

EI-968

ANASTASIA HARITON AND SOPHIA KATARIDES

BIRTHDATE: ANASTASIA, JANUARY 1, 1909; SOPHIA, SEPTEMBER 24, 1911

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U.S.: NEW YORK, NEW YORK

LEVINE: Today is October 17, 1997, and I'm here in the Ellis Island Oral History studios with two sisters who came from Alexandria, Egypt, in 1922 through Ellis Island. They are Anastasia Harriton and Sophia Katarides. Both sisters had the maiden name of Ambazoglou. And at the time, in 1922, when they did immigrate to this country, Anastasia was thirteen and a half years old, and Sophia was ten years of age. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. Well, I'm delighted that you visited here today and that we have a chance to . .

HARITON: I'm delighted to be here too. And I'm surprised because that wasn't planned. We wanted to come and see the old place. What it looked like.

KATARIDES: It's the first time we came to Ellis Island...

LEVINE: Since you went through here?

KATARIDES: And it brought many, many memories.

LEVINE: Well, that's wonderful

KATARIDES: Yes.

LEVINE: Well, let's start at the beginning. Now Anastasia, you were born January 1, 1909, and Sophia was born September 24, 1911. So if you could start and just one at a time, give me some of the memories that you have of Alexandria before you left for this country.

HARITON: I had a lot of memories. I remember a lot of things. I had cousins, that we used to play together. And then, one day, my mother left me by myself. Our home was a very nice apartment. It had a balcony. And I went outside crying because I was all alone in the house and I wanted to play with the other children. So I start crying and screaming and my father had a place, a barbershop, a little further down. And he heard, and he came and he said, why are you crying? And I told him that I'm all lone and I want to play

with my cousins, and I won't stop. He says, well, stop crying and I'm gonna take you and bring you to, it's not a bakery – it's a store where they sell only sweets...

KATARIDES: Pastry.

HARITON: But was a beautiful place. So we went there and he bought me sweets and I stopped crying. (they all laugh)

LEVINE: How about you Sophia? Do you have a memory?

KATARIDES: Well, I'm trying to think.

LEVINE: How about describing the city?

KATARIDES: I remember going to school...and ah, I remember it was the Avelo, a beautiful building that was built by the Greek people, and it was all in marble. White stairs. Something like that you see at museums in New York City – the width of the entrance going upstairs. And I remember my one teacher, telling us, speaking to the class, some how or other, I don't know how the subject came about, but I remember very distinctly saying, that you must always sleep from your right side. And I've been sleeping on my right side ever since. (laughing) And she was a charming lady by the name of

Eleni. And I continued going to the Greek school. I had a year or two maybe. By that time we were on our way to America. My father had left. He wanted to come to America from the 1900's but my mother didn't want to leave him because he was a very handsome man, and he listened to her.
(laughing)

LEVINE: Before we talk about coming to this country, maybe you could fill in the background of how it was that your mother and father were in Alexandria to begin with.

KATARIDES: Well, mother and dad were very, very loveable people. I never heard them arguing in front of us. They were always with a smile. They took good care of us. We were very, we were, I would say, less than the average American family, because my father ah, was just starting...

HARITON: Sophie – (says something in Greek)

KATARIDES: My father came from Constantinople. And my grandfather was the owner of, he was a designer in rugs. But the Turks started a fire, and everybody left, and he found himself in Athens. And the whole family was scattered.

LEVINE: Now both your mother and father are Greek by heritage?

KATARIDES: Yeah. Yeah.

HARITON: They're Greeks but they're born in different... My mother was born in Glymnos and my father was born in Constantinople.

KATARIDES: Constantinople.

HARITON: They met in Egypt, Alexandria and that's where they got married.

KATARIDES: Well, he stayed there for a short time. He didn't like Athens and he came to Egypt. By that time, he had to find something to live on. He became a barber, but in Constantinople his intentions were to become an engineer. And at that time, when he started, I think it must have been in '14, '16, he developed typhus, and he couldn't remember like he did before. So his career was ended there. And later on, when he came to Egypt, he married my mother. And I've got to say a little joke. My father was so handsome, when they met (both laughing) that she came in with a tray of sweets, she almost dropped the tray cause she never saw such a handsome man. Well anyway, they lived very happy. They had a happy life, and I never remember my mother and father screaming at each other or anything. It was a very peaceful home. They tried the best that they could give us at that time. But he always behind his mind, was to come to America. And by that time, he came, he stayed here a year in New York City, and he sent for us. When he sent for us, we were in Athens. We had left Alexandria and went

to my uncle. And he went down to get the tickets to come to America and he came back and said to my mother, well, all the cabins are taken. It would be a good idea if we called my brother to come to Athens and we do something here. My mother said, no, I'm going to America. I'm not going anywhere. I'm going to my husband. So he went the second time, down to the ah, what do you call it – those places...

LEVINE: You mean to get the passage?

KATARIDES: Yeah. To get the passage. And there were again no seats, no cabins. My father at the same time had sent money for first or second-class because in those years, you had to prove that you can support the family. And so, he was under the impression that we were on first or second class when we arrived here. But there's a little story on that. Because my mother was chasing four girls all by herself. And we were on top of the third class open. It's a wonder we didn't fall over. It took twenty-five days to come.

LEVINE: You were on a deck, essentially.

HARITON: On the deck.

