

NPS-9/HARRY PAPPAS

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HARRY PAPPAS

BIRTH DATE: UNKNOWN

INTERVIEW DATE: SEPTEMBER 1, 1973

RUNNING TIME: 16:45

INTERVIEWER: MARGO NASH

RECORDING ENGINEER: UNKNOWN

INTERVIEW LOCATION: STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK

TRANSCRIPT ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY: CAMILLE FORD, 7/1979

TRANSCRIPT RECONCEIVED BY: JANET LEVINE, PhD, 2/1995

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: DAVID H. CASSELLS, 4/1995

GREECE, 1908 AND 1918

BORN: MAVROMONTI ITOMISH MASHINEAS, GREECE

AGE AT IMMIGRATION: 18 (FIRST TRIP)

PORT OF EMBARKATION: KARLAMATA

PASSAGE ON: *GETTY*

US RESIDENCE: NYC 72 ST.

NASH: Today is September 1, 1973, and I am visiting in the home of
Aristomenes Demetrius Pappavisalu. Do you want to say your name
again?

PAPPAS: My name is in Greek, Aristomenes D. Pappavisalu.

NASH: But people call him Harry now.

PAPPAS: Now they call me Harry Pappas.

NASH: And we are going to find out when and why Mr. Pappas came to the United
States and something about his experiences after he got here.
Mr. Pappas, what was your hometown?

PAPPAS: My hometown is Mavromonti Ithomish Mashineas, Greece.

NASH: And could you tell me something about what it was like in that town,
what you remember about it?

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PAPPAS: My village is Asharoshical. A lot of visitors from all over the world came there every summer to visit the ruins.

NASH: What kind of ruins?

PAPPAS: Different kind ruins.

NASH: And why did you decide to leave this town?

PAPPAS: I came in this country, call it "America," for better life.

NASH: How old were you when you left?

PAPPAS: When I came in this country I was eighteen years old.

NASH: Could you tell me what it was like, the journey, how did you prepare to leave your country?

PAPPAS: That time was poor. My father gave me the money and I came over. My trip was about twenty-eight to twenty-nine days.

NASH: How did you get to the boat? Where was the boat?

PAPPAS: I got the boat from Karlamata Mechineas.

NASH: How did you go there to the boat?

PAPPAS: I went to the boat by train from my village.

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NASH: What did you take with you when you left?

PAPPAS: I just take small valise with my things.

NASH: Do you remember anything about the trip?

PAPPAS: The trip was very rough and we didn't fit very nice in the boat that time.

NASH: What was the name of the boat?

PAPPAS: Getty, Austro-American Line.

NASH: Austro?

PAPPAS: Austro-American Line, yes.

NASH: What did you eat on the boat?

PAPPAS: Every second day we had meat. The other days we had anything that comes along.

NASH: How did the people amuse themselves on the boat?

PAPPAS: Nothing, just sit down on the deck and nothing else. And look at the ocean.

NASH: You said there was a storm on the boat?

PAPPAS: Very strong almost all the way.

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NASH: Were there times you thought you wouldn't make it?

PAPPAS: Or else I got sick, seasick many times, but I got through. So...

NASH: Did you make any friends on the boat?

PAPPAS: Yes. I made friends. Big friends, you know, who come together from the same place where I started.

NASH: Tell me what happened when you got off the boat.

PAPPAS: When I came off the boat they took me to Ellis Island, New York. They examine me there, my eyes. Sooner they found out my eyes was okay, they let me off and my brother was waiting for me downstairs and took me home. What else you want me to say? Did I say it right?

NASH: Yes, you did. What were your first impressions of New York City?

PAPPAS: That time I was a young fellow, you know. My impression was very nice. When I came here the streetcars was run by horse downtown in South Ferry.

NASH: That was what year?

PAPPAS: The year I came, 1918, and after that. And then I went up the elevator and take me home. Elevator was upstairs. You remember that.

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NASH: Elevator train?

PAPPAS: Elevator, you know, elevated trains were upstairs in the South Ferry and get off on 34th Street and went home. I remember that, that's all.

NASH: You went back to Greece, didn't you?

PAPPAS: I went back to Greece in 1915. Soon as I get in Greece they took me in the army.

NASH: The first time you came was 1908?

PAPPAS: Yes.

NASH: And then you went back in 1915.

PAPPAS: 1915, after eight years. And I serve in the army almost five years.

NASH: What happened? How did they get you when you went back to Greece?

PAPPAS: I was supposed to go in the army. You know. How do you say it?

NASH: Drafted?

PAPPAS: Yes, drafted. And I got wounded in the battle. Not much, very little.

NASH: When you went back did you know that you were going to be going into

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the army? When you went back there?

PAPPAS: Yes.

NASH: Oh, you did, and you went back there?

PAPPAS: Yes. I knew that I was going in the army.

NASH: So you wanted to go?

PAPPAS: Want to go, yes.

NASH: So you fought in World War One?

PAPPAS: World War One, yes. When I get through the army, I came over here again.

NASH: I want to know a little bit more about your experiences in the army. Who were you fighting?

PAPPAS: Against Turks and Bulgarians and Germans, the front.

NASH: And when you were wounded, do you know which army it was that you were fighting?

PAPPAS: I was in the Greek Army.

NASH: I mean who was the --

PAPPAS: The Bulgarians.

NASH: The Bulgarians. Where did this happen?

PAPPAS: In the place?

NASH: Yes.

PAPPAS: Place, Kilkis. Kilkis.

NASH: Is that in Greece?

PAPPAS: Yes, Macedonia.

NASH: What was it like in the Greek Army for a young man?

PAPPAS: Well, I was a young man, I pass alright. They treat you very good, but not the way they do now. Understand?

NASH: Yes.

PAPPAS: I don't know if you understand me.

NASH: Well, sort of. Do you remember when the war ended?

PAPPAS: The war ended November 11, 1918 and I was in the army in Macedonia at that time, that night when we heard the news.

NASH: Were you very happy when you heard it?

PAPPAS: Of course. I was very happy. And after a couple of months I got

off the army, two or three months later.

NASH: And then you decided to come to the United States?

PAPPAS: And I came to the United States again.

NASH: How was your trip different from the first trip?

PAPPAS: The second trip was much better than the first one. Much better boat and we had better treatment. Took us about eighteen days.

NASH: And what happened this time when you got off the boat?

PAPPAS: I came off the boat, I pass Ellis Island again.

NASH: You had to go to Ellis Island again?

PAPPAS: Second time. Again.

NASH: And what happened there this time?

PAPPAS: The same thing. They examine me and they let me free. Don't take long, but ten or fifteen minutes.

NASH: Did they look at your eyes again?

PAPPAS: Yes, again, yes. The eyes and they look in here, in this thing here, what do you call it.

NASH: Your ear.

PAPPAS: See I had the scar here.

NASH: The scar in your ear.

PAPPAS: (?) And when I come, I come again to my brother. My brother was married and had a family and I went him and I stayed with my brother about a month and then I went to work.

NASH: What kind of work did you do?

PAPPAS: I went to work as a waiter in Hotel Robert Fulton. First in Hargrove and then Robert Fulton on 72nd Street, New York City.

NASH: Was it hard work?

PAPPAS: Oh, work, of course, as a way to make a living.

NASH: How many hours did you work a day?

PAPPAS: Ten to twelve hours a day. The first time I worked ten to twelve hours, seven days a week. No off.

NASH: How much money did you make?

PAPPAS: The first time I make, my wages were twenty dollars a month.

NASH: A month?

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PAPPAS: A month and whatever tip I make, about four to five dollars a day.

NASH: Was that a good salary then?

PAPPAS: That time was a good salary because everything was cheaper than it is today, much, much cheaper than it is today.

