



Citation for this collection:

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PETER AND TASIA METAXAS

315 W. 37th Street

Wilmington, Delaware

Greek Immigrants

Peter- Born 1887, Immigrated 1906

Tasia - Born 1895 Immigrated 1916

Interview and

transcription by:

Irene H. Long

Feb.-Sept. 1968

Peter Metaxas at eighty-three cuts his lawn with a hand mower and walks twenty blocks a day. His life has always seemed to follow an unusual path. As a young man his decision to come to America was uninfluenced by preceding relatives or friends as there were none here. His associations here were with American youths, taking walks to Brandywine Springs Park, having sundaes in a candy store, listening to the band in the park. Even after his marriage to my father's sister, he stayed apart from the Greek community by beginning a business in Easton, Maryland, where there were very few other Greeks. Only after his retirement did he move to Wilmington where there was a large Greek element.

He is extremely proud of his three college graduated daughters as is my Aunt Tasia, who also tells part of her story during the interview. Her first years here were spent working in the store and keeping house for her father and three brothers. During the interview she scurried to get a photo album to show me pictures of the family, especially of her oldest brother Danny, who died in the flu epidemic of 1919. The envoy of the Haldas family to the New World, his accomplishments as head waiter at the Bellevue Strafford enticed the family to emigrate en toto. His early death was a deep blow to every member of the family and he is recalled with great remorse even now.

Uncle Pete and Aunt Tasia were my first interview; and although in my excitement I neglected to take advantage of several opportunities to glean information, I found an auspicious beginning in the charming conversation they provided.

TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW WITH PETER AND TASIA METAXAS

"Uncle Pete, where were you born?"

"In Cephalonia, Greece."

"And is that the area or the town?"

"Island, island."

"It's an island."

"The island of Cephalonia, yeh."

"Were there little towns on that island?"

"Yeh."

"And what town on that island, on that island were you born?"

"Skala"

"Skala. What year were you born?"

"Uh in 1887."

"1887."

"Uh - how long did you go to school in Greece?"

"Well, uh, let's see, when you finish the eight years."

"Eight years you went to school. At what age were you when you began school."

"Seven."

"You were seven and you went through - was that considered the end of grammar school, high school when you stopped?"

"No, junior high."

"Junior high. In other words, had you gone on you would have gone into high school."

"That's right. I graduated from junior high and I left to come over here."

"I see. Uh, what would you have done there had you

stayed."

"Nothing!"

"Nothing, farming?"

"That's all."

"Just farming. There was nothing else to do?"

"I never, I never work in a farm."

"You never worked on a farm anyway?"

"I was too young. I never worked."

"What did your father do?"

"He was, he was ... My father was in Russia for twenty years."

"He was in Russia?"

"He had a baker shop in Odessa."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake!"

"But he was going and coming. You know what I mean? It's not too far; Russia's not too far from there."

"He was on a boat and he went by boat?"

"Oh, yeh, by boat. Yes, sure."

"And he would commute more or less?"

"Well, every couple of years or so."

"But he was - was he one of the wealthier ones on the island? Or were you more privileged than the others?"

"Yes, yes, yes. He, the old man, had money. He left quite a bit, too."

"Did he?"

"But I never got a nickel."

"You were here and they were there."

"I'm going to tell you something - put it in there because I want them to hear it. When somebody die over here, they can come over here and collect the dollars."

"That's right."

"But if somebody die there, for instance like my father. He left me - oh, he worth about seven, thirteen thousand dollars all together. I mean what's left. I never got a nickel."

"You couldn't go over there and collect it."

"No sir, you can not!"

"You can't do it."

"Can't move penny."

"For Heaven's sake. So you were lucky to get what you got as far as education was concerned and that sort of thing."

"That's right."

"What made you decide to leave Greece?"

"Well, that was a boom that time. You know what I mean - with the San Francisco fire in 1906."

"Yeh."

"And everybody was coming here and I was young and I say, 'Well, I'm going too.' I don't, I don't see no future there."

"I see."

"With all the farming and like that because it's not here, like here, you know."

"No, there isn't that, there isn't as much opportunity."

"People didn't have no protection from the government."

"Uh huh."

"Sure."

"Well then, how old were you when you decided to come?"

"Well, I was about nineteen."

"About nineteen. Did you have friends or relatives

already here."

"I have a nobody."

"Nobody?"

"No relatives, no friends or nobody."

"You just decided on your own?"

"On my own."

(MRS. M.) "And five dollars in a pocket."

(MR. M.) "No!" (Laughter)

"You were about fifteen when you completed your education and nineteen when you decided to leave?"

"That's right."

"And for those four years you just..."

"I was laying around and moving around the island."

(Chuckles)

"Moving around the island, I see."

"The old man wouldn't let me do any of the farm work."

"No?"

"He wouldn't let me dig the ground, no."

"He wouldn't let you touch it."

"He wanted me to go through the school."

"He wanted you to go back to school."