KATARIDES: We were on the deck. When my father, when we arrived here at Ellis Island, my father was down in the boat, leaning against the ship,

“Constantinople”, and he said to my mother, well, get ready and be on your way. My mother said to him, well, we’re in the third class. When my father heard third class, he was under the impression we were first or second and we were going to get out right away, he held the boat, because he... Well, later...

HARITON: A dizzy spell...

KATARIDES: Later on developed to ah, what’s the... From the shock? A tumor. Well, finally he ran out and met his friend, who was very loyal to my father, who had been here and had enough money. And turned \$10,000 to my father’s name to show the immigration that he had enough to support us. But somehow or other, a miracle happened when they just let us go out without an inspection. And of course from then on we lived in New York City. My father tried to support us and by 1931, after he had that stroke from that shock that he got – he died right almost the same day we arrived, in August, 1932.

HARITON: 1932.

LEVINE: Oh, wow.

KATARIDES: And we were left alone. No one, no relatives whatsoever. Just mother and four of us. And that was during Depression years. 1931.

LEVINE: Okay. Let's pause here. Let me just back up a minute. Do you know why your mother and or your father moved to Alexandria from Greece to begin with?

HARITON: My father moved from Constantinople for the reason, they were wealthy people, they weren't poor. But the reason the Turks had burned the whole island...

KATARIDES: City, city...

HARITON: City of [], that was the name where my grandfather lived and they had their homes by the water and everything, the way our father was telling it. And everybody had to go to different places.

LEVINE: Why Alexandria? Did they ever say?

HARITON: Because Alexandria was, I guess, closer to...

KATARIDES: No, not only that. It was a very, a very noted seaport, run by the British.

HARITON: It's like I want to go to America.

LEVINE: It had a pull for people, that they wanted to go to that city.

KATARIDES: I don't think my father, at that time, he was single at that time, and he had no intentions of knowing about America. But he got married in Egypt. My mother came from Lemnos [also spelled Limnos].

LEVINE: Now, why did she go? Do you know?

KATARIDES: Well, what happened with... She became an orphan. Her father had left her.

HARITON: Had died. He died.

KATARIDES: Had died or something. And then she was adopted by a lady from Alexandria when she was five years old.

HARITON: And from the same part of Greece.

KATARIDES: So she stayed in Alexandria, and she spoke Arabic. And so did my father, of course, later on. And she was brought up by a family that were more or less related, very far apart.

LEVINE: Now, was there a Greek community that you can recall in Alexandria.

KATARIDES: Oh, yes.

HARITON: (both at the same time) Oh, yes.

KATARIDES: A very large one.

HARITON: I remember the family Katakousinos, and they had the factories that they used to bring flour. I don't know where they...

KATARIDES: From Russia, I think.

HARITON: ...whatever they did. They used to bring the flour. And from there, we used to pass every day and go to the school. The name of Averofio...

KATARIDES: Averof.

HARITON: Averof. And Averof was a very famous man, a Greek man from Greece. I don't know what he had done. I think it was in the boats during the war. You know there were wars there. I couldn't remember. But it was the most beautiful school you wanted to see. Inside the stair was all marble. You had to go up, maybe fifteen steps up, then you went to the rooms.

KATARIDES: (interjecting) the classrooms...

HARITON: And mahogany, it was the doors, wide, and then where the teacher used to stand up, all that desk was all mahogany.

KATARIDES: It was high, two steps high.

HARITON: It was beautiful with statues inside of that Averof, and different Greek statues in there. Was beautiful.

KATARIDES: The Greek community was very large in Alexandria and they had the schools and the hospitals. They built hospitals. And very knowledgeable people at that time had lived there. Like I said before, it was run by England and Alexandria was a beautiful city that all the elegant ladies from England and the other parts of Europe used to come to go to India and see the Orient. And so it was, it wasn't like a country. It was a city. Beautifully built, with beautiful parks by the seashore. Beautiful buildings along the coastline. Wealthy people. And we lived on a street that the trolley car was working, going different areas. And the trolleys were built in those days, they had different poles of electricity, of electricity, yeah. That picked up and the vehicle moved. It was interesting. And so we never, I never lived in a private home like, the first private homes were here when I arrived.

LEVINE: You were in an apartment.

HARITON: An apartment.

KATARIDES: We were in apartment buildings. And we had our school, Greek school and the orphanage. I mean it was a build up. Then, we had a very... After my father left for America, the Arabs, the Egyptians, rioted. They were always rioting.

HARITON: They were..

KATARIDES: Because they wanted to get the country back, from England. So one day, my father was in America by that time, and mother was, we were living, and it was on a Sunday when we heard a riot coming down, um, a mass of Egyptians with fires and, and they, Alexandria, of course, being a seaport, you had Italian sailors, you had from all different countries. And there was, on a Sunday, this here Italian captain was walking. In those days they used to be dressed all in white. Very handsome. And when this here group of rioters, picked him up and doused him with gasoline and burned him alive. And when mother saw that, she said, let's go to my sister's house. Well, from then on, we were, there were riots in Alexandria. And our landlady

was Egyptian, but being that we were born there, she had, she felt like she knew us.

HARITON: Like her children.

KATARIDES: And she said, don't worry she says, you stay here. So mother, the next day, said, let's go to my uncle, who was about two miles down, and he used to provide the British and the foreign people, hot, and so he knew the language. My uncle.

HARITON: He spoke English.

KATARIDES: He spoke English. But it was from his ah, area, and where he also had groceries providing the people that were working there, the English people, and they ripped everything. It looked like a stable. So they were coming toward our direction. And we were going to them. When mother, we came to a cross section. And there were Greek people running and they were yelling.... Go back, go back. Mother spoke Egyptian, and she was telling... Mother got us into, we had carriages, you know, drawn by horses. And she told him, please take me back where you picked me up. He went slower and slower. But then, somehow or other, he turned back. And just as we enter our home, about a block or so, that riot had arrived. Because they'd kill anybody that was European.

HARITON: They were killing people left and right.

KATARIDES: And the English only came out in the morning with the guns, and then they disappeared. They never came out to... And I remember, on one corner, like a block down, was a tavern where a man would go and have a drink, and they set it on fire. And they owner's wife was pregnant. She came up with the (pausing)

HARITON: Balcony.

KATARIDES: No. The roof. Because we used to play on top of the roofs. They never let us play in the street. And they put, I don't know whether she was burned or what, but many, many years after, I met the girl that she was pregnant. Here in America. Long Island somewhere.

LEVINE: What were the relations like between Greek people and the Egyptians?

HARITON: They were very fine. Very good. They were very nice. In each apartment, you know, the way we have here, a doorman – we always had an Egyptian man. He was dressed all in white and he watched who goes in, who goes out, you know, for stealing and things like that. People there, among themselves, they didn't have trouble.

KATARIDES: It was political.

LEVINE: I see.

HARITON: After, what happened, it was more political. After, you know that England had the country and actually didn't take care of them. I mean, we can't say too much...

KATARIDES: (talking over Anastasia) Politically they didn't...

HARITON: ... because we were young, but as mother says, you know, all the Arabs, the Egyptians, they were all picking cigarettes from the street...

KATARIDES: (talking over Anastasia) They were poor.

HARITON: ...to get the tobacco from inside to make a cigarette.

KATARIDES: ... to smoke.

HARITON: ... and sell it.

KATARIDES: (interjecting) Well, following...

HARITON: (over Sophia) People were really suffering.

KATARIDES: (interrupting) Let me say the continuation of this ah....

HARITON: I remember when I came to America. No. How am I gonna say. I took a trip to Egypt and I went to pyramids. That was 1950.

KATARIDES: (interjects) '47.

HARITON: '50 or '47. You should have seen then what Egypt was. I mean the people like...

KATARIDES: The workers.

HARITON: No, not the workers. If you were in business and you had money, you lived beautiful. But the poor people suffer.

KATARIDES: Still suffer.

HARITON: Especially the Arabs.

KATARIDES: Well, after, when did I leave...

LEVINE: Can I ask you, what did your mother and father speak at home in Alexandria?

BOTHARITON:(at the same time) Greek. Greek.

LEVINE: So you grew up with Greek as your first language.

HARITON: Greek, only in Greek. We had a beautiful church in Alexandria.

KATARIDES: Well, hospitals, schools, orphanages... All run by Greek people.

HARITON: (over Sophia) and we had – let me see – Itany, wait a minute. Itany. Somebody by the name of [Zervoudakis??], that he had donated hospitals and schools.

KATARIDES: Millions of dollars.

HARITON: Big places. Not anything....

KATARIDES: There were a lot of Greek people in Alexandria, or in Cairo in Egypt. And they were all the wealthiest people. And they did a lot of good to the city of Alexandria.

HARITON: (interjecting) The same thing with the Italians.

KATARIDES: Well, they supported the poorer Greeks there by sending their children to school or orphanages or whatever. So, I mean, it was a cultivated country.

HARITON: (interrupting) Even the Italians. I mean, Sophie – they weren't only Greek. They were Italians, French, Americans...

KATARIDES: Well, I know, I'm talking about the Greeks.

HARITON: And they had business. You know, they weren't... Of course, not what we have in America. The big.. but there were big businessmen.

KATARIDES: They used to travel, you know, go to the East. But it was under the English rule at that time.

LEVINE: What was your father's name?

BOTHARITON:Fortius Apansoglo.

LEVINE: And your mother's name?

BOTHARITON: Antonia.

KATARIDES: Antonia.

HARITON: Antoinette.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

KATARIDES: Wait a minute.

HARITON: It's a long name.

KATARIDES: I-O-N-A. No. I-O-N-O-U (faltering) I-O-N-O-U.

LEVINE: Okay. And you were the two oldest children?

HARITON: I was the oldest.

LEVINE: You were the oldest, and then her.

KATARIDES: I was the second.

HARITON: Then I have two more.

LEVINE: You have two other sisters.

HARITON: They still living.

KATARIDES: And there was a boy that died in between my third sister and my fourth.
The youngest one.

LEVINE: And were you a religious family?

BOTHARITON: Yes.

KATARIDES: We went to Greek Orthodox Church.

HARITON: We used to go to school.

KATARIDES: (at the same time) We went to school. They never allowed us to play in the street. We always went up the roof.

LEVINE: Why was that, do you know?

HARITON: Because it wasn't America. You know, down there, the people at my, our, years, you know, the whole world was different. People, they lived a little

better. They wouldn't let them go and play. They didn't know whose children...

KATARIDES: (interrupting) Because one thing, because more or less you were in a foreign country. Another thing that mother used to tell us to be careful because a lot of men used to come from the East, like Asia and all that, and they used to pick up girls, or the Turks, to keep them in the harem.

HARITON: Well, they did that to me.

KATARIDES: So they were aware of that, and therefore, they wouldn't let us play.

HARITON: Look at what happened to me. I was about maybe ten years old, and one day, my mother says to me, you know where the lady..

KATARIDES: (interrupting) My godfather.

HARITON: You go to her house and you tell her that we gonna go like Wednesday, Thursday to go and see her. Which we never, it was never done before. So it was about, eleven o'clock, twelve o'clock in the morning. I said, I knew how to go. And I was going, so, before I went to her house, they used to have little parks where we used to sit and play. And I got tired. It wasn't too far that I walked. Maybe five blocks. And a man comes next to me, and he

says, oh, he says. What's your name? I was telling him my name and all that. But I remember always, my mother said, never go with anybody.

KATARIDES: Never.

HARITON: Never tell them anything. So then, after he start talking to me, and he got hold of my hand and he says to me, oh, you have nice hands. You come with me and I'll go and buy you a bracelet. And I said to him, when he told me that, I'll buy you a bracelet, then something bad went to my mind. Even that I was a child. And I said, no thank you. He says, where you going?

KATARIDES: My godfather's store. Tavern was along the shore.

HARITON: But it was by the sea. By the water. Beautiful places. So I says, I'm gonna go there. When he heard that, that I was gonna cross the street to go to that place, he let me go. So when I got back home to my mother, and I went back. I don't think I went to the [], and my mother says, where did you go? I said, Mama, a man wanted to buy me something. A wristwatch.

KATARIDES: A bracelet.

HARITON: Well, a bracelet. Something like that. So my mother, since then, she never let us go.

KATARIDES: Oh, never.

HARITON: And she says, you did a wonderful thing that you didn't go with that man.

KATARIDES: Well, they used to teach us to protect ourselves.

HARITON: It was, I don't know. I must have been, I guess, about ten years old.

KATARIDES: Then, then ah, then we came to America. And like I said, my father, oh, my father said to my mother, over the, you know he was, he came with a motor boat, and he was right next to the ship. And he says, come on, get ready to come down. My mother said, I'm in third class. When he heard that, he held on the boat. Cause he felt like he was going to fall.

HARITON: Got sick.

KATARIDES: And he says, now I saw all of you. And now you're going back. He knew right away we were in third class above him. So he runs over to his friend. And he put ten thousand dollars to show that he can support the family. Well, the next day, in Ellis Island, we pass through the doctors and we slept over night. We got up. They served us milk and donuts and cookies and

things. And we went through physical examination, which was the right thing to do. They don't do that today.

HARITON: You know how...

KATARIDES: And they let us out. Meanwhile my father had come with a basket full of nice things, you know, cookies and all that. And they never examined or said...

HARITON: (interrupting) We passed from the examination. We passed. I remember that.

KATARIDES: We passed the examination but they never, when, to see my father could afford us. They let everybody go cause it was the last boat coming in. And they let everybody out.

LEVINE: So he had made preparations, to be able to show, but he didn't have to do it.

HARITON: Well, after that, he, well, we ah, we lived nicely. He tried his best. Ah, I came out of school, I only had two years of school, English, here. Then I had to go and work. And he told me, he said, Sophia, I'm sorry that I'm not able to send you to school. Cause he was a great believer. I said, that's all right Daddy. So I went down to 14th Street, looking for, maybe to pack

chocolates or something. And I lost the nickel that I was supposed to put in the elevator.

KATARIDES: A train elevator.

LEVINE: Elevated train.

HARITON: And I lost it, and I said, how am I going to I was on 14th Street. So I go, there was a nice tall Irish man directing the traffic, and I go, I was a pee-wee, I hadn't grown yet. Stood next to him. And he says, what do you want? You know he was, I got scared. I said, I lost my nickel and I can't go up to 145th? He said, stand here. I was directing the traffic. So finally, he gives me a nickel and he says, all right. Go on your way. I was holding the nickel not to lose it. I didn't even put it in my pocket. I came back after a few steps, and I said, would you give me your name and address so I can send you back the money? I was so, (they all laugh), naive. He says, keep going. Hold on to that nickel. Don't lose it.

LEVINE: Okay. We're going to pause here so we can turn the tape over.

END SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

LEVINE: Okay, we're resuming with side B of Tape One. I'm speaking with Sophia Katarides. And Anastasia Harinton. Okay, now before we talk about where

you went from Ellis Island, is there anything else about Alexandria that sticks in your mind, or when you think back, you think about?

HARITON: I remember, what to remember from Alexandria? We used to remember my friends. Because when I came here I couldn't speak English and have friends to talk English, so I, we always remind that. And we used to cry, and mother says, you gonna learn the language. And you're gonna make new friends.

KATARIDES: I remember that somehow or other my family was a very peaceful family. I don't remember anything to say that, what impressed me. They were trying their best for us. My father was a very knowledgeable man. He thought that education was a very important part of anyone's life, and he even felt very bad that he couldn't send me at the time. Cause I did show indications that I wanted, which I did. So we come from a very happy family.

HARITON: We've been healthy, thank god, all these years.

KATARIDES: Never.

HARITON: I want to tell you another story. When I was, before I went to school, I couldn't go to school because I have tonsillitis, and what I remember, they said that they were gonna cut out my tonsils, and my father took me and my

other sister Diane, and we went to – what’s the hospital we have downtown in New York? The big hospital?

