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PETER LASKARIS

218 W. 38th Street

Wilmington, Delaware

GREEK IMMIGRANT

Born: 1887

Immigrated: 1900

Interview and Transcription

by Irene H. Long

March - Sept., 1968

The middle of a blazing battlefield is the last place one can imagine Peter Laskaris as he describes campaigns of the Balkan War with great enthusiasm and detail. Barely over five feet in height, almost bald and apparently asthmatic, this one time officer returned to fight for his native land at the request of his father, leaving a new business and a promising future in this country.

Now eighty-four years old, well-cared for by his lovely wife, Mr. Laskaris was nervous in relation to specific dates but could remember every card in a winning poker hand fifty years ago. There was little time for recreation in his life, however. The girl he married before returning from the war died of a heart ailment, leaving two small sons. The second Mrs. Laskaris died during the flu epidemic of 1919, leaving two more small sons motherless. In these years of bewilderment, Peter kept returning to Greece to his mother and to educate his boys.

The courtship of the present Mrs. Laskaris is related in a good-humored, heart-warming way as the description of the arrangement is told. Mrs. Laskaris laughs as Mr. Laskaris tells of sealing the bargain with a kiss and a five dollar gold piece.

The traditional story of dishwasher to restaurant owner can be applied to Peter Laskaris but also can the long, hard hours of labor, void of any recreation but filled the desire to succeed in a land where the door of opportunity was open to those who could work the hardest and the longest.

TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW WITH PETER LASKARIS

"Mr. Laskaris, where were you born?"

"In Greece, Sparta, Greece."

"Sparta."

"Yeh, a small village, a small village called Zupina."

"Zupina, how far was that from the city of Sparta?"

"It was about half an hour."

"About half an hour."

"Yeh."

"What date were you born, what year?"

"I born 1987."

"18 90.....?"

"19 87."

" '87."

"Yes."

"Right."

(MRS. L.) "19...?"

(Mr. L.) "19"

(MRS. L.) "18"

(MR. L.) "1987"

"O.K. Did you go to school in Greece?"

"Yeh, for a little while. I left when I was twelve years old."

"Did you go to about six years of schooling?"

" 'Bout around five, six years, yeh."

"Five, six years of schooling."

"Yes."

"What did your parents do?"

"They're farmers."

"They were farmers, too."

"Yeh, farmers."

"Did you help on the farm?"

"No, I was going to school, stay home, getting ready for, come home and fix the fire, and fix *Kavonja*, you know, fix the *Kavonja*."

"The lamp?"

"Yeh, for my mother, yeh."

"What would you have done had you stayed in Greece?"

"Farm, I guess."

"Farmer?"

"I didn't have no education. I didn't ----- . My father was very poor and he never speak, write Greek. Don't know. And my other son (brother) he left for the United States, so he says, my brother here, he's - he wrote a letter to my father. He says, 'You better send a Pete.' "

"Uh huh - your brother was already here in America?"

"Yeh, so he send me here with a couple boys from another town and I come to Philadelphia."

"And what year was that?"

"That was -uh- in 1900."

"1900?"

"Yeh"

"So you were about thirteen years old?"

"Round there."

"Around thirteen and you came with just another group of boys."

"Yeh"

"Around the same age or were they older?"

"Oh, some of them older; soem of them have friends

with them. And -uh- I come to New York and I was so little and my brother come up after me in New York and got me from, from the cuscut....ty."

"From the customs?"

"Yeh, customs. They got me and brought me to Philadelphia."

"Uh huh. Did you travel to the port in Greece... what port? What port did you leave from?"

"Patras."

"Patras, so you went from Sparta to Patras."

"That's right"

"By train?"

"Train, yes, train."

"Do you remember the boat trip over?"

"Oh, have hard time. It was, it was old boat. I don't remember, I don't remember exactly. Some old boat."

"Did it take you very long?"

"Thirteen days, fifteen days."

"Fifteen days?"

"Yeh, I think it was Italian boat. I don't, I'm not sure."

"Had you ever been to a big city before?"

"Noooooo, no, no."

"That was your first experience away from home?"

"That's right."

"And when you got to New York, did you stop at Ellis Island?"

"They sent me there. They say, 'Where's your -----?' I say, 'They supposed to come down get me.' The way they wrote the letter it says, 'You be in New York and I'll come down and

get you.'" "

"This is your brother Alex?"

"No, Jim."

"Jim"

"Yeh"

"And Jim was supposed to meet the boat?"

"Yeh"

"Did he meet the boat on that day?"

"Yeh, yeh."

"You had no trouble then?"

"No, no, next day."

"The next day?"

"Yeh."

"So did you stay over night?"

"I stay over night there in 'cuscorey.'" (custody?)

"Uh huh"

"And the next morning they come up there and they call the names, and so 'Pete Laskaris,' they call my name and I say, 'here, I'm here,' and he come up there, got me, kissed me, and so....."

"I guess you were glad to see him."

"Yeh. He took me to Philadelphia and I worked for my uncle there. Wash pans inside in the kitchen in the candy maker."

"A candy maker?"

"Yeh. Wash the pans, helped candy maker, chocolate dippers, oh, for over a year. After that they sent upstairs and try to learn to sell the candies. Sooooo...."

"How did you make out speaking English?"

"Well, I tell you the only thing I had a little book, that's all and try and they never sent me to school."

"No?"

"No, never sent to school. My uncle he was so strict."

"Was he really?"

"Oh, he was so strict. So I remember one day I was upstairs and a colored woman come in there to buy candies. Sooo she wanted a half pound. I give him a half pound. I had the bag and I put the scoops, you know, in the bag. Piece candy fall down."

"Uh huh"

"On the floor. So I pick up the candy from the floor and I put in the bag. So my uncle was sitting there in the corner; and after the colored girl went out, he says, 'Come here.' Smack me right here in my face! 'What for?' He says, 'Why you pick that candy from the floor?' And I says, 'What shall I do?' He says, 'Wait the woman get out first then pick up the candy and put it in the case here.' 'Oh,' I was crying. And one of the girls there got me and took me in the back and says, 'Mr. Fornakis, why you hit that boy? What's the matter?' He says, 'You have to learn, have to learn.' She says, 'You have to smack him to learn?'"

"You were only fourteen or thirteen?"

"Thirteen, fourteen, yeh."

"Well, you learned that lesson."

"I was"

"You can still feel it?"

"He was big heavy man. Whooooo eeeee, gosh! For a week my face it was ----- . So I was mad; so I, so I stay there for couple years, and they send me, he has two stores. So one, his home was cooking for all those guys working for the stores."

"You lived with your uncle then in his home?"

"Yeh, had a room there, room there. And the one factory, one meals they cook, cook and they send me to the other store

with pan meals. You understand me? Meals to pick up the other place, the other store. They cook for all the boys."

"And you delivered?"

"Yeh, he he. (Chuckles) Yeh, I delivered and they send me no car fare, no money, I walked and I remember it was snowing so I fell down and the pan I had all dropped in the floor, in the road. And I just dropped it and flew the cover on the top, and I went in the store, and the manager there he days, 'What is this? Only this piece meat there? That's all I'm going to eat?' 'Well, that's all they send me; that's all they give me.' And it took what was good piece. So he got mad; he says, 'I'm going out eat,' he says. So he went out up to the restaurant, got I don't know twenty-five, fifty cents and he went to the restaurant to eat. So oh, I was awful there, I don't know."

"Were there many boys your age working for your uncle?"

"No, they was bigger. I was little one."

"You was, you were the smallest one?" Did you live in his home as his son?"

"Yeh, I live upstairs the home. After a year they wake me up about five o'clock and I open the store down Front and Market, Front and Market Streets."

"Front and Market in Philadelphia?"

"It was about twelve squares, twelve blocks. So I open the store and clean up the floors and the cases and everything else; and anybody come in for candy, I sell them. And so I for five years I work there. They only give me five dollars a month."

"Five dollars a month?"

"Yeh, five dollars a month and my brother, he left that time and he come to Wilmington. So he come up there one day,

and he says, 'You better come to Wilmington with me,' He says, 'No use to stay with Uncle. I bought store, business here in town and I want you to run the store.' So, 'All right Brother, all right.' So I didn't have no money. So I didn't know to get out of Philadelphia, you know. So saw my boys selling newspaper. So I told him I want to go to Wilmington. So I didn't have no money. So I used to give him candy and he give me newspaper and ask information, you know."

"I see."

"And I told him to get to Darby-----. Go up to Darby, go to Chestnut Street and the car there take you way up to Darby. From the Darby, get another car and take you to Wilmington."

"Uh huh"

"When you go to Wilmington, you know the address, you go there. So all right. So I didn't have no money. So I told the manager. He says, Don't bother me, don't bother me.' He says, 'Go up the cash register and take any money you want.' So I have, I read, I says, 'Dear Uncle, I'm leaving and I took a four dollars from the cash register and I'm leaving.' So I took the four dollars and I left. I was so scared and I went up the 'Ostri' (?)Hotel, hotel in the there's a hotel there."

(MRS. L) "Ostri" (?)

"Ostri, uh huh."

"So I stayed over night. And the next morning, the next morning I had a little bag, my clothes. Left and went up to Chestnut Street and got the car and I went up to Darby. Darby, I ask them, 'I want to go to Wilmington.' So they told me, 'Get this, you wait here, right here,' he says, 'and the car comes and take you to Wilmington.' So I did. So I went there, stay there. The car coming there and say, 'You going to Wilmington, Wilmington,

Wilmington.' I say, 'Yes.' So I get in there in Wilmington, and I pay the fare. So I come to Wilmington."

"What year was that, Mr. Laskaris? Do you remember the year you came?"

"19..... it was 19.....0.....6."

"1906?"

"1906, yes."

"And your brother had opened a store. Where had he bought the store?"

"It was, it was between Fourth and Fifth, Market Street."

"Between Fourth and Fifth on Market. What's there now, do you know?"

"The Wilmington Dry Goods store."

"The Wilmington Dry Goods."

"Yeh, yeh."

"Uh huh, OK, so you went to work for your brother?"

"Yeh"

"Where did you live then while you were working for your brother?"

"My brother had rooms here on French Street."

"Uh huh"

"And I stay there with him, room - rooming house."

"I see. You were about eighteen then, seventeen, eighteen?"

"Around there, seventeen."

"Around there. So you are a young man in a new town and living and working with your brother."

"That's right, that's right."

"What did you do in your spare time? Did you have any.....?"

"No spare time! You sleep and work! Sleep and work! I -uh- leave the store, I went to bed, I had no place to go. I mean I didn't know anybody. I didn't have a car and I have to go to sleep and get up in the morning seven o'clock to go to the store. Open up, clean up the floors and the cases and everything else."

"Was this a candy store principally or did you have a restaurant."

"Candy store, open soda fountain."

"Oh, you had a soda fountain?"

"They had a soda fountain. I learned the soda fountain, candy, buy the candy. They had another girl there works for the candy counter and I was the soda fountain making ice cream sodas, banana splits, and making the sundaes."

"Did you work on Sundays?"

"Oh yes, yes."

"Oh so you did have a seven day week?"

"Yes, seven day, yep. So....."

"Uh...."

"So, 19....."

"Go ahead."

"1910 I left, went to Greece, serve in army."

"Oh, did you really?"

"My father wrote me letter. He says because I was in United States, I was twenty-one years old, twenty years old, he says, 'You have to go serve in army for six months and pay three hundred dollars, three hundred francs.'"

"Did you really?"

"Yeh, I did. I left because my father wrote me. He says, 'You better come up, serve, serve in army because if you don't serve, you never come back to Greece.'"

"Oh?"

"See, you have to serve. So I left and went up to Greece and I went in army six months and -uh- paid the three hundred francs and I stayed six months, you know, at home. So I left back to the United States."

"Well, let me ask you this: were you anxious then to keep your Greek citizenship? Is that what you.....?"

"Well, my father. I listened to my father."

"Oh, I see."

"I listened to my father. He say you better come."

"But your other brothers didn't?"

"No, no they never did. I listened my father. So I left and went to Greece and stay there."

"Was there any active campaign then? Was there any war?"

"War was 1912."

"1912, yeh, the Balkan War."

"I came to the United States. So I bought business Sugar Bowl, open little store on Fourth and Market, Sugar Bowl."

"Uh huh"

"So war was in Greece 1913."

"Uh huh"

"So 1913, so I have to go back because I was officer. See I was, I had to go back."

"Oh, I see."

"Have to go back. Like a it's here, it's a"

"Like in the National Guard?"

"National Guard, that's right. So I bought that business. I open up business. I - so I left my business to my brother. I say, 'Here you take the business over. I'm going to

Greece. So I don't know if I come back or not, but you take the store. When I come back, I want the store back. So he if you make any money, it's yours; but I want my fare to go over there and my fare to go back.' So I did. I left. There was - it was boat in New York; thousands, thousands of boys going over, volunteers."

"Greek?"

"Yeh"

"Returning?"

"Yeh, I went up to Greece. Right away I went home. They give you five days time. Talk to my father, mother. So I stay there five days. So I left. So up in Athens. Right away they give me clothes and exercise a little bit there. So we was keep on war, big war but I, I was..... The way I was figure that the war be over when I go over there, see?"

"You thought it'd be over by the time you got there?"

"So I went over and stay about a month in Athens and they send me with couple, oh a lot, oh five six hundred boys. And man, they sent with the boat in the port they call Pravida." (?)

"Pravida?"

"Yeh, little small place there. And -uh- from Pravida we have to walk to 'fah' (firing) line. Walk over two days walk."

"March to.....?"

"March from that little small town to go to the 'fah' line - far line where the -----."

"Uh huh"

"So they call, they call 'em -uh- uh - Pessani."

"Pessani?"

"Like the fort, big fort."

"Oh, I see."

"So....."

"Were you over then in Macedonia. Is that how far?"

"Yeh, yeh. So I left there and I didn't know - they told us we were going to some town to police men.....to be police men."

"Uh huh"

"Watch the town."

"Right"

"But they fool us. They sent us to 'fahr' line."

"Oh, I see. They sent you into the action then and you thought you were going to be a patrol?"

"They boys say we was small town. Everybody's happy be watchhing like policemen, you see. But they fool us. So we walk two days and went up the 'fahr' line."

"Uh huh"

"And we went up there, they separate twenty-five boys here, fifty there, twenty here. They separate different companies."

"Yes"

"So I went up there. It was cold. Whooooo...cold! I didn't have no clothes nothing! So I stay there couple days, three days. And next day nice -----, he says, 'Everybody get ready, we leave three o'clock in the morning to go to fire (finally clear to listener) line, change the, change the ones fire line.' See changing the fire line."

"You were going to replace?"

"Yeh, replace them."

"Uh huh"

"So we walk there, I don't know about ten blocks near the fire line and laying down, sleeping in ground. So about

three o'clock in the morning, we woke up. Everybody woke up. And no talk, nothing, just go easy, quiet, and go to fire line. Was a little hill, so I - they woke me up. It was cold. I can't, I can't put my clothes. So one of the officers, 'Come on, come one boy, get ready.' So nervous. So he help me my clothes. So I went over, went up, lay down, and -uh- don't talk, talk, - quick- so went up the hill. So right away they find out us. They starts to shoot. ZZZZZZZZZ! BUZZZ! Come right to us, but we lay down, down. Go up....."

"On your stomach?"

"Yeh, yeh. So I went down there. God Bless Me! I went down there and I see our boys at the fire line and they the -----, when they stay in there. You know what I mean. You know what I mean?"

"Fox holes?"

"No, they had the ground..... They had different ground there and they had sand bags on the floor there."

"Uh huh, like a fort?"

"Yes, so we went there and he says, 'Hey you take,' he says, 'you go stay there, this place here.' And the other boy was there; he was leaving."

"You replaced someone?"

"Yeh, replace. So that boy, it was so sudden, and he got up and change clothes. See. He just got up then from the shooting. WOW! He got shot right here in the face. Somebody watch him. See."

"That close."

"Somebody watch him and shot him in the head and lay down and I, I hollered, 'Help! Help! Help!' Call the soldiers one by one up the main office. Oh, everybody. The man got killed,

'Help! Call the Red Cross.!' So he was laying down. So I had my head down underneath. So the boy, I think he died. I don't know. And next day they sent us food; little, little glass metaxa, brandy, brandy; see it was cold."

"That was part of your rations?"

"Yeh, little bottle of wine, metaxa, and food; and we stay there about two days. And after that the, the place the Turks there, they surrendered."

"Oh really, they surrendered in two days?"

"Yeh, because King Constantine, he was the King. He was the General. He walked so many miles way up to see, cut them, for over a week night time to cut the supply from the Turk."

"He cut the supplies off?"

"Yes, cut off the supply. And the next day I heard the noise. We don't shoot nothing; we didn't do anything, but the guns shooting."

"Oh, you could hear the fighting in the back."

"Yeh, yeh. Guns, noise, every five minutes guns. So right away orders to get up and run, go after them. They was running. The Turks come out from the place there, and they left. They run away. So we come up there and go after them."

"You chased them?"

"We chased them. So and -uh- it was - we went up to Essimi (?), big -----, Essimi, they call it. We stay there about three or four days, and after we got a notice to go to Athens. One of the kings, King George - I don't know - he got killed in Salonika in Greece."

"Oh?"

"He got killed. Somebody kill him. So we have to go to the funeral."

"Oh, I see."

"So our company was the best company, see. They order to come up to Athens. So we left from then. We come to Athens. So we parade, march in the funeral."

"In the procession."

"We march there on the cemetery. So after that I - after that we left. We stay there about two, three days, oh more than that - and we left and sent back to Salonika. And we started Bulgarians, you know that?"

"Yes."

"The Bulgarians they started war in Greece."

"Yes, I know. Uh huh - they tried to take more territory than they were supposed to."

"You see we was together, the Bulgarians, the Rumanians incorporated. But they fool us. The Bulgarians, you know, they trying to get the Salonika."

"Yes."

"And somebody give them up to King Constantine."

(MRS. L.) "Constantine" (Correcting pronunciation)

"King Constantine, give him tip from some part in Europe that you better go after Salonika because Bulgarians go after it. So I didn't walk there; but they walked for three, four days. They stopped 'bout five, ten minutes to go up to Salonika. They didn't have no truck, no cars, no nothing."

"You walked?"

"Not me."

"Oh?"

"Not me, but we find out afterwards. And I stay there in Salonika just for two days and after wanted them to go, to go after round called Kilkis, Kilkis. Big fight there and Greece and

Bulgaria. Kilkis. So we was up there and -uh and -uh- we didn't know the place. So they send me to get some water. So I didn't know - I didn't know; but see, one of the officers, he says, 'Laskaris, go over there and get these boys over there to get some water for them.' So I says, 'We don't know, I don't know.' He says, 'See those soldiers, they go after. You go look those boys, they know where to get the water.'"

"Uh huh"

"So they sent with the pan, those things, you know, they put the water."

"You carried the water?"

"Yeh"

"In what?"

"They have - can, you know....."

"A can?"

"Uh huh"

"A canteen?"

"Yes, so they sent with the pan, you know, with my -----, you know. I walked there with them and I fill them up and I come back and I come back and give each one full with water."

"Uh huh"

"So next day it was sunshine and -uh- it was big fight there in Kilkis. Was sunshine and these officers they have this hats with gold, you know they graduate, you know, they graduate they change their hats and everything else."

"Yes, so the officers' hats?"

"Yeh, they have these..... We watch them there. One of those officers of mine, he says, 'Watch this ----- generals, and captains, and everything else.' And we were watching these."

"These were the Bulgarians? You could see them through

binoculars?"

"The Bulgaians, it was in church. See it was way up in church. See, the Bulgarian church they great big hill, great big hill and they have over there----over there on top there and we don't want to bomb the church. But those Bulgarians. So they camp there. They were watching there for two, three days. So those generals come up there and watch, look the place olver. So two, three bullets come up there and fill them all up."

"Killed the officers?"

"Yeh"

"The Bulgarian officers?"

"No, Greek officers."

"The Greek officers."

"Yeh, yeh. We watch them. I see."

"You could see it being done?"

"Yeh, because you see they no - they no, you see the church. We never thought they go in the church."

"Uh huh"

"You see the big church over there on top of this hill is different church from here, It's high, all high. And the Bulgarians, they go up there and priests go up there. They holler about to the people. But they have big gong (guns) there and watch for this time."

"Oh"

"They killed about three of four generals. So after that our way they send more supply over after. And -uh- in Kilgis we walked over great big mountains, big mountains. We went up there and come down again. And from here to Bell Telephone* it was the highway, highway and went over to cut the Bulgarians' lines. The

* Building two blocks from Mr. Laskaris's home.

Bulgarians they supposed to come up there; but when we come down the hill, from the hill, everybody was started so it was, it was order to sit down. There was little river there, mud, little river - mud; and the captain, and the captain there he says, 'Everybody take a rest.' Stay there over night."

(MRS. L.) "Such a big story."

"So you were resting for the night."

"Yeh, next morning right away they order us to get up, get dressed and go after the highway. But those Bulgarians they had big guns. Run away from another place, run away; and they have these guns. We was hid cross the street, but they had these guns. They throw up the guns, up and bring the, bring the bullets down, you see. They they go straight. Course we were hid there, but they throw the guns up there and fell down. And I got wounded here - shot here."

"You were wounded?"

"And my captain, my general he was on his horse cause he was ----- . Psiscoumadis, that was my captain, Psiscoumadis was his name. Was very nice man and he got shot there and lay, fell down from the horse. And I, I didn't know, I just look my hair and blood. Whooooooooo! So I stay in the river; my half body was in the little river. Stay there and after about half an hour was everything over and I left, went down the Red Cross. And look me over; they fix me up there. Then they says, 'You better take a walk.' I got to get a another little city there and from the city there they take you to Salonika, big city, big hospital there. So they dress me up and everything else. And I walk oh about a half an hour, meet up other guys; but some of them -eh- anybody has feet - all right walk because no cars, no-no supplies to keep pick you up."

"No horses even?"

"No nothing. So I walk there, went up the -----, this new city. Oh man, I so many wounded there; so many dead there, too. Nobody round there, doctors so busy, I don't know. There was so many dead. Phew! The stink."

"There was stench, uh huh"

"So a big car came in there and says, 'Hey,' I call him, 'Come on take me down to Salonika,' and he says, 'I can't take you to Salonika.' It has two wheels, you know, wagon with two wheels?"

"A wagon with two wheels?"

"Yeh, ever see them?"

"No."

"Oh yeh, two wheels. I wnet up there and oh man it was, you know, shakey."

"Oh, it was bumpy for your wound."

"Yeh, so I went up there near outside from the - take me way up to Salonika. They took me to the hospital and they dress me up, fix me up. Stay there a couple days and send me back to Piraeus."

(MRS. L.) "Pireefs."

(MR. L.) "Piraeus."

(MRS L.) "Oh,

(MR. L.) "It's near Athens."

"Oh, you went back then"

"Piraeus"

"To the port Piraeus."

"So I stay there about enough and uh and uh, I left. They sent me, you know, off. They say, 'Go back home now, you're all right.'"

"You were discharged then?"

"Yeh"

"Because of your wound?"

"No, he says, 'Take a rest, month's rest, then go back.'"

"Oh, I see, Oh."

"So I went home, stayed there or month; then I go back."

"Uh huh"

"I come back. (Chuckles) So I stay there in Athens oh for month, two. And then they give me discharge papers."

"Uh huh"

"So King Constantine send me big, big letter, his picture, and name down the bottom. I was hero!"

"Ahhhhh, I see."

(MRS. L.) "Big star, I mean something like..."

(MR. L.) "It was, you know, what you call -uh-.....hero...?"

"Like a medal of honor?"

"Medal, that's it, that's it. So I come back to the United States."

"And you returned again. Did your parents ever ask to come over? Did they ever want to come?"

"Oh no, no, no. We had a big farm there. They can't read, can't write nothing."

"They stayed and farmed. Did they have other children there?"

"Yeh, one my brothers died in army."

"Oh, did he?"

"And I have two sisters."

"But you yourself returned to the United States, to

Wilmington."

"So I started, took my place over, Sugar Bowl. So I keep on....."

"Let's see now. What's the year? What year did you return to take the Sugar Bowl over?"

"19...uh....1914."

"1914"

"I stay about two years in Greece, year and a half to two years."

"Fighting in the war?"

"Yeh"

"Did many more boys then come over after the war?"

"Oh, a lot of them, lot of them, but I, you know....."

"But you were by yourself again. Nobody else came with you?"

"No, not with me, no."

"So you were in the Sugar Bowl and the year is?"

"1912"

"But you came back about 1914, right?"

"That's right, that's right."

"And did you live again with your brother?"

"Uh - no, no...he, uh... I open, I open business. I open the Bowl Shop for myself. I didn't work for my brother. So I got a room for me."

"Oh, I see."

"You understand?"

"Did your brother leave then? Left the restaurant entirely?"

"No, my brother was up Eighth Street, Eighth and Market. And I was down on Fourth and Market."

"Oh, Eighth and Market."

"So oh when I left, I got married over there. I forgot to tell you about."

"Oh?"

"When I was in Greece after the war, I got married."

"You got married there in Greece?"

"Yeh, so I bring my wife to here, to the United States."

"Uh huh"

"So I have apartment here on Tatnall Street."

"An apartment on Tatnall Street."

"And I have two boys, George - Dr. George."

"Dr. George, uh huh."

"And Xenophon. He's not here either. He's up the, up the Pennsylvania. He works for -----Preserves."

(MRS. L.) "He's engineer."

"Engineer?"

(MR. L.) "Well he's a forrester, forrester."

(MRS. L.) "I don't know, agriculture, something like that."

"A forrester, uh huh."

(MRS. L.) "Do you know him?"

"No, I never met him."

(MRS. L.) "He's second, the next from George."

"No, I don't know him."

(MRS. L.) "He went to State College."

(MR. L.) "Yeh, he was at the State College and he took -----.
That's what he wants it, that's what he wants it. He took it."

"He didn't then, neither one of these boys helped you in the store?"

(BOTH) "No, no."

(MRS. L.) "See after he's mother died, took them to Greece and

put them on Spetse Island, private school."

"Oh, your sons went to school in Greece."

(MRS. L.) "They stay two and one half years."

(MR.L.) "Spetse, big college there. They learn Greek and American language, you see."

"In Greece?"

"Yeh, I sent them over there. I took them over there."

"Oh?"

"And I put them there because they had no home, nothing. So I sent them to school over there, and they stay there two years. Learn American and Greek language. It was nice city and....."

(MRS.L.) "It's private, beautiful place."

"It was a boarding school?"

"And I come back and I - they wrote me letter to come back to the United States. They say, 'We got enough Greek; we want to come back United States.'"

(MRS.L.) "His mother died 1918. *Two or three* His wife- the flu."

"Oh, that flu epidemic then. The boys then were only young, four years old?"

(MRS. L.) "Oh, John"

(MR.L.) "Seven, eight, something like that."

(MRS. L.) "No, seven months."

"Oh, I see."

(MRS. L.) "They went to Greece two times."

"Uh huh"

(MR. L.) "Mrs. - Mrs. - Fourth and Market had a little hospital there, babies' hospital, Fourth and West, West."

"Fourth and West there was a babies' hospital?"

"Mrs. Walter, she used to have that baby hospital."

I know I used to have the Dr. Reedy and he's the one come up; he's took my children over there and I pay so much. So my brother Jim he left to go to Greece. So I sent those two boys together over there."

(MRS. L.) "And the next trip they went to school."

"I see. There were two separate trips."

(MRS. L.) "Oh, George, he's born 1916 and Xen 1918. I think his birthday May and his mother die seven months."

"Oh, he was only seven months old when his mother died."

(MRS. L.) "And my sister-in-law took it after in Greece."

"In Greece?"

(MRS. L.) "Yeh, his family, her family."

(MR. L.) "I sent them over there with my father, my mother over there and help the parents."

(MRS. asking MR.) "How long they stay in Greece?"

"How long did they stay in Greece then, do you remember?"

"Ah, two years."

"About two years."

"Uh huh."

"And my mother, - should I tell them all, everything?"

"Yeh, uh huh."

(MRS. L. begins to laugh)

"My mother used to have a girl help them out. Help these two boys, take them bath, wash clothes and everything else. So my mother wrote me there. He says, 'You got to get married.' And he says, 'This girl here,' he says, 'is very nice.' He likes the boys. She take care of the boys and everything else and make a good wife.' So 'All right if you say it's good, all right.'"

I never see her. My uncle, my uncle Fornakis from Philadelphia and I say, 'Bring him over.' And my uncle can't bring him over here but some how or other he make it - Mr. Fornakis."

"Oh, I see."

"You see?"

"Now at this time it was difficult to bring these people here."

"At that time he say I got to have someone to take care my home. I want a nurse, you see."

"I see."

"She cooking for me and everything else. So she came up here - Philadelphia."

"Were your two boys with her?"

"Yeh"

"Yeh."

"So I come there. So he says, 'Well,' he says, 'There she is - wife.' My uncle....."

"Your uncle?"

"Yeh, so, you know, we got married in Kent Hotel. Used to be -----. Used to have the Kent Hotel. Used to be another Greek fellow. And I had wedding there and I got married and I had two children from her. I mean....."

"You had two more boys."

(MRS. L.) "Yeh, Eddie and John."

"Eddie and John"

(MR.L.) "Eddie and John"

"What year did you marry again?"

(MRS. L.) "Second marriage."

(MR. L.) "I don't remember exactly, I don't know."

"You don't remember?"

"I don't remember. She died with a leaking (?) heart. I have - over two years she suffered, suffered. I went different doctors and nobody know what's the trouble. And one doctor here told me, he says, 'She has leaking heart; she has to keep quiet, very quiet, no work, nothing.'"

"She had a heart condition of some sort."

"She died."

"So she died."

"So I sold my business."

"You sold the Sugar Bowl?"

"I sold my store and took my four boys home to Greece."

"Again you went to Greece, home to Greece. Did you go to your mother's?"

"Yeh, yeh, to mother. Stay at mother. So I stay there over a year, So....."

(MRS. L.) "Now he put George and"

"The big boys I put them in school."

"In Greece?"

"In Greece. The two little boys stay in my home town."

"And what did you do?"

"Well, -uh, -uh - nothing."

"Nothing? You had made some money and took it back with you?"

"I had a little money. I sold my business and I had enough money to go back, my fare, and everything else because I didn't bother my father."

(MRS. L.) "He stayed one year with the kids."

"So I, I got to do something, I says. I have these four boys. I don't know what to do. I can't go back to the United

States. I can't make a living here. I can't do. So my mother says, he says, 'You got to get married again.' I said, 'What's the matter with you?' She says, 'Well, you do,' she says, 'who's going to take care of these four boys?' So I look around, I look around."

(MRS.L.) "He left the first time to the United States."

(MR. L.) "No, no."

(MRS. L.) "You left the boys to the Greece and you come back."

(MR. L.) "I come back, took the boys home from school. I met you in Sparta."

(MRS. L.) "Before you left the boys."

(MR. L.) "I know that. I left the boys in school and I start business - Kozy Korner."

"Oh, you started the Kozy Korner."

"Yeh, I went what you call it and I left bring my wife -er- bring my boys and so I left there and I was six, seven months. So I left John Moros. He died. He was my nephew and he take care of the business. So I went up. So the - I try to get someone, an old lady, get married, see. (Laughter) So I got somebody, my cousin told her, she says, 'You go down that house over there;' he says, 'there he got four girls.' I says, 'How old they are?' 'Well, I don't know.' 'I don't want any young girls; I don't want any eighteen.'"

"You didn't want any young ones?"

"No, no, no. I want thirty-five, forty, forty-five. I don't want. And he says -----. 'One,' he says, 'I think is about thirty, thirty-three;' he says, 'One,' he says. So I went down there and I find the excuse I hear her father's in oh business bricks."

"Her father was a brick layer?"

"Uh huh"

"This is in Greece?"

"Yes, yes. So I"

(MRS. L.) "You finish the story now." (Laughter)

"So I went up there to buy bricks so I can see them."

"Oh, you made an excuse to go."

"I didn't have; I was afraid to send messages, you know, because I wanted to see her before."

"Oh, you wanted to see them first?"

"So I then was her father come in there. He says, 'What do you want Mister?' in Greek. So I say, 'I want to buy about five hundred bricks.' 'Five hundred,' he says, 'What do you want to do?' 'My home town Zupina;' and says, 'I want to fix my father's home there and mix batch and send them there.' So I sit down. So I sat down in chair there and he called the girls to bring some drinks - little wine. So she come up. Another sister I don't know which one with the drinks."

(MRS. L.) "It's a funny story, ahhhhhh."

"So I saw her and I said, 'She looks all right.' I says, 'OK, I'll tell you truth;' I told his father, 'All right, I no ----- the; I'll be back here tomorrow again.' I left. So I went to see my cousin there in Sparta there. He says, 'You see that big girl, that's the one I'm telling you about; she's very nice, nice people, very poor, very poor people; they have bricks make a just living.' And says, 'Can you go down tell them that I want to get married to one of his daughters?' And he says, 'I go, yeh, I go.' So I says, 'Just tell them I don't want nothing, no prika (dowry).'"

"You didn't want a dowry."

"No, no, no, no."

"Is that....I see."

"Just a black and white, I'm widow. I got four children and I', go back to the United States. I won't stay here. So she's went and says, 'All right, bring here.'"

"Bring you there?"

"Bring him there and bring the children, all of them. So I was there and I give, you know, they give candies, you know, and talk over and my cousin explain all about. I says, 'After all I want to tell you the truth; I'm widow.' He says, 'We know all about.' 'How do you know?' 'Your cousin told us.' 'Well, I'm want to tell you the truth; I have four boys and I want to be sure the girl she wants to come to the United States. If she don't want to come to the United States, I don't want to get married. I don't want nothing, only her. That's all.'"

"Uh huh"

"He says, he ask her, you know, and she says, 'What my father says, I'll do.' I says, 'Here wait, here, you better something make your mind.' 'What my father says, I'll do.'"

"That's all you said?"

"So he says, 'All right.' So I says. So we shake hands. So I had five dollar gold piece in my pocket, put it in her hand. I kiss her. (Much laughter from Mrs. L.) I kiss her."

"And that was the courtship."

(MRS. L.) "That's all."

"It's all over; it's all over."

"What year was this now? Do you remember?"

(MRS. L.) "19.....34."

"1934, oh, I see. Did you in any of your travels back and forth have any difficulty with papers or documents?"

"No, no, no. Oh yes, yes, yes. When I was at the

Consul getting my papers to the United States, he says, 'Hey you marry three wives, that true?' He says, 'You marry again, what you do your wives?' 'They died, they passed away.' 'Oh, something wrong here, something wrong.' 'Don't you believe me? There's picture; there my four boys and I sent them to school in Spetse, college there.' He says, 'Ummmmmm, you sound -----'. Well, all right I show you picture everything else.' He says, 'I want you bring me from cemetery, from United States what cemetery you bury your wives, the number of the cemetery, you know.' So all right, I went out. I write to my cousin, my nephew there and my brother to go over in cemetery on Delaware Avenue, that's my first wife and my second one - both of them - and give the year they die and give the company, the cemetery company and the numbers of the place, the number. So, oh, I was mad. I don't know what I'm going to do. So I, in a week's time I got the papers from them. So I took to the American Consul. 'All right, go ahead.'"

"And that was that."

"That's all, that's all. So I left."

"Then you had made several, about five six trips back and forth to Greece or more than that?"

"Yeh, yeh, several."

"Did any of the time you spent in The United States, did you encounter any prejudice or bias. Did any discriminate against you because you were Greek, you know."

"No, no, no, no."

"Never found any?"

"No, no, no."

"Difficulty that way?"

"No, I was so busy down Fourth and Market to My name, my name was good all over, Chicago, Buffalo, Boston. I

used to buy a lot of candies from Boston. I had no hard time in my life. Oh, they sent me right away. I went down to Baltimore. I bought some booths to fix the store here on Fourth and Market. I move next door to New York Restaurant. Two thousand dollars booths, cases, I was moving from small store to big store."

"Yes, to what was the Sugar Bowl?"

"That's right. So took the order, send me, pay so much every month, regardless. I didn't have no hard time getting the money. Having hard time from the banks but from the, the companies, no hard time. They send me the order down, pay twenty dollars this month, fifty dollars this month, pay my bills and never have any....."

"No difficulty at all?"

"Did you travel much in the United States, you just spent your time in your store?"

"No, I didn't travel much. No, only Wildwood."

(MRS. L.) "He went to Arkansas once."

"Oh, I was single that time."

"You were single?"

(MRS. L.) "Yeh single, with Mr. Saros."

"With Mr. Saros and Mr. Govatos, Nick Govatos."

"Nick Govatos?"

"They want me to go with them. I have a week off. I had another man with me at the fountain. They say, 'Come on, Pete, let's go together.' I say, 'Whoooooo, I'm not sick.' Because they were sick; they was something with their stomach, Arkansas."

"Did they go to the springs there?"

"Yes, yes, Hot Springs."

"Uh huh"

"They say, 'Come on.' I tell the truth: I was playing poker one night there. First time."

"First time you'd ever played poker and....."

"Eighth and Market...."

"Eighth and Market?"

"In 'partment there. There was four, five American fellows there, half-drunk, half was. So they come up there. 'Come on, Pete, come on, let's sit down, sit down.' Oh, see pile of money here - one hundred, two hundred, five hundred. When I didn't have no money, I only have 'bout thirteen dollars. (Chuckles) So so Nick Govatos there Nick Govatos. 'Sit down, Pete, sit down there.' Couple minutes lost that thirteen dollars. I say, 'Nick, -----.' He gave me fifteen dollars. 'Take your time, take your time.' So I sit down and I tell you the truth, those guys they have been drinking, bluffing, you know, bluffing."

"They were bluffing you?"

"Fifty dollars see. So I got couple hands round one hundred fifty dollars, couple hands. So one guy he put nine hundred dollars for the last card."

"Nine hundred?"

"No nine hundred, I mean ninety dollars."

"Ninety dollars."

"Yeh, that's only money he has. He had two tens and hoping open a stall. I was Jack, Queen, and King. I was anything I get I beat him. He was putting ninety dollars. I say, 'What's the matter with you, crazy?' He says, 'Ninety dollars.' So I got ninety dollars. 'Shoot!' Zip! Zip! One for me. I had ace on bottom."

"Ohhhhhhhhh."

"And he says, 'What you got?' 'What you got?' 'I

got two tens.' 'I got two aces.' He's look at me..... they thought I was dummy, I never play cards."

"Beginner's luck?"

"I never play cards; I never just like it, that's all. And they was trying to bluff me."

"Uh huh"

"And I pay for bluffing, but they try to bluff me. And I got 'em one time. Another fellow one hundred fifty dollars last card. He has two fives and I had two sixes, two fives."

"He had two fives and you had two sixes?"

"One hundred fifty dollars. 'Oh, what you talking about?' I says, 'I'm not playing with you.' And I had about three, four cards, you know, and so all right I'm sport. 'I call you one hundred fifty dollars.' 'I got two sixes; what you got?' 'Two fives.' Whewwwwww. He was so mad. He says, 'Nick, go out and get me couple hundred dollars.' 'No,' he says, 'four o'clock in the morning.' So I says, 'No, that's enough.' So I get up, I say, 'Thank you boys.' (Chuckles) So and I have oh four hundred dollars. I give Nick, he give me fifteen dollars, I give him fifty dollars."

"Fifty dollars for fifteen."

"Yeh, so I left, went on home. Next day these boys, next Saturday they call me back, come up to play. 'No, I'm a sick; I no feel good.' (Laughter) So I left. I went to Hot Springs with Nick and Mr. Saros."

"Oh, how old were you then, about? Was this before you were married and all?"

"Yes, yes."

"Had you ever had any experience with a coffee house? Were there any coffee houses in Wilmington in those early years?"

"Yeh, I was in the coffee business, too."

"Oh, you were in the coffee business, too."

"Yeh, coffee business down Fourth and Walnut, Third and Walnut Street."

(MRS. L.) "No, Irene talking about coffee houses."

(MR. L. - doesn't understand) "I sold my business Kozy Korner. I had trouble with my partner, fight all the time."

"With your partner?"

"Yeh, fight. So I bought, you see, store there for my Eddie, my son Eddie."

"You bought the store for Eddie."

