

KECK-106

TESSIE (ANASTASIA) KALOGARADOS ARGIANAS
BIRTH DATE: AUGUST 28, 1903
INTERVIEW DATE: DECEMBER 19, 1985
RUNNING TIME: 1:00:00
INTERVIEWER: DEBBY DANE
RECORDING ENGINEER: FLAWN WILLIAMS
INTERVIEW LOCATION: BROOKFIELD, IL
TRANSCRIPT ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 1986
TRANSCRIPT RECONCEIVED BY: CHICK LEMONICK, 11/1995
TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

GREECE, 1914
AGE 9
PASSAGE ON "THE ATHENIA"

DANE: This is Debby Dane, and I'm speaking with Tessie Argianas on Thursday, December 19, 1985. We're beginning the interview at 10:50. We're about to interview Tessie Argianas about her immigration experience from Greece in 1914. She was nine and a half years old. Mrs. Argianas is Interview Number 106. Mrs Argianas, let's start at the beginning. If you'd tell me what town you were born in, and what year you were born.

ARGIANAS: I was born in 1903, August 28th.

DANE: Where?

ARGIANAS: In Greece. I a small town, what should I tell you?

DANE: Yeah, that's fine. And you were telling me it's Cephalaria.

ARGIANAS: In Cephalaria, the small town of Cephalaria, the island of Cephalaria.

DANE: Was it a fishing village?

ARGIANAS: Oh, yes. Fishing, there's ocean all around.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. You were telling me on the phone about the church there. That mad a big impression on you. Could you describe it?

ARGIANAS: Oh, oh yes. We have the most beautiful church in the village, St. George Church. It was all built out of marble. It was a beautiful church. And every time you go by you can hear the echo of your heels going by. And, uh, especially, never go by, unless you make the sign of the cross. It was so beautiful. And the sign of St. George is up there. When I went back in 1972, they had the earthquake about 1962. I didn't

recognize it, because it was just not even the half of it. There wasn't a cemetery, was around it at all. I didn't know anybody or anywhere. I just wanted to have a high mass for my father because he took a trip in there and he passed away. There was, uh, I don't know, some kind of sickness over there and he passed away. So they buried him, and so my brother had to go over there. Because it wasn't so easy. There was no planes like today, you know. My father's gone now, he was forty-seven years old when he died. Oh, and he's been gone for about fifty-seven years, fifty -six, around there somewhere.

DANE: As a child, would you go to mass every Sunday at that church?

ARGIANAS: All the time. I remember on Good Friday my mother, she used to say, "Now, listen. If you're good children, and if you can stand it not to drink as much as even water, to drink water, to the burial of our Jesus, you're going to be with him the rest of your life. And he's not with you, he's going to be when you walk, and he's going to be with you when you're dead, and he's going to wait for you when you die." We never give us anything, we never eat nothing till four o'clock. The churches, really, in Greece is different. All day long the churches go dong, dong. It's just like a funeral. And nobody cares to eat. You go to the church, everything is purple and black and in one day, you know, for people that really believe

Jesus. And we were very strictly because Greeks is very Christian people. And I'm telling you, when I went back there, we didn't have anything. After the burial, we were followed, the procession, you know. Then we home. "Mom, can we eat now?" "Well, the only thing you can eat is a piece of bread and some olives. We can't, we don't have meat, we're not supposed to touch meat." I mean, those things that a kid learned, you know, from little kids. But you can't teach those kids any more. I can't teach them that. No matter what, I can't.

DANE: When you were young, your mother took care of you because your father left when you were--

ARGIANAS: My father left us when I was sixteen months old and my sister was only a month old. And, uh, he left, came to the United States, landed in New York City. He didn't understand the language. No place to go. He was in his twenties, his twenties. He was a young, very young man. And no place, no jobs. He couldn't send us anything. We were poor. My mother, she had to work here and there. He had a little property. But you have to wait to sell, to get the grapes, go someplace and, how they do? They smash and make the wine out of them, you fill up the barrels. Then the guy comes along without drinking in the morning, tastes them, I give you so much money for it. Well, they bottle it and everything, they send to the United States. Now, you're poor, you're in the village, you know what's

going on in this world. That's why I say, I have the voice of experience, why the world made today. I don't, I don't forget it. Now, if you, the important things, and do things, why don't you pay the right price for people that they really need it. That's all we pay. Then you take that, they buy flour, they buy those dry vegetables for, like lentils and beans, dry beans and stuff like that, and keep it for the winter so they can pass the wintertime in their homes. That's the way, Europe is, to this day, a lot of them live like that. And, uh, that's the only way that she was, we didn't have nothing. My father couldn't get no job, so there was, as I told you, that fellow in New York City. If you would ask back, you would find out who The Lambrose is. Because he was on of the richest Greeks in New York City. Every corner, I understand, I never been in New York, I understand that every part of, every corner, he own a flower shop. All those people that were going in there, Greeks. They come from other parts and everything. He had a big business and have beds in there and they work for him for nothing. They teach him how to deliver, how to make pieces, how to make flowers. For nothing. Just to have a bite to eat and a place to sleep. I mean years ago, people came in here. Just like animals. Because the government don't know you. What is our government could do? He comes from another country. How can he stay here, some money. Our government didn't have money those years. People didn't go to the government like today they go line up and say, "Hey, I got four kids, I want money."

DANE: Uh-huh. So that's what you're father did, worked in the flower shops.

ARGIANAS: He was working for nothing. So, uh, when I grew up a little bit I used to write letters to him, because my mother couldn't read and write. She used to go to have some relatives we had, was a priest. He write letters for my mother. And then she would, when my father write, then she went to priest again, she was doing odd jobs and all that. But she was a good mother. She wants us to learn everything. Because when I was in school, from six years old, I was a very talented person. I had the most beautiful work, at nine years of age, they put in experts, medicia work, I still got them to show you, from Europe. I was nine years old, I brought in this country. I still got them on my beds. I mean, they put an exhibition. I was just like a musician when the kids, they're five, nine, ten, twelve years old, I was in fancywork. I could read, I could write. I could do a lot of things, anything. And she was, tried to help me. But, uh, times weren't so nice. We didn't get no money from him or nothing. Finally he came to Chicago. And I was growing up, and I'm beginning to understand. Because I never knew I had a father, I never knew the name of a father. I never know him when I came in this country. I don't remember him. I was only sixteen months old when he left. So when we came here, I can't remember now, uh, when I saw my father I didn't like him.

DANE: You didn't know him.

ARGIANAS: I didn't want him. I couldn't say, "Dad." I didn't have no love for my dad, you know? He was, I didn't know, he was different. I want to go back. I didn't like Chicago. Chicago was so dirty. The streets were, a man was working like a slave, sweeping the streets with a, from the horses, you know, manure and stuff, and the way they worked, the people, coal. People come and sell you coal, a bucket of coal. Bucket of coal, in the morning, you want to buy a bucket of coal, and you have a stove and a bucket of coal in there. Some people, they never had a telephone. We had a telephone, though. Some people, they never had a telephone in their homes. They couldn't afford it. We had one person in there. And I liked the newspaper. And he used to come every morning and read my paper and I says, "What are you reading my paper all the time? Why don't you buy your own?" "Uh-uh," he says, "paper cost three cents. Now, I put three cents every day, at the end of the month, I can send to my kids in Greece." How do you like that? Three cents a day.

DANE: Before we stay in this country, let's stay in Greece for a little while. He would write letters here to Greece. Would you imagine what America was like? Did you ever think. "I want to go," or I don't want to go see him, I want to stay here."

ARGIANAS: Oh, no. I want to go because what I'm telling you about this Lambrose, this Greek, was a very rich man. He came in the town, in our little village. He put the most beautiful home. And here, you see our walls in here? That's the walls, is outside, because it's so clean, and the ocean, and flowers, and mountains and, uh, I remember every first of May the school put us with the white dresses and the blue ribbons, that's the Greek flag, and singing, "Welcome May" up in the mountains. The shepherds was ready to welcome the schools. And here they have milk for you, they had cheese. Everything they were making, the big dogs they had tied so we can, the kids can go around and play with them. We went up to the mountains, up in the hills. But that, that doesn't affect me. When I saw this guy, he had three girls, I think the three of those girls they became an actress, but I don't know their name. I lost track with them. But if you're going back to New York and ask for the town, you ask for Lambrose, you can find him, what I'm telling you. And I don't know, I know their names, I never forget. We used to go to school together.

DANE: And they made you think about how wonderful--

ARGIANAS: And I says, if he can, "Mom," I said, "if Mr. Lambrose can have such a beautiful home, and daddy's in that country, can't we be able--" I said, "we're living in a two room house. Can we do something in there?" And she says, "Where can you go? Can you speak the language? It's a different country." I says, "Ma, I can learn." So I keep on sending letters to my dad. "I want to come to America." Because when we finish, in the villages, when you're going to fourth grade, they don't have no more teachers for that. One teacher has first, second, third, and fourth. I was in the fourth grade, I was teaching the first grade, yeah, uh, pupils once a week, she was taking care of it. And I'm take him to another room to help, because it was only one teacher for first, second, third, and fourth grade. And the three villages was learning out of one teacher. Now, how much could he learn? And then they have to teach you how to crochet. They have to teach you how to make the fancywork. In fact, on canvas, when I came in here they took my canvas, one of the school, Greek school teachers, to this day it's on the Socrates School. I don't know if it's still in there, I haven't been, but they copy it from there and teach them, the Greek American children.

DANE: Oh, that's wonderful.

ARGIANAS: And I was only nine years old. And she asked, but she's supposed to return it back, but she never did, because she passed away a long time ago, now. You know, it was years. But I don't forget them, because I like to have those things.

DANE: Oh, yeah. That's nice it's there. But then what happened? Your father finally had enough money to send you a ticket?

ARGIANAS: No. So my father borrowed money from the bank. And, uh, he send us, my mother, and it was only my mother and the two girls. We went on two tickets, you know, on half fare, because we were under twelve. And that's the way we came. So when we came in here it was, the boat, it was terrible.

DANE: Where were you?

ARGIANAS: It was like sheep in that boat. They were like animals. I remember that. I couldn't wait to get out of there.

DANE: You left from Patras?

ARGIANAS: No, I left, no, I left from Patras to come to the United States. But we left from another boat to come to Patras from our island, because, you see, the water's not as deep as the, for the bigger boat to come in there, you know, over the--

DANE: Before you get on the ship, describe the day that you left your village.

ARGIANAS: Well, that's a funny story. You know, the coats waiting, and then she had a trunk, my mother. They were all carrying. The village follow us. And the house, our house was on a hill. And the windows was open. The shutters were open, and the dog was there crying, and you can hear the echo in the valley, like, you know, I can see down. And I didn't, I didn't care who was kissing me, who didn't say goodbye. All I was thinking of was my dog. I says, "Can I have my dog?" "They don't want your dog." And from there we went to the city, to the island. We went. we went, I still got him. Vaccinations. Look. One here, one there. We had to go to the hospital for the vaccinations before we come to this country. And then from there we wait for the boat, and then we went to Patras. When we--

DANE: Now, the vaccination, there's a story there, isn't it?

ARGIANAS: Yeah.

DANE: They gave you one--

ARGIANAS: They gave me two. One, two.

DANE: It didn't take, and then they gave you another one.

ARGIANAS: Yeah. No, they, I don't know. But they gave me two the same time. They gave me two for, maybe for different disease.

DANE: Uh-huh. And then you took the boat to Patras.

ARGIANAS: Then we take the boat to Patras. We stay there and we lost the boat.

DANE: You lost the boat?

ARGIANAS: Yeah. We missed the boat, I mean. We missed the boat. And we had to wait for two weeks. Now, it's very expensive to live. We, we were living in a hotel right by the ocean there. She couldn't afford it. She

had some money, but she was afraid to spend it all to come to the United States. And we have some friend of ours who was living out of the city. And we went to her house. They call it a little town. It's a funny name, but you're not interested for the name, but they call it the Tabahana. And it's nothing else but little homes and a lot of property around raised vines and fruit and, you know, a lot of things. So we stayed with those people. Oh, never forget it, we would sleep on the floor, for two weeks, till the next boat came. Se we came on this boat. We were on third class. We went down, they had, we went downstairs. It was smell. There was no toilets in there. There was only running water. You believe it or not?

DANE: Yeah, this is good. Keep describing it.

ARGIANAS: There was running water on the ship. Now, where were those kids going to go? There was no baths. We didn't have no baths. I don't remember. We just go and wash ourselves, you know, with some running water, some sink. (there is a knock on the door.) Excuse me. (Break in tape.)

DANE: Mrs. Argianas, we were just at, you were getting on the boat. Uh, let me ask you if you remember any impression of when you were in Patras and you looked at the ship. Had you ever seen a boat that big before.

ARGIANAS: Not that kind of ship. No, I saw the small ones in our, you know, because I'm from island. But, uh, because we have, we have two little cities in there, the cities of of the, of the map, of the country, whatever you call it. And we have, see, uh, Greece is a poor country. It's not a rich country. You know, people go over there and leave all their money to see what people did years ago. You go up to the Acropolis, break your neck. Oh, God. It wasn't even worth it. The last time I went I didn't go up there. Heck, no. And, uh, we have a smaller boats. Here people sits outside, you know, on the sidewalks, drinking coffee or whatever. And then the boat comes back and forth. And on the boat they have violins and guitars. And they come from back, back another, and you, I don't remember how much money we pay. I think it was in Greek money. Two drachmas they call it, or something. And you go, like, to the other city. If you want to shop, you know, go around

the port. And you want to come back, it goes back and forth. They go back and forth. It's so beautiful. That's one thing, it's beautiful, especially in the night. It's just, but, what the heck. We go down here I have a better time. (She laughs.) I go in Chicago, here on Chicago River. I had a, my, we went with my, uh, I belong to another lot in one of the banks and I go with the very classy people there, very classy people. And we had a dinner on the ship, you know, they call the Chicago Star, it's a new one. And now they take the Chicago Star, and it's down in Florida. And in the summertime they bring back in our waters in here, in Michigan, down here. And, we had dinner and dancing at night. Then we go across, then come back at night, and you watch the Chicago. The beautiful fountain, the gorgeous lights. It's the most beautiful dream. I tell a lot of people. I says, "You don't see nothing. Come to Chicago." I says, "Get on that ship and go across." I says, "Just, just all, during the night, you find out the world." And you see a lot of people in there. Because we go at night. We just love it down there. We go in the Graham Park, you know.

DANE: But the boat that you were on, not, when it wasn't a luxury liner and fun, what was the name of the boat?

ARGIANAS: Athena. But, I don't know how to pronounce it in English. Athens, but they call like Goddess Athena, you know. That's the name, they took up. That I remember. I remember, I can't understand why I remember that. There was Athena, the name, but, uh, there was nothing, there was nothing. People, two people died on that ship. And at night before, now, here's we come to, to New York.

DANE: Wait a second. I want to ask you about the bakery on the boat.

ARGIANAS: Oh. Oh, so we went on, every time, you know, we were downstairs, and I couldn't stand it. So upstairs on the deck, you know, the main deck of the ship there is this bakery and there is this candy store. So I go to the, first I go to the guy and I talk them Greek. It was Greek one. And he says, "Now, what you come? You got any money?" I says, "When am I going to get any money?" I says, "What do you think I'm going to America for? I'm going to have money when I go to America. Now, give it to me and give me your address. I'll send you money." (She laughs.) But I didn't tell you that, and we were laughing. He says, "Here's a lollipop for you." And then from there I go to the bakery. I knock. "Now what do you

want?" I says, "I just want to see how you--" I says, I can't stand downstairs. All the women." I says, "Nobody talks." I says, "There's no kids to play around." They says, "All right, you come on in here. You come in here."

DANE: Would you do this every day?

ARGIANAS: Every day, two three times a day I watch them make the bread, and they would give me fresh bread. Well, anyway, when we arrived in Chicago, I mean, New York, I went to the bakery back and I says to them, I says, "I don't want your bread any more. I want to thank you for being so nice. I will never forget you." And, I says, "You gave me a lot of bread." They says, "Oh, you not through with us, little girl." I says, "Why not?" "Wait a minute. We have to give you a little gift. We can't give you a good gift. Well, we're going to give you a loaf of bread like this." I says, "What would I do with a loaf of bread? I don't want a loaf of bread. I'm going to Chicago, I'm going to America. I don't need it. I'm going to get off now." He says, "I don't care what you're going to do with it." He says, "Throw it to the porpoise, like you always do. Feed them." So I got there and I go, everybody, you know, there was inspectors from United States. You know, they're coming up and inspecting the people in those years. And they wait for them in the morning, and we landed at night. Okay. Finally I said t myself, "What am I going to do with this bread?" So

I, there was one man dressed well-to-do. I says, well he seems very nice gentleman. He dress better than some of them in here. I'm going to pull his coat, and I'm going to say, "Mister?" And he call me, in Greek, Kitty. "Kitty, (Greek phrase), please." And he says, "What do you want little girl?" "Would you like some bread?" And he says, "I surely do." I says, "Go ahead. But I have nothing to cut it with." He says, "That's all right little girl." He takes, he takes a nice big piece, and he was eating it. So I go to another one, I go to another one, and they all, they all said, "You ate all the bread." So they says, "You're a nice girl. Where'd you get the bread?" I says, "That's my forward present from my friends." We had it. Anyway, my mother says, "When you're going to behave yourself?" I says, Ma, those people are hungry. I could throw it to the sharks, I mean to the porpoises, there isn't any on there any more." And she says, "Okay, now behave yourself. We're going to be inspected up here. Let me see, fix your hair." I had hair way down to my knees. My hair was thirty-six inches long, longer than my dress, way down to my knees. And everybody was crazy about it. Everybody. Well, the first thing, when we went to Ellis Island and the boat stop and we went to Ellis Island, was a man who had a candy store in there. He looked at me, and he looked at me. And there was no other kids, but there were, all the people, they were wearing babushkas, tight like this, and they had some packages in their hands. I didn't have nothing. I don't know. So they are just looking, and they look. He says, "Come over here." And I says to my sister, I says, "He call us. Maybe

he'll give us some candy." She says, "Well, why, we try." So I took her by the hand, we walk over there. He turns around and was holding my hair and he says, "My, oh, my." That was the first words I learn in English, "My, oh, my." And I keep on saying, "My, oh, my. My, oh, my." He saw my, I says oh, he admires my hair. He says, "Don't you understand that?" That's what it is. I guess, he better give us something now. (They laugh.) He give us a piece of candy, this one. And, uh, I shook hands with him and I says, "adio, adio." That means in Greek, you now, goodbye. And he says, "Bye, bye. Bye, bye." And I learned all that from Ellis Island. When we go, when we got to Ellis Island, you know. You know, you go from the ship, they take, of course, they build it right in the ocean. Is it still there?

DANE: Uh-huh. Yes, it is.

ARGIANAS: But they don't use it?

DANE: No, not any more.

ARGIANAS: So we got in there. I don't know how we got up there, on a little ship. You know, how it goes.

DANE: The little ferry. Uh-huh.

ARGIANAS: And we got us in there. Looked like one big barn. And on the side there was a jail, you know, like we have the jails, the bars. And on this side, inhere, I still remember, each side of it, there was all the people from different nationalities in the world. They have benches, and you sit in there. And when the one is gone, then you keep on moving. And they weren't very nice. Especially that Greek. He was very, very nasty with the, he yells at one person. And, uh, they inspect you. You know, they inspect, they say on the books where you go, if you, you know how it is.

DANE: Do you remember being inspected?

ARGIANAS: I remember. I remember.

DANE: Can you describe what they did? Did they look at your eyes?

ARGIANAS: Mmm, they didn't bother me at all. Just my ma. I don't remember what they did to my ma. That I can't say because I don't remember. But all I remember, he was kind of fresh to this person, and I said, my aunt was with us, and I says to my aunt, I says, "Well, he better not talk like this to my mother, because I'm going to tell him a piece of my mind." So she says,

"You see the jail over there? You see those people in there? They're going to send them back. Do you want to go back in nineteen days, where you came and suffered? Don't say nothing, no matter what, how fresh that man is. He's not polite, but that's all right." You know, they treat the people funny those days. And they had a lot of people, they had in jail there. And the people, I guess, they send them right back or something, I don't know. All I remember, I see them inside of the bars. And they would sit on the benches.

DANE: And it looked like a big barn to you inside?

ARGIANAS: Yeah. Like a big one.

DANE: Was it clean, or was it--

ARGIANAS: Oh, yeah. It was, it was clean. And then after that they took us from there, they put us in a horse and buggy, took us to the train, and then we took the train to Chicago.

DANE: Did you spend the night on Ellis Island?

ARGIANAS: Hmm, I don't remember. Let me see, no, just hours. Just hours. I don't remember how many hours we spent until they brought us to the station.

DANE: Do you remember, maybe you don't. But some people have described, from the tickets on the boat, they would pin their number on their chest.

ARGIANAS: We didn't have numbers.

DANE: No numbers?

ARGIANAS: No. We didn't have numbers. We had papers. Because see, those years, when my father was in here, when he was here for nine years before we, we came. When my father came in here, he became American citizen. And then, those years, if the husband is an American citizen, including the whole family, okay. And then, when they, our papers shows, we're American citizen people, we're going to American citizen person. So he's responsible for us, so they don't bother you. But if they don't have anybody and you come alone, then they, they want to know everything, because why, why our government is going to support you right away when you come from? That isn't right. Why I support somebody coming here when they get

rid of them other countries. That's not fair. Of course, it's human being, you can't let them go hungry, all right, but you can help them once, twice, three times and that's it.

DANE: Do you remember if they, you were sort of young so you might not, but do you remember if they asked your mother, questions about where she was going, or how much money she had?

ARGIANAS: Yes. Oh, yes, yes, yes. They ask her. Says, "Where you going? What's your husband's name? Uh, where does he live?" And they have it in the book. And, uh, well, the answer is perfect, that they didn't bother her. And she was gone. Then we were waiting till the train is supposed to take so many people on the train. But there wasn't many Greeks when I came. It was, uh, because the boat stops in Syria, it stopped in Italy, to pick up more people. It was all different languages in there. I couldn't talk to everybody. I was going to talk, but nobody talks to me. So I was disgusted. I was running around the boat. There was no kids, there was nobody.

DANE: You also told me the story of, on the boat, that you were bored, and you knew how to dance as a little girl.

ARGIANAS: Oh, yeah. So, one night was a real nice evening. And,

uh, I don't know, I was born in, I'm a good dancer. I was born with the music in my body, it seems, from the little girl, when they have this big doings in the villages and everywhere else. They would dress me in the little Grecian outfits, you know, and I danced with them. And I'd do everything. In fact, when I went back in 1972 we had a big doings out in the farm. And everybody was there, all the teachers of United States, from New York, from Chicago, from every part of the world because once, my daughter, she's the president of the school. She's got a big job, this girl. And, uh, when we went over there, those (Greek word), you know, dressed in the Grecian style, the women. We had a stage in there. They had the lambs, the barbecued lambs, and everything else. Of course, it's twenty-seven dollars for the night. It was outside farm. They had, a little kid have ouzo already, you know, the drink, and giving to everybody. He was pouring ouzo. And they give us hot dogs, make it ourselves, before the lamb is going on one side. They have so many beautiful flowers on the table. White tablecloths. The barbecued lambs were going and going. All you can eat. In the end, the musician comes in there and says, it's afterwards, he says, "Ladies and gentlemen, is any one of you people, please, is any one to speak Greek, or is any Greek in here?" Everybody knows, me, "Tessie." And he comes over and takes me by the hand, takes me on the stage, and he says, "You're going to dance." I says, "Well, I've been gone a long time and I don't go to--" (Break in tape.)