LEVINE: The Eye and Ear?

KATARIDES: The old one.

HARITON: It’s another one. I forgot the name. It’s a big hospital. It’s still there. So I remember, my father said my mother, they’re gonna cut her tonsils. And my sister and I, we were sitting in a lot of people, few more children, sitting on their own, and they bought us a bucket, a big bucket. I didn’t speak English this is all that I understood. So I was holding it. And then, about ten children, a line, they were gonna cut the tonsils. And the doctor came around and he says to me, open your mouth. And I opened my mouth and he cut my tonsils. He left me with something and then he went next to the other girls. But my tonsils, my tonsils must have been bad. I always suffer with tonsils. With a little cold. And I stayed in the hospital. The other children left, but I stayed. They kept me in the hospital because my tonsils must have been bad. So I remember, about two, three doctors came around me and they were doing my (gestures) pretty hair and they were talking. (laughing) I didn’t know what they were saying. They were petting my back and the doctors were talking. And he says, open your mouth. Ah. I open my mouth, he says, she’s all right. So the next day, my father came in.

I guess I was all right. But it's so funny how those doctors were around me and I remember that.

KATARIDES: They're kind. Americans are always kind people.

HARITON: But none of them spoke...

KATARIDES: All English.

HARITON: Greek or another language so I could...

LEVINE: So where did you go when you left Ellis Island? You were allowed, you were free to go from Ellis Island. And your father was there. Where did you go?

KATARIDES: We lived on...

HARITON: Sixty Fifth Street

KATARIDES: The first one or two weeks, I don't know, three weeks, we had rented a room, two rooms. After that, he found...

HARITON: We went to friends' homes.

KATARIDES: 242 West 67th Street, New York.

HARITON: That was the first place.

KATARIDES: And that was, the reason he picked that area was because my mother spoke Italian and that was an Italian section. So that gave my mother a chance to, she made friends because she spoke in Italian. She had a little difficulty because she was speaking the Northern Italian and they were from the ah,

LEVINE: Sicily.

KATARIDES: But she managed and apparently she got along and finally, later on...

HARITON: Well my father had friends, Greek friends, you know that we used to come and talk and visit mother.

KATARIDES: He was trying to find, do enough to bring us to a better section, which we moved up to 145th and 8th Avenue.

HARITON: 8th Avenue! It wasn't 8th Avenue.

KATARIDES: Yes, I remember that. So, we got there, and finally my father was doing a little bit better and he went and he bought some land, out in Long Island. I used to remember the name. Way, way, way out. Not Astoria.

LEVINE: North Shore?

KATARIDES: If we have those shares, we'd be millionaires. So I'll come to that part. Well, ah, we girls, Tessie and I, Anastasia and I work, and my other sister too. But then, by 1931, my father died. And left us no relatives whatsoever. Just mother and the four of us. And we used to work in the millinery. We helped support for the rent, food. Food, mother managed because she spoke Italian and there was up at Amsterdam, we were at that time between 142, between Riverside and Amsterdam, or Broadway, or whatever it was. And then she used to go to Amsterdam to the vegetable man that spoke Italian and that's where my mother shopped. So we kept the house, and that was season work. We worked for the summer, the winter hats.

LEVINE: The two of you were working in the millinery? In a shop?

HARITON: 38th Street, close to 5th Avenue. The one I remember, even the name who had Abe Belmonte. And was a very famous....

KATARIDES: Was very well known man.

HARITON: A well-known company. Had a lot of people working there.

KATARIDES: It was the millinery section.

HARITON: It was like, he was almost a millionaire that man.

KATARIDES: It was the millinery section.

HARITON: Close to 5th Avenue. On 38th Street.

KATARIDES: But after my father died, it was very, very hard for us. But we managed. Each season we'd buy, whoever needed something. And we, after that, well, we made friends through church and all that. And ah, my father died at the Presbyterian Hospital, because that shock that he had was a stroke, that developed...

HARITON: A tumor.

KATARIDES: A tumor and they were ready to...

HARITON: To operate on him...

KATARIDES: To operate on him when he got the hiccups. But prior to that, he spoke Italian, and the barber at the hospital spoke Italian. My father, at that time, he wasn't himself. So he sent me a letter which I still have and it said, Sophia, come, and then a scribble, and then he said, I'm almost going crazy. He scribbled. Come and take me out. And three days after that, he died. And that's when we were all alone. I mean completely.

HARITON: They even kept whatever it was...

KATARIDES: And I forgot to tell them, they kept asking me, what was wrong with your father? I said, he never had a cold or anything. I forgot to tell them about that stroke. And that's what it was.

LEVINE: And you were saying, they kept what?

KATARIDES: Oh, meanwhile, my father bought this land that was...

HARITON: Lots.

KATARIDES: ... in Long Island. And he got from the corner down five, for each one of us. And we used to go to the bank and pay five cents.

HARITON: Five dollars. (laughing)

KATARIDES: Five dollars, but we didn't know what it was all about. And we didn't have relatives to tell us to keep that. So finally we were, we were young and we needed things. And we gave it up. And the bank got it.

HARITON: We could have been millionaires if we had those five lots.

KATARIDES: I used to remember the name. Not the beginning of the island where it was built. But further back. That today probably is a beautiful area.

HARITON: I think it's like...

