

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

Narrator: JoAnn Tryfon
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Interviewed by: Mark Kilner
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Mark Kilner- So JoAnne, would you like to start with a little bit about yourself where you were born and who your family is?

JoAnn Tryfon- Well I'm JoAnne Tryfon, born in Tacoma and I was born at St. Joseph Hospital. I have one brother, I had one brother, and he was born at Tacoma General Hospital. He was younger. My mother came from Idaho, she was of Russian and Greek ancestry. My father came from Komenitsa, Greece in the Peloponnesus. He was born in 1898, my mother was born in 1916, so they were nineteen years apart. And it was technically not an arranged marriage, but they had relatives in common and even though they weren't related themselves, I'll have to explain that. My mom's father died when she was three, and he was from a place called Granitsa, that's my fraternal grandfather. And it's close to Komenitsa. I've been able to find it on the map and I believe I passed through without finding my grandfather's family because I didn't know too much about him. The interest in my grandfather came when my mother's next closest sister passed, she had her father's ring. So Pete Liberopolous was his name and I have his 18 carat wedding ring which I wear. And it has PL 1914, the year of the marriage on the inside of the band so it means something to me and maybe other people wouldn't have an emotional tie to it but I never met him and I never knew anything about

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

his family. My mother said he had one brother who came to her wedding but there's little that we know about him, only that he died in the flu epidemic in maybe 1919.

And my grandmother was married at 16. She was born in 1896 in either Kiev or Odessa I think. And their story was interesting and all of our cousins tried to get more information, but my great-grandmother Juliana, her name was Baranov, the family name, and I don't know how many siblings there were but mother always told me that they were nobility before the 1917 massacre in Red Square and that she had ball gowns and that she was presented to the Czar which was the custom for the coming out of young women. And that she had like 5 button gloves. And she had a trunk of these things and when she came to the U.S. she married a Greek man who was from the tip of Greece, Kalamata area and he became a partner of her brothers in mercantile, I guess, business. The brothers were then from Odessa or Kiev, either one I know it's a long distance. And so the brothers and my great-grandfather got together. His name was Stavropoulos, Stavros meaning cross. So Mr. Stavropoulos married Juliana and they had 5 kids, 4 kids, 5? And the second in line was my maternal grandmother, Juliana. She was born, not in Romania like a couple of her siblings, she was born in Russia. And then from Romania I don't know if they went to New York first, but they ended up in Idaho. And Urania got married at 16 and she had 8 daughters and 1 son. My mother was second in line there. My mother took care of the younger ones until she was 21. Her older sister Kostandina (Connie) got married at 16 and there were troubles in the marriage, she just shouldn't have gotten married that young, but that was the custom. And they tried to marry my mother at an early age. Everyone they brought for her to see, she would make an excuse. Until she met my dad,

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

they were so many years apart, there was something about him. He was a very gentlemanly person. And he was a third cousin of my step-grandfather who took over and raised that large family. They had a bakery, or my grandmother, Urania had a bakery. She became a widow and had four kids at an early age. She was probably 21 or something. She ran a bakery, she drove a delivery truck, and she had a grocery store. I don't know if that was incorporated with her parents or just how that worked, but they must have been pretty well known in Pocatello. Pocatello was kind of a Greek center. There was a church there, it was the only Greek Orthodox Church in Idaho.

So then Grandma remarried. I think that a lot of the bachelors thought that she had a lot of money, and maybe she did, you know? Maybe her husband left her well off, I don't now how my grandpa got the money to buy a bakery and so forth at such a young age because he was closer in age to Grandma and I have a picture of them when they got married.

Anyhow, so Nick Lagas, my mom's step-father, was a third-cousin of my dad. So Dad came to visit and he met all the girls and when he finally got engaged, I read one of their letters, my mother wrote to my dad. My mom was in Idaho, Dad was here. He had his business in Tacoma by then. It was so sweet and kind of formal. And she had 8th grade education, he had less. So his written English was always poor, and yet he could read the Wall Street Journal and he did read it. Toward his later years, I do have an example of his writing ability at age 75, you could see how limited it is even though he spoke better. He never was able to write much. But we understood what he meant.

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

Mother was used to hard work. She worked for her step-father in a grocery store in Idaho Falls and the requirement was to work at the store and to sell some items like little bit brown bananas, try to push those, and she learned that art from her step-father. And he was a pretty smart business man. When he died he had a building in Blackfoot, Idaho where the fire department housed their vehicles and then he had an apartment overhead a business buildings unit, it was called the Bill's building and it was on the main intersection in small Blackfoot. He also had an apartment house in Idaho Falls. Anyhow, he was successful. He was acquisitive you know? He knew how to deal with people. He was a little tiny man. He had a very Asian look. I looked at him and he's short and not too large but sort of a little (she indicates eye squint) but who knows. My father had more of a Scandinavian look. They grew up in the same village! They were close in age, third-cousins. And in fact there was another cousin in San Francisco. Two of them, one in Salt Lake City. My step-grandfather, all cousins of some sort. Second, third, and my dad. My dad was the only light-haired blond, and of course Dad lost his hair at 19. At least this much of it (circles crown of the head). Mom had to work late with her sisters. They were required to do all the cooking and the cleaning and mother told me that many times my grandmother after having all these kids she would dress up and go downtown in Idaho Falls and shop.

But her experience with discrimination in Idaho, it was a small town. There was a very large group of religious people and when the girls would go to school they would usually walk together. And they were required to get on the street because the others would come through and they were called dirty Greeks. "Get off the sidewalks, dirty Greeks" that was

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

said to them. So she always remembered that and had it in mind. And when she later on came to Tacoma after she was engaged and married, she was dumbfounded by all the languages she heard like in the elevators going shopping and felt more acceptance because Tacoma doesn't appear to be cosmopolitan but to her it was because she was from farming area and small town. Everybody knew everybody there. You knew who you could trust. And Dad had a less of a sense of who you could trust. My dad was trusting, my mom was suspicious. So she kind of counter acted to some things that might have gone bad. So Mom went through 8th grade. She always loved to read. And I think she was a very obedient person and the 5th in line aunt once told me more or less that she thought my mother was a brown noser. And I thought no she was probably diplomatic in her way. If she knew how to get along. And the other fought their dad and this one that described my mother that way she is a very hot tempered person and at odds with the rest of the family. She's one of the last ones living now so I do speak to her frequently. She's in Green valley, CA. She just moved.

So the 5 sisters in the family, the 5 younger ones who were all educated at Utah State. And many of them married Mormon men. They all started out as Greek Orthodox. So they changed. Some became Episcopalian, some Mormon. I have a lot of cousins who have been on Mormon missions. They're quite successful. One of the Mormon cousins ran the employment office in Renton for the Mormon Church. The children of these sisters are all well-educated. Doctors, lawyers. One has a clinic in Boise, one of the doctors. The lawyer worked for Intel for years. He retired at an early age because he made a fortune there and he traveled all over the world. And he has a ranch in Phoenix. I

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

mean my cousins are totally just all successful. And I have a cousin who lost one of the most lovable aunts. He was a twelve year old and his older brother was 14 and he had two other siblings younger. It made them very strong, all except for the oldest one. He could never quite get back on his feet. But the other three were quite successful. One cousin that I mentioned, whose mother died when he was 12, became a comptroller for Washington Federal Bank and he helped open the Phoenix branch so now travels between the two. He has a high-rise condo in Seattle and one in Phoenix and he loves to golf. It's perfect, he has a great life. He has 2 educated daughters. Yeah all of the younger cousins are very successful. The ones from the first family didn't become as successful. One of my cousins had an education and she chose to be a mother and she must have wanted to compete with my grandmother because she had something like 10 children and she died in her 50's which my grandmother did. So another cousin had 4 boys. She didn't graduate from college but she married a wonderful person who was going to become a Catholic Priest and then married Urania who was named after our grandmother, Urania, that means sky, actually my mother considered that name for me and I'm very glad that she didn't because one of my cousin Urania got teased quite a bit in some respect, and I won't say how.

So another male cousin from the first 4 worked for the railroad. Another cousin was killed during summer work. He was getting ready to go to the University of Idaho and was working coupling box cars and was crushed. Awful. That was my uncle's child. But he had two other children. And the daughter became an engineer on the railroad. And she made quite a bit of money. And her hobby was to buy old houses and restore them. So

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

about three marriages later she married a Greek fellow and so now she goes to the Orthodox Church which she never did before. So there are a couple of us left in the family who still attend the traditional religion.

M.K.- Why did your family come to America?

J.T.- Well the Russian part of the family, the Baranov family, my grandmother married Stavropoulos, came because of the Russian revolution and because they were part of the aristocracy more or less. Not way up there. They feared for their lives and left. So that's how their children came to Idaho. My father left Greece because he could not get along with his dad. He loved his mother, he was very wonderful to her. His father and he collided. Maybe it was because he didn't want to get stuck in the village he just saw it as, no way to advance you know, like he would have been a workhorse for the rest of his live. So that's how he got to Italy making saddles for a couple of months. And then decided that wasn't for him and then got on this Italian boat called SS Saturnia in the steerage with fleas and lice and stuff. I guess that was pretty typical of immigrants. And he didn't really have a bad time going through Ellis Island but a lot of people did you know. And so he was met by my grandmother's brother and one thing I don't understand about my grandmother, his mother, is it seems from a birth certificate that her maiden name was Koralis, the 'is' endings represent people from the north of Greece or the islands. Crete, they're always almost 'is' or 'es' or something. But the people from my dad's part of Greece are 'opolous,' that's in the Peloponnesus generally. So anyway she was a Koralis and she must have married somebody else because her brother's name

