

KM-048

ANNA MISOPOULOU CHIGARAS

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TURKEY (GREEK), 1920

AGE 11

PASSAGE ON "THE BLACK ARROW"

MOORE:Good morning. This is Kate Moore for the National Park Service, and today is the 26th of June, 1994. I'm in Seattle, Washington at the home of Anna Chigaras, who came from Turkey through Ellis Island in 1920 at the age of eleven years old. Why don't you begin by giving me your full name and date of birth please?

CHIGARAS:My name is Anna Misopoulou in Greek. And I was born October 12, 1908. I was born in Sigi, Turkey, Sigi.

MOORE:How do you spell the second name you gave me? Anna?

CHIGARAS:M-I-S-O-P-O-U-L-O-U.

MOORE:And that is your . . .

CHIGARAS:My maiden, that's the name I came through.

MOORE:Your maiden name.

CHIGARAS:My maiden name, yes.

MOORE:How do you spell Sigi?

CHIGARAS:S-I-G-I.

MOORE:S-I-G-I. Turkey.

CHIGARAS:Turkey.

MOORE:And what size town was Sigi?

CHIGARAS:Very small, it was very small, a sea coast town. Very small, a very pretty town, yeah.

MOORE:And what did it look like? When you say pretty, what do you mean?

CHIGARAS:Well, it's beautiful scenery. It's the Sea of Mamara there. And from my window, the whole house you could see the water, that's all. And houses. And there's some beautiful houses, too. There were some rich people, and others were just very poor. And there were lots of

orchards. Our main industry there was raising silkworms in the summer. And in the winter we had orchards. My grandfather had about three thousand olive trees. Yeah.

And . . .

MOORE:All right. And what was your father's name?

CHIGARAS:My father was, uh, Steven, what you call it, Strata, Stephen, I guess, you could call it. Stephen Misopoulou.

MOORE:Stephen Misopoulou.

CHIGARAS:Yeah. He was from the interior, not from our town.

MOORE:Okay. He was from the interior. And what was his occupation?

CHIGARAS:He was a carpenter by trade. I don't remember him, because he came to America when I was, when my mother was pregnant with my brother. I must have been about six years old, five-and-a-half, six years old, when he came. And he died back east, so we don't even know where he is buried, or what happened.

MOORE:Could you describe, do you know anything about his personality or temperament? Did anybody tell you?

CHIGARAS:I couldn't tell you anything about him really, not too much.

MOORE:And so there's no stories about him your mother told.

CHIGARAS:No, no.

MOORE:What was your mother's name?

CHIGARAS:Alexandra Tsobanoglou. That was her father's name.

MOORE:And how do you spell that?

CHIGARAS:T-S-O-B-A-N-O-G-L-O-U.

MOORE:And what was her occupation?

CHIGARAS:Just a housewife. They didn't work there.

MOORE:What did she look like?

CHIGARAS:Well, when I remember, she was tall and thin, but when I saw her when she came in 1947 to Canada, I didn't recognize her at all. She was, she seemed to have shrunk, and she was very stout at the time.

MOORE:And when you say tall, how tall does she seem?

CHIGARAS:To me she seemed awfully tall then. Of course, you know, when I was little. But I don't know, I used to be five-foot-six. She probably was that, anyway.

MOORE:And what was her personality and temperament, your mother?

CHIGARAS:Well, my mother was jolly and a lot of things, yeah. We had lots of fun with her. I mean, my children's children, you know, their grandma, Yaya, they called her. That's what they call me now, too. ( she laughs ) So, yeah, she was.

MOORE:And what were her chores around the house back in Turkey?

CHIGARAS:Everything. I think they did everything there.

MOORE:All the housework.

CHIGARAS:Housework, yes, and things weren't easy. We didn't have pushbutton things.

MOORE:And what about, do you have a story that you associate with your mother? Anything that she did that you think about? Funny, or . . .

CHIGARAS:I think about the spanking I got one time. ( she laughs ) After the war, after 1918, during the war, you see, we couldn't live in Turkey because they accused us of helping the British submarines, which wasn't true, because there were no submarines in the Sea of Mamara. Anyway, they sent us back into the interior, and we were there for a little while, but it was impossible to live there.

The place was nothing. It was just, there was no way you could live. But we had an uncle who was a bishop in Brousa. That's the capital of our county, like.

MOORE:And how do you spell that?

CHIGARAS:Brousa? B-R-O-U-S-A.

MOORE:Brousa. And he was the bishop of which church?

CHIGARAS:Greek Orthodox Church.

MOORE:The Greek Orthodox Church there.

CHIGARAS:Yes. So he managed, see, he helped us, and others, too, to escape from there. We escaped in the vegetable wagons, hiding under the fruit or something.  
( she laughs ) He took us to Brousa there. So he found a little house for us, and we got settled there, and I had, there was my mother, my grandmother, my great-grandmother and my great-great-grandmother.

MOORE:So you had five generations.

CHIGARAS:No. Of course, my grandmother was really not their daughter. They adopted her, but they were related.

MOORE:I see. But you were five generations.

CHIGARAS:Living in there, in a little, tiny house, yes, and four children, yeah. Well, my daughter, my sister after me, her name was Marika. She passed away. She had meningitis. We lost her there. And then the patriarch of Istanbul, Constantinople is what we call it, passed away, so my uncle was called to fill his place, which was left another one. So he went to Constantinople, and then we went with him. We just all went there with him because he could help us with a lot of things. We didn't have anyone there. My grandfather was gone. He came to Canada, and on the way back he couldn't make it through the Dardanelles. You see, the war had started. So anyway, we went to Istanbul, and that's where we spent, all during the war we spent in Constantinople there.

MOORE:You mean, the first World War.

CHIGARAS:The first, yes, that was. And then we came back in 1918. That was in November. Well, we came back into our home in the spring.