KATARIDES: I know the department stores were built out there from Fifth Avenue, the branches, you know. And so that's why we were left with nothing.

LEVINE: Oh, boy. Well, how was it learning English for each of you?

HARITON: All by ourselves. Well, I went to school but then I got sick. She went to school.

KATARIDES: I went two years

HARITON: And I learned English by working with the girls.

KATARIDES: I went two years to public school before I went to work. And I enjoyed it because, and I picked it up pretty fast. I remember. I don't know whether Miss Schwanker, her name was, I don't remember if she did it purposely, helping me, by leaving me in the class, and was, I was good in geography. And she'd go out, I don't know what she did. And I'd direct the, I remember the classroom asking questions. Where's this river? Where is that? And I enjoyed it! But then when we went into the millinery, I hated it.

HARITON: She didn't like it.

KATARIDES: My hats were coming flying back. Every time, the poor lady was disgusted with me. Five o'clock came, I'd drop my scissors and my thimble and run out to – I used to go to automat. Get my, my mother might not have something to eat...

LEVINE: Why don't you describe the automat for somebody who might not know what it was.

KATARIDES: Well, we'd go to the automat. The automat in those days were little windows up and down, all around –

HARITON: (interrupting) It's like a restaurant .

KATARIDES: And you dropped you nickel in, your money and you turn it and you open.

And ah, you, and it was just, it was called the Automat.

HARITON: Just a minute. It took the place of a cafeteria. They have you, it's not a rest... Was like a cafeteria. And you had a wall. And each one, it had little doors and in there, used to put the food. And you had to put your nickel or the dime, whatever it worth, and when you put your money in there, the little door opened and you took the plate – ice cream, coffee, or sandwich (talking over each other...)

KATARIDES: It was the Automat. It was called the Automat...

HARITON: And then you'd close and you'd get your plate. And they had tables. Very pretty.

KATARIDES: Very clean.

HARITON: They had them on Fifth Avenue. They had them all over New York City.

KATARIDES: Not only then...

LEVINE: Can you think of other things like that, that maybe you had never seen before, but that you can only get here in America. When you came here? New things? New things that struck you?

HARITON: Yes. One thing was, at that time, I didn't like the styles of the women. They were wearing those very pointy shoes. And mother had beautiful vamp, you know, round. Because the fashions used to come in Egypt from Paris and we were more dressed in the latest styles. And when we came here and we saw those shoes that we had to button up, we were surprised. We were disappointed. Whereas, she, Anastasia, was very fond, and she is still today, of old things. And she wanted to bring my mother's wedding, not the wedding gown, but the wedding dress that they used to wear...

HARITON: After fifteen days...

KATARIDES: ... going to their friends to thank them for the wedding, when they were invited to a wedding, then they'd go and reciprocate by visiting. And my mother said, oh, we're going to America. She said, what am I going to do with this and that?

HARITON: And she threw it out!

KATARIDES: So she didn't. My mother thought, well, we'll come here. You know she thought she was going to see beautiful things, better than what was over there. And we were all disappointed. And then another thing that we were surprised was, that they had these fire escapes. And at that time New York City was run by coal. Everything was black. And we didn't have that in Alexandria. So the fireplace, well, why do they have a fireplace. And then they explained it to us, in case of fire. So it was a little disappointing for us but it was a very fortunate thing that we came here.

HARITON: That we came here.

KATARIDES: And I love this country to my dying day. And I'm thankful, but I'm also afraid of what's going on today that this beautiful country. I don't know how it can survive. Because they let it go. They don't teach children anything, history, or important things, like we did in our day. Of course, I didn't have much schooling, but I managed. And this is the only country in the world. If America fails, don't ever expect to find another independent country like America. I love it to death. And if I had a larger family, I would... I would have liked to become a teacher, but I was unfortunate that I couldn't be educated, and then I had to work to live.

LEVINE: When, you married. How did you meet your husband?

KATARIDES: Through the church. Through the Greek Orthodox Church. We lived in, at that time we were up in Washington Heights.

LEVINE: And what was his name? Or what is his name? Your husband?

KATARIDES: John. No. No.

HARITON: George.

KATARIDES: John [Prinos]. I had divorce.

LEVINE: Oh. And you have children.

KATARIDES: I have one son...

HARITON: That young man that you saw.

LEVINE: And his name?

KATARIDES: His name is John [Anprino]. And I was good in art. And I used to go even in National Academy on 110th Street, was it? Years ago? You're too young to remember that. On Lexington Avenue. I used to go in the evening.

School. I tried my best. As much as I could. But my love for this country...

HARITON: And you used to go painting, drawing.

KATARIDES: I went oil painting and so forth and so on. Then I re-married again, but anyway. The whole thing behind my thought is that what I read today, I feel very sad about it. Things are, I don't know, I hope people will understand and do the right thing. But I follow what's going on and I'm very disappointed. I'm disappointed because they're not doing the things that America was built for. And sent so much knowledge to the world, besides myself.

LEVINE: Maybe you could say something. How do you see America as different from other countries?

KATARIDES: Very much different.

HARITON: Oh, my goodness. How we see it? I mean, the government is the most wonderful thing. The idea, and the way the people in the White House and all the...

KATARIDES: (talking over each other) the politicians.

HARITON: The politicians, they get together and they talk and they see what it is and you see them talking nice and they try their best.

KATARIDES: (talking at the same time) They're doing the right thing.

