO: Why—why shouldn't they, you know, carry on to—so they can leave it to the—their children.

LEVINE: Yeah.

SPIRO: I hope they do.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay. Well, I think maybe this is a good place to end.

SPIRO: I don't know if—if I was good. [chuckles]

LEVINE: You were wonderful. I want to thank you so much.

SPIRO: Maybe I don't know much, you know.

LEVINE: You know—you know a lot. And this has been so interesting and I thank you very, very much.

SPIRO: Well, you're welcome. [chuckles]

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I've been speaking with Mariolla Spiro, who is here in Auburn, Massachusetts.

SPIRO: But I say it again. God bless America. Because I'm happy that I'm in this country. I love my country but I love this country too.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. And today is—is November 21st, 1994. And how old are you today?

SPIRO: [chuckles] Should I say my age? [unclear] Yes, I'm 78.

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LEVINE: Seventy-eight. Well, thank you very much.

SPIRO: [chuckles] You're welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW]