

EI-703

SOCRATES BOLGOURAS

BIRTH DATE: SEPTEMBER 28, 1915

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

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**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: IRENE MELIDONEAS, CAROLYN
LEE**

TRANSCRIPT RECEIVED BY: IRVING SILBERG

GREECE, BORN IN THE US; RETURNED TO GREECE AT

C.AGE 6; RETURNED TO US C. 1937

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PORT: PIRAEUS

RESIDENCES:

- **THE US: MANCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE**
- **GREECE: TRICOLA; KADTSA**
- **THE US: CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

LEVINE: Today is November 1st.

BOLGOURAS: Yes.

LEVINE: 1995.

BOLGOURAS: Right.

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LEVINE: I'm here at Concord, New Hampshire with Mr. and Mrs. Bolgouras. Both of them came through Ellis Island, but we're beginning now on interviewing Socrates Bolgouras.

BOLGOURAS: Right.

LEVINE: Who came to the United States around 1930 when he was about 18 years of age. And he was born in the United States...

BOLGOURAS: In Manchester.

LEVINE: In Manchester, New Hampshire, left for Greece when he was six years of age.

BOLGOURAS: Around that.

LEVINE: Around six years of age, stayed in Greece up until he finished high school at about 18 years of age and then came back here. To Concord?

BOLGOURAS: Came here because my father was here, established [ph], and I stayed. He was, he was alone there. My mother was in Greece, I was in a, he was, I was with, with her, and my little sister, she...

LEVINE: Okay. Well let's, let's just start, and I'll ask some specific information.

BOLGOURAS: Right, right.

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LEVINE: And we'll get back to that.

BOLGOURAS: Go ahead. Definitely.

LEVINE: Okay, so if you would say for the tape where in Greece you were born, where in Greece you went after you went back to Greece, and your birth date, for the tape.

BOLGOURAS: September 28.

LEVINE: Nineteen?

BOLGOURAS: Nineteen fourteen.

LEVINE: Fifteen.

BOLGOURAS: Fifteen?

LEVINE: Fifteen. Okay, so you came, so that's your birth date and will you say now where in Greece you were born, or wh, where you went back to, sorry. Where you went when you lived in Greece.

BOLGOURAS: To Nimossli [ph], state of Greece called Tricola Kadtsa. Kadtsa and Tricola, they were two different capitals of the two states there.

LEVINE: Okay. Now how do you spell, I know Tricola, how do you spell the other one?

BOLGOURAS: Kadtsa?

LEVINE: Yeah.

BOLGOURAS: K-A-D-T-S. T-T-. T-S-A. Kadtsa, Kad-tsa. That is the capital city of the state, smaller state, you know, not too big.

LEVINE: Okay. Okay, now, do you remember anything of your life in the United States up until you were six years old when you, when you went back, when you went to Greece?

BOLGOURAS: I didn't remember anything. I remember the, the right in Manchester they used to have a big park there. My mother used to take me by the hand and hold me, watch me, and they had a few statues stas (statues!) there, bronze, right built by the park there. And she used to take me there everyday of the week, too. And I was admiring those statues that they had there, bronze statues. Water was coming out of the mouth. (laughs) I remember that just like I see you.

LEVINE: Really? Wow. Now what was your mother's name?

BOLGOURAS: Evangelia. Evangelia. Vandy, Evangelia.

LEVINE: Evangelia, okay. And how about her maiden name, do you remember that?

BOLGOURAS: Yeah. K-O-U-T-R-A-S. Koutras.

EI-703/BOLGOURAS

LEVINE: Great, okay. Now, so your mother used to take you to the park,

BOLGOURAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: And do you remember anything else that you did as a little boy before you, when you were in Manchester, before you went back to Greece, went to Greece?

BOLGOURAS: Whatever they took me they had the, these, the Emmett Kelly was the guy who was with the

LEVINE: Circus?

BOLGOURAS: With the circus. I remember that.

LEVINE: Really?

BOLGOURAS: Oh yeah. (Laughs) I remember that.

LEVINE: Yeah. And did, was your father here in Manchester at that time?

BOLGOURAS: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: And what was his name? His name.

BOLGOURAS: Costas.

LEVINE: Constance?

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BOLGOURAS: C-O-N-S-T-A-N. Conostas. Constantine is the full name, but it was, you know abbreviated.

LEVINE: Yea. Okay. And did you have brothers and sisters here?

BOLGOURAS: No, my sist-

LEVINE: Before you went

BOLGOURAS: I had a little sis, I mean brother, who was, he died after. He was probably four, five months old.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BOLGOURAS: And after that, my mother had a little girl, who is residing in Tricola now, in Athens.

LEVINE: Oh.

BOLGOURAS: And she majored in French in, in Paris.

LEVINE: Wow. Now, when, your sister, was she born here?

BOLGOURAS: Yes, definitely. She's a real native from here.

LEVINE: I see. Now is she old, was she old, is she older or younger than you?

BOLGOURAS: No, no, she's younger.

LEVINE: Younger, okay. And her name?

BOLGOURAS: Iphigenia. Effie.

LEVINE: Okay. So why was it that you went to Greece when you were six years old?

BOLGOURAS: Why because my father insisted. To my mother he says, you gonna go to Greece, and anything you want to buy to have it over there in the house, in Manchester, you buy it and we going to ship it to Greece.

LEVINE: Why did he want your mother to go to Greece?

BOLGOURAS: So we wouldn't be like your cock-eyed people without no language and couldn't. Who would talk to a natives from Manchester? No, they were natives from Manchester (laughs). They had little, I'm talking, English.

LEVINE: So you, he wanted you to learn Greek?

BOLGOURAS: Definitely, and that's why he sent me to go to finish high school over there.

LEVINE: I see.

BOLGOURAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: So, and did he go over there with you or you just went with your mother?

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BOLGOURAS: It took him about four or five years in between, intervals to come over, for me and my mother and my sister and brother that died, that died as a kid. We were, we were with our mother. In, in 1923, he decided call his wife over, three kids, and that's it. And I couldn't say yes, yes if no or bad, but I had to learn, hard.

LEVINE: What was school like in Greece?

BOLGOURAS: Tough, tougher than here. It was very little Greek but the other was English.

LEVINE: So you had to learn in Greek in the school there?

BOLGOURAS: Yeah, you could, yeah. And as you advanced, second year, third or fourth year over there, you learned more English in school because we were not the only ones. They had a lot of people emigrating back here. They couldn't talk their kids, they were folks, their parents, that's it.

LEVINE: So there were other children in your school who had also been born in this country and, and had gone back to Greece?

BOLGOURAS: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: I see. Now the town of Tricola.

BOLGOURAS: Tricola.

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LEVINE: Tricola. Was that a, was it a big city?

BOLGOURAS: It was, right now its about eighty-five thousand, but the time I was going to high school over there, it was about twenty-eight, thirty thousand. Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. And what do you remember about the town, when, what it was like when you were there?

BOLGOURAS: Well, I told, I mean, I remember the town just like I see you now.

LEVINE: Well, could you describe it? What it looked like, what the main street looked like?

BOLGOURAS: Beautiful, beautiful. It was beautiful. I never forget it, and, and I'll never forget it now.

LEVINE: What did you like so much about it? What was it that made...

BOLGOURAS: Well, they had different types of games, skating, ice skating, roller-skating. It was extinct because we didn't know how to cope with it anyway. After a while, we got trained, and we joined them.

LEVINE: You, that's what you did for fun?

BOLGOURAS: Yeah. Sure.

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LEVINE: Yeah, and, so you were living with your mother. Did you have grandparents over there?

BOLGOURAS: No, no they were, they were dead.

LEVINE: Oh. How about aunts and uncles, did you have any other family over there?

BOLGOURAS: Yeah, my father had a, a brother here, and he, he went back after a years, and my mother was supposed to have had come back here as company, two, two sisters. They both died, and that's, that's all she had here then.

LEVINE: So, after you finished high school, then did the family, did your father think then you should come back?

BOLGOURAS: Oh yeah, definitely. He says, find it too hard to finish high school over there, he says forget it, you don't have to finish, come over here, I'll send it to you, and you stay right there finish high school over there.

LEVINE: What was your father doing for work?

BOLGOURAS: He had a small grocery store on Lake Avenue.

LEVINE: Oh.

BOLGOURAS: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: And, and, and so he would send money over for your mother and

BOLGOURAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: And your sister and you

BOLGOURAS: Oh yeah, for

LEVINE: When you were there.

BOLGOURAS: Yeah, that's right.

LEVINE: And-

BOLGOURAS: My mother couldn't talk any English. My father was worse, even, even worse. (Laughs) So.

LEVINE: Well, you must have known English when you first went over.

BOLGOURAS: Very little, very little.

LEVINE: But I see, they, they weren't speaking it at home so. Had you gone to school at all in this country before you went to Greece?

BOLGOURAS: As a, as a listener. I couldn't understand. I couldn't make any compositions or anything, any verbs and stuff like that, you know. Unless it was somebody that was much, much longer here than me, and then I would get the basis.

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LEVINE: Did you learn enough English in, in school when you were in Greece, so that when you came back you could-

BOLGOURAS: Very, very little. But after, after I returned here, I was determined to learn English, do or die. Period. I was determined, I mean, determined.

LEVINE: Well, when, did your father, well did your father go back to Greece and come back to the United States with you and your mother?

BOLGOURAS: No.

LEVINE: No, you came with

BOLGOURAS: My mother, she came with me and my sister.

LEVINE: I see.

BOLGOURAS: Two kids.

LEVINE: Yeah, okay. Do you remember leaving Tricola and going to the port to take the Piraeus?

BOLGOURAS: Piraeus? Piraeus? Yeah.

LEVINE: That's where you left from?

BOLGOURAS: Oh yeah, sure.

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LEVINE: Yeah? What was that like, leaving and saying goodbye to everyone and-

BOLGOURAS: It was beautiful, for me it was, it was like a brand new toy, like, like you gave me a, a car, and not a, a Ford car, small, gave me a heavy car, a big car. Even though I knew, I didn't know how to drive or anything.

LEVINE: Who gave it to you?

BOLGOURAS: My father.

LEVINE: Oh, once you got here?

BOLGOURAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, but when you were leaving, when you were leaving from Piraeus, do you remember getting on the ship?

BOLGOURAS: We came with the, with a ship, and we disembarked in New York.

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

BOLGOURAS: Oh, yeah, yes, I remember that.

LEVINE: Did you see the Statue of Liberty?

BOLGOURAS: Positively. Three, four times, with my wife and then my daughter, you know, the kids, and my, my youngest son.