HARITON: But the thing is, you know we have the Republicans and we have the Democrats and each one have maybe too...

KATARIDES: Well, what they're aiming at and the country's aiming at the wrong direction. Because they're doing, they believe, well, I'm not a thinking woman. I'm a Republican. Not because I want to be different, but because they have a little bit better ideas. And if people don't use... They stopped a lot of things in education. The education is not like it used to be. They cut down on all the things that it's progress. I mean, not that America is falling down, but America will fall one day if they keep it up. Too much freedom is not good.

HARITON: I watched Roosevelt's elections and the whole...

KATARIDES: Since then...

HARITON: Every time Roosevelt came on, and I saw Mrs. Roosevelt on 42nd Street and Sixth Avenue. And she was tall and by herself. She must have been shopping. And I was out there.

KATARIDES: (over Anastasia) Well, she was a great woman.

HARITON: And she was walking. And I said, oh, my god. Mrs. Roosevelt.

KATARIDES: And another thing, we worked at that time, and unemployment started. And we were ashamed to go and pick up...

HARITON: I was ashamed to get that.

KATARIDES: And today, they live on that for so many years, that America is going broke. I mean, enough is enough.

LEVINE: Well, Anastasia could you just say how you met your husband and your husband's name?

HARITON: How I met my husband? I met him in church when there was a Greek wedding. So I was sitting with my mother because we never went without my mother or boyfriend, so it wasn't going like that. So he was coming down and he saw me from the stairs and he stopped and he looked at me. I

didn't know that he was looking at me. And he says, that's the girl I like. And he came down, and he asked me to dance with him, you know, after the wedding. And I danced, and he said to me, you know he said, you're not allowed to dance with anybody else. It struck me funny (laughing) I was very bashful. And I said to myself, what nerve this fellow... And I think that was the first time in my life that somebody to come to ask me without who he was, that I got up and dance. But he was the most wonderful man.

LEVINE: And what was his name?

KATARIDES: Chris.

HARITON: Chris Hariton. And he was from Cyprus and he was from a very wealthy family. And he came here too, because they were having trouble in Cyprus. The family, rich people and they were fighting there for money too.

LEVINE: And did you have children?

HARITON: No. This is the sad part. But I'm still contact with his family. I go to Cyprus, I see them. I send them money. Gifts. Small. And they live very happy down there. Nice. Big family.

KATARIDES: Well, I must say that we were fortunate in one respect that we came from a family that had no problems.

LEVINE: Let me ask you this. What impact, if any, do you think coming here, immigrating here, immigrating here at a young age and really starting a new life here, do you think that immigration event in your life had an influence on the kind of person you became?

HARITON: I'll tell you (talking over Sophie)...

KATARIDES: Well...

HARITON: Well, I'll tell you – Sophie, I'm going to give her the answer – I believe that that comes originally to each person. They have different feelings. Now I, for my feelings, I didn't forget my Greek. I didn't forget anything what I passed. A lot of people that came at my age, they don't remember, they don't care. But I love... I watch, I like my country, to talk Greek and all that. The Greek things. But I like, I'm an American citizen and I love America and I can tell them and compare. That country and United States too. Know what I mean?

KATARIDES: We know that.

HARITON: I give my life for United States because there's no other country.

KATARIDES: Oh, I just love this country (under Anastasia's talking).

HARITON: And we live, I mean, we weren't poor. We weren't wealthy, but we live, let's say, in a good, educated, people around.

KATARIDES: We tried to get as much knowledge as we could, and do the right thing. And I believe in the family. I think the family's the start of everyone's life. It's how you're raised. And I feel that indirectly, sometimes from too much love, it turns out bad. You have to control your feelings as a parent, opposite to the child. The child, I don't know, the child, his mind is developed, but not enough so the knowledge should really come from the parents. From the parents. How you go about it, what to do, how you behave when they do a little thing. Not spanking, but in a knowledgeable way. To teach them. To give them little stories in a childish form, to understand as they grow. And that's where the family comes in. To keep going. The parents have to be one, in a way. To increase the knowledge of the child. Because a child comes to this world and everything is beautiful. They see and they absorb a lot of things that they see or they hear. So you, as a grown-up, you have to follow. Like I would sit down and I would – not that I did great things – I did as much what this brain told me. I would sit down with my son and tell him stories. And if he did – now he was a child. He loved baseball and he let go of his math. Just like every other child.

Well, I noticed. I had to control him. I had to find a way. That's where parents have to do today. But they let – oh, he's a child. He's a child. He is a child, you know? The child doesn't know anything . You don't blame the children. It's the grown-ups that don't give that knowledge to the children. And of course now our schools are not what they used to be. At least then they respected the teacher. Now everybody's on. They do whatever...

HARITON: Sophia (laughing)...

KATARIDES: But they...

HARITON: This is the first social security that came in the United States.

KATARIDES: Bless America.

LEVINE: So you got a card when the social security first began.

KATARIDES: Yeah.

HARITON: This is the first one we got. And I remember that you could go and buy things. I was ashamed. Like if you worked three months, two, three weeks you didn't where they were giving the money. I don't remember. I was

ashamed to go in there. I said, I'm not going to stand to give me money for what? I couldn't understand.

KATARIDES: We had a little pride.

LEVINE: Do you remember when you became a citizen?

KATARIDES: Oh, yeah.

HARITON: Yeah. Sure.

LEVINE: Was that a big event?

KATARIDES: Well, my father...

HARITON: Oh, my father had become a citizen.

KATARIDES: And you know what? After 19- (stopping to think) 1940, after my father died...

HARITON: No. Not 1940.

KATARIDES: A law came out. If your father was a citizen...

HARITON: If you're under 16 you know the children became an automatic American.
A certain age.

KATARIDES: Automatically.

LEVINE: You brought up before, we don't have too much time left, but if you could say, apparently your father died about 10 years after you got here, and it was really the Depression time.

TOGETHER: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: How did the Depression affect you and your mother and your sisters?

KATARIDES: Well it was very difficult for us, because like I said before we had no one to give us a hand. No relatives.

HARITON: We worked. And we lived. And we were trying to go about it, you know, if you had \$10 the bread was like five cents to go and buy.

KATARIDES: We tried to clothe ourselves, to pay the bills of the house, and food...

HARITON: And another thing, excuse me, about dressing. For instance, this year, you're gonna buy a coat. The other one will buy the next year. Or something like that. You had to manage.

KATARIDES: We divided. We divided the money in a way that we should have.

HARITON: We didn't divide. Everybody put the same, the whole family. Not this is my pay and that's her pay. All the pay was one. I worked. She worked. It was one pot (banging lightly on table). And that's why it worked.

KATARIDES: And we gave it to my mother, and we paid the rent and the food. And if she need any help. And eventually it was, we managed to get furniture. And we lived nicely. My mother cooked wonderful. I mean we had no sickness.

HARITON: Oh, we had furniture. She was a good cook.

KATARIDES: We were all healthy.

HARITON: Thank God for that.

LEVINE: Do you remember any dishes your mother made?

KATARIDES: I was the dishwasher.

HARITON: No. No. The dishes. (tells her in Greek) The food. Oh, we still do it.

LEVINE: What do you make today?

HARITON: Well today...

KATARIDES: We make pasticcio.

HARITON: Pasticcio. Pasticcio is you boil the macaroni and then you...

KATARIDES: You make the sauce.

HARITON: You make a sauce and you put it in the oven.

KATARIDES: And sometimes you put...

HARITON: With milk and eggs.

KATARIDES: And then you fill it with ground meat.

HARITON: And cheese. Ground meat and we make the meatballs. And then we get from the vine...

KATARIDES: Vine leaves. Grape vine.

HARITON: We get that and we stuff them either plain rice or hamburger with rice
(Laughing), and we make all different food. We still do the Greek cooking.

KATARIDES: We do all that. Delicious.

HARITON: And baking.

LEVINE: Let me ask you this, when you were little girls in the Greek community in
Alexandria, did you have any songs or poems that you can recall? And
maybe you could either recite or sing one of them.

HARITON: I remember the English soldiers used to come in Egypt. They were going to
war.

KATARIDES: They were the Australians.

HARITON: The Australians, whatever.

KATARIDES: For World War I.

HARITON: They were singing Tipperary. (They sing the first line of a “Long Way to Tipperary”).

KATARIDES: We didn’t know what we were singing.

HARITON: But we were singing because everybody was singing.

KATARIDES: The Australians were coming in, in Egypt. And they were fighting. They were in the war of, the first World War. That America went into. The Australians used to come. I don’t know why, I guess the Navy or something.

HARITON: Oh, I remember a lot of things.

KATARIDES: My other sister, Diane, she was a blonde, and when she was about four years old, my mother lost her. And we couldn’t find her. And she, somehow or other, I don’t know how she got downstairs, because mother was very strict about it. And she went, there was a bar, and it was filled with soldiers.

HARITON: Where Papa was, his barbershop was there.

KATARIDES: Soldiers from Australia. And they had her up on the bar, and they were singing with her because I guess they remembered their children, you know.

LEVINE: So no other songs of your own?

HARITON: Oh, Greek songs?

KATARIDES: I knew a lot of songs, but now at my age. I forgot.

HARITON: She used to sing to.

LEVINE: Well if you can remember any....

KATARIDES: (they think together in Greek) You know, at my age I forgot a lot of things.
You know, it's not easy.

LEVINE: You remember a lot too.

HARITON: I remember (says a few words from a Greek song).

KATARIDES: I forgot that too.

HARITON: I remember it. Pos to lene ["How do you say it?"] – like the way you say
God Bless America? Yeah.

TOGETHER: *Se gnoriso apo tin kopsi,
Tou spathiou tin tromeri,
Se gnoriso apo tin opsi,
Pou me via metra tin yi.
Ap' ta kokala vialmeni,
Ton Ellinon ta iera,
Ke san prota andriomeni,
Haire, o haire, Eleftheria!
Ke san prota andriomeni,
Haire, o haire, Eleftheria!*

KATARIDES: It's about...

HARITON: The hymn.

KATARIDES: The national hymn about independence.

HARITON: The national hymn of Greece.

LEVINE: Wonderful. Well, that's a perfect place to close. I want to thank you both so much. Most enjoyable.

HARITON: I enjoyed it and I'm surprised. Because I didn't expect it.

KATARIDES: I want to thank you for having the patience to hear us.

HARITON: And if you're in Virginia, we'll give you our address and you come and see us.

LEVINE: Thank you. I've been speaking with Anastasia Harinton and Sophia Katarides, and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service on October 17, 1997 here at the Ellis Island Studio signing off.

END INTERVIEW