DANE: I've just got to go back and do one thing. (Tape ends without slate.)

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DANE: This is the beginning of side two, Tessie Argianas, Interview Number 106. So you were dancing in '72 but, now, you were on the boat as a nine and a half year old. You were bored--

ARGIANAS: Right.

DANE: And then--

ARGIANAS: Then we came on the train to Chicago.

DANE: Oh, but tell me the story, you haven't told me the story, I'm sorry, I wasn't clear. And you went upstairs, because you didn't have anything to do. Did you start dancing, or how did you--

ARGIANAS: Oh, that night. So there was such a bright night on the deck. Very bright night. So everybody was,

started dancing and everything. So here they say, "How about you, little girl? You know how to dance?" I say, "You bet I know how to dance." I never forget that. And I was dancing and ah, I was, I was, the night of the party.

DANE: What kind of dancing? Do you remember? I mean--

ARGIANAS: Oh, I dance everything, everything. Greek dances, oh. Oh, God, they had the polka, they had all these round dances, you know. You ever seen Zorba the Greek? Oh, I danced there. We danced everything. We had a good time. Everybody loved me on the ship. Oh, God. I was, uh, I was the only, there was no kids, but me and my sister.

DANE: Were you dancing for the people down in steerage, or the second and first class people, or--

ARGIANAS: For everybody that night. Everybody comes on the deck when we have a big doing. Just like when you got, when you go on the loving boat. Did you ever go on the loving boat? I go.

DANE: I've seen it on TV. I never--

ARGIANAS: Oh, you never? Oh, you miss something. Look, I got pictures in there from loving boat. I just came back. It's beautiful. Oh, oh, I never saw anything as beautiful in my life.

DANE: Also, on the boat, you were talking about the food. I remember that you said--

ARGIANAS: There is nothing there. The food just stunk. It was terrible. I don't remember the food. I want eat bread. They had dishes they served you. Tin dishes. You can hear them, some, they fall on the floor, you sit in there, you have the dish like that and eat like animals. That I remember. I never liked that. They didn't have no tables or nothing.

DANE: Would they feed you down in the hold where you were staying?

ARGIANAS: In the hole is right. (She laughs.) Sometimes when it was real stormy, you know, and the deck was washed underneath the waves--

DANE: Did you get sick? Seasick?

ARGIANAS: No. I never get sick. My mom, she almost died. They

had a doctor every day for her there. It was, that's what I was worried about. Then once you fell asleep-- And, uh, when we arrived, they call us, they says, "Ma'am. Lady, lady, take care of those two kids. The boat is going to land into, uh, pretty soon." And says, "that's all right. They know how to take care of themselves." I got the clothes, we had a little luggage. We had just the clothes, the shoes, the ribbons. We were really dressed. We weren't just little foreigners coming in. We had, I had a blue dress, my sister had a pink one. I had a big bow of ribbon in, was hanging down. We were, you know, our place, the seven islands of Greece, it's not, uh, they're, uh, seven islands of Greece is very, very, uh modernized place. It's a beautiful places. The kings and queens. They have places for the summer. It's, it's more educated than other places. I've been in Sparta, through the mountains. I've been everywhere. There is no place like America. No place in the world.

DANE: You, I think this is a good place to stop for a second.

(Break in tape.) Okay. Here we go, then.

(Break in tape.) We're back on tape. We've just pulled in to New York harbor. We're, they have come to tell you that tomorrow morning we're going to be in--

ARGIANAS: Oh, that's where we left, huh? Well, anyway, when we got to the New York harbor, everybody came up on the

deck for inspection. It's going to be about ten o'clock in the morning when the inspector of the United States coming up to inspect the people. But I never know what they were doing. Everybody, you know, they put them in the line and everything. And all I had on my mind I was looking at the Statue of Liberty.

DANE: Had you heard of her before?

ARGIANAS: Oh, we had it in school. We had a picture, a big picture in school, in our school. And we have like the Indians and the Black-- You know we study all of those things. And when I saw it, I says, "Mother, mother, come here, come here." She says, "Now what? Wait a minute. The man's coming upstairs, up here." I looked at her, and I says, "You don't understand. This is the Statue of Liberty. This is the place," I says, "where people can come. The freedom of the world. America. As we studied it in the Greek school. Come on, I tell you." Now, we see a lot of people come around me. He says, "How do you know?" I says, "I have it in my school. This is the Liberty. Liberty. This is the freedom that we're going to, it's a free country, you go. You can do anything you want in that country if you're a good citizen." And I looked, and I saw a woman sweeping, you know, and cleaning. Everybody was keep on going. I still had it in my mind. I look at that statue, because I had it in school. I studied statue in school. My name is really Anastasia, you know. But the

teacher, "Anastasia, where do you got your mind again?" "Oh, I'm sorry teacher." And I says, "The statue's so pretty." And says, "Okay, study your lesson now, listen." And that's it, I remember. But, uh, it was a most beautiful thing. And the torch was burning. I still remember the light. And I keep on looking and looking. Everybody was keep on going. My mother turned back and she pulled me. Says, "Come on. We'll get out of here." I says, "Mother, isn't that beautiful?"

DANE: And you were talking about, when we were on the phone, that it was liberty for everybody.

ARGIANAS: Oh, and I said, "Yes." And so, a man came to me, and he says, "What is it, girl?" He says, "Do you know this liberty, what it means?" I says, "The Statue of Liberty, do you know what it means?" He says, "It's just a statue." I says, "No. That's then freedom of the world. That's the statue. This lady in here opened her arms for people. We come from all over the world. That torch up there, it says welcome." And, I says, that's what they taught us in school. I says, "My teacher was telling us that, and we had to write it in out book." And, uh, he says, "I never knew that. I just thought a statue's a statue." I says, "No, but

this called Statue of Liberty, which they call them in Greek (Greek phrase). That means the Statue of Liberty." And I said all that. We, and I, you know, I was pretty smart in school.

DANE: How did you say it in Greek?

ARGIANAS: (Greek word). (Greek word) means the, the statue. (Greek word) means freedom. And, oh, that's what I learned in school. And they'd say, "Why, that girl knows more than what people like us. We don't know nothing." And I looked, and I saw the woman sweeping, you know, outside. You know, I couldn't believe my-- I stayed there for over two hours just staring at her. And I always wanted to go back to New York to see it. Now, when we left to go to Italy this year, I says, "Oh, God, we went to, we went to, uh, New York and," I said, "I hope we see the Statue of Liberty." Had in mind is the Statue of Liberty. And the plane was flying over New York. I still didn't see the Statue of Liberty. I said, "Someday I'm going to take a trip." My daughter says, "Mom, next year we're going." I says, That's a date. We're going to go."

DANE: That morning, when you came into the harbor, and you learned about it in school, and you saw, was it bigger than you had imagined? Was it smaller than you had imagined?

ARGIANAS: No. I thought it was, I thought it was the biggest and prettiest thing I ever seen in my life. And it's still in me. You know, what they have, though, there, I used to say to my kids. I says, "Go ahead. Go and get me the lady. They talk about the lady, she's so poor right now, she needs money." I says, "Come on, get it." Because the company, you know, was making money. And I says, "Buy me the statue, too." So he bought it, because we're working together. But it's, uh, it's something beautiful that we have. You know, the statue is opening arms for all the people. We're all standing in here. But, tell me something, if it wasn't for you, well, or your great-grandfather or your father, or my father, would I be here today? Would I have everything I want? Would I raise my children with college? Would I raise my children with everything they want, and the real Americans? They don't care about their language, which I like. I wish they can speak, because I like to speak languages. I just love languages. But they don't. They don't care.

DANE: We were talking on the phone before about the liberty and what you had, uh, explaining to these people who didn't know what it was about, and you had said something pretty much what you were saying before, but it was liberty for everybody.

ARGIANAS: Oh, yes. I told this man. He says, when he was talking

to me, and then a couple of ladies came around. I says, this liberty, I says, it's for all over the world. You open the arms. This is America. And I says, "It's a new country, and we're going to build this new country, because this is the, this is the most beautiful thing in the world." I says, "They taught me in school." They says, "Oh, that's right. You're going to school, huh?" I says, "Yes." And I says, "This is one of the greatest." I says, "This was given from the French people." I remember all that. I says, "It's a gift for freedom." And they think about the country that we're going to it. And I says, "You better learn how to speak English." I said, "I'm hoping to." I learned English about three months later. I talk a little bit.

DANE: And you were telling us earlier a little bit about the bakery. You'd established a relationship with a baker on the boat. And you ran back to say goodbye.

ARGIANAS: Oh, yes.

DANE: And what did you tell him you were going to do in

America?

ARGIANAS: I told him that I'm going to America, and I want to remember them. And they say, "Come to see me sometimes." And they give me the loaf of bread, and I says, "I don't want it." They says, Oh, you have to take it." But I says, "I can't, I'll dirty my dress." He says, "You take it." And I went outside and I pulled a man's coat and everybody take a piece of bread and everybody was eating it. They were eating it. But they all said goodbye to me. They said, "We hate to miss you." But nineteen days on the ship, oh, God. That was the most slave, slavest thing I ever saw in my life. Nineteen days, that's too much.

DANE: You were telling me about Ellis Island. I was like a big barn, and they treated people fine, but not very nice. And you had said that you couldn't believe that the Statue of Liberty--

ARGIANAS: Not the people, not the American people. People, people. They were, nobody was any good. I don't know, they weren't friendly at all. Why they have these people in jail for? I don't know. I keep on trying to find out. Till this day I don't know why they do that.

DANE: You could see the statue from Ellis Island.

ARGIANAS: Oh, yes. Oh, the ship is right there. You just like, from here to kitchen. That's how the ship just stands like that. You can't help it, see, it's so beautiful, you know. Oh, it's still in my heart, I tell you. I just, it's so beautiful. When I see them, you know, and another man going up in the arms, you know, and cleaning it, you know. It just took my mind in there. I didn't know, inspectors, inspectors didn't bother me. Nobody ever looked at me. I had the world on my own.

DANE: This is usually a question I reserve till the end, but we'll, uh, fill in when you get to Chicago. But it's a question that seems appropriate now about your feeling, coming from Greece, being Greek born, and becoming a citizen of the United States. How was, what being an American means to you. How you feel.

ARGIANAS: Well, as a kid, when I came, the only thing I know about America, when I came to Chicago. When we came to the depot there, they put us in one of those covered wagons, like, you know, they have just the benches open. And a lot of people sit on both sides in there. And when they took me, I still remember the number, 728 South Halston where the whole house, you know, did you read the history of, uh, Adams, where the house, the whole house there? That's where I went to live. That's

where I went to learn most of reading and writing. Because my father, when I was eleven years old, he sent me to a tailor shop, and he says, "She's small, but she's sixteen years old." And I wasn't. Nobody asked you for how old you were, nobody cares who you were. So I was pulling baste from coats, man's coats, you know, in the factory, (name of company). And for five dollars a week.

DANE: And how old were you really?

ARGIANAS: Eleven. They took me out of school. So I went to Miss Adams. And, oh, I was telling you, she liked me. She said, "You're a very smart girl. You should keep going to school. You come in here, I'll help you." She was my friend.

DANE: How did you learn English?

ARGIANAS: That's when I learned.

DANE: From her, or--

ARGIANAS: From school. From school. From study dictionaries,

books. I read.

DANE: When you finally had to go to--

ARGIANAS: I read a lot.

DANE: --go to work, at eleven, did you think that's what America was going to be like right away?

ARGIANAS: No.

DANE: Did you want to go back to Greece at any point?