MOORE:Which home was that?

CHIGARAS:In Sigi.

MOORE:In Sigi.

CHIGARAS:In Sigi. That was our home. We came back there. And my mother didn't come right away. I went to my grandmother's, and the children. My mother, I don't know what she had to do in Constantinople, she came later. So when we knew that this was coming, oh, I decided to get a parade to meet them. So, you know, what they have to get at Moundania, a place. That's where the railroad station was, and that's where the boats used to . . .

MOORE:How do you spell that?

CHIGARAS:Moundania.

MOORE:Moundania.

CHIGARAS:M-O-U-N-D-A-N-I-A. Yeah. So I decided, I got to my friends, all of the kids around there. ( she laughs ) Little cans, and something to make noise, make a parade, like ( she laughs ) to meet them. Well, she decided, when she came off the boat she decided to walk to our town, about half an hour away from the beautiful scenery. She and another lady that was coming with her, they decided to walk instead of taking the boat, or getting a horse and buggy to pick them up. So they heard this music, this noise, and they thought, "Oh, my God, the Turks are back again." So they got scared, they went and hid

in the trees. ( she laughs ) Finally when they saw it, because the road was closed, like, around there, and they saw it was kids there, they came up, and I was at the head of them. We had newspaper hats and everything. And ( she laughs ) I got the beating of my life. ( she laughs ) I scared the life out of them, and I thought I was doing something for her. That's what I remember now. I never forgot that.

MOORE:How many brothers and sisters did you have?

CHIGARAS:I was the oldest in the family of four. There was two sisters, and my brother. He still lives in Canada.

MOORE:And what were their names, and what were their ages, in comparison.

CHIGARAS:Well, my . . . ( she addresses someone leaving the room ) All right, goodbye. Anyway, they were, my sister Marika, the one that passed away, she would have been about two-and-a-half, three years younger than me. And then I had another one named Zoe. She passed away during the second World War One in Greece.

MOORE:And Zoe is spelled how?

CHIGARAS:Z-O-E.

MOORE:Z-O-E.

CHIGARAS:Yeah. So, and then my brother Peter. He is still in Canada.

MOORE:All right. And . . .

CHIGARAS:We were six years apart, my brother and I, so the other two have to be two years each.

MOORE:Yeah. When you leave your house in Sigi what, can you describe it to us, what the house looked like.

CHIGARAS:Yes. I remember very vividly. When you come in the street, it was a big entrance hall. It was all tile floor, I remember. And it was a curving staircase going to the bedrooms, and there was a, like a family room in the front. We had a little sitting room. And this big dining room, and the living room, and there was a bathroom. And then going down in, downstairs was the kitchen and another sitting room there, we had. Upstairs we had three big bedrooms.

MOORE:And did you have, how was it heated, the house?

CHIGARAS:Oh, there was no heating it up. Just, what we call was mangalia, we have like little round things, some of them

very fancy. And they put a coil in there, you know,  
this . . .

MOORE:How do you spell mangalia?

CHIGARAS:( she laughs ) M-A-N-G-A-L-I-A, I think, yes. They don't  
have anything like that here. There must be something  
in. They have a fire there. You keep the room warm that  
way. You can't heat the whole house, that's for sure.

MOORE:How was the lighting? How was it lit?

CHIGARAS:Uh, lamps. We had lamps, no electricity.

MOORE:Gas or oil?

CHIGARAS:Gas, I think. Yeah, it was gas.

MOORE:And what about toilet facilities?

CHIGARAS:Well, we had one upstairs, and one down where the kitchen  
was.

MOORE:And was that a flush toilet?

CHIGARAS:Oh, no, no.

MOORE:Okay. And did you have a garden?

CHIGARAS:Not in that, on the harbor. We had lots of property and lots of gardens farther away. When my grandfather was alive, he had a boat, and he used to ship all the oil that we have, the olive oil, especially with Russia. He did business there. And then he was feeding the Turkish Army, too. He was partners with one of the big shots there. But after that he lost everything, and my uncle, who was the bookkeeper there, taking over the business, he came to Canada, and my grandfather decided to come and see what it was like here. And when he heard the war was breaking out he tried to come back, but it couldn't make it through the Dardanelles, so he died in Greece.

MOORE:And did you have any animals at all?

CHIGARAS:Well, we, no. Just a goat, I think, we had for milk. I remember that.

MOORE:Now, who lived with your family in Sigi? Did you have your grandparents?

CHIGARAS:I lived with my grandparents. It was my grandparents' house.

MOORE:I see. Which grandparents, now?

CHIGARAS:My mother's.

MOORE:Your mother's parents.

CHIGARAS:My mother's, yes. I don't know my father's parents at all.  
I don't know them.

MOORE:So who did the cooking in the family?

CHIGARAS:Mostly my grandmother did.

MOORE:What was your favorite food?

CHIGARAS:Any things, I think, that you could get. Especially during  
the war, you know. It wasn't much you could choose from.

MOORE:And did you help cook?

CHIGARAS>No, I never had.

MOORE:Tell us about the kitchen. How was the kitchen arranged?  
Do you remember?

CHIGARAS:Hmm, I remember the sink, and I remember, it was like a  
fireplace. There was an open fire, anyway. We cooked  
there. And we had a table, and I don't remember too much  
else.

MOORE:What about the, your furniture in the house? What kind of

furniture did you have?

CHIGARAS:Well, I remember the salon, what we call the living room there. That was pretty well-furnished. We had nice king-back chairs, and like a big table in the middle there. And built-in, like a built-in couch, which was also used for storage. You know, you could lift that and hide things under there. And that's what saved a lot of our things when we had to leave to go, when the Turks sent us away. And when we came back we found a lot of things in there that they didn't know about, they didn't touch it. And our house was one of the few that was standing in good condition. They must have had a good family living in there, and they didn't ruin it anyway. We found it very good condition.

MOORE:And what about mealtime? How many meals a day did you eat?

CHIGARAS:Oh, three.

MOORE:And did you eat together?

CHIGARAS:Mostly, yes, mostly.

MOORE:Were you, who were you closest to in the family? Any family member that was particularly close to you?

CHIGARAS:Well, when my aunt, my mother's older sister, she had no children, and she more or less had me, you know. Then she left when I was about four years old. She came to Canada then. So after that, really, I don't remember. It was all the same to us, I think.

MOORE:Do you have any stories about any of your family members that you tell your children, about your aunts or your grandmother or anything?

CHIGARAS:Well, they knew my aunts. My aunts were here, so they knew. Nothing I like.

MOORE:What about religious life?

CHIGARAS:We went to church, yes.

MOORE:How often did you practice?

CHIGARAS:Well, as often as we could. During the war, you see, we couldn't do too much churchgoing then. But when we went back to Sigi after the war, I was only there one year when I left, but we were going to school there, and we had a good, nice school.

MOORE:How big was the school?

CHIGARAS:It was nice, a new building, whatever it was. But when

we came there we didn't have enough teachers, and a lot of the kids didn't even have a chance in the four years we were away to go to school. And we came back, some of them, big kids, sixteen, fifteen, seventeen years old, they didn't know what school to put them in. I was one of the lucky ones because I went to school regularly in Constantinople there. I went to school. When I came back, I was put in the top grade. I was the fourth grade, we called, because it was three, and the fourth, because there wasn't any, enough kids to make another grade, so they put it all together.

MOORE:What, you say your uncle was the bishop.

CHIGARAS:Yes.

MOORE:Was your family particularly religious compared to other people?

CHIGARAS:I don't think so. My mother was a very religious woman, I know that.

MOORE:And was the bishop her brother?

CHIGARAS:Oh, no. She was my grandfather's cousin.

MOORE:Your grandmother's cousin. Okay. How close was the church,

the nearest church, that you worshipped in?

CHIGARAS:Well, we didn't have any other transportation. We had to walk. I don't know how far it was. ( she laughs )

MOORE:It was within walking distance.

CHIGARAS:Oh, yes.

MOORE:And did you have prayers at home that you, you said?

CHIGARAS:Yes, yes. Especially my grandmothers. They were religious, too. They were trying to teach us, too, a lot of things.

MOORE:And you were Greek Orthodox.

CHIGARAS:Yes.

MOORE:And did you, did you pray before meals, grace?

CHIGARAS:Sometimes. I don't think we did all the time.

MOORE:How about at night before you went to bed?

CHIGARAS:Always, always that, yeah. I still do, more at night.

MOORE:And how were holiday celebrations? What was your favorite?

CHIGARAS:( she laughs ) We didn't have much to celebrate, believe

me.

MOORE:Because of the war.

CHIGARAS:There was Christmas, of course, and Easter, but we didn't have much during the years that I was there. So, and after I came here, they lived quietly there for two years, and then the war started again with Turkey.

MOORE:Did you learn any English before coming here?

CHIGARAS:No, none at all. A few French, a little French here and there, from school.

MOORE:And did you experience persecution as a child, being Greek in Turkey, before you left?

CHIGARAS:Well, yes. Of course, they sent us to go into the interior.

MOORE:Did people say things to you on the street, or were you singled out?

CHIGARAS:No, no. No, really, the Turks weren't that bad when I remember them. I mean, we didn't have, we were afraid of them, yes, but we really didn't have much trouble with them. It was afterwards they got awfully wild. I don't know.

MOORE: Is there a story about you as a child that you can tell?

CHIGARAS: ( she laughs ) I don't know what I can tell.

MOORE: That was a good one about your mother and the spanking.

CHIGARAS: I remember her best for that. ( they laugh ) How embarrassing it was, how the kids scattered around.  
( they laugh )

MOORE: In their hats.

CHIGARAS: You know, we had hats with the swords. ( they laugh )

MOORE: Who decided to come to America first?

CHIGARAS: Well, my aunt and uncle were here. And after it was my aunt. She was about, I don't know how old she was. She must have been about thirty years old at that time. They wanted to bring her here, too. And I don't know how it got that they brought me along, too. So anyway, that's how I came.

MOORE: And was there, do you remember getting ready to come to . . .

CHIGARAS: Yes. I was, of course, excited. I was going on a trip, yes. I was excited.

MOORE: What did you pack? Anything special, did you bring with you?

CHIGARAS:Oh, my mother had a new dress. The dressmaker make me a beautiful dress, but I grew out of it before I could wear that again. ( they laugh ) I was growing so tall. When I first came, I was a small thing then. And when I came to Canada, I don't know whether the change or what, but I just shot up.

MOORE:And what else did you pack? Any toys or anything?

CHIGARAS:We had no toys. We didn't have anything like that. We never had anything like that, no.

MOORE:And how about family possessions? Did you take any with you?

CHIGARAS:Well, just what my aunt wanted, you know. What, save it for their trousseau, you know, things that they made, a lot of fancy work.

MOORE:And how did you get from home? Where did you leave from? What port did you leave from?

CHIGARAS:Constantinople there.

MOORE:Constantinople. How did you get from Sigi to Constantinople?

CHIGARAS:On a boat.

MOORE:On a boat.

CHIGARAS:Yes.

MOORE:And how did you get to the boat with your things?

CHIGARAS:Well, we got, we got a rowboat from our, from Sigi. Right in front of our house, practically. And then we go to Moundania. That's where the boat was.

MOORE:For Constantinople. Okay. And did they give you a party? Did you have a party before you left? Did everybody gather together?

CHIGARAS:No, no. Nothing like that. It was in January, the last day I was there, and we have a holiday, The Three Hierarchs, and I had a point to say in the school. It was just a school doing, yeah, but that was all.

MOORE:And you were bound for where? Where were you intending to go when you left Constantinople.

CHIGARAS:To Edmonton.

MOORE:To Edmonton, Canada.

CHIGARAS:Yes.

MOORE:Okay. And how did your mother feel when she said goodbye? Do you remember that?

CHIGARAS:Well, we all cried, of course.

MOORE:Did you think that you'd be back, she'd be joining you, or . . .

CHIGARAS:Well, I thought I'd be back, but instead she came.

MOORE:Ah. So you thought you were going for a short trip.

CHIGARAS:Yes.

MOORE:How long did you think you were going for?

CHIGARAS:Well, till I could go to school here, learn English, you know, make something of myself. I always wanted to be a teacher, but I never made it because, you see, with the trouble that they had I had to leave school and go to work to help them. So I didn't do any of those things I wanted to.

MOORE:And so were, now, what boat did you come over on?

CHIGARAS:I remember it was The Black Arrow.

MOORE:The Black Arrow.

CHIGARAS:And that was the boat that take us from the Germans, and they made it into a passenger.

MOORE:And you came from Constantinople when? When did you leave?

CHIGARAS:I can't exactly say. It was the early part of February,  
I think.

MOORE:In 19 . . .

CHIGARAS:'20.

MOORE:'20.

CHIGARAS:Yeah. But, you see, it made a lot of stops. We stopped  
a week in Smyrna.

MOORE:How do you spell that?

CHIGARAS:S-M-Y-R-N-A.

MOORE:And where is that?

CHIGARAS:In Turkey, it's in Turkey, yeah. We stopped a week there.  
And then we came through Gibraltar. We were only there  
one day.

MOORE:What did you do for a week in . . .

CHIGARAS:I don't know what the boat had to do. That's why, we didn't  
want to stay, but that's what the boat did.

MOORE:You stayed on board the whole time?

CHIGARAS:Oh, yeah, yeah. Well, we went down to the town. See, we were coming. It was three other people. My, we had, my mother had a cousin in Philadelphia, and he was engaged to one of the girls that came with us. Well, her brother came from Philadelphia to bring his sister and her younger sister. So that's how we call came at the same time.

MOORE:All right. And what were the accommodations on the boat? What kind of conditions on the boat?

CHIGARAS:Oh, they're not luxurious, I don't think I wouldn't call, but it was all right, I guess.

MOORE:Was it first, second, third class? How was it?

CHIGARAS:I don't know what you would call it. We had a cabin.

MOORE:You had your own cabin.

CHIGARAS:Uh-huh.

MOORE:And you had, how were the, were there beds in the cabin?

CHIGARAS:Yes, yes. My aunt and I, we had a little cabin. I know, I remember that.

MOORE:And how was the food on board?

CHIGARAS:Well, it was all right, I guess. I don't remember

completely.

MOORE:Was there a dining room?

CHIGARAS:Yes, yes. There was someplace where, it must have been a dining room. You see, this wasn't a luxury ship. That was converted from a troop ship into a passenger. So it wasn't a luxurious thing. But, anyway, we made it. And we stopped a week in Medira, the Canary Islands. Yeah, that was nice there.

MOORE:And did you have fun on these trips?

CHIGARAS:Yeah. Well, there wasn't any kids my age for me to associate with.

MOORE:And so you stayed a week? You went into the city?

CHIGARAS:Yes, we used to go there.

MOORE:And where would you eat? In the city, or on the boat?

CHIGARAS:On the boat.

MOORE:So you would sightsee in the city?

CHIGARAS:Yeah, and go back. ( referring to someone in the room )  
That's okay, don't worry.

MOORE:And so, all right. So then you went, first you were in Turkey for a week, then you went to Gibraltar.

CHIGARAS:Smyrna. Gibraltar just for a day. I don't know what they did there, but we stopped, I remember. And we didn't get out at all.

MOORE:And then Canary. Do you remember any new things that you'd never seen before on this voyage?

CHIGARAS:Well, I don't remember really anything that made an impression on me like that. But I remember the beautiful orchards that they had in Madeira, and different places like that, you know.

MOORE:And so from Madeira where did you go?

CHIGARAS:To New York.

MOORE:To New York.

CHIGARAS:Uh-huh.

MOORE:And how long was that trip, from Madeira to New York?

CHIGARAS:I think you're talking about thirty-eight days.

MOORE:Thirty-eight days.

CHIGARAS:Thirty-eight days in Ellis Island.

MOORE:Okay. So, anyway, on that trip, do you remember anybody getting sick on the trip across the Atlantic. Were there any problems?

CHIGARAS:Oh, one of the girls that was coming with us, she was in her cabin all the time. She couldn't get up. She was always seasick.

MOORE:And . . .

CHIGARAS:No, it didn't bother me at all, or my aunt. We were fine.

MOORE:Were you allowed to go on deck at all?

CHIGARAS:Yes, yes. We used to go on deck.

MOORE:And what did you, what were the sights and smells of, do you remember coming into New York?

CHIGARAS:Yes.

MOORE:And what did you see? Tell me what you saw.

CHIGARAS:Well, I saw the Statue of Liberty, of course. We knew what it was, because the man that was coming with us, you know, he explained a lot of things like that to us. Yeah. It was really . . .

MOORE:Was everybody watching for the Statue to show up?

CHIGARAS:I think so, yes. Everybody, yes.

MOORE:And was it, what was the atmosphere on the boat, then?

CHIGARAS:Well, we were happy to get there after thirty-eight days.

( she laughs ) You know, you want to get out.

MOORE:How about the skyline of New York. Did you see that?

CHIGARAS:Yes, all the tall buildings. I never saw anything like them before. ( she laughs ) Very impressive.