NASH: Plus did you get to eat a little food on the job?

PAPPAS: I ate in the hotel.

NASH: Did you eat well?

PAPPAS: I ate so and so.

NASH: How did you meet your wife?

PAPPAS: My wife, meet her through my cousin. We have the same name, the same family. And I got married in Lewiston, Maine.

NASH: How did it happen that you got married in Lewiston, Maine?

PAPPAS: Because my wife came over here and then --how can I say that?

NASH: Did she live there?

PAPPAS: No. She came over here and then we know each other and then we get married over there, 1921, October 22, 1921.

NASH: Did you still go to the Greek Orthodox Church?

PAPPAS: Greek Orthodox Church over there in Lewiston, Maine. I am still a member in the Greek Orthodox here in Brooklyn, Schermerhorn Street, Saint Christenden, Brooklyn, New York. Still a member there.

NASH: You told me before that there were many different types of weddings that you would see.

PAPPAS: When I was working in last, I was working Hotel Martnick, 32nd Street and Broadway, and the banquet department. There were many weddings, almost three to four weddings a week from different nationalities, Greek, German, Italian, Polish, Russian, all kinds. Most Greek.

NASH: Who gave the fanciest weddings?

PAPPAS: Fanciest, James Kendall from Staten Island.

NASH: What do you remember about that wedding?

PAPPAS: I remember everybody was happy and never before in their life. And James Jorgenson from Brooklyn, New York, the same thing.

NASH: What did they eat?

PAPPAS: They eat --they start from cocktail, Manhattan cocktail, and then fruit cocktail, soup, chicken, all kind of vegetables, ice cream, and cake.

NASH: How long do the banquets usually last?

PAPPAS: Last about five hours.

NASH: Was there dancing?

PAPPAS: Dancing, music, and all.

NASH: Do you remember --I would like to know what the difference was between the different weddings of the different groups like the Greeks.

PAPPAS: The Polish wedding, after they finish, ready to go, they sit at the table again to eat a second time. They do.

NASH: So it was a very long wedding, a very long banquet?

PAPPAS: Oh, short. Not many things as the first ones, and the other ones just almost the same. The food is the same. Sometimes they ate chicken or prime ribs of beef. Do you know what that is?

NASH: Yes.

PAPPAS: And the rest. All this was in there?

NASH: Yes. Were any groups nicer to the waiters than any others?

PAPPAS: I found lot of nice people and lot of bad people, very rough. They start trouble every minute, but you have to stand for that. Do you know what I mean?

NASH: Yes.

PAPPAS: One night we had 150 people, FBI.

NASH: The FBI came to the wedding?

PAPPAS: No, no, just party. And they got drunk as can be. I was surprised people like that to be --

NASH: So drunk?

PAPPAS: Yes. That is true. (break in tape)

NASH: Mr. Pappas, why did you go back to Greece to fight in the army?

PAPPAS: I went back to fight other people, (?) badly treated. That's because they fight them against the Bulgarians and Turks because they want to come to take Greece over. That is why I went to fight for.

NASH: And other--many people too?

PAPPAS: Lot of people from over here, they went over to (?). Almost half Greeks while I was in New York (?).

NASH: That is very interesting, I didn't know that. So many people cared so much about Greece.

PAPPAS: Oh, yes. That time was different, not like today. Today they try to escape. Who is that?

NASH: It is Pamela.

PAPPAS: Yeah, my niece, my granddaughter, is in Greece. She is about nineteen now, and she telephone from England yesterday.

NASH: Really?

PAPPAS: My son, their first cousin in England, they went to see him. Then she went back to Greece and from Greece she come here.

NASH: Did she visit your hometown?

PAPPAS: Oh, yes.

NASH: Do you still have family there?

PAPPAS: I only had one sister, but lot of nephews. I have brothers and sisters. (?) That is why I want to go every summer because (?), and (?) got sick last year. (?) for this year (?). My grandson is going over next month for three weeks.