

**Tacoma Community History Project**  
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**Interviewed by:** Mark Kilner  
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JoAnne Tryfon- So on Sundays sometimes we would go home, have dinner, and then go back to the church and we'd have some type of speech, poetry, kids reciting Greek poems, or just general discussion. Sometimes we didn't pay attention the kids would be playing and you know making noise. But I do remember the poster, it was of a starving child reaching up for bread. And the whole object of having these meetings, they never proved to be anti-American, the whole thing was to assist Greeks in Greece. To get through this period.

So they had the Truman Doctrine that rebuilt Greece you know, and so there's big monuments to Harry Truman. Although when you visit Greece now, Greek-Americans, we're not very popular. I don't think they really hate us and my cousins, having lived in the U.S., understand our way of life here and the progress that you can make.

Although the youngest girl in the family is Tom the oldest cousin next to me, I talked to her on the phone, she's still in Evanston, Chicago area and they've done well although they were just blue collar, they had a fruit stand and they made a lot of money from it and it helped their friends and helped employ other members of the family. When I talked to Joanne, we're all named after our grandmother, there were three JoAnns in the family, all cousins, I mentioned that I would like to have her come and visit. She's a grandmother

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now, but she's younger than I am. And she said it would be difficult because her husband had had a heart attack and she babysat for the children when her children went to work. But she loved it. But she said lets see Washington, is that near Chicago?' She had no conception after all the years in the U.S., 20 years or so, 30 maybe, where Washington State was. She was thinking of Washington D.C. or east coast.

So the girls in our family were not educated. The other Joanne was educated in Greece. And she was pretty smart because you either go to trade school or college nothing in between you know. And they decide that when you are getting out of their equivalent to our high school. They decide if you have the means or mental capacity, acuity, to go to college. They don't mess around, and it's all paid for. You don't pay anything to go to college. That means little backwoods people go into the big city, to Athens, and it's a big change in their lives. They're kind of leaving parents who are very backward behind.

So one of my cousin's children became my Godson. But I only saw him when he was three and then talked to him when he was 24 I think. I never have seen him since he was 3. So I became his god-mother there, and then I went back to Greece in 06 and 08, did I make another trip? I think I made three or four trips, I can't remember. And he didn't seem too interested. I think he thought because of the language barrier, he had not learned English. He was in Athens living with his girlfriend and he was a security guard for celebrities who came to perform in the outdoor theaters in Athens you know? So he had a good job. And I think that's what he's still doing. And his two sisters have a spa, a

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tanning salon. You know they're very modern, upbeat, good looking kids really nice looking. They're getting along well.

And one of my cousins was just taking her son to karate and you know just like our lifestyle, only the towns look a little more rustic. There aren't so many paved streets, and it's awfully hot there. I went to Greece when I was, well lets see I went to Greece in September once and it was so hot. Then I went to May after that, and may totally surprise me because the area I was in was green. Before in September everything was that color just burnt. And when I saw green and saw all the flowers in southern Peloponnesus you know across from Athens is Corinthian canal. And then Peloponnesus is the lower part. That's Olympia over here. The city I'm talking about, Kalamata, that's where the olives are from. Flowers all over. I could not believe it. I thought I was in Holland it just looked so lovely. I was very impressed. In fact one impression I'll always have. We stayed at an excellent place, a resort with an outdoor swimming pool. And I had a tendency to wake up early and I'd open the window went out to the balcony and I just listened. And you could smell orange blossoms. And you heard this coo, coo sound, the doves. And you could smell lemons. And then the sea. You could see it, I mean you knew that you were close to Africa. Over there, over there maybe. It was just lovely.

I think I saw things my father never saw because all they did was work. And that's one of the reasons you wanted to leave Greece. He wanted an opportunity and his cousins were writing to him and telling him about the U.S. And this brother went. And his brother came back in a year. It was like his brother went, my dad went to New York, stayed with

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an uncle. He decided New York wasn't for him. Way too big of a city you know. So he just worked his way across the U.S. Stopped in Missoula, Montana, spent a little time in the Missoula area. And then to eastern Idaho. That's where his cousin and his third cousin happened to be, my mother's step-dad. So they were married not as relatives but there were marriages that joined the families.

And then when I went to Dad's village, I could see where her step-dad's house was, where our family house was, where my cousins from you know, from you know, the origin. And then I visited all those people in the US and visited them, the families, in Greece. They still have kept their homes there and even though they may live in Athens because it's easier and they have jobs as firemen or policemen, I don't know if there are any professors in our family. We're really kind of peasant people.

My dad never told me but his youngest brother, who is the only one left now of Dad's family, siblings, told me that my dad was a shepherd. And I had this big question mark. My dad never told me that. But it must have been true, because they showed me the place where they would, wherever you'd store animals in the winter. They had to go up higher or something, there was a place call Pioclese and when I interpret that it sounds like the last closing. I don't know if that's really, had something to do with it, geographical position, but I was 40 when I climbed up to where they used to go. And there was a little cave where my uncle said he stayed. They wrapped up in blankets. They would have the animals outside, they'd sleep inside, and they had an icon there of the Virgin Mary. And it was just rudimentary you know?

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They probably just lived like dad said they lived, on black bread. I asked him why his teeth were so good. He said 'we never ate bread like this American bread you know, soft. It was black bread, you had to chew it, it was dry you know. So he thinks that that was one of the reasons his teeth were very good. And he didn't have problems with his teeth. My brother and I both did though. Terrible [Laughs].

So yeah we were always very proud of our dad and just hearing his story just made us, made me especially want to know him better. Want to know his family and what made him like he was with the character that he had. I saw people he used to help here, Greek bachelors would come into his shop. And they, I know other Greek people who had business that did this, and they'd have pension checks and by the end of the month they'd run out of money so Dad would float them a loan and they were honest, they paid him back as soon as they got their checks, and he did that all the time.

So there's a close tie. And one of the things that keeps us close is in our church we have organizations. There's a cultural organization for the men it's called AHEPA (American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association) that was like the Sons of Italy you know? One for advancement through education. And they'd have conventions and people emulated what they saw.

They learned I know my father, I could never figure out how he dressed as nicely as he did. He had taste in clothes and fabrics and things. Well part of his work was

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haberdashery so I would see GQ in his shop not knowing that we would call it GQ and it would be totally different from the magazine GQ. At that time he had issues of it, I would thumb through it. I'd look and Hickey Freeman suits, I knew all of this because Dad would buy those suits. He wouldn't buy them often, but he really liked to dress well. And he had his clothes tailored because he had a short leg. So he had to build up that shoe, then build up this pad you know, and his suits fit him beautifully. But he'd have he would buy fabric from a tailor that he knew. This tailor rented out the back space. He was from Cicely, and he rented out the back space in Dad's shop. And he made only jackets. But he was so well known and so well accomplished that one of the Weyerhaeuser had him do his jackets. He would come into the shop and say ' hi john' and he'd walk right back to the Italian coat maker. So through him Dad bought alpaca, vicuna, cashmere, you know really nice fabrics. Well people don't dress like that now you know? But Dad always did dress formally. And when I saw him at age 25 like I was saying, he had hair. He had the knife pleat pants and shoes shined before he would go to church on Sundays I would see him in the basement, he'd put his shoes on the stairs leading down to the basement and he'd just polish away. He never went to church without polished shoes. I was very proud of his grooming and his care the care that he took. How he appeared. And he was kind of a small man, 5'5", he's one of the shorter people in his own family too.

He had two sisters who were twins and one of them just died after my last visit. So I only got to see her twice. All of her kids went to Australia. The young people meaning the next generation after my dad didn't stay in the village, couldn't make a living, it was too hard. They had fights over water. There was a beautiful valley maybe three or five miles

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away from Dad's village and they got all the water and they stopped it from coming down to that village so somehow they settled. Somehow they settled it.

So I mean I always used to listen to him translate the letters. So from the time I was little I had an interest in the old country. The trouble was I couldn't do anything but write a letter to a cousin or something and not know if they ever understood what I wrote who was going to translate it there you know. But they'd find somebody, it might take them awhile. Visitors, bilingual visitors or family members. But I think because we were country people some of our city relatives kind of you know they showed off a little. For instance, one of my least favorite aunts by marriage had a brother in law who was a general at the time of a military coup and he was way up there you know, And oh it was like she was part of it you know like, and this was only her brother in law but she just lorded it over everybody in the family and I'm sorry I just couldn't, I didn't exactly know what she was doing, but I could see by the body language and so forth she had sort of distain for the rest of us. And I thought 'oh well, I don't have to live around her.' But her husband was a favorite uncle of mine. She was an in-law. And I tried to be nice, polite. I think she just thought I was a dummy from America because I couldn't speak Greek and we couldn't converse so that I could show her I had a little depth at least you know [Laughs]? The values.

I went to Greece to baptize this cousin, second cousin, who as I said they waited a year, so he was already three. Usually our little children are baptized by 6 months or so. We had infant baptism. We went to the cafeneion, and generally that was a coffee house for

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men only, but my cousin's wife was very political, she was from Puerto Rico believe it or not, so her kids were Greek, Puerto Rican and something else, I don't know. They were beautiful children too. But she came to visit the village and she went into a cafe and it was a little iffy for a woman to go there especially by herself. And she went there to talk politics and they got into a horrendous fight and they threw her out more or less. She was a reasonably well educated person but a hot tempered Puerto Rican girl. But she spoke Greek, she you know was tri-lingual I guess you could say. She is passed away now, I only met her once.

So my brother, George, died before he could ever go back to Greece and see grandpas house or claim it you know. We were supposed to go there and rebuild it but we didn't so Tom got the house which was just fine with us because we never George never went, and Dad went back to Greece about three times. My mother went twice, I've gone three or four times. Don't have any claim there except to visit my grandparents graves, take flowers you know.

I find that American-Greeks attend the Orthodox Church much more frequently than the Greek Greeks do. I don't know if they've lost their faith because of politics or what's happened. My family doesn't go, but when a saint's day, kids are all named for saints you know, when a saint's day comes up that's their child's saint, like Konstantinos 'Gus' translated, or Constantine the Great, they will invite 200 people, they go out into the country. They have lamb on a spit, it's called Arni me Patates, so it's lamb roasted. And they dance folk dancing, and talk and have a great time. We missed that party and my



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cousin was kind of put out. That's another thing, you can cross out your relatives a little bit.

If you have plans to say go to Santorini, Mikonos, or some of the other islands. And trying to coordinate a visit to them, we're trying to figure out how to do this now because my niece is married to a fellow who's Italian, and they went to Italy and visited three cities in Italy and loved it. My niece loved it. And of course he did, he loves art anyway. And they saw a lot of art in Florence and Venice and Rome. And he wants to go to Greece now and he has joined our church. He'd been married to my niece for 30 years and just all of a sudden decided he was going to change his religion from Catholic to Orthodoxy and my niece's mother was from Belfast.

So she was a Baptist I believe and then she joined our church when my brother and she married. And she and my brother divorced. So she kind of dropped the church, married another man, and he passed and she became ill with cancer and she came back to the church with her kids, the ones that were still going. She still felt a little, my sister-in-law still felt a little close to some of the church members who were still there, who had been there years prior you know. She was just a little 18 year old girl when she came to our Greek community. So she learned how to dance and folk dancing, and learned the Greek cooking style from my mother. And in fact I don't believe she knew how to cook. My mom kind of taught her. Because she said that her mom wasn't much of a cook. I meant they were close enough, but she just picked up the Greek style of cooking. And she was very talented as far as sewing. Her mother made doll clothes and taught her how

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to make doll clothes. So from that when my niece got married in the seventies, Brenda was able to make all of the brides maids dresses without seeing the women. She just had them give her the measurements over the phone, and she constructed the bride's maid's dresses. She was a really beautiful woman. Pretty skin. I don't know, people from Ireland have beautiful skin don't they? And her children, she died last year, at this time of year last year she was going through a lot of chemo, and I believe she died in July.

And her kids, her daughter really treasured her the most. And then her, the second, the son. Now the son who lives with me is kind of a person who doesn't show his emotions. He kind of destroyed his own life. He was married, had two girls, and then when he divorced just spiraled down. And he has a degree from western in business, but he didn't go to grad school. He had some really interesting jobs. And after a while he wasn't working at all. And he hasn't worked now for over 5 years. And so he lives with me. And one of the reasons he does is when his mother was dying, we had known each other for so many years Brenda and I, I wanted her to be relieved that, I shouldn't even be saying this, that he wouldn't be living in his car. And I know personally he has the brains to do whatever he wants to. He's lost all ambition. It's rather sad. And his health is suffering, he hasn't had insurance, he signed up for Obamacare after we pushed him into it. He's not really a person you can push much. I was hoping that by living with me I'd get him back into a pattern of mixing with the family because he's isolated himself totally. But is quite unusual the approach you take with him. I don't know where it's going to lead. I may die first without knowing what happens to him. His youngest girl is going to go to University

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of Idaho, and she's wants to be a dietician so she's been accepted now and she'll go there in October or September I believe. She's already visited the campus and she is a very nice girl. The older girl had glaucoma at an early age and she was studying Japanese and became fluent and so for her senior year they were taking a trip to japan and went to Nagasaki and Tokyo and another city I don't remember. But anyway, she got the glaucoma, lost the sight in her left eye, developed some kind of hair style that covered her eye, and took the trip anyway. She started out at Tacoma Community College and she didn't finish. She's kind of not doing anything and she's very far away from her father. The little one was going to the University of Idaho keeps in closer contact and tried to be polite to her dad. You know it's the mother that brought them up and she's a good person and has had a very good job with Social Security for 25 years now, 20 years anyway. So they're getting along fine. And he doesn't know them really it's a sad thing because he's just kept his eyes closed all these years to what's going on. He tries to reach them, they live in graham it's just south by Puyallup. And his sister keeps in touch with that family. So it's kind of, when I think of the things my dad accomplished and look at the two grandsons. One of the grandsons is a barber but he knows how to manage money and he's very tight fisted on spending. He and his wife have a gorgeous home on a lake. He's got a good life and he's a real worry wart. And then the youngest one lives with me and has no ambition, but he's got the education [laughs].

I was around those kids a lot when they were little, you know and knew them well. We babysat for them. We took them to church, we cleaned them up on Sundays, Saturday nights. The parents were young and irresponsible and wanted to go

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out and have fun. They were missing all that. One child after another. By the time my brother was 24, he had a house he had three kids, he was married, he owned his own barber shop. And then he lost everything because he was not very wise in his personal life. So Mother, Dad and I kind of took care of the kids a lot financially and tried to guide them. They went their own ways but they had a closeness to my mother especially and they respected my father a great deal. And the youngest one, you wouldn't know what his feelings are he just has everything bottled up and never expresses. And I know he loved his own mother who passed away last year but he doesn't show anything. And he dislikes my brother, he disliked my brother I should say. And now he's turned out to do some of the things his own dad did that he dislikes so it's history repeating itself only worse.

I know I shouldn't have gotten to that personal stuff it just shows that there is sort of like a disintegration of values or something by the second or third generation of the family. It isn't like that with all generations. I believe Greek people and others of course have high standards. And the high standards I think are set by our church and its traditions, by the cultural organizations, these were like the guiding things. It kept us out of prisons for the most part, educating ourselves. Generally pretty good people. I think the Asian community is very well educated in America from statistics, I don't know where the stats are from but I've read it in our papers that the Asian community immigrant families have very high educational levels and I think that the Greek community has too. I mean, proportionally. I know there are a lot more Italians and Germans probably and Irish, other nationalities that are prevalent but I think percentage wise that it's always been stressed.

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And this AHEPA organization I mentioned, part of these letters, the acronym or whatever it's called, that education was stressed with scholarships. I'm on a scholarship committee now in fact we have a meeting coming up. So every year we, last year we got to the highest endowment, is that the word? What we're giving out each year. It was \$25,000, and we gave um, they're not huge scholarships in comparison to some of the others. But I think nowadays anything helps. So the kids we had 14 applicants this year and they are from Spokane, where we have our churches, Spokane, Seattle, Portland, and Tacoma. And some of the outlining areas are around those. But it's usually the churchgoing youngsters whose parents are represented in this cultural organization who are eligible to apply. They also have junior organizations, well these names are probably a little strange, Daughters of Penelope is the ladies organization that I belong to and I've been president and secretary and a district officer and that's the ladies. AHEPA is the man's, the young men, teenage men, young men is Sons of Paraclese and the young ladies are the Maids of Athena. And the biggest objective is to raise money to go to these conventions, to receive scholarships that they've applied for. It's just a good process, it gives a kid a chance to fill out applications, make sure that they're done right and posted properly, because if they're going to college they have to know how to do this. We had to eliminate several of them because the postmark was wrong, it didn't meet the guidelines. One of the women who is the code chairman of the scholarship committee also is a, I just looked up this word I didn't know what it meant, adjunct professor at pierce college. So she is very involved.

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Mark- So the church plays quite a roll in the community?

Yeah there's another thing too, a cultural thing. One of our, they're called Metropolitans now, they were called bishops before, there were like seven districts in the U.S. and they had quarters of the Archdiocese in New York. Well they got elevated so now they have a little larger districts and they're metropolitans now. And so one of the metropolitans decided that it would be beneficial if our young people carried on the dances of Greece and so this is how they tried to keep the child in the church and perform so they would have spiritual and cultural. So they'd compete in California in our district and the metropolitan who started this was also our metropolitan from LA clear up to Seattle in our district. I mean they got like uh New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Atlanta, Denver, what are we called? Not west coast, Northwest I guess. No that's wrong. San Francisco Diocese yeah, I don't know why I blanked on that. So each of these districts if they can joins a group so that they can compete and they'll work on these dances after church, they have instructors, and they'll separate the young kids, kindergarten to 3rd grade maybe, and then if they can they'll have three groups. But this year we actually had three groups but the largest group was the adults. We don't compete, it's just strictly for fun for the adults but we have a very good teacher.

We have many, many, many converts in our church now. So that's why there's a push for all English so that the convert, converted orthodox, will be able to participate and understand. And we have a person running our bookstore who has books that will educate and carry you, it's almost like a journey, the more you read the more you understand

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about this complex religion. One time somebody asked me about the church and I mentioned the hierarchy and they said 'hierarchy? Let me go to the Baptist church. I don't want any hierarchy.' But our church is very organized. There used to be more of a connection in our church with our NY archbishop died. But since the metropolitans really got more authority when they changed from bishop.

We used to have a church that was north and South America and that became changed too. We have a program where young Mexican boys who might otherwise end up on the street are able, and I don't know how they become eligible, they're able to go to a, it's not a monastery, they have a church there, they teach the orthodox faith. Now this is bewildering to me because Catholicism is you know a predominant religion in Mexico. So these are Mexican boys who are educated from 5 to high school and they can even be helped through college or trade and some of those young men have come back to that. More or less a home for young Mexican boys to help guide the young children and they have built their own buildings and expanded. So we've got that program. We have another wonderful organization that I've become involved with too. I've been doing this since I retired I didn't have the time for, it's called International Orthodox Christian Charities, and they do work with other religious denominations to help with all the disasters, domestic and foreign, or help as much as they can. And it's been very successful. They have a load cost, you know able to put a lot of money into the program assisting people around the world.

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And so what else is there? Well a lot of things have, this program that John and Joanne (Nicon) have started with the museum you know. They have planned an exhibit in 2015 in MOHAI (Museum of History and Industry), I always have trouble. We all got to go there. We had a meeting there, talked to the curator and saw the room where our exhibit will be and so we started putting ducks in a row and we're having a preliminary exhibit or something at one of the churches in Seattle. And so we've got a year to go. And I think what they decided is to take American-Greek restaurant owners. They told us that it was King County only, you know for MOHAI, otherwise we could have got some Tacoma people into it to get memorabilia from these restaurants to see if they ever served Greek food which most of them didn't. They had to learn how to cook hotdogs and hamburgers, American food. So gradually, now I think and I meant to ask John about this, there was a very exclusive restaurant, Peter Canlis, Canlis restaurant, and I believe he was a Greek man. So that was the opposite side. Most of the Greek restaurants were chili parlors or something you know.

Yeah it's been probably there have been periods of my life when I have not gone to church very much but it as one of my friends told me, the church is always there you can always go back. And I've found that my life just feels hollow when I'm not part of the Orthodox church and like our Easter is quite a thing it's a pageant you know, Holy Week is very big. A fasting of 40 days which is very difficult and hard to do when you're working. If I get two weeks of fasting, fasting means no meat or eggs, butter, you can have beans and salads you know. No meat products. So you try to do that for 40 days, it's difficult. But if you went to church and went to all the extra church services you would be



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constantly at church. It's just a whole cycle. Easter's the biggest holiday in our church, bigger than Christmas because of, you know, history. So I think, I've always thought it was the discipline of that period that kind of sets the tone of your life. Is you get a feeling that probably there isn't too much you can't accomplish if you keep your head straight and I can't say that I'm an example of that thought, I went to the university of Washington and spent about a year there and then I started night school at u dub and then I gave it up and went to work. I was so anxious to make money and I just wasn't, I didn't have the ability to study. I don't know why, I mean getting into the U was so easy then. Now, you're fortunate if you can get in. I took those things for granted. Being employed with the Boeing Company was easy. Walk in one day, fill out an app, you're employed the next. And now it's totally different. The work world is, I'm very behind in things. At this age I don't know anything about modern music or sticking the things in your ears. I'm going, my nephew in law came over and I was so frustrated, they gave me an iPad for Christmas (I didn't want it), but what can you say it's a gift. So then he programmed it for me so then I could do kindle and I haven't a clue what he's talking about. He's still got more programming, he's excellent at it. That's his line of business. Plus he's a musicians.

Anyway what I was going to say about him. After 30 years of marriage he joined the church which made my niece very happy she never tried to push him into it. And I was overjoyed and he asked me to be his god-mother and so I sort of stood up for him during this chrismation service cause he had been baptized as a Catholic but as an adult he didn't go to the Catholic Church which hurt his mother. But his mother comes to church with us

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now, she's in her 90's and because of her dementia I don't think she realizes it's not really a catholic church. In fact she's Italian catholic so I took her myself up the hill to St. Rita's because that's a, it was primarily an Italian community. We talked to the priester and he said 'oh everybody goes here now it's not just Italian, and I thought if she had friends from that church she might feel you know, she kinda feels left out sometimes. It's difficult when a person's in their 90's and the family can't really take care of them.

So I personally feel close to her, I was going to a cultural thing in Portland and I know that sandy was looking forward to a weekend away from her mother-in-law because her mother-in-law was living with them and so I asked Tony if I could take his mother to Portland with me. And so we went to go see this Greek film about actually I'm glad we didn't make it. I got lost. I started circling and I was right where I was supposed to be but I couldn't read the address so I took Marian to... in Portland there are two hotels on each side of the Columbia River, and they were in the same chain, a double tree or something, one burnt down. Well anyway, the one that burnt, we went to dinner there after we were lost. She still remembers that because we were laughing so hard because we were lost and I was frustrated. And I'm really glad we didn't make it to the film because it was about musicians who played bouzouki, you know the bouzouki, it's like a mandolin, gourd on the one side you know. And clarinets, clarino you know, in a tavern setting. And it was actually about drug use of those musicians. They were hashish people because there's a lot of hash produced in turkey and Greece as I understand it. I've never seen any of it, but I'm sure we hear about it you know. So I don't know if that's one of their big crops or not

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you know but maybe now with the economy being as poor as it is maybe they've had to rely on drug production. I hope not, but you know.

Anyhow so we bypassed that thing but she was willing to go with me you know. She was willing to go with me you know, she grew up in Philadelphia she wasn't from Italy but her parents were from Rome and Tony her son, I love him like he's just my own nephew you know. He's a wonderful, educated, caring, loving person and he really leads the family. People trust him. He left his home in Anchorage at an early age, he wanted to be a musician so he started going to the lower 48 to play and then he decided he didn't want to finish college so he took a few courses at University of Alaska. Then he ended up, after he was married, going to University of California at Riverside, graduating there, and then he took online courses at Stanford and then he came here. And his company, it's a computer company, he didn't want to work for them they were too large. It's well known and I cannot think of it. You know he got his masters here, they paid for it and then he quit and went to work for a small computer outfit. So he still does the music, he has two or three bands that he's in. He's in computer work. And so he started going to our church, then he decided he was going to learn the chanting. We've gotten away from choirs, and there's like seven tones in the chants. The tones are dependent on the time of year, which Saints holiday it is, which holiday it is, the annunciation, you know the funeral of the lord of the burial, the resurrection, all these tones change so he's now learning that and he's learning them in Greek. And I just admire him so much and he's learning to speak Greek now, and he's learning with Sandra. Sandra never knew any Greek. So now they're taking pimsleur course.

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M.K.- So the church plays a huge role in even preserving foods and music and customs. Was that when you were growing up, that was kind of a reinforcer of your Greek identity?

J.T.- My mother had kind of a Russian and Romanian and Greek background. And so she didn't quite cook like the ladies did here. And then she had two friends who were like one of them was like her mother the other like her sister. They were inseparable. All married. She learned from them, a little bit more about Greek cooking and speaking Greek. She learned from her friends because her family in Idaho, they were from a small town. Their church was in Pocatello but they lived in Idaho Falls which was a 30 mile ride and so they didn't get to the church too often. And so she was steeped in the traditions here and churchgoing and she probably taught George and I, my brother and I, most of our Greek. Oh we'd go to school and then after school a couple nights a week, or once a week I can't remember, we would have Greek school at the church in the basement. The priest would teach us, and we were all afraid of the priest and he was old country and he might hit you with a little yard stick or something if you weren't paying attention, the old country style. My dad says when he was in school he was disobedient and he got his ears pulled. So I thought it was history repeating itself only American style. Now you wouldn't be able to touch a kid you know [Laughs]. But we were growing up in the 50's so, 40's and 50's.

M.K.- What was the Greek community like here? What was it like growing up?

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I think we knew that a certain area kind of controlled the church. We realized it as we grew so we didn't make waves cause our area of Greece was not yet in control. My father was friends of both. But there was this community that controlled were well educated. My father's wasn't. But Dad read a lot. And he had friends from investment brokerages and from banks who would come in and talk and sometimes give him little tips which they probably can't do now. But he learned a lot about finances through them. He knew the bankers in town, the other business men, the people who were from larger cities and opened haberdasheries you know, they would have hats cleaned. I'd go pick 'em up. Pick up the hats, bring them to Dad, he'd wash them, dry-clean I should say. And then iron them on flanges and have the crowns and the... you know satin inside, the feathers, all of that. He was pretty well known around town and I think he did things outside of the church too. He wanted to be not just a Greek-American, he wanted to be part of the community in Tacoma. And so most of the time in the 40's and 50's, the mother was at home, she didn't work, she worked at home, and believe me Greek homes were clean you know, very clean as a rule. They were very fastidious, and kids were pretty well groomed and you know if they didn't have the money to buy new clothes things were patch and mothers made sure that the kids went to Sunday school, Greek school, to their own school you know. Yeah the mother was at home in the 40's and 50's and after that there were many professional women. A few that had college degrees in our community really stood out and kind of impressed the other women. But the ones that came from the old country didn't care too much about advancing themselves. That didn't come 'til later. Now we have a parish full of Greek doctors and a few lawyers, but a lot of doctors. And it's what the parent wanted. You're either going to be a lawyer or a doctor [laughs]. But it

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didn't happen as I say in our family. But we did alright you know so we didn't have a lot of money but we had love, I think. And respect for the most part. And probably as many problems as other families did.

In the old days, nobody knew about the gossipy part of things. About kids stumbling and going to rehab. I know there was no such thing. But as the generations came up we heard things like a young fellow being on some type of drug and trying to throw himself from a window ledge. I mean we could not believe it because all of this was kept under wraps if it was happening. The families were straight for in church, on target, but that wasn't really the truth. There were things happening to them because you can't stop that you know, and each generation seems to get worse. The values are so different. And we had a more of a, I can't say that my upbringing was strict, I was very independent my parents really couldn't tell me anything but I didn't get in a lot of trouble, but my brother did. He was my younger brother. I still loved him though right to the end, he died in 2010 he was 69 years old. Three kids, and three children and four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Then my mom died three months after he did, my dad had died you know in 1985, he died of leukemia, George died of heart problems, and my mother it was old age, heart you know. She was a very sturdy person, and very resolute, you know. She made her mind up and nothing changed it. She was very strong. But I owe that to the fact that she grew up in a large family in Idaho. Her step-dad didn't show favoritism to the first four children who were fathered by a man who died during that huge epidemic in the 20's, the

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flu influenza, so her father's, the remembrance she has is up to age 3, and her guiding father on earth at least was her step-dad who was unemotional to the first four and he showered the next 5, they all went to college, every one of them. The first 4 didn't. But they couldn't have been very successful, I think. One of them got into a business. Didn't last long because she wanted well she had very excellent taste and her business was in a small town, farmers, and the tastefulness missed the mark. And the other one was the only boy in the family out of 8, 9 children and he worked on the railroad in Idaho. My mother had to babysit quite a bit and take care of the house. They had regular chores. She was expected to do a lot of kitchen cleaning and cooking, she was the second oldest. Her older sister got married at 16 and somehow she just told herself she wasn't going to go through that. And she worked at Cresses, she was a floor, George and I call it, no, I'm not going to tell ya [laughs] we teased her, anyway she was a floor walker, so she had some, she was a little bit above everybody else doing sales. But she learned a lot about candy making and sales and having a personality and she was cute, she was very cute, petite woman. And I think she had a lot of backbone. So from age 16 to 21 I think she worked and she had to give her paycheck to her mother. Her mother, who had all these kids, would get dressed up and go downtown and shop while all the kids took care of the other kids and cleaned the house. My aunt pat told me about having to clean from the ceiling down to the floor in the kitchen, every week. So Mom told me about working for her step-dad in the grocery store and they would, 3 or 4 of them, walk home at night along the railroad tracks, you would never let your kids out at night, meaning 9 o'clock or whenever they closed. And she was tough in that way you know? She knew things were expected of her. Also from what I heard she never made a fuss with her parents, she

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never talked back. She was very obedient and so she was favored somewhat. One of the younger aunts told me that. I said 'my mom?' I said 'she never talked back?' I said 'now, she had opinions about everything' [laughs] but that's how she got along. She did what she was told and she did it right and she was a great mother, she just deserved better kids than us. But we didn't do anything enormous but weren't really bad. All of brothers got into a little trouble. One time he was driving while intoxicated and so my mother had to go into the police department and bail him and out and said she was so humiliated. She walked in 'hi Martha' 'hi Martha', she knew everybody there. So that was quite a humiliating thing for her.

My brother was known all over. In fact I lived in Kent and I would go places with him. He'd know everybody because he was a barber and had worked in barbering from the time he was 20, he also drove a taxi when he was first married. Brenda didn't work until they were about to split and she went to my dad's store and Dad taught her how to make change and she went to work at the Black Angus. And she was so cute, Irish Brenda. And so pretty really, she just had a lot of friends and they liked her and she got very good tips. And once she went on, oh they had a strike, so she asked me if she would waitress for her, you know cover her spot. I did it one day and I did everything wrong. I was pouring water in cocktail glasses and serving the wrong food to people and the food was up there on the ledge getting cold because I couldn't keep up. I thought 'I will never be coordinated enough to be a waitress.' So that was a lot of years under the bridge. I can hardly believe Brenda isn't living now. To have gotten married so young and died relatively young too.



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Well the average age now is 78 and 1/2 life expectancy so I've got just a very short time to live it up and I don't think I have the energy [laughs]. But I look back on things, the community, the church, the traditions, my parents and I don't think I would change anything even though I didn't progress as far with education. I didn't realize the value. My parents allowed me to go into a sorority, and all I did was socialize, you know, I just didn't look ahead enough. And I wanted to go to the University of Washington and they wanted me to go to UPS, 12 blocks from our house. I would have lived at home. Now that probably would have gotten me through school. But no, I told them I wanted to go to Washington State and I was trying to trick them into compromising on UW. I never used them like that except that one time and I felt pretty guilty and later on I told my mother about it and she was shocked because she didn't think of me in that regard in trying to get my way. What's the word, coerce or something.