"Eddie owns the coffee business, see. But war declare and they took him in army. So I took it over, me and another man. American fellow, Wallace I think his name. We took it from, we bought it for six thousand dollars, that was cousin, that was cousin of mine. I don't know if you remember."

"No, I don't."

"We bought him out. He want to get out. He was old man. So I stay there round three, four years; but my partner was...."

(MRS. L.) "Crooked!"

"Crooked."

"Your partner?"

"Crooked!"

"What was this in the 1940's?"

"I don't remember exactly what year."

"Second World War, Eddie, did Eddie go in the Second World War?"

"Yeh, yeh."

"So this was in the 1940's."

"So I bought it. I was waiting for him to come back,

you know, take over. I didn't know. I was staying there and I would go out and get all this coffee business, you know, from the restaurants. And I have a hard time selling coffee, hard time selling coffee."

"It was difficult?"

"No, 'What you know about coffee business?' Every time I go over there and they buy from Adelpia and different companies. They have steady and I have hard time selling. Oh, that's no good for me. So I stay there for two years, three years. I wait for my son. So my partner he says, I have trouble with him. I says, 'The money, no money here; where's, where's money?' We shipping, we have a lot of coffee, send shipment outside Baltimore, Trenton, New Jersey. Over six, seven hundred pounds a week."

"Outside of Wilmington?"

"Outside of Wilmington. We doing more business outside instead of Wilmington. So I didn't see no money, money there. My partner and I didn't know anything about coffee. I can mix it, that's all. So I say, I say, 'Want my business, my share?' He says. I told my partner. He says, 'You better go back to restaurant business, candy business.' So any how we stick together. So he bought me out. When my son come back, Eddie come back, I told him all about it. It's no use, this man here, he's all right, maybe he know his business; but he's crooked, crooked business. So I left. So he says, 'All right, Pop.' And so I start in Richardson Park, restaurant there."

(MRS. L.) "Five Points"

"Five Points in Richardson Park, uh huh."

"And Eddie went up Philadelphia to school, IBM. He wants for IBM school. EH?"

(MRS. L. questions him about which son - indiscernible to record)

"He went there, too. I don't know. But anyhow he got job in IBM. Sent him school four, five months, but something wrong in company there and they let him off. So....."

"Well, that brings us pretty well up to the present. Through all these years can you remember the worst time, through the two world wars and that war that you were in? You.....?"

"Well, the war from Greece, it was, it was rough, awful bad, bad. They didn't have no provisions, no trucks, no cars, no....."

"It was hard fought war?"

"Rough, rough, rough, rough. No likes now. They have buses; they have cars; they can cross creeks, jeep. They didn't have nothing that time."

"The very first time you came here when you were the youngest, what was there on Market Street?"

"Huh! That time it was different altogether. It was - everything five cents: ham sandwich, coffee, five cents; you know, ten cents coffee; -uh - fifteen cents coffee, ham sandwich. Everything cheap. Everything cheap. And I used to buy Wanamakers, I used, one of my friends used to - if you want any clothes, you go to Wanamaker's. But I didn't have no money. My uncle buys everything, shoes, everything. I don't know why. So always that time. It was good years."

"Those early years?"

"Nothing like see now. Robberies, killing friends, everybody."

"Everybody was friends? You never encountered any prejudice even after the Second and the First World War?"

"No, no, no."

"The second war was..... Did you take citizen papers?"

"1921"

"1921?"

"Yeh"

"Did you have to pass a test?"

"Yeh, I guess I failed the first time."

"Oh, did you?"

"Yeh, I failed the first time and the judge there he says, 'I'm,' I says, 'I'm telling you the truth, I can't get out of business.'"

"You didn't have time?"

"You got to study; you got to study the law. Well, all right. So in 1921, 1921, I got my citizen papers. So she got it, citizen papers, I don't know what year."

"Did you have to take a test, too?"

(MRS. L.) "Yeh"

"Yeah, after 1922 I think....."

(MRS. L.) "I don't know. They help me, I think, the army...."

"The boys helped you?"

(MRS. L.) "She had four boys in army. All were in the army."

"All were in the army the same time?"

"Yeh, John, the Doctor, Xenophon was in the army.

Eddie was in the army. Johnny he wanted to see the United States."

(MRS.L.) "Johnny, he's don't stay long."

"George and Xenophon was in Europe and Eddie some place down south. I don't remember where. And when I, she went to get her papers, I think the judge he says her, 'What's the capitol of Delaware?' She says, 'Dover.' Couple questions."

(MRS. L.) "Not too many questions."

(MR. L.) "Couple questions. O.K. that's all."

"I see. Did you find then that your test in 1921 was

a lot more difficult than Mrs. Laskaris's."

"Oh yes, they ask me a lot of questions in 1921 over there, but for her just two or three questions."

"Who were the first Greeks here in Wilmington? Do you remember?"

"First Greeks?"

"Uh huh"

"When I came to Wilmington, I think there was John Brothers."

"John Brothers, uh huh."

"And George Melos."

(MRS. L.) "Melos?"

"Melos. He used to have the Sugar Bowl. Used to have candy store."

"Oh, did he?"

"When my brother bought it, I bought it from him."

"Oh, I see."

"And Govatos."

"And Govatos, uh huh."

"John Govatos."

"John Govatos."

"Those three I remember."

"You remember those three."

"After that some more come in, they have shoe shine stores."

"Shoe shine stores. Any other Greek businesses on Market Street?"

(MRS. L.) "Mr. Regos."

"Huh?"

(MRS. L.) "Mr. Regos."

"Yeh, Regos, he came after. After he was across the street."

"All right. Is there any other stores that you remember?"

"That's all, that's all. The candy store and the movies cross the street from me, The Savoy, I meanwhat you call the movies, five cents to get in there."

"Five cents? Did you go to the movies very often?"

"Once in a while. (Chuckle) When I had time."

"All right, I think that's about all. Well thank you very much, Mr. Laskaris."

"All right."