"Yeh and my - I don't know. Oh, I just didn't want to take a chance, might spend his money - don't get no wheres. Then he'd be out of luck, too."

"I see what you mean. Uh, well, when you arranged for your papers to come over here, did you have to go to a court house?"

"No place."

"No place. You just bought a boat ticket?"

"I just bought a boat ticket, yes, here to come over."

"From what port did you leave?"

"Patras."

"Where's that?"

"Greece, it's Greece."

"On the island proper?"

"No, no in the Peloponnesus."

"In the Peloponnesus."

"We have to go - we have to go from Cephalonia, you have to go with the boat."

"That's right."

"Over to Patras. It's about, I think about fifty-four miles."

"Fifty-four miles?"

"From Cephalonia, yes, to the port of Patras. That's where I took the boat."

"Uh huh"

"And from there we went to Palermo, Italy."

"Uh huh"

"We stay ther about twelve days and then we got another boat, the Fransisca, it was a Austrian boat, the.... I don' t know what the name of the company. The boat was name Fransisca anyhow. That's Afro-America(?), Afro-American."

"Afro-American?"

"Afro-America was the company name."

"Oh, I see. But the name of the boat was Fransisca? And it was an Austrian boat?"

"Austrian, yes."

"You had gone from Greece to"

"No, no. I went to Italy and that's where that boat came in and we got into it and come over here to the United States."

"Is this the way your ticket was set up or did you just sort of hop from boat to boat?"

"No, no, that's the way the ticket was."

"Was it costly? How much did it cost?"

".....was 'bout..."

"Did your father give you money for this?"

"Oh, he give me the money all right. Oh, about two hundred fifty, two hundred fifty drachmas, something like that."

"You can't remember exactly how much that - anyway the money would have changed so much."

"Yeh, My God that was sixty years ago now."

"What were conditions like aboard the boat?"

"Hmph! Like a cattle!"

"Like cattle?"

"Yeh, cattle. Banana boat!" (Laughter)

"Did you sleep in large compartments?"

"Sure. We, I don't know how many exactly. One bed right on top of the other."

"Bunks?"

"Four."

"Four beds high. What bed were you in, do you remember?"

"Well, I was in dungeon."

"You were in the first one." (Laughter)

"I was the top."

"On the top one but down in the hole. Is that what you mean?"

"Oh yeh, sure. That's all there was. There was no second or first class."

"It was like a freighter?"

"Freighter, sure. They change them to the passenger boat. but not supposed to be passenger boat."

"Uh huh"

"That's all you can get then."

"Uh, you told me the name of the boat. Were the passengers of mixed nationality?"

"Yeh, yeh."

"They were. They weren't all Greeks or?"

"No, no. Greeks, Italians, Austrians, Bulgarians. So we got ...we took some people from Algeria."

"And theirall their destination was to...."

(MRS. M.) "To come here."

(MR. M.) "New York."

"New York. You didn't stop in England or any other port? From there you came. How long did it take you?"

"Uh, eighteen days."

"Eighteen days from Patras or from..?"

"From Patras to ...to New York."

"New York. Um...do you remember how you felt when you arrived? What first impressions of the dock or the.....?"

"In New York?"

"Yeh."

"Oh, I was very impressed."

"Had you ever been to a big city before? Had you traveled when you were young?"

"Oh yeh. Sure."

"You had been to Athens?"

"Oh yeh."

"So this was not a new experience in that....?"

"I was, I was all over the Greece as far as that

concerned."

"Did you speak any English?"

"'Yes' and 'no'."

"You said 'yes' and 'no' or....? " (Laughter)

"That's all."

"Oh, I see." (Laughter)

"Just them two words."

"Did anyone meet you in New York?"

"NO!"

"What did you do when you got here?"

"Well, there was a Greek- what do you call - the
guy's...?"

"An immigration ...?"

"Agent, a Greek agent."

"Agent."

"They used to issue tickets for going or - and er
it happened to be a Cephalonian, you see."

"Oh, a home towner."

"So, he's the one took care of me and I told him
where I want to go and I went."

"Where was that?"

"I went to Richmond, Virginia."

"And why did you go there?"

"I went there to get - because I knew couple fellows
from this side to meet them."

"Uh huh"

"Well, I meet them but they were nothing else, but
they working in the C and M, that's the railroad. I mean they
used to build engines for the rail, you know what I mean."

"Uh huh"

"But the work was too hard for me."

"Steel work."

"Steel work. I couldn't stand that work so I worked there for twenty-eight days. I got a little money and I learned about the place here Wilmington, a candy store here."

"How long were you in Richmond, twenty-eight days?"

"Twenty-eight days."

"And you got a little money."

"Yeh, I got a little money and I left without anybody knew anything. I left and I went down the station and I says, I said to the man, I ask the boy how to write down for me so I can learn it, 'What time train go Wilmington?'"

"Oh, you had someone write this in English?"