MOORE:And what do you remember, tell me, walk me through what happened. You saw the Statue of Liberty, and then what happened?

CHIGARAS:And then we went to Ellis Island, disembarked there.

MOORE:How did you get from the boat to the Ellis Island?

CHIGARAS:I think they have the small ship take you there.

MOORE:Like a little tugboat or something?

CHIGARAS:Something like that. I think that's the part I'm not quite sure of, but I think that's the way it is.

MOORE:And then what happened?

CHIGARAS:And that's the way we left, I remember that.

MOORE:Okay. So from the big boat you went to a small boat.

CHIGARAS:To a small boat, to Ellis Island, yes.

MOORE:What do you remember next, what do you remember?

CHIGAVAS:I remember then we had to pass through examinations and  
all that.

MOORE:And what did they do to you?

CHIGARAS:They examined our eyes, and looked in this.

MOORE:Did everybody get the same examination?

CHIGARAS:I think so, yes. Well, you're being examined.

MOORE:Did they take your clothes off? Did they look through?

CHIGARAS:Yes, yes. I think they did, yes, yes.

MOORE:And so, were you frightened at any point you'd be sent back?

CHIGARAS:Yes, like everybody was frightened. A lot of them were  
sent back.

MOORE:You saw people on your boat sent back?

CHIGARAS:Not on our boat, but others that came in there. And I know one of the French girls, she committed suicide in there, because they wouldn't let her stay.

MOORE:How did you know about this?

CHIGARAS:I don't remember. I think that the man that was coming to see us, that friend of ours. And I don't know, she talked that he was our interpreter. You know, he would ask around. And other people knew and talked to him.

MOORE:So that was the rumor, that there was a French girl.

CHIGARAS:Yes, yes.

MOORE:And what do you remember, all right. Now, say, you had an examination. What else do you remember about Ellis Island?

CHIGARAS:Well, I remember, see, we had kind of bunk beds we were sleeping in, a big room with, a lot of them were sleeping in there. I remember the first morning we got up, they took us to the dining room, and all I could see was big tables, and they had bowls of cornflakes. And I had never seen cornflakes before. We didn't know what it was, or

what it is that we're going to eat. We didn't know, we weren't the only ones. The others didn't know either.

( they laugh ) So, anyway, somebody was coming around to show us what they were, you put milk and sugar in them, and they were good that way.

MOORE: Is there anything else you'd never seen before?

CHIGARAS: That was the first impression, the cornflakes.

( she laughs )

MOORE: And what, and what about, what else do you remember at Ellis Island? Tell me what else?

CHIGARAS: The waiting. The waiting, I remember.

MOORE: Was it crowded?

CHIGARAS: It was crowded. Sometimes, you know. Sometimes people would go. They'd come to the door, and call your name, and say, "Alla valise, alla valise." Take your valise, your suitcases. And we'd wait, every morning we'd have everything beside us sitting there on those hard benches, waiting for our name to be called.

MOORE: Where were you sitting?

CHIGARAS: In the benches, right in the big, in the big room.

MOORE:Do you remember a big room?

CHIGARAS:Yes, a big room. They had a tile floor, these hexagonal white tiles. You remember that, they used to use in bathrooms here and everywhere? I remember that.

MOORE:And how, when you say a big room, how big was this?

CHIGARAS:Oh, God. It was just a huge room. I think it was just . . .

MOORE:A hall?

CHIGARAS:Something like a hall, yes. But that's where there was just benches, and windows in one side, I remember, and the back. They had windows there, too.

MOORE:Were people polite to you? Were they nice to you?

CHIGARAS:Oh, yes. They weren't bad at all. But, like I say, we couldn't talk.

MOORE:Yeah. Did they have interpreters for you?

CHIGARAS:Oh, yes. Whenever you were going to be examined, they'd have an interpreter for you, yeah.

MOORE:And you said the bunk beds where you, did the men, were the men and the women separated? Who did you sleep in the

bunk beds with? I mean, who was, who were you . . .

CHIGARAS:My aunt was, I think I was on the top, and she was on the bottom. And I don't know about the others, but I don't think that they had the men and the women together.

MOORE:What about, did you have sheets?

CHIGARAS:Uh, yeah. There was some kind of sheets. I don't know if they were any good, or any clean or not.

MOORE:Do you remember the conditions at Ellis Island at that time? Was it well-kept? Was it clean?

CHIGARAS:Yes, as far as I can tell it was clean.

MOORE:You said you stayed in, earlier we were speaking, you stayed thirty-eight days in Ellis Island.

CHIGARAS:Uh-huh.

MOORE:Why were you detained, and what happened?

CHIGARAS:Because my aunt, we didn't know, my aunt decided at the last minute she wanted to go to the wedding in Philadelphia. So they asked her where she was going, she says, "Philadelphia." They said, "Oh, Philadelphia?" They says, "Your papers are for

Edmonton, for Canada." So we were just going to go to the wedding, she told the interpreter. So that's why they got suspicious, because I was a child, and they said, "No, you've got to stay here until we find out where you're going." Oh, and that was a mess. It cost my uncle quite a bit of money, you know, to get a lawyer here and a lawyer there to straighten it out.

MOORE:Did you, what happened in the thirty-eight days? Every day you lined up?

CHIGARAS:Every day, every day the same thing, I'll tell you.

MOORE:You didn't go to school then?

CHIGARAS:No.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

MOORE:Where were we now? We were saying . . .

CHIGARAS:School.

MOORE:Did you go to school there at all?

CHIGARAS:No. How could they have a school, so many different nationalities.

MOORE:Hmm. And so you stayed basically with your aunt.

CHIGARAS:Yes.

MOORE:What was your routine? You were there thirty-eight days, so what was . . .

CHIGARAS:We'd get up. After breakfast we'd go and sit on those benches. And then some kids came afterwards in there, too. So we, even though we couldn't communicate, we were playing together. We were just sliding on the floor there till our shoes wore out. ( she laughs ) So . . .

MOORE:And what were you wearing, all of you? What types of clothing were you wearing? You had a nice, new dress. Did you wear that for thirty-eight days?

CHIGARAS:Oh, no, no, no. Oh, no, no, no, no. That was for my aunt, I didn't want, I was saving that. ( she laughs ) So anyway, when it came time to go, I wouldn't go. The man came to take us to the train because we had to leave right away. And, "No, I'm not going to go with my, the shoes. My shoes are worn out." I wouldn't go. He grabbed me, he took me to the store and got me a pair of shoes. I took them, and we got on the train, and first thing I did was take out my old shoes and throw them away.

( she laughs ) And I put on my new ones. But the new ones were kind of small, and sitting five days in the train. It took five days and five nights, or four nights, I don't remember. By the time I got off my feet were all swollen. ( she laughs )

MOORE:Wait a minute. Let's go back now. What were your, how was your family reacting to the fact that every day for thirty-eight days they had to get up and sit on those benches with their belongings?

CHIGARAS:Everybody was doing the same thing. All nationalities were there.

MOORE:And were there other Greeks?

CHIGARAS:No, I don't remember any other Greeks there.

MOORE:But were your parents, your uncle and your aunt, were they in good humor this time, or what was it like? I mean . . .

CHIGARAS:They must have been frantic and wondering. It was kind of expensive for them, too, to try to get us out.

MOORE:What did they have to do to get you out?

CHIGARAS:They had to have a lawyer there, and a lawyer in New York. And between the two lawyers they found out that my aunt

wasn't trying to do anything illegal. She just wanted to make a safe trip to Philadelphia. She just, there was nothing to it. But it cost plenty.

MOORE:And who paid for this?

CHIGAVAS:My uncle.

MOORE:In Edmonton.

CHIGARAS:In Edmonton, yes.

MOORE:And how did he arrange it all, through New York?

CHIGARAS:Well, we had this patriorial man that's from our home town that came to see us. And, you know, he kind of took over. He protected, coming in to see us and bringing papers and bringing something.

MOORE:And he lived where, in New York?

CHIGARAS:In New York, yeah. He was a waiter in a big hotel.

MOORE:He was a waiter in a big hotel. And you knew him from Sigi?

CHIGARAS:From Sigi, yes. My aunt did, anyway.

MOORE:So your uncle contacted him to take care of this?

CHIGARAS:Yes, yes.

MOORE:That's interesting. Okay. So what, so finally you got out.

CHIGARAS:Yes.

MOORE:What was the attitude when they finally told you?

CHIGARAS:They told us, okay. You can go to Edmonton now.

MOORE:But not to Philadelphia?

CHIGARAS:No, no. No, we didn't go to Philadelphia. ( she laughs )

MOORE:They wouldn't let you go to the wedding.

CHIGARAS:No.

MOORE:Okay.

CHIGARAS:We went to Edmonton.

MOORE:And so what was that train trip like?

CHIGARAS:The train? That was another five days sitting.

( she laughs ) It was terrible.

MOORE:Was it beautiful?

CHIGARAS:Well, trains. They were beautiful. It was all right.

MOORE:Did you see anything new there on the train?

CHIGARAS:Oh, lots of beautiful places, yes. We went by Niagara Falls. And we got in there, and every time we'd stop my aunt would want to know where we are. And I knew a little bit of French, so I'd go and try to read the postcards that would find where we were. The first time was in Toronto. So I said, "We're in Toronto." So we went and bought some postcards, and we had to send cards.

MOORE:You were able to leave the train?

CHIGARAS:The station, no.

MOORE:At the station.

CHIGARAS:Oh, yeah. We had to change.

MOORE:Ah.

CHIGARAS:Then we went to, the next one I remember, the last one, was Calgary. We were close to home there. So, but it was about, during the night that we stopped there, and we had to leave the next morning. And my aunt says, "Oh," she says, "we're so dry." She says, "We couldn't ask for anything, we couldn't order anything." So I said, "I would love to have an orange. She could look and find

an orange. ( she laughs ) So she sent me dark, I was afraid I'd get lost. You know, I walk and walked. And I didn't dare go across the street, I might get lost.

I'd better go the same way where the station was. And then across the street, finally, I saw a light in the window. And there there was a great, big bowl of oranges in the window. It was a restaurant. So I went across the street, and I went inside. I had money in my hand, and I was pointing to the oranges. The man tried to tell me they don't sell oranges. I have to go to the fruit store to get them, but there was nothing open. And he talked German there. No, I just wouldn't leave.

Finally I heard him calling Greek to somebody. He said, "Come and see what this female wants here." In Greek.

I said, "You're Greek!" So, anyway, they were very nice, both of them. He came out and told him the whole story, where I was coming from, what I wanted. So one of them took out his apron. He was the cook. So he took out his apron and he made me, he made sandwiches and donuts. And everything else, we didn't know what they were. And the oranges, of course. And he took me to the station himself. ( she laughs ) So I was so happy to see.

MOORE:And he spoke Greek with you.

CHIGARAS:Greek. I said, "Eureka!" He was Greek, I understand.

( she laughs )

MOORE:And you were only eleven years old.

CHIGARAS:Eleven years old, yes. ( they laugh ) So, anyway, we got  
the oranges. ( they laugh )

MOORE:So then you were in Calgary and you . . .

CHIGARAS:And then we, he took me to the station.

MOORE:Edmonton.

CHIGARAS:And then we went for the train came. I don't remember what  
time. I don't know how we got to Edmonton, but we were  
there in the morning, except not that early in the  
morning. It isn't far from Calgary to Edmonton, yeah.  
And this one happened to mention, and asked me where  
I was going, and she told me she knew my uncle because  
they had worked together. So the man that was, that gave  
me the oranges.

MOORE:He knew your uncle?

CHIGARAS:( she laughs ) They had worked together.

MOORE:It's a small world.

CHIGARAS:Yeah, it is a small world.

MOORE:And, it's incredible. Okay. What were your expectations about, you knew, all right, so you went through Ellis Island, and then you went to Canada. And what were your expectations about Canada? Were they . . .

CHIGARAS:Well, I don't know what I expected, but I knew I want to go and go to school, and I did that. But I didn't have much sense to finish school, because I had to go to work.

MOORE:Were you ever, did people ever show any prejudice against you for being Greek?

CHIGARAS:Oh, no, no, no.

MOORE:What type of house did you go to, then? You went to . . .

CHIGARAS:My aunt had a little five-room house.

MOORE:In the town?

CHIGARAS:In the town, yes. And my uncle, I don't remember if he had a restaurant there or he was working in the restaurant, but in the end I know he had the restaurant.

MOORE:And so you lived with your family. And you said your mother

came over in what year?

CHIGARAS:In 19, after the war. My sister, in the meantime, had died in Greece, so she was all alone. And we brought her here, but I couldn't bring her to the United States. It was harder to.

MOORE:You said she was all alone. Where was your brother?

CHIGARAS:My brother was here in Canada. He's the one who brought her.

MOORE:Uh-huh. So he brought your mother.

CHIGARAS:Yes. My brother was here since he was fourteen, fifteen years old. We brought him.

MOORE:I see.

CHIGARAS:My aunt and I brought him.

MOORE:So, okay. So you came here. Now, do you remember going to school. You came to Edmonton. Do you remember going to school for the first time?

CHIGARAS:Yes, oh, yes.

MOORE:And what was that experience?

CHIGARAS:Oh, scary. ( she laughs )

MOORE:What grade did you go into?

CHIGARAS:The first time in the third grade.

MOORE:Uh-huh, which is normally nine years old.

CHIGARAS:Yeah. Well, yeah. Well, this time in the third grade,  
and I went to the fourth, and then I skipped fifth and  
went to sixth. And then I had to quit school. I didn't  
go to seventh.

MOORE:What about, when you first started school, how did you learn  
English?

CHIGARAS:Well, it was hard, of course, you know, but I tried.

MOORE:And did you, did anybody help you? Do you remember anybody  
helping you?

CHIGARAS:Well, some of the kids were nice, you know. They told me  
things, this was like understandable. And I did.

MOORE:And so children helped you?

CHIGARAS: Oh, yes, children helped me. And the teacher, the  
teachers were nice, too, yes.

MOORE:And were you living in a Greek neighborhood?

CHIGARAS:No, there weren't that many Greeks there.

MOORE:In Edmonton.

CHIGARAS:No, not that many. It was, there's lots now, of course,  
but in those days there wasn't that many.

MOORE:Did your aunt and uncle learn English?

CHIGARAS:Oh, yeah.

MOORE:And so they adjusted to life in Canada?

CHIGARAS:Yes, yeah.

MOORE:And, now, we're now in Washington State.

CHIGARAS:Yes.

MOORE:Tell me a little bit about what happened to your, your life  
after you arrived in Edmonton.

CHIGARAS:Well, I went to work.

MOORE:Sixth grade you stopped.

CHIGARAS:Yes, I had to stop.

MOORE:And you were how old then?

CHIGARAS:Well, I know I wasn't fifteen, because I couldn't work right away.

MOORE:And why did you stop school then?

CHIGARAS:Because I had to earn some money to send my mother. My mother, brother and sister were there, and my grandmother was still there.

MOORE:So you came in 1920.

CHIGARAS:Yes.

MOORE:And you went to school for three or four years.

CHIGARAS:Three years, three years, yes.

MOORE:Okay. And that was '23, '24. And that time you went to work.

CHIGARAS:Uh-huh.

MOORE:And what was your first job?

CHIGARAS:Oh, the first job I think was in kind of a fruit store, yes, selling fruit. And then I went to work in a cafe, they called it. It had, there was a candy factory in there. There was a bakery, and there was a tea room.

So I went to work there.

MOORE:And the house that you lived in, did you stay in this five-room house most of the time?

CHIGARAS:We did.

MOORE:How long did you stay in that house?

CHIGARAS:Oh, and then we moved to another one. There was a Greek family close by, and there was a girl, she was younger than me, of course, but she helped me, you know, to come to school with me, and if there was anything I couldn't understand, she would explain to me.

MOORE:And what were the conditions in this house? Were they as good as they were back in Turkey, this house that you lived in?

CHIGARAS:Well, I think it was electricity, of course. And we had, the stove was coal and wood, I think, we used to use for cooking. They didn't have any . . .

MOORE:You had wood stoves?

CHIGARAS:Wood stove, yeah.

MOORE:And how was it, how was it lit? By electricity?

CHIGARAS:Electricity, yes.

MOORE:What about plumbing? How was the plumbing?

CHIGARAS:We had the plumbing in the bathroom, yeah, indoor plumbing,  
yes.

MOORE:And how many people lived in that house?

CHIGARAS:Uh, my aunt and uncle, and my other aunt, and me.

MOORE:All right. So you then went to work, and what happened after  
that with your life? You said . . .

CHIGARAS:Well, I worked for a few years, and then I went to Bampf.  
See, because someone, we had somebody in Bampf, and I  
thought it was for a better job. And I went there, and  
my aunt and my brother followed after. And there I met  
my husband. He was coming from Seattle to visit the  
people that had the restaurant.

MOORE:And was he Greek?

CHIGARAS:He was Greek, yes.

MOORE:And did you speak Greek together?