ARGIANAS: No. I wanted to be some people, like, they had, uh, automobiles. Not so many automobiles. The only thing was entertaining, when people died, on Sunday, we all watched the parade because it was, you know, like a parade, that death. There was horse and wagons and music, band, you know. On Sundays. All funerals was on Sundays. And you have to go, whenever you go to a funeral. That's awful. There was no entertaining at all. It was nothing. People had, uh, stoves. The houses had, uh, cold water, never had hot water. We moved to two houses, not one had hot water.

DANE: Let's-- I'm getting a little out of synch here. When

you left Ellis Island and you took the train--

ARGIANAS: Yeah.

DANE: To Chicago.

ARGIANAS: Right.

DANE: Did your father pick you up at the train station? When did you first see him?

ARGIANAS: No. No, he wait for us. We went to him.

DANE: In Chicago?

ARGIANAS: In Chicago.

DANE: And when you first saw him, was it at the place he was living?

ARGIANAS: No. It was his business. He had one of those, uh, houses with the, what they call it, uh, pool rooms, like, and they smoke this Turkish with the, you know, with those pipes. You know what I'm

talking about?

DANE: Smelly.

ARGIANAS: You know, where they have this kind, they've got water in there or something and they smoke this, they call them Turkish in there, with a hose in the mouth, and serving coffee. And he was having some primadonas coming from Greece, you know, stage in there and dancing. That was lousy at that time. There was nothing, no entertaining or nothing. Eh, there wasn't so much entertaining.

DANE: Did he have an apartment for you? A place to live?

ARGIANAS: Oh, yes. Uh-huh.

DANE: Was your mother homesick when she first got here? Did she want to go back?

ARGIANAS: Yes. I want to go back. She didn't want to go back. I want to go back.

DANE: Hoe come? You must--

ARGIANAS: I didn't like it. I didn't-- We, you know, when you come from a nice, clean village, and the house was so black from smoke, everybody had, uh, coal, and you don't know how people used to live. I'll never forget it. One time there was such a snow, and my mother sent me to get some sweets. And I fell in the snow and I couldn't get out. I was just a kid. And a man go by and he pulled me out. Snow was this high.

DANE: You weren't used to snow either, were you?

ARGIANAS: No. We never had snow. And I didn't like it. I says, "Oh, ma, I want to go back home." And she says, "Well, you got to stay here." And after I begin to grow older and I changed my jobs and, and I went to school. And then I, I met better people, then I begin to like it and like it. Then I went to a place that they were having fancywork, and I learned that.

DANE: Stitchery? Fancywork?

ARGIANAS: Fancywork, by sewing machine. And then I went by that, and then the teacher got sick, and they made me charge to it for two years. And I, then I begin to be somebody, to grow in my teenage, and I began to like America.

DANE: What company were you working for when you were doing the fine stitchery?

ARGIANAS: Singer Sewing Machine Company.

DANE: And at the same time were you going to school, or were you working and going to night school?

ARGIANAS; Night school.

DANE: Night school. Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

ARGIANAS: You have to learn. You have to learn a lot of things. People struggled those years. It isn't like today. It isn't like today. It was hard times, very hard.

DANE: Did you go around with other Greek children, or did you start meeting American children, or--

ARGIANAS: Oh, yes. I met, uh, not too many Greeks. There wasn't too many Greek children, but most of them, some, you know, in the Greek school. But, uh, see I went to both schools.

DANE: Both Greek and English.

ARGIANAS: Yeah, and English.

DANE: Uh-huh. And Greek customs, did your mom bring Greek recipes? Would she still cook a Greek kitchen?

ARGIANAS: Oh, yeah. She's a great cook. My mother, she was a cook for the Queen Olga in Athens. Oh, yes. That's what, we were there and then, when I was supposed to be born, she took me back to the island, to the islands, because it was too expensive in there. See, we had two rooms, from the queen. She was working for the queen, for the palace. And, uh, then when my father came in this country, she couldn't keep it any more, because we were three children.

DANE: Did she teach you recipes that she used to have?

ARGIANAS: Oh, yeah. I'm a good cook.

DANE: Any Greek specialties?

ARGIANAS: Oh, yeah.

DANE: Like what?

ARGIANAS: I cook everything. Name it.

DANE: Oh, I don't know. Any-- What are the favorite dishes that you used to make?

ARGIANAS: Well, the most main dishes is lamb. You know how the Greeks like lamb. You know, and a lot of people don't like lamb, because they don't know how to cook lamb. Lamb, and uh, pigs in the blanket, what we call it, and , uh, stews, and Greek kind of stews, and Greek soups, and what kind of meat you use and what kind-- I'm a good cook. I wish you were around, you could have come to dinner.

DANE: You already filled us up with all that stuff this morning.

ARGIANAS: Oh, God, no.

DANE: When you met your husband you were, you were nineteen.

ARGIANAS: I didn't met him. They matched me, those years. Sure.

DANE: Tell me that story. Your parents?

ARGIANAS: My parents. Yeah. And, uh, he used to come over to see them, and they got to know him, and he asked my parents for my, for my hand, and-- I would never do that to my kids. Hey, kids, marry who you want.

DANE: And so he was a stranger to you when you met him?

ARGIANAS: Sure. What do you think? You have to learn everything the hard way those days. It wasn't easy. Everything, it was hard for me. I made it easier for my family, because I didn't like it. I really didn't like it.

DANE: Was he from the same island?

ARGIANAS: Yes. My father was seventeen, my mother was seventeen and a half when they got married. They were young people. But she never had anything good, my mother died young.

DANE: And citizenship. You had told me earlier that you became a citizen automatically, because your father had become one when he was here. But then you married a Greek man.

ARGIANAS: Right.

DANE: And you, didn't you lose, you sacrificed your citizenship when you married him? How did that work?

ARGIANAS: Didn't I tell you that?

DANE: Not on the tape.

ARGIANAS: Well, see, when I got married I was nineteen years old, I mean eighteen. And we had an election that year, so I was notified from the government that I'm no longer recognized as an American citizen because I married a foreigner and I lost my rights. So I took two witnesses, and they gave me thirty days to naturalize myself. So then I went downtown, down in the City Hall, and it cost me ten dollars, and I got my papers back again. And I says to my husband, I says, "This is enough. Where is your papers?" "I expect my second papers." I says, "You got to go after them." So I went after him, too. And he became an American citizen.

DANE: Was that a good day that you got your citizenship?

ARGIANAS: Oh, yes. I never forget, I had my daughter in the

buggy, and we had a business in there, so we give him, one of the (?), registration in there. And there was the president of out town. So here I go and they say, "There's Tessie." I say, "I'm twenty-one. I'm going to register today." And he put a quarter in the, in that, uh, whatever you call it, in this piano, you know, and he danced with me on the floor. That's, I mean, there's so many nice things that I can remember. I wouldn't give you American for all the money, for everything in the world. I think it's the most beautiful thing that, uh, ever happens to me.

DANE: A proud day it was?

ARGIANAS: A proud day. And I'm very proud to be in America. I'm very, very, very proud.

DANE: One other thing that we talked about earlier. Your name in Greece as Anastasia.

ARGIANAS: Right.

DANE: Beautiful name.

ARGIANAS: That's my baptized name. Yeah, my daughters don't like it. Not one baptized after me, the children. They

didn't like it.

DANE: But when did you become Tessie? How did you become Tessie?

ARGIANAS: Well, when they, my uncle, when he took me to school, they put me on the third grade, when I first came. They started me from the third grade. And, uh, he registered me. Now, I don't know the language very well, you know, hardly. He says to her that my name is Anastasia. He says, "What do we cut it down, to shorten?" So they cut it down to Tessie. So I go, since then everybody knows me Tessie.

DANE: What did you think of that idea?

ARGIANAS: Well, I'm used to it now, so I don't care.

DANE: Did it feel like--

ARGIANAS: But if I should die I can't go under Tessie, because my baptize, and I got to be buried from my church. My name is Anastasia, Anastasia, see. And that's my name. So that's where they're going to, that's what I'm going to be baptized from, and that's what I'm going to be.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Did it make you feel more American to be called Tessie rather than--

ARGIANAS: Yeah. It does. Everybody knows me, from a kid I grew up like that now. You know, the years go by and I just don't care.

DANE: What was your maiden name?

ARGIANAS: If I tell you I wouldn't believe it. I got a brother, he's a school teacher, and he cut it down in half. My name is, he cut it in Kellog, but the real name, my middle name, is Kalogarados, Kalogarados. And that's long. So my brother, he's school teacher, so he cut it down to Kellog. And, uh, he's got two sons. One is in the Air Force. He had a hundred and forty missions during the war in 1950. And the other one is teaching the Academy school. They're all educated people. They're a hundred percent American, all of them. Of course, they were born here, too.

DANE: There was one other story, it's been helter-skelter, and you've been wanting to--

ARGIANAS: Yeah. Sometimes I forget, too.

DANE: Uh. the banana story.

ARGIANAS: Oh, God, that was something. Oh, you know, when we were in the train coming to New York, there was the funniest thing that happened in my life. I says to my mother, "Mom, can you spend a nickel?" And she says, "You always want change. Okay, here's a nickel." I says, "I want to buy that, that long thing there. I says, "What is that?" I says, "It's a fruit." "All right. You get it." So my mother, I went over there, and in the train, those years, they had nothing on it but colored people. I never saw one white in the train. All served in white, the black people. So he gave me the bananas. So my mother says, "Let me taste it first." So before she peeled the banana, she puts it in her mouth. Now, you know, how the heck you're going to eat the bananas. This is funny. How you're going to eat the banana. So she says, so she said something funny, funny word. "Yuck." And I looked at her, I says, "What's the matter? Isn't it no good, mom?" She says, "Nah. You know, you know what it is." She said it very funny and very plain. And, uh, I says, "Give it to me." So I looked around. I says, "Look at the lady over there. Sop what?" I says, "You see how she peeled

the banana? You got to eat the inside of the banana. You understand me, mother?" She says, "Here you want to eat it, eat it, but I don't want to eat that?" So I take it you know. Oh, is this taste good. I said, "Can I have another nickel?" She said, "No. It isn't worth it. That's no good." Imagine that, how people, you know, then. You see, in Greece, they don't, they don't raise bananas. There isn't, uh, the salt, the water, you can't raise it.

DANE: That's right.

ARGIANAS: But this time that I went, 1972. I went twice, already, in Europe. In the hotel that we live, I went back to the island, and to the hotel. And in the morning, when we're, the taxi came to pick me up, we went to another place. I look, a place had bananas on it, right by the hotel. I said, "My God, they're raising bananas."

DANE: These things change.

ARGIANAS: So things change. Everything is change.

DANE: Before we finish, I want to make it clear that you

started a restaurant here. You married your husband--

ARGIANAS: Oh, he always had a business of his own. And I had to help him all the time. Then we started, with my brother, that we became pretty big in business.

DANE: Here in Brookfield?

ARGIANAS: No, in Cicero. Cicero, then we went to Berwyn. I was moving, we had about five of them. Then we sold them, after my husband died. I had a beautiful place downstairs. It was only sitting fifty people, but there was, we had everything in there. They robbin' me. I waitresses. They were taking e. They were, they were stealing.

DANE: What was it called?

ARGIANAS: I couldn't keep it any more. So I had it, I advertised it, I said, Fixtures for sale." I closed it up.

DANE: What was the name of it?

ARGIANAS: Pete's & Tessie's Drive in. There was a big sign up, said Pete's & Tessie's Drive In.

DANE: What happened to the sign?

ARGIANAS: I give it, everything ,away. I sold everything. That place, they gave me fifty thousand dollars for it, and I didn't sell it. I didn't want to sell it. My husband was crying, he didn't want to sell it. I says, "You don't feel good." I says, "I can't run it any more." Because I, I had to take care of papers. I had to take the people, I had to take the government. I had to take, it was hard for me. So I sold out. And, uh, I have a nice people down here, now. I got a beautiful place inside. I own three buildings here on the block.

DANE: Uh-huh. I think that we should stop right now. This is
 the end of side two, Tessie Argianas,
 Interview Number 106. It's 12:15.