"So the man understood what I wanted, you know what I mean. He's - he told me with his hand to sit down. So I sit down and he come over and he give me the ticket and he told me to wait. I know exactly when he said, 'Wait.' Then when the train come in, he took me down and told the conductor there where I was going and get me - don't forget to get me out there cause I speak no English. So I guess that's what he said to him, I don't know. Anyhow I come over here. The station wasn't at Front and Market yet. The Pennsylvania station wasn't built yet."

"Pennsylvania station."

"So I went up to Market Street. I know where that place was."

"The candy store that you heard about?"

"Yeh. So I saw a fellow there with a little mustache. Well, I said, 'That's a Greek.' (Laughter) I said to myself. I talk to him in Greece and he turn around and he says,

'Yes.' He ask me where I come from and I told him. So, he was open the door, you know. He was the candy maker of the place."

"Do you remember his name?"

"John ...oh...uh....Trionolis."

"Trionolis and where was this - on Market Street?"

"On Market, yes. Right there where the Wilmington Dry Goods is. There was...."

"About Fifth and Market, between Fourth and Fifth."

"Yeh, it's in the Wilmington Dry Goods now."

(MRS. M. - speaking too softly to be audible on the tape suggested her husband was going into too much detail.)

"That's fine. That's just what we want 'Thea'* Tasia. We'll get to you in a minute."

"So we went upstairs. Man made coffee. And I'm telling you I was hungry!"

"I bet."

"I had money but I didn't know how to go in and ask for anything."

"That's right."

"See, I know where the restaurant was and everything else. Anyhow -uh- you the boss come in about nine o'clock, you know, and we talk togwther. So he told him, 'Well, it looks to be a good boy. How 'bout I keep him here to work.' He says, 'We need help,' he says. So he ask me if I want to stay. I says, 'Sure.' So I stay. Twenty dollars a month, room and board, and my laundry."

"Everything's paid."

* 'Thea' means aunt in Greek

"That was done, yeh. Twenty dollars a month."

"Now where did you stay?"

"In a furnished room but we had beautiful...."

"Furnished room?"

"We had everything but we had beautiful furniture."

"Where was this?"

"That was Eighth and French."

"Eighth and French."

"But don't look Eighth and French now."

"No. (Laughter) Were you by yourself?"

"No, no. We was the boss was living there.

Course we had four rooms altogether, you know."

"Uh huh"

"Yeh, but I was in room by myself, yeh."

"You had your own room?"

"Oh yes."

"Food, prepared for you?"

"Oh yes."

"And your laundry done?"

"My laundry, yes."

"And you got twenty dollars a month besides."

"I did."

"And what was your job?"

"Help- I was helping the candy maker."

"You had not made candy before this?"

"Nooooooo."

"This was your....."

"No, no. Just happened, you know."

"And this is how you learned to do this?"

"Yeh, I learned. Well, after six months the candy

maker left and he went to Washington and bought a place in Ninth Street with his nephew. Now I don't remember his nephew anyhow name. And then the boss, he ask a me if I can take the job, the candy maker job. So I said, 'Well, I'm not here long enough to go through with it.' 'Well,' he says, 'O.K. I will help you out, too. Things that you don't know.' So I says, 'O.K.' and took it over, took it over. But I wasn't - uh- I wasn't satisfied what I was doing, you know what I mean, because of course I was green yet, you know. And I left and I went to Boston."

"What year was this now. Where are we?"

"Uh - 1908.....1909."

"1909"

"Yeh, I went to Boston."

"You had been in Wilmington. Now you had gone to Richmond then to Wilmington."

"I went to Richmond first."

"First."

"And then I came back to ..."

"To Wilmington and now you decide to go to Boston."

"I went to Boston to learn the trade."

"Candy making?"

"Yeh. I knew the man who, the was the salesman of Lovell, Lowell Covell people and -uh- that was pretty good."

"It was good candy."

"Them years it was the best candy made."

"Uh huh"

"And he had a German -uh- candy maker and I worked in there and I'm telling you he liked me so much that man he wants me to stay there and take his job after I was through."

"This is in Boston?"

"He learned me everything. When I come back here, I was the first man to put the hollow eggs in the market. Here in the Wilmington."

"Oh really? The hollow Easter eggs?"

"The hollow Easter eggs, you know."

"For Heaven's sake."

"The first man."

"How was your English by now."

"Already made in Germany and everything else. So after that I workin' here for -uh- to 19....1912."

"Back in Wilmington now?"

"No, I left; I got homesick - my mother."

"Oh, I see."

"So I went back and I was caught in the Balkan War."

"You went from Boston back to Greece?"

"No, from Boston I came back here."

"Came back to Wilmington?"

"Yeh."

"And then getting homesick....."

"In 19...1912 I was, I went to Greece."

(MRS. M.) "To the war.....to the Balkan War."

(MR. M) "To the Balkan War and then I come back in 1914 and working for the same people."

"And how long were you in Greece...for two years?"

"Well, I - not quite."

"Not quite?"

"Well, I was - oh well - 'bout a year and a half."

"uh huh"

"Altogether."

"But you weren't homesick enough to stay, you came back again."

"Oh yeh! But when I, when I come back I say, 'Never again!' And I never took that trip back again either and I don't intend to take it."

"Even though now you could afford it a little more luxuriously."

"I had enough of Europe."

"Enough of Europe."

"I don't want no more Europe."

"No more trips?"

"No."

"So you're back in Wilmington. The year is about 1914."

"That's right."

"And you're still...."

"I'm working for the same people. I was working Laskaris."

"Laskaris?"

"Laskaris."

"Now you're not at Fourth and Market any more?"

"No."

"No?"

"No, it was Ninth and Market."

"You went up to Ninth and Market."

"No, Ninth, no - Eighth and Market. Right there where Eckerd's drug store is. That building there."

"Uh huh"

"Right in there."

"And you're a candy maker."

"That's right."

"Now let me ask you this: Was your English much improved?"

"Oh yes, sure."

"You had learned the language."

"Getting better every day."

"I'm sure."

"Little by little, you know."

"Did you attend classes?"

"Huh!! How? (Chuckles) Them years we was working from seven o'clock inthe morning ten o'clock at night. If the boss told us to go home, we went home. If he didn't, then we might stay there till eleven, twelve o'clock."

"There was no such things as hours then. It was just the work."

"No, no, no. There was no unions then." (Laughter)

"Was this six days a week, seven days a week?"

"Seven days a week!"

"Seven days a week?"

"No, no, no. For me it was six days."

"You had a day off?"

"Sunday, we never made any candy."

"What did you do with your spare hours? You weren't married yet."

"Well..."

"What spare hours you had."

"We used to take a walk.. On the Sundays we used to take a walk all way to....You remember out there on the Concord Pike - the Kennet Pike."

"Kennet Pike?"

"There was a tree there, a pear tree. They fixed up with the concrete all around."

"The white tree. I know where you mean, on the estate."

"We used to walk up there on Sundays."

"From town to the tree."

"From town up there. Walk up there, rest, and then come back again."

"Was that your recreation?"

"Yeh, we used to go to Brandywine Springs. They had a park there, you know."

"Uh huh"

"Plenty music on Sunday afternoon and -uh-..."

"Uh huh and you did this with your Greek friends?"

"Yeh"

"And was there quite a community? Do you have enough people for church?"

"No, no, we didn't have....."

"No, you had no church services?"

"Altogether about sixty people was then."

"And -uh- "

"Nobody married then, all single people."

"All single young men?"

"All single."

"Working very hard."

"Yeh."

"Living in these furnished rooms?"

"Oh yeh, yeh.. Always lived there."

"Then you had no dances or any kind of a social life?"

"No, no, only American dances."

"Oh, what you would do within the community. Did you attend those dances?"

"Oh yeahhhhhh"

"Oh yeh?"

"I mean themy.... the real friends I had, they was all American boys."

"Uh huh"

"We used to go out together. There's one of them still living in Norristown, Pennsylvania."

"For Heaven's sake."

"Were, was he, was he is business near you, or did he live near you?"

"No, he was working for the railroad."

"He was working. Was he single and did he have similar interests?"

"Yeh, he got married after."

"Did you ever intermingle with the Italian community or go to"

"No, no."

"No?"

"No."

"Did the Greeks pretty much stay together?"

"Yeh, oh yeh. Oh yeh."

"And you had no church services; you had no priests?"

"No, no, no."

"Or no way....of course you - without being married, you had no reason for baptisms or weddings or christenings right then."

"No, no, no."

"Uh - now we're up to the year ...what 1919? 1914?"

"14....the year."

"1914. How long did you work for Mr. Laskaris?"

"I workin' up to 19, 19,..1919"

"1919. Now I think we'll stop a minute here and ask my aunt, Thea Tasia, about her experiences. You came then to the United States around 1916, did you tell me?"

(MRS. M - in a very soft voice) "Yes."

"1916. When did you meet Uncle Pete? When do your stories merge here?"

"Well, I come into Philadelphia into my father. Cause my father he....."

"Your father was already here."

"Yes, and my oldest brother, the one he pass away."

"Yes"

"During the flu."

"Uh huh"

"And I stay there five years."

"Five years with your father in Philadelphia. Now your mother wasn't here, right?"

"No"

"And did you take care of the house?"

"Yes"

"Did you have any difficulty in keeping house. Had you kept house much in Europe?"

"Well, I tell you the truth I have very difficult time because a different way to keep a house here. I didn't know to make a soup. My father teach me." (Laughter)

"Your father taught you how to make soup. Then you weren't expected to do much in Greece? Your mother did it all?"

Is that right?"

"Yes"

"But when you came here, you were the woman of the household."

(MR. M.) "That's right."

(MRS. M.) "I have to do everything, keep the house, -uh- workin' to the store."

"You worked at the store, too?"

"Oh yes."

"And this was a grocery store, was it?"

"Oh yes."

"In Philadelphia, on what street?"

"Eleventh and Locust"

"Eleventh and Locust. Uh - did you have...well, of course you didn't have to shop for groceries."

"No"

"No, how about your dress or ...going out to buy anything you would need?"

"Well, ah, always my brother, the one passed away, he took me to the store and buy the dress for me."

"Danny would help you."

"Yes."

"He went with you."

"After he pass way, little by little I started to learn how to..."

"You learned by necessity, in other words."

"Yes, to, you know, learn in English to buy the necessary things which I needed."

"When did your mother come?"

"My mother came in 1920."

"1920. So you were here about four years?"

(MR. M.) "That's right."

(MRS. M.) "Little more."

"Little more than four years. Were there other young girls? You were a young girl then; were there others around to associate with?"

"Only two, but didn't live near me."

"Only..."

"In Germantown. Name is Kambriotis, Sophia and Pia. But both of them pass away and Iyou ask me how I meet Pete, my...."

"Your husband, yes."

"He was friend of my brother, the one who pass away. They go to school together."

"Uh huh. Oh, I didn't know that."

"In junior high."

"In junior high?"

"And then, my brothers after, you know, we.. three of my brothers in Philadelphia, they think the store is not big enough for the three to work and they movin' to Wilmington and open up the Haldas Bothers, Mike and Danny."

"Uh huh. When did Danny die? What year?"

(MR. M.) " '18."

(MRS. M.) "1918"

"1918 and this was the great flu epidemic and of course I've heard this story before. He had pneumonia. Is that"

"Yes"

"And a doctor wasn't called?"

(MR. M.) "Oh yes, he was called."

(MRS. M.) "I don't know how your father stood it."

"My father had it too?"

"Very bad."

"It was a very, very bad time especially for the -
And you (referring to Mr. Metaxas) had it, too. Oh my.
Now we are at 1918 and you married in 1919 or you met in 1919."

(MRS. M.) "Well, met a before."

(MR. M.) "We met before."

(MRS. M.) "Before. He come to me. I'll never forget him.
I want to say this. He come for Mr. Neilon to buy few things for
his store, you know, ---- and sodas. And he run out of money
and he come to my brother Jim and ask him if he could give him
twenty dollars to go back home." (Laughter)

"Uncle Pete, what is this story?"

"No, but she went head of the time."

"Oh, but she's telling something she remembers."

"And I met him and I remember I sit down in a
piece of marble, you know, you know - marble, you know. And
it was very cold day and he says, 'Don't sit down there. It's
too cold for you. Why don't you get up from there.'"

"Oh, he was concerned for you."

"Well, we know each other just like friends. I never
I don't think enter his mind or my mind any.... you know for....."

"That any would come of this."

"Neh,* you know...the days, the months ---- until
we marry."

"When did you marry? What year?"

(MR. M.) " '22"

"1922, Uncle Pete, where were you at that time?"

* Informal Greek word for yes.

"Easton."

"You had moved from....."

"Well, I didn't tell you my story. Cause you see in 1919 I left and went down Easton, Maryland and open up business down there, my own. And -uh- everything went fine."

"What kind of business was this?"

"Eh...confectionary and restaurant together."

"You branched out into the restaurant."

"Yeh"

"And why Easton?"

"Oh, it was...I love that little place there. It was nice - county seat and there was plenty business there and that's where I made my money."

"Oh I see. You saw the opportunity so...."

"Sure, everything I got is still down there - the properties."

"You didn't touch it; it's still there."

"Oh yes. I would never touch that. (Chuckles)
When I go, they can do anything I please with it."

"This is '19 then 1922 and you've established a business. Can you tell me something about your business life in Easton?"

"You mean the"

"What kind of a store it was and what you served."

"I had a beautiful place there. I opened in July, 1919. I opened the place up. It cost me - well, of course, it was good money then - it cost me about eight and one half thousand dollars altogether. I pay the place; by the first of the year 1920, the place was paid, I draw seventy dollars a week for myself and I put four thousand dollars in the savings account."

"My Heavens. That's astonishing. And you served dinner or lunch or....."

"Yes, yes."

"You served the full....."

"Yes."

"And you made the candy."

"And made the candy meself, yes. That's where there was, you know what I mean - I had that advantage."

"Uh huh. You did a lot of the labor yourself."

"Yes"

"Where did you live then?"

"In the town there, in a room."

"In a room in your store?"

"No, no, no."

"No, a separate room?"

"Separate."

"Did you have the kind of a"

"I had a 'partment upstairs, you know what I mean, but I fix it later but I never. I uh - We stay there after we got married."

"In the apartment above the store."

(MRS. M. - bringing in a family photo album) "You want to see your father the day....."

"See my father?"

(MRS. M.) "Right here. At's your Uncle Gus."

(MR. M.) "Yeh, but that machine is working now."

"And that's Danny over there?"

(MRS. M.) "No, no, that's your Uncle Jim."

"I want to see this but let's talk for a minute.. All right, in 1922 then you married. Where did you marry?"

(MR. M.) "Philadelphia"

"In Philadelphia. Thea Tasia, was there a community there and a church?"

(MR. M.) "Yes."

"When you moved, when you came over, there was already established a church?"

(MRS. M.) "Εὐαγγελισμός."

"So that your services and you could attend. You then neither of you were in Wilmington till you returned?"

"No, we returned to Wilmington in 1932."

"In '32."

"I sold the business down there, not the property the business."

"Uh huh"

"And we moved here and open the Wilmington Meat Market, Fourth and King."

"You were there then with -uh-..... Uncle Joe, Kimon, I mean."

"Uncle Joe, Kimon, yeh, and Gus."

"And Gus. Then you went into the meat business?"

"That's right."

"From the candy and restaurant business. After 1921 did you feel there was a change in the spirit of America after the World War?"

"Sure."

"What kind of a change was this?"

"You know what I mean, people begins to feel, you know what I mean. The American people begins to feel better for the immigrants, you know what I mean."

"They felt better toward the immigrants?"

"They mixed up better more, you see, because they used, we used to go down the street and they say, 'Well, he's a foreigner.' Understand? So...."

"You felt this prejudice?"

"Well, well, there was!"

"There was prejudice?"

"You couldn't help -uh- that feeling. Sure! But after that...."

"After the World War?"

(MR. M.) "After the World War the things changed lot."

(MRS. M. - inaudible for tape says something about her name)

"You couldn't say your name, Thea Tasia, you said that?"

(MR. M.) "Well, no, not very well."

(MRS. M.) "They turn around and look at you and then many times they say, 'Why don't you speak English?'"

"This is if you spoke your language in a store?"

(MR. M.) "Yes"

"They would come right out and say to you, 'Why don't you speak English?'"

(MR. M.) "Well, I'll tell you....."

(MRS. M.) "Some people are very nice; and if I don't say the words right, they come around and say, 'You say this way.'"

"Uh huh"

(MR. M.) "Oh they...."

(MRS. M.) "You know, you find a good one and....."

(MR. M.) "My daughter tell me the people, you know, the ones that was the real educated people, they knew, they knew the handicap that a man has when he goes to another country. But in the old days people didn't understand. They thought, you know what

I mean, you can learn it in two days. Well, I like to move them over there, see if they can ----- it in two days."

"See if they could do the reverse?"

"But now things are different."

"And you say this changed after World War I?"

"Oh yeh, yeh."

"After the First World War?"

"First World War."

"Did you experience any difficulty in 1921. There was a law passed that limited immigration."

"Yes"

"Uh, did you have any difficulty? Were there friends or relatives or relatives that wanted to come after that period?"

"No, I'd have no relatives, friends, I mean."

"No one of your family came?"

(MRS. M.) "Yes, but uh....."

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

"You were the only one. How big was your family?"

"Oh, it was three sisters and two boys."

"And you were the only one who came?"

"The only one that come over, yes."

"Uh huh"

"See, my sisters got married there and my brother got - he stayed there. He didn't have no business to go away, you know. He was leading normal life. He had a plenty."

"Uh huh"

"Yeh"

"Thea Tasia did you remember any...."

(MRS. M.) "Yes, the time we wanted to bring my mother."

"When you wanted to bring your mother."

"Mother, my rest of the brothers came over, Gus, Bob. We have to fill it out."

"You had to go fill out papers. There was another law passed subsequently that said you could bring relatives over. That is what you did?"

"1920, the law passed. You can't bring anyone you want. So you have to go through a law."

"Uh huh"

"So after -uh-....."

"Did this delay their departure or was it easily accomplished?"

"No, much easier today, much easier now."

"But then did they have to wait for the papers to come through?"

"Oh yes."

(MR. M.) "Oh yes. They have to wait to get the papers and then they go to the American Consulate there."

"Was there any difficulty involved?"

(MR. M.) "Not very much."

"Not very much?"

(MRS. M.) "Not as much today. But you have a reason to bring in."

(MR. M.) "You had to have reason, yeh."

"Uh huh"

(MRS. M. showing me a picture in the scrapbook) "That's the store Uncle Pete has down Easton."

"This is the store in Easton. Oh, isn't that lovely? I can see that there's much there for someone to want to come in."

(MRS. M.) "Oh yes."

(MR. M.) "It was beautiful place."

"It seems that way. Did you miss Easton when you came back to Wilmington? You did?"

(MRS. M.) "I still....."

(MR. M.) "For awhile, yes. She did. Not me."

"You didn't. It was hard work? Is that what you didn't like?"

(MR. M.) "Yes, it was hard work, yes. That's why I sold the business. That's why - it was too hard for me."

(MRS. M.) "I didn't want to live in Wilmington; but if it a comin' to the point for me, I stay in this house any longer, I can move tomorrow."

"Uh huh"

"But, you know, I don't want to leave it."

"But you would go back to Easton in a minute. Is that the idea?"

"I spent a wonderful eleven years down there."

(MR. M.) "Thirteen years."

"Thirteen years. Your married life then was easy. Were there many Greeks in Easton?"

(MR. M.) "We were."

(MRS. M.) "No one." (Laughter)

(MR. M.) "No, no, there was couple families."

(MRS. M.) "Couple families they speak Greek, but they speak a their own Greek. Different Greek from mine. Helen, she loved it and that's my oldest, you know."

"Your daughter in Washington."

(MR. M.) "Don't say.....don't -uh...."

"Your married life. your early married life, your home life was relatively easy in Easton even though you had no friends, you did not know Greek friends, I mean."

(MR.M.) "The people, the people were very friendly there. Oh yeh."

(MRS. M.) "I started to go to church, Sunday school, and the church; and I make, I made myself to know, I wanted to learn English. The time I was engaged to Uncle Pete, my people they try to bring him to Philadelphia or to Wilmington to open up a store so I can stay near them, but I didn't want it. I want a go to Easton so I can hear no more Greek so I can know how to speak English."

"I see. In other words when you got apart from the community, you learned the ways and the customs of your own land, your new land."

(MR. M.) "That's right."

"And it was easier?"

(MR. M.) "That was after she got married."

(MRS. M.) "And if I'm a with the American people, I don't mix my Greek and English together; but if I'm with the Greeks, I don't know for some kind of fear, I mix my words up."

"Uh huh"

"I belong to Eastern Star and there I'm a perfect. Some time they ask me, 'Why don't you speak Greek?' 'I don't need it.'"

"You don't need it. Did you feel then when you first came that you needed the Greek community. This was sort of a resource, no?"

"No, not to me."

"No? You didn't want to stay in the community life. It was easier, in other words, you weren't the kind who stuck close for security. You wanted to -uh -...."

(MR. M.) "You see, Irene, our association was with the Ameri-

can people as far as that's concerned. I always liked the American ways in every, in every way. Begin to love the food. Of course, some people they think it's too flat, but I don't. Now the Greek food may be a little more tasty than the other; but if I kepted on eating that I'd be dead a long time ago and I'm still living." (Chuckles)

"If you kept on the Greek diet, you....."

"Too rich, too rich, understand? I like a, I like this food better."

"I hear you're a good pie maker."

"Yeh, well. (Laughter) Especially with the way they cook now. I mean the way they cook now, it's wonderful. No, and as I told you my friends was American boys."

"From the very beginning?"

"We used to go out with the girls in this Sunday afternoon or maybe couple nights a week. Not like the people go now, you know. And we took a girl out, went to movies; or Sunday afternoon we used to come over here in the - we went to Brandywine Springs for a couple hours or here in Zoo park and then we went back in the town and we went to a candy store there and have ice cream sundae or anything else we want. We went home. We take the girls home. We might have a lemonade and a couple of songs, played - the girl, the girl played the piano. 'Good night. Good luck.' That was all it took. We had a good time."

"You felt no prejudice or bias."

"No, no, no indeed!" We respect the girls, and we respect the people."

(MRS. M.) "And after we comin' here my children was grown up with no Greek. There was a Greek school but no Greek church. I started to St. John."

"The Episcopal church?"

"The Episcopal....."

"Here in Wilmington?"

"Yeh. My two daughters, they have more, you know, Episcopal religion."

"When did the Greek services begin here in Wilmington? When did....?"

(MRS. M.) "Well, uh, the year we come to Wilmington was no church, what....?"

(MR. M.) "By 1934, something like that."

"There was still no church?"

(MR. M.) "'33 or '34."

"There was still not enough demand?"

(MR. M.) "No, they used to bring a

(MRS. M.) "Priest here."

(MR. M.) "Priest here couple times a year, or maybe half dozen times. We had a little hall there."

"Where was the hall?"

(MRS. M.) "Eighth and Market, you know, up in the five and ten store."

"Was this owned by a Greek?"

(MR. & MRS.) "No, no, no."

"Or just rented."

(MR. & MRS.) "Yes, rented."

(MRS. M.) "Second floor."

(MR. M.) "Yes, second floor. They used to rent it."

"Uh huh"

(MRS. M.) "And that's and after that my daughters are growing up. They went to college that was end of me for Greek community. You know, because if you, you know, take them to church they

don't know nobody. They didn't understand the service and everything else because they went to college and Cecelia she spent four years in college, Helen are for four years, Mary - five years and they marry."

"So that your need for the church had....."

"Now I go to church, now I don't know the half of the people. Just few people we know."

"The community has really grown then in thirty years?"

(MR. M.) "Lot of Greeks here."

(MRS. M.) "I only know a few people, few old timers like Mrs. Cooper, few people like that."

(MR. M.) "I bet you bout two fellows maybe more in Wilmington now."

"And how many would you estimate were here when you came here in 19.....?"

"Sixty."

"Sixty?"

"Sixty, altogether."

"And all young men."

(MRS. M.) "All men."

(MR. M.) "Oh yeh. All young men, single."

"And were they mostly going into the business-like....?"

"Business, business."

"There were no laborers or....?"

"No, here, no. They all working for the people who had the business."

"And who were the people who had the business, the nuclei?"

"There was Govatos there; there was Laskaris; there was..... eh oh, different people they had...."

"All in the food line?"

"All in the food line, restaurants and confectionaries."

"Why?"

(MRS.M.) "That's all they know." (Laughter)

(MR. M.) "They have, couple they have billiard... they have a couple of them."

"Billiard rooms? How about a coffee houses? What's a coffee house?"

"They have a coffee house, but they're for Greeks not for the Americans. (Laughter) Americans don't drink Turkish coffee." (Laughter)

"What was...describe, well describe a Greek coffee house to me."

"Yeh"

"Where was there a Greek coffee house in Wilmington?"

(MRS. M.) "I don't think he's a every been."

"Oh, you don't think he's ever been."

(MR. M.) "Well, they had a couple on King Street. If you ask me, I don't know because I never step in it."

"You never went in one?"

"I never believe things like that. As I told you my companions was American fellows. There was no coffee stores for me."

"Did you - you never attended classes of any kind for citizenship papers or ah....?"

"Citizen papers, no! I learn law by myself."

"And did you have to....?"

"I become citizen in 1922."

"In '22."

"That's after I got married. We were married in February 5th, 1922. In May I got my citizen papers and she become citizen then, too. Now if I had to wait to September, she had to go through like the, like I went through. And I'm telling you, when I took my papers, he asked me, the judge ask me every question was in the book."

"Can you remember some of them?"

"I answer them! Only one thing I got stuck. He says, 'Who makes the laws for your county?' "

"Who makes the laws for the county?"

"For the county, yes."

"So I just - I got stuck but the fellow named Holiday, he was the clerk of the court. He was a close friend of mine. He says, 'Well,' he says, 'County Commissioner.' He says, 'That's it.' 'But,' he says, 'That's necessary - that's not necessary.' The judge says, he says, 'Everything's all right.' So he says, 'Gentlemen, you hear how many of youse, you know as much as this man does about your country, about your constitution.'"

"That's right. Thea Tasia, did you have to do the same thing?"

(MR. M.) "No."

"You didn't. By right of marriage then you automatically became a citizen."

(MR. M.) "Automatically."

"But....."

(MR. M.) "If she wait till September, I mean, if I didn't go through in May...."

"Of that year."

"And go through in September. She had to go through because the law changed then."

"The same thing, yeh."

"Yeh. So she just became a citizen right...same time I did."

"So there were no classes, you just learned this. You had a pamphlet or a book or a"

"I had a book but the only way I learned it is, you know, different a words.. I had a dictionary, different words I didn't understand, went back to dictionary and I"

"You had the translation there."

"I had a good memory. I wish I had that memory now." (Laughter)

"I think you still do to remember all these facts from years past."

(MRS. M.) "All these things now, Irene, they're going -eh - record and everybody's going to know it."

"No, these will be kept in the library; and if there's a student who wants to study a certain time or to study immigration, they may use these recordings as they would a book. They must have special permission to do so; but if there is a valid reason, then....."

(MR. M.) "What's the difference?"

(MRS. M.) "Yes, I know."

"Is there anything you want to add, any experiences? Thea Tasia, you must have had some being around all those men in the store for four years working."

"Well, that was very, I was very happy. I was no happy on account of I lost my brother."

"Uh huh. That was a tragic time."

"Tragic time, but I was very happy to see all my brothers on a Sunday to bring their friends and prepare dinners

for them and have, you know, laugh and I remember good years, too. The only thing I still -uh- never was off my mind the brother I lost."

"Uh huh"

"That - you know, they keep me very unhappy even today, even today."

"He - did he work for the Waldorf Astoria, is that or the....."

"No, not the Waldorf Astoria, he work a for the -uh..."

(MR. M.) "Bellevue Strafford"

"Bellevue Strafford and he was a head waiter there?"

(MRS. M.) "Yes, for awhile, but -wh"

(MR. M.) "He went to the business; he left and went to the business. He's the one who opened the business."

"Down in Wilmington?"

(MR. M.) "In Philadelphia and in Wilmington."

"Both places. Did he work at the store and the hotel?"

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

(MRS. M.) "After my father come, he opened up the business and stopped working for the hotel and after me, your father, they opened up the store in Wilmington, the Haldas Brothers. Your father and my brother Danny open up."

"Opened up the store at Fifth and King?"

(MRS. M.) "This is the original. My brother Jim they come to Wilmington in 1922. We married."

"You married?"

(MRS. M.) "Yes and left and went to Easton."

"But your mother was there by that time."

"Yes"

(MR. M.) "She was in Philadelphia."

"Uncle Pete, do you have anything to add?"

(MR.M.) "Nothing else."

"Nothing else?"

(MR.M.) "The only thing was here - except you don't want to hear.....ah no, no.....I don't think it's necessary."

"About what?"

(MRS. M.) "Enough!"

THIS HAS BEEN AN INTERVIEW WITH PETER AND TASIA METAXAS
FEBRUARY 28, 1968. INTERVIEWER - IRENE LONG.