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LEVINE: Do you remember seeing it that first time when you had come?

BOLGOURAS: Absolutely.

LEVINE: Did you know what it was?

BOLGOURAS: Oh yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BOLGOURAS: From geography, we had a course of geography or history, that's how you pick it up.

LEVINE: So, do you remember Ellis Island?

BOLGOURAS: Yes, I do, even my wife remembers it.

LEVINE: What do you remember about it?

BOLGOURAS: Well, they had a, big posters there the timers how the old people, how they used to disembark there.

LEVINE: No, but I don't mean now, now it's a museum. But I mean when you first came in about 1930.

BOLGOURAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: What, do you remember when you got off the boat going to be, to Ellis Island?

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BOLGOURAS: Yes, I remember.

LEVINE: What do you remember about that time, what it looked like, and how you were treated?

BOLGOURAS: They told us, from a, I mean, from a distance, they told us, "That is the Statue of Liberty" and we knew the history that that statue, Statue of Liberty, it was donated at the expense of government France.

LEVINE: Yes.

BOLGOURAS: Sure.

LEVINE: And, and how were you treated, were you examined at Ellis Island?

BOLGOURAS: Oh yes, we had doctors there. (?)

LEVINE: What was the examination like for you?

BOLGOURAS: An, anything that might be, if you had whooping cough or a grippe or, those kids diseases, small, you know.

LEVINE: Were you healthy?

BOLGOURAS: Yeah, I was healthy.

LEVINE: Yeah, and your mother and your sister?

BOLGOURAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, so you, were you detained? Did you stay overnight at Ellis Island?

BOLGOURAS: No, we stayed at a hotel there. We had some people from the same village that they knew each other from the old village there. So that's it. And as the time was going by and I started picking up a little English and a little of the language here, English, then I started to get grounded, grounded there, and I, I, I was determined to learn, do or die.

LEVINE: Well, now, did your father pick you up at Ellis Island? He met you?

BOLGOURAS: He, he came right at the boat, at the seaport there. Yeah.

LEVINE: And you remember that?

BOLGOURAS: Oh.

LEVINE: Seeing him for the first time when you first came?

BOLGOURAS: He, I, it was a fortunate thing that he had the same suit, and he had a Borcellino [ph] hat and a, a necktie and a, the hat was a, the hat had (?). (Speaks in Greek to wife?)

LEVINE: A derby?

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BOLGOURAS: Oh, no, it wasn't a derby. It was a tile.

LEVINE: Oh, like a riding cap?

BOLGOURAS: Not exactly.

LEVINE: A riding cap?

BOLGOURAS: No, no, like a dress hat.

LEVINE: A dressy hat.

BOLGOURAS: Yeah, we bought it in Naples, Italy. We stopped there, and my father says, "Come over here alright collect, pick up what you want for color and the size." It was an Italian guy, so my father says to him, he knew a little Italy, Italian, says, "What you want?" He says, "I want four Borcellino hats." And they were expensive. Then, four hundred drachmas those days, well, I, which I still have in our closet here now.

LEVINE: You still have a hat? Aww.

BOLGOURAS: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: Wow.

BOLGOURAS: So.

LEVINE: Maybe when I take your picture later, I can take you wearing the hat.

BOLGOURAS: Sure.

LEVINE: That would be nice.

BOLGOURAS: I, I can put-

LEVINE: Okay, we'll do it after this.

BOLGOURAS: Absolutely.

LEVINE: Okay so, so you met, your father met you, and he took you to a hotel?

BOLGOURAS: My, my father, he not, he send me a telegram that I'm going to arrive such a time in New York. There was another guy from the same village, and my father knew him, but I couldn't remember him anyway because I was too small and (laughs), and I was

LEVINE: That's a beauty. Oh, we're going, we'll take the picture with that.

BOLGOURAS: That hat? That is a, an antique.

LEVINE: That's a beautiful hat.

BOLGOURAS: This hat here, when do you think I bought it? When I was in high school over there, and I paid only fifty cents.

LEVINE: Really?

BOLGOURAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: It's lovely.

BOLGOURAS: And (?) touched it up, and this, this has a-

LEVINE: A snap? Oh, a band.

BOLGOURAS: Yes. That's right, and here's the name of the guy that was selling them. He's still in business.

LEVINE: Really?

BOLGOURAS: Honest to God.

LEVINE: He, he-

BOLGOURAS: There it is, it says *To Mekron*, is the name of the little store where they were made and where I bought it. *To Mekron*, means, means "the small." That was the name of the title. The guy that helped the creator, the owner of this little store, was Aristatis Koukounis.

LEVINE: Oh. Yeah. Wow, that's wonderful.

BOLGOURAS: Tricola.

LEVINE: Oh, there it is. Yeah.

BOLGOURAS: Yeah.

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LEVINE: Yeah. Okay, so, so when your father met you and your mother and your sister-

BOLGOURAS: My father, he didn't know me from Adam.

LEVINE: When you came to Ellis Island?

BOLGOURAS: That's right.

LEVINE: Really?

BOLGOURAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Because you hadn't seen him for how many years?

BOLGOURAS: From 1922.

LEVINE: Oh, so he didn't know you from Adam.

BOLGOURAS: Here, here they was, right here. That's me.

LEVINE: Oh, those are beautiful, old pictures.

BOLGOURAS: That was my father's brother, the oldest brother. That was my, my mother, and there's my father.

LEVINE: Wow.

BOLGOURAS: Oh yeah.

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LEVINE: Beautiful. Well so, okay so he didn't know you. What was it like when you saw him them? When he didn't know you, and it was at, you were at Ellis Island?

BOLGOURAS: There was a, a group there of young boys, young girls and whatever, and somebody said to me that they were checking in and out. And they said, "You speak any English?" "No, no, American. American, okay." So, I met one of the girls that was checking people who were coming, disembark or embarking, to go out or come in. And I says to her, I'd never forget her, her name was Liz, says, "Liz, yeah, call for my father's name, will you?" "What's his name?" "Charles or Constantine Bolgouras. See if he is there, and notify him through the interpreter, whatever, his son is right here, right on my right, and I'm going to escort him 'til I'll deliver his son to him, safely." Oh yeah. And right after that, half an hour, they said, it was a group there, said, "Let's go and have something for the supper." We went some Italian restaurant, good restaurant, and we ate there. It was about eight or ten people there. Yeah.

LEVINE: And this is in New York City?

BOLGOURAS: In New York City, right by the harbor.

LEVINE: So a bunch of people from your town

BOLGOURAS: Oh yeah.

LEVINE: Came and met

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BOLGOURAS: Oh yeah.

LEVINE: You, and you had dinner.

BOLGOURAS: Oh yeah. They knew it. They knew that my father was arriving that day or evening, whatever, and.

LEVINE: And then what did you do that evening after you had the dinner?

BOLGOURAS: Did nothing. Oh yeah, we went the big, big avenues there, where the Empire State Building is, and the, the, the big theater there. What the heck was it?

MRS. BOLGOURAS: Radio.

BOLGOURAS: Radio City.

LEVINE: Radio City. You went there?

BOLGOURAS: Oh yeah. (laughs)

LEVINE: And you, so you stayed in New York for a few days or...

BOLGOURAS: A few days.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BOLGOURAS: Yeah. And after, after the three, four or five days

MRS. BOLGOURAS: (?) making noise.

BOLGOURAS: We, we came to, my father says, "Let's go, and you want to see a big theater?" I say, "Yeah, we don't have any, any big theaters in Tricola and Kadtsa." Yeah, he says, "Okay, we'll go." So he gave somebody a tip, there fifty cents, whatever, and let us all go, instead of paying a full ticket, fifty cents, paid thirty-five. (Laughs) Greek, Greek style. (laughs)

LEVINE: This was, was this Radio City? Or this was-

BOLGOURAS: Absolutely.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah, Radio City. So then when did you come to New Hampshire?

BOLGOURAS: It was less than two days.

LEVINE: I see, and you came by train?

BOLGOURAS: Came by train. My father and, the conductor came, and he was picking up the tickets from each customer, and my father stuck, stuck his by the row of seats there, and the guy, he started saying, "Hey, ticket, ticket, ticket!" "Ticket," he says. "The boy had it here, where, where is the tickets?" "You picked them up." "Well," he says, "I'm talking English, so give me his ticket." Yeah, he used to, they used to pick them up. But they were not a dollar or two dollars. They were for, forty cents, fifty cents.

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LEVINE: Well, so, do you remember arriving here in New Hampshire?

BOLGOURAS: Oh, definitely. My father, my father and I, we landed right down here, the big, they had the biggest railroad station right here in the city, and it was, it was the biggest station this, after you leave Boston, the next one, big one, used to be in White River Cen-, Junction, Vermont, another big one. And that's it.

LEVINE: Yeah? You remember that station?

BOLGOURAS: I remember that just like I see you there now.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BOLGOURAS: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: What did it look like to you when you came in, having come from Greece?

BOLGOURAS: Like a little hole in the ground. (laughs)

LEVINE: A hole in the ground?

BOLGOURAS: Yeah, maybe my, my wife, she knows it, too.

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay, so, so you got here to Concord, and then what did you do once you got here?

BOLGOURAS: Wh, where, what I did?

LEVINE: Yeah, did you all go to work or...?

BOLGOURAS: No, my father, he told me to come in the store. He has a store right there next door.

LEVINE: Oh.

BOLGOURAS: Yeah, and he says, "In the morning, come in here and give me a little hand here." I says, "What? I don't know anything, how to weigh this stuff and blah blah blah, how much it costs." He says, "Don't worry, you just do what I tell you." "Okay, fine." So, started to put in a, in a little bag, five pound a bag, paper bag. Ten pounds, twelve pounds, (?). [ph]

LEVINE: What were you putting in the bags?

BOLGOURAS: Potatoes.

LEVINE: Oh, potatoes.

BOLGOURAS: Onions. (laughs)

LEVINE: Onions. (laughs) Now, did your family live in this house when the store was over there?

BOLGOURAS: No, my father was the first one that moved here, this house here, 193-

MRS. BOLGOURAS: (?)

BOLGOURAS: Wait a minute, 1937, ah? Oh yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah?

BOLGOURAS: At least he, he had the intuition that where am I going to live if I don't have a house? So he borrowed from some other big wholesale, wholesaler. "How much money you need, Charlie?" "Oh, I need a thousand dollars because my family is just coming back and I, we're going to have a place to sleep." "Is okay, how much you want?" He says, "Give me a thousand dollars." No, fuss no muss, nothing. (laughs) Yeah, but

LEVINE: So he was in the wholesale business? Is that what it was?

BOLGOURAS: No, no, he was, he had a small, small grocery store. Is was like a self-service.

LEVINE: Oh.

BOLGOURAS: Yeah. It wasn't a big, big, huge money.

LEVINE: Now was there a big Greek community

BOLGOURAS: Over here?

LEVINE: In Concord?

BOLGOURAS: The biggest was in Manchester. Oh yeah, Manchester.

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LEVINE: So would you get together with other people who had come from Greece?

BOLGOURAS: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: And what was your

BOLGOURAS: Especially weekends.

LEVINE: What, what would you do?

BOLGOURAS: They had picnics. Oh yeah. Do you remember? She remembers, too. She came from a small town, too. Her town, you know where he is from? From West Virginia. West Virginia.

LEVINE: Oh, okay. Well, we're going to talk, I want to talk to her after we finish with yours.

BOLGOURAS: Absolutely. Yeah, yeah. Refresh your memory.

LEVINE: Okay. Okay. (laughs)

BOLGOURAS: aYes.

LEVINE: So, okay, so what did you do, like you'd, you'd have picnics, would you have dancing, singing?

BOLGOURAS: Oh, definitely. E, every weekend had something. Whether it was a community dance, big size, or

mediocre, or especially if it was summer, swing. They have, they call a, a band, a big one, consisting of eight, ten people, different instruments, and then dance there 'til midnight. Oh.

LEVINE: So how were you treated, when you first came over here and you were really coming from Greece, were, did people treat you

BOLGOURAS: Very good. Very good. Everybody was, was telling me, "Welcome, how do you like it here?" and this and that. "And use, your father's childhood name?" "Yeah." "Ah. Well," he says, "we know your father longer than he knows you." (laughs)

LEVINE: (laughs) So, let's see. And how about, how did your mother adjust? Did she like it here?

BOLGOURAS: Oh, she liked it. Whether she liked it or not, she did.

LEVINE: Yeah, she stayed, but she, she, she, well, it was a lot colder here, wasn't it, than where she was from?

BOLGOURAS: Oh course, course, course.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BOLGOURAS: Like it is now.

LEVINE: Yeah.

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BOLGOURAS: Yesterday, my wife was going (makes blowing noises).

LEVINE: It's turned cold. (?)

BOLGOURAS: Freezing, freezing, freezing.

LEVINE: Okay, so, let's see. So, you were here in Concord, and then you helped your father in the store. And how, did you stay, is that what you kept doing for work?

BOLGOURAS: No.

LEVINE: Then what did you, you do with that?

BOLGOURAS: No, after, after, after I was registered with the, to be drafted in the army, not only I, many others, too, so I was drafted, registered to be in the service. So, I was sent to Manchester, I stayed there about five, six months, yep, and from there, they took a group of us, and they send us to Fort Devins, Massachusetts, outside of Lowell.

LEVINE: And then what?

BOLGOURAS: And then they took us only, after the basic tr, training, they send us to a bigger camp. Like, I served, my div, div, my, my outfit, they were sent to Fort Devins, Massachusetts, which was one of the biggest camps for placing newly drafted boys for the service, the service.

LEVINE: Did you go overseas?

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BOLGOURAS: Five years.

LEVINE: Oh.

BOLGOURAS: All over. All over Europe.

LEVINE: So you saw, you saw action, you saw fighting?

BOLGOURAS: And how, and how, sure. Sure, I was a medic, a medic.

LEVINE: A medic?

BOLGOURAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Oh.

BOLGOURAS: They send me school.

LEVINE: Did you, did you, can you say what your outfit was?
What, did, were you in a particular

MRS. BOLGOURAS: (?)

BOLGOURAS: I was with the, with the, with the infantry division. The
name of it, yes, the name, the, the division was under the
command of General George Patton.

LEVINE: Wow.

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BOLGOURAS: He was the guy. He didn't care who's son you were, President Roosevelt's, or what. See you on the street, "Yes, sir", sal, sal, sal, salute you

MRS. BOLGOURAS: Salute you.

BOLGOURAS: And then he'll reach for his gun. He had two, two pearl-handled, pearl-held, held. Yeah.

LEVINE: Pearl handled guns?

BOLGOURAS: Guns, yeah. Two. He had one here and one there. (laughs) And he-

LEVINE: So after he'd salute you, he'd reach for his gun?

BOLGOURAS: No, no, see, if he noticed you, he noticed that you were not from this same company, he'd, from a distance, from across the street, sa, salute to him, he says, "What the hell is your name?" "My name is Joe Bugalow." "Oh. And, what are you station?" He says, "I'm with the fiftieth infantry division." "Oh, you are? Good. Okay, in other words, you are new inductee here." I said, "Yeah." Everyone there was new. (laughs)

LEVINE: So what kind of a man was he? Did you have

BOLGOURAS: George Patton?

LEVINE: Yes.

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BOLGOURAS: Even my wife had the p, pleasure of meeting him. Big, from here to floor. Big man. And he was rough. I mean, not to curse you, but he would be rough. And he would say, "Hey, come over here." Like this. Go, "What the hell is your name?" "Sergeant Hirsch." "Yeah. How long you been here?" "I don't, a few weeks." "Hey he says? I'll fix you," he says. "So, you'll do just as you are told, not the way you want." (laughs)

LEVINE: (laughs) D-day, okay. So do you

BOLGOURAS: D-day, D-day that we, we disembarked, any, any, any outfit from the American forces were landed, at

LEVINE: Normandy?

BOLGOURAS: Normandy. D-day. Not D-one, not two, D-day. Right there.

LEVINE: Wow. Well, how, did you think it, it, it affected you, being in the, in the Second World War?

BOLGOURAS: It, in more ways than one like.

LEVINE: What, how, how

BOLGOURAS: Helped me to pick up English.

LEVINE: Oh.

BOLGOURAS: Not sure whether I wanted to or not.

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LEVINE: How did you feel about serving in the, in the army for this country at that time?

BOLGOURAS: I never served under the Greek army.

LEVINE: No.

BOLGOURAS: So, I was, was like a prince here.

LEVINE: Oh.

BOLGOURAS: Yeah. It was good.

LEVINE: It was good.

BOLGOURAS: I liked it. The only thing that was impeding me was the

LEVINE: English.

BOLGOURAS: The language, English language.

LEVINE: You said you were determined to learn it.

BOLGOURAS: Oh, definitely. Oh yeah. And I would ask the, my s, s, sergeant, especially the first week that we were inducted, say, "Sergeant," I'll never forget him, I remember him just like I see you, Chester, Chester Byrne, he was from Chicago, "Hi, Sergeant." "Hi." I says, "May I ask you something?" I says, "you say in every morning, and I still don't know it." He says, "Why? What's your problem?" I

say, "You're saying, all you say in the morning when you report? You, you are a Sergeant, look here, and you report to the First Sergeant who is present who is not present. So, (?)" get under his wing there, say, have somebody the First Sergeant re, recite the names. "What's your name?" So even the captain was saying, he says, "As I call your name, I don't want any fancy names, and blah blah blah" he says, "I want your real name, so we, we're going to get acquainted here. You don't know me, I don't know you." "Okay." So, (laughs) so he say, "As I call your name, I want you to stand up right by your desk, and the minute you hear your name called, well, stand up and report to me at once." Right on. So, this guy says, "My pleasure is to report to," he says, "My name is Captain such and such." He's from? "I'm from West Virginia," he says, and this and that and that. But, he says, "Pay attention so you, you won't forget my name because it's, it's not going to be playing checkers here," he says, "Or table. Oh no, no, we have a work to do here."

LEVINE: So, could you, did you find out what he said in the morning?

BOLGOURAS: Yeah, in the morning. I, I, I asked the first sergeant, Chester Byrne. "Sergeant, what do you say in the morning?" "You're reporting to the first sergeant, not the one with one sardine here, but had four, five sardines here." (?) one, he says, "What do you say?" He says, "You don't know?" "No." "You don't know any English?" I said, "No, where in the hell I'm gonna, learn it?" I says,

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"I've been living up in a village." "You, what, what, what do you speak? Your mother?" "Polish," he says. "You know Polish?" "Very little." "What the hell you blaming me? I have to go on and train the others."

LEVINE: So, how did you get, get to learn English in, in the service then?

BOLGOURAS: Curiosity.

LEVINE: You, you asked people what they were saying and repeat it and...?

BOLGOURAS: Any, any soldier, any corporal, sergeant, officer, I would ask him. Nothing to be embarrassed. Say, "Excuse me, my name is such, I'm with such outfit, would you be kind enough and tell me how would I learn where my med., part of my division, is established?" "By Bordeaux." "You know that." I said. "Yeah, you're going to teach me some more, too." We had a good time. (laughs)

LEVINE: Okay, well, now when you, when you got out of the, of the service, what did you do then?

BOLGOURAS: Nothing, I, yeah.

LEVINE: You met your wife?

BOLGOURAS: Yeah, that's it. (laughs)

LEVINE: How did you meet?

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BOLGOURAS: How?

LEVINE: How.

BOLGOURAS: Oh, acquaintance.

LEVINE: A mutual friend?

BOLGOURAS: Oh, well, I didn't know her, and she didn't know me.

LEVINE: Right.

BOLGOURAS: But some, some, some of her people, I mean, her father, mother, uncles, whatever, and, and from the same hometown, from Greece, they were acquainted amongst themselves.

LEVINE: Ah.

BOLGOURAS: So, they would know you, they would meet you that way and they say, "How long you been here?" "Two, three years." "Oh, you are new." You know, without English, what do you want? That's it.

LEVINE: So, so did the families arrange like a marriage here or they didn't do that here?

BOLGOURAS: No.

LEVINE: No.

BOLGOURAS: The girls would make the arrangements then. That, that was the point.

MRS. BOLGOURAS: Not me.

BOLGOURAS: Not you, of course not.

LEVINE: What, what...

BOLGOURAS: She was the Queen Elizabeth.

LEVINE: What, what, what did you like about, what did you like about your wife? Why did you, why did you

MRS. BOLGOURAS: Sixteen.

LEVINE: Your, your wife was sixteen.

BOLGOURAS: Yes, she was very tender. (laughs)

LEVINE: Tender? (laughs)

BOLGOURAS: Yes, she was very young.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BOLGOURAS: Very young. Yeah.

LEVINE: And so, so did you see each other for quite a while or you got married soon after you met or

BOLGOURAS: No, I got married to her not right off the bat because I, the first time I met her, I was

MRS. BOLGOURAS: 1940.

BOLGOURAS: I was drafted in the army.

LEVINE: 41? Oh, you met her right before you were drafted.

BOLGOURAS: Yeah, yeah. So that's it.

LEVINE: So you didn't, you couldn't

MRS. BOLGOURAS: Five years.

LEVINE: Five years you were away then.

BOLGOURAS: Well, I was in and out, and her, not only her own hometown, adjacent town, like you from Manchester, no you from Nashua. Okay, so you meet like that. That's it.

MRS. BOLGOURAS: (?)

LEVINE: (?) fill it in. Okay, so, then what did you do for work after you came out of the service?

BOLGOURAS: Oh, after I came out of the service, that was, hm, I got married.

MRS. BOLGOURAS: 1945 (?)

BOLGOURAS: See? Ma, mangono, the Greek word is mangono [ph], that, that I nailed her, threw the hook over, like catching a fish, hah?

LEVINE: (laughs)

BOLGOURAS: (laughs) That's it, see?

LEVINE: Yeah.

BOLGOURAS: See, she remembers that, and she's laughing. She thinks it's a joke.

LEVINE: (laughs)

BOLGOURAS: But if she was in my place, I don't know what the hell she would do that. Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BOLGOURAS: Not that she would have been slighted, but somebody else would say, "Hey, who are you? Hey, you're, you're a nice girl. Let's go to the movies," or "Let's go to a dance." So, she got acquainted like this, bum bum bum, before, before knew, you knew, she, she knew more, all, all the people in town. Sure, get acquainted.

LEVINE: Yeah, so, so what, then what did you do, did you go back into your father's store?

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BOLGOURAS: No, no, no. After I got married?

LEVINE: Yeah.

BOLGOURAS: No, no, no.

MRS. BOLGOURAS: Yeah.

BOLGOURAS: Nor right off. I did? See, I got, I, I, I got the direct order from the high command.

LEVINE: (laughs)

BOLGOURAS: You know what I mean? (laughs) What the...

LEVINE: Yes. (laughs) So, so your, your wife says that you, that you did go back and work with your father in his store?

BOLGOURAS: Oh, of course. Sure.

LEVINE: Yeah. And did you stay doing that or did you do something else?

BOLGOURAS: No.

LEVINE: Yeah, you stayed there.

BOLGOURAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: I see, so, now did you have children?

EI-703/BOLGOURAS

MRS. BOLGOURAS: Three.

BOLGOURAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Three? Three children? And their names?

BOLGOURAS: Constantinas was the first one. The second one was Frederica. And the third one was

MRS. BOLGOURAS: (?).

BOLGOURAS: The first one, Alcibiades. That's another good one.

LEVINE: (?) Beautiful. (conversing with Mrs. Bolgouras) So, let's see, what do you consider, what do you feel very proud of that you've done in your life? What makes you feel satisfied that you were able to do in your lifetime?

BOLGOURAS: Well, I, I was not in a position to do what I really wanted. I wanted to go to university to study something, but my father says, "I have a small insurance. Two hundred dollars." He says, "I'll cash it. And with it, two hundred dollars, which would amount to four hundred dollars. I'll give you two hundred dollars for the part of the first semester, and the second semester, I'll give you the balance. In the meantime," he says, "You're gonna work in the kitchen with the boys helping. Cooking there, washing dishes, bake, bake, pots to wash and whatever."

LEVINE: Wh, what kitchen? Where was the kitchen?

EI-703/BOLGOURAS

BOLGOURAS: When the soldiers came sh,

LEVINE: Oh.

BOLGOURAS: For the

LEVINE: Fort Devin?

BOLGOURAS: Not Fort Devin. This way. It's smaller.

LEVINE: Fort Dix?

BOLGOURAS: Fort Dix is New Jersey, no. No. No.

LEVINE: Well, but wait a minute, you, when you got out of the service

BOLGOURAS: Yes?

LEVINE: Then, do you, were you still thinking about going to college?

BOLGOURAS: I still, but after my father told me, he says, "I don't have any money to make up for you can go to college. So, unless, if you wanna follow classes for college, I have a little policy consisting of two hundred dollars to go to college."

(door opens, male voice: Hello?)

EI-703/BOLGOURAS

LEVINE: We're going to pause here.

BOLGOURAS: Yeah, I have money. How could I go?

LEVINE: Yeah, so you didn't. Okay, now, how, how was it after you retired?

BOLGOURAS: Yes?

LEVINE: How, what, how is your life here in Concord?

BOLGOURAS: Fine, it's alright.

LEVINE: Yeah?

BOLGOURAS: Well, I had change the routine. I didn't forget about going to college, taking special courses in this and that and that, try to get acquainted with boys from various cla, classes and some people that I knew 'em before I even was inducted, and slow but sure, I applied myself and I started picking up a little English. Otherwise, I would have been psssh.

LEVINE: How do you feel about having come to this country and, and lived here in, in this country all these years?

BOLGOURAS: It was fine. For me, it was like having a new toy. Good.

LEVINE: Do you consider yourself Greek and American?

BOLGOURAS: Full-fledged Greek.

EI-703/BOLGOURAS

LEVINE: Full-fledged Greek.

BOLGOURAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: What do you think about the melting pot idea?

BOLGOURAS: Ay, that's just a, just a thing, saying, you know.
Otherwise

LEVINE: You don't think people melt

BOLGOURAS: No.

LEVINE: Into, so they're all the same?

BOLGOURAS: No, I heard that long time ago.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BOLGOURAS: Oh yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember Concord from the old days? Anything different about it from when you first came here compared to today?

BOLGOURAS: Many, many things. They, lot of people, that had some right to – and they were good buildings, they were nopt old shacks -, they tore them down, and they rebuilted them new. good buildings, they were not all shacks. They tore them down, they rebuilted them new, so. And

then of course, in the meantime, they expanded. Lot of industry came here. The next time, the same thing, the next time, the same thing, so that's how the thing expanded.

LEVINE: Were there other ethnic groups besides Greek

BOLGOURAS: Oh yeah.

LEVINE: That came here to Concord?

BOLGOURAS: Oh sure.

LEVINE: What other, what other groups came from what other countries? Besides from Greece?

BOLGOURAS: Mix, mixed from all over. Greeks were there. Albanians, they claim they were Albanians, but they were not. Greek descent, but they happened to be born in Albania, and that's it. And then others. Lot of people came from Germany, and they applied themselves, and they had to learn. French, I mean, the others German, others something else. Yeah.

LEVINE: So there were, there were quite a few a people, people who immigrated and settled around here?

BOLGOURAS: Oh yeah. Definitely. Oh yeah. Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay, is there anything else you can think of about coming to this country that maybe we haven't really

talked about? Anything else you can think of about how it affected you coming here, or were you glad that you went to Greece and studied Greek?

BOLGOURAS: Oh, no, no, no, that, that was number one that helped me immensely. Oh yes. Because if I didn't know, if I didn't improve on my Greek, how would I be improving my Greek from Greece? Never.

LEVINE: So you're glad you went back and

BOLGOURAS: Oh, definitely.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BOLGOURAS: There, there is my picture from when we graduated high school in Tricola. You see what it says here? Tricola.

LEVINE: Oh. 1936.

BOLGOURAS: That's it.

LEVINE: Oh, so then that must be when you came to this country.

BOLGOURAS: That's when I

LEVINE: 1936.

BOLGOURAS: When we graduated high school.

EI-703/BOLGOURAS

LEVINE: But didn't you say you left for this country right after you graduated high school?

BOLGOURAS: Yeah, oh, not, not I, the wait took one year or two.

LEVINE: Oh, so you maybe you came in 1937.

BOLGOURAS: Just about.

LEVINE: Okay.

BOLGOURAS: Now here was the, the principal of the high school. This was a one good professor there, John Faropolis. This guy was my favorite professor. He was really

LEVINE: Why did you

BOLGOURAS: He

LEVINE: Like him? What did you like about him?

BOLGOURAS: Because he was determined to do or, or die. Either you learn or door for the. "___" side door, rear door, we don't need you.

MALE VOICE: (?)

LEVINE: Oh.

EI-703/BOLGOURAS

BOLGOURAS: (coughs) If anybody's, who knows, who, who is around from here, these people here. This guy was physics and chemistry. This one here, too.

LEVINE: But it sounds like you're proud of that education you got in that high school.

BOLGOURAS: I most certainly was.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BOLGOURAS: Anyway, if I had the opportunity, ah, I would, I would proceed.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BOLGOURAS: Without any hesitation.

LEVINE: Do you think that you were similar as a father to your children as your father was to you?

BOLGOURAS: My father wasn't here with me.

LEVINE: Oh yeah, he wasn't, that's right, he was, he was away a lot while you were growing up.

BOLGOURAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Right.

BOLGOURAS: I grew, I grew away from him. That's right.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BOLGOURAS: Dog oh boy, I read these, and I, I really, I reminisce.

LEVINE: Yeah. Uh-huh. You remember any things that happened in your high school class that, that comes to mind?

BOLGOURAS: This, this, this guy became a major general.

LEVINE: Oh.

BOLGOURAS: And a cousin of mine of his, kin (pronounces kyne?) of his, he was my classmate. And lot of them, right here, this guy here, he was, he had a big position with a court, courts in, in Tricola. That's me here.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh.

BOLGOURAS: This is the guy that became a major general, right here. Boy, oh boy, that, that really brings a lot of memories to me.

LEVINE: What, what, is it, is it interesting to you to think back on these times?

BOLGOURAS: Oh, of course.

LEVINE: Yeah?

BOLGOURAS: Course. Course. That's good food for thought.

EI-703/BOLGOURAS

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Well, how do you feel now about, about having come through Ellis Island? Did you, seeing the Statue of Liberty and all? Does that

BOLGOURAS: Well, that was a, an island that was worthwhile.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BOLGOURAS: Yeah, seeing it from a distance.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BOLGOURAS: I went with my family over there.

LEVINE: Afterwards.

BOLGOURAS: All the kids and all that.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BOLGOURAS: Oh yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. Okay. Is there anything else you'd like to say before we close?

BOLGOURAS: Well, maybe some other time to finish off. (laughs)

LEVINE: Okay.

BOLGOURAS: Okay?

EI-703/BOLGOURAS

LEVINE: I want to thank you very much.

BOLGOURAS: That's alright, my pleasure.

LEVINE: I'm speaking with Socrates Bolgouras

BOLGOURAS: Right.

LEVINE: Who came, who was born in the United States, went to Italy at about, went to Greece at about age six, and then came back here, we think now, around 1937 because it was about a year or so after he graduated from high school.

BOLGOURAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: And I want to thank you very much. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and we're signing off.

BOLGOURAS: Good.

END OF INTERVIEW