CHIGARAS:Oh, yes. So . . .

MOORE:Was he born here?

CHIGARAS:No, no.

MOORE:He was born in Canada?

CHIGARAS:He was born in Greece, he was from Greece, yeah. And I got married, and came here.

MOORE:And what year was that that you met your husband?

CHIGARAS:1929.

MOORE:Uh-huh. It was just the Depression time.

CHIGARAS:Yes, that's when the Depression started, right. That's right.

MOORE:And so you, what did you do after you met him? How did you meet him? In the restaurant, you said?

CHIGARAS:Yeah. Well, because he was a friend with the owners of the restaurant. But I, and I lived in their house. I lived in the owner's house.

MOORE:And so you moved where?

CHIGARAS:Well, actually my aunt came. She got a little house across the street there, and I moved in with her, of course,

and my brother.

MOORE:And so then you had children?

CHIGARAS:Well, after we came here, yes, I had my son.

MOORE:How did you get here, to Seattle?

CHIGARAS:Well, my husband had to make petition for me, to bring me  
over, you know how it is. He had . . .

MOORE:Was he American or Canadian?

CHIGARAS:He was American citizen, but he didn't get his papers until  
just before we got married.

MOORE:I see.

CHIGARAS:So that's . . .

MOORE:So he, what did he do for a living?

CHIGARAS:He was a barber.

MOORE:He was a barber.

CHIGARAS:Uh-huh.

MOORE:And so he came to Seattle.

CHIGARAS:Yes.

MOORE:And how did he get you here?

CHIGARAS:Well, we rented a little apartment in Vancouver for a month, until I got my papers straightened out. And I was bringing my aunt with me, because she was widowed and she didn't have anybody else. So I was bringing her. We had to wait a while till we got our papers straightened out. My brother, we left in Vancouver. We were paying someone to take care of him when he was going to school.

MOORE:And so you came to Seattle, and your husband found, he was a barber here.

CHIGARAS:He was a barber, yeah.

MOORE:And then you started a family here?

CHIGARAS:Yes.

MOORE:In what section of Seattle?

CHIGARAS:When we first got married we rented a house by Capital Hill, a little house there. And then in a few months we found a house in Greenwood, a brand new house was built. Just a small house, too, but we moved there.

MOORE:And did you work with your children?

CHIGARAS:No.

MOORE:All right. How many children did you have?

CHIGARAS:Two, a boy and a girl.

MOORE:A boy and a girl. And how, what are their names?

CHIGARAS:John, and my daughter is Sandra.

MOORE:Sandra.

CHIGARAS:Alexandra is her name, really.

MOORE:After her grandmother.

CHIGARAS:Yeah.

MOORE:She's named after . . .

CHIGARAS:Her grandmother, yes.

MOORE:And so when were they born, what year?

CHIGARAS:John was born in 1930, September 25th, and Sandra was born  
in 1934, October 6th.

MOORE:When you look back on your life, do you think that your decision  
to come to the, to Canada and to the States was, do you  
have regrets?

CHIGARAS:Not really but, of course, it wasn't my decision to come in the first place. I was just a child. I thought just, "Oh, I'll go on a trip." I was happy to go on a trip, see something new. So it was really, my aunt and my mother would be, arranged for me to come.

MOORE:And did you ever think in your life about going back since then?

CHIGARAS:Well, I thought that I would get away and work and go and see my parents, go and see my mother.

MOORE:Did your mother learn English ever?

CHIGARAS:No, but she understood quite a bit, because my sister-in-law is Canadian, so she had to kind of learn a little bit to get along with her, too.

MOORE:Did you ever consider, up till now, going back, seriously, to Greece?

CHIGARAS:No. No, I've never even been on a trip. My husband went to see his family there, but I couldn't go at the time because I had my mother staying with me. I didn't want to leave her. And, at the same time, I had an operation, and I didn't want to, I couldn't go.

MOORE: So, basically, do you have, do you feel good about what happened in terms of . . .

CHIGARAS: Oh, I had a pretty good life, yes, I had a good life. I mean, nothing exciting, but my aunt, the one who came with me, she got married here, so she stayed here after that, and then they moved to California because my uncle was a fisherman. So he went to California and lived there, and they would come to see us quite often, and I went there many times, we'd go and see her. But they passed away now, both aunts.

MOORE: How have you passed on, or how do you still feel Greek in any way?

CHIGARAS: Well, I always, I don't know, I just feel Greek.  
( she laughs ) I don't know.

MOORE: Do you feel American or Greek or both, or . . .

CHIGARAS: Mostly Greek I think, because deep down I am Greek, yeah.

MOORE: And do your children, have you passed on, do you speak Greek to your children?

CHIGARAS: I spoke Greek to my children. I forgot my English so my children would learn Greek. And they were going to

Greek school for years, I would send them. Then they got married outside of our, of Greeks was married, and they speak English, they don't talk too much Greek any more.

MOORE:Do your grandchildren talk?

CHIGARAS:No, they don't, regretfully, no. I wish they had learned something. No, my granddaughter, she has two children, my two great-grandchildren. She goes to church every Sunday, takes them to Sunday school.

MOORE:To Greek?

CHIGARAS:Oh, yes.

MOORE:So your great-grandchildren are starting to learn Greek.

CHIGARAS:Uh, not learning, learning their religion. Yeah, you have to go to Greek school. It's too hard for them to do everything, to take them to Greek school. They do have Greek school twice a week. But, you know, it's a little one, go down to church, and it's too hard for them. So I'm sorry that they can't do it.

MOORE:Well, I'd like to thank you on behalf of Ellis Island for giving us this interview. We'll send you a copy of this.

KM-048/CHIGARAS

CHIGARAS:Okay, thank you.

MOORE:That's right. This is Kate Moore signing off in Seattle,  
Washington on June 26, 1994.