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

was Metropolous so that must have been her first husband's name? No that's not quite right. I'm not sure if there's a real brother-sister or a step-brother. Anyway, that's where my dad went. To Mr. Metropolous, the uncle, in New York. And he decided New York was not the place for him. Too big, too many sounds. I mean he came from a donkey and sheep world, you know everything was quiet. You didn't have deadlines, and I wrote about him one day. When he first got there he was so hungry there was a vendor on the street and he bought 10 pies. He didn't have much money and eats them all. And then of course it didn't stay with him. So from there he went to other relatives. And the next stop I remember was Montana in the copper mines working on railroads, working in restaurants, and then further on to Idaho. So he meets his third cousin Nick Lagas, which is my mom's step-father, but I'm not sure if my mom was around then. I do not believe she was. Yea she would have had to be. No, I can't quite tell you if Nick Lagas was single at the time and this was before my grandma became a widow. I'm not sure about that sequence there. Anyhow, meets Nick, they keep in touch. Dad decides to go to Seattle (Tacoma), he meets a lot of nice people in Tacoma. Makes good connections. Opens a business in Seattle, and it was on 2nd avenue. I have a picture of it in one of the books there. And I don't know what the duration was but he was in Tacoma and had a business in Tacoma for 50 years and he retired at 82. Lived to 87. So at 82 being in business 50 years means he was 32 or so when he opened the Tacoma business and he must have been in his 20's in Seattle. And I do understand that he was engaged to a Swedish woman in Tacoma prior to my mom, and it didn't work out. (Laughs)

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

So dad's first hat shop, wear and hat shop, he dealt with a lot of work clothes. There was a factory here, Day's Manufacturing, and I can recall going there and picking up items you know that Dad had ordered. I was his service you might say, and I dropped off hats at haberdashers in town and dry cleaners and you know whatever I needed to do. I did this in the summer. Kind of learned his whole business and my brother did too. But George was here there and everywhere. He loved to party as a teenager. If you could get him to work two hours you were lucky, but I would work 8 hours if Dad needed me. But I do recall he was paying me 10 cents an hour one time I said, I was sitting at the dinner table with Dad and Mom and I said 'dad can I talk to you about salary? I can't live on 10 cents an hour'. He just laughed at me and my mother almost, well she was very surprised I asked for a raise. Labor. Labor and management [Laughing]. So yea I got a raise, 5 cents, 15 cents an hour. It was kind of interesting. I got to meet the Brotman Brothers and another really nice men's shop in town. There were a lot more. You know Tacoma had a lot of stores. And then the mall is what changed everything. And my father didn't want to move to the mall. He thought the rents were outrageous so he stayed in downtown Tacoma while all the other business moved out. They were forced to close and it became more of a financial sector. And they tried to remodel the downtown area and then somebody redid the Pantages Theatre and that was the Music Box or Blue Mouse or Temple, no the Temple was still there. We had the Music Box, Blue Mouse, I think they were all Pantages Theatre chain. And then it became the John Hamerik chain. And you never heard the name Pantages until somebody started a campaign to raise funds, buy a brick, you know the bricks aren't even there anymore. And then they created the Pantages. However, what I was trying to say was that my dad's first shop was on the

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

lower side of the Pantages building, and he bought out a man that he had kind of worked with before and when he was there he was right next to a photography shop that was in the basement and they became very close friends with this well-known photographer in town. Dad made friends everywhere. He wasn't a kind of person who had to stick with his ethnic group. You know he wanted to know the business men in town. It was beneficial for him to join the Masonic Order and meet people there and make connections. And the bankers who came in always gave him information on the market. I wouldn't say it's insider trading but I think they helped him get an interest in the stock market. Even though he wasn't an educated person he was reading more and he liked to invest. But that was in the days when you bought one stock you know, you didn't buy mutual funds. He started me in mutual funds when I started working, but that was when mutual funds were just starting up. None of my friends ever invested in mutual funds. But like I said he brought someone to the house and he worked for a company downtown that just moved to Seattle two summers ago. My friend worked there. They used to operate out of their home and they ended up with this huge building downtown. In fact I met the owners of that investment. Russell, Frank Russell. So one of the Frank Russell investment advisors came to the house and I can remember I didn't want to waste my money on stock. Oh no I wanted a car. But I had to do it. Dad insisted because he said 'if you don't save out of every paycheck you're wasting your time working and I had a tendency to like clothes. I love clothes. Clothes and cars and you know. My dad was a very thrifty person. George and I were just the opposite. I think it was because he had the thought always of 'keep the spending down' and Dad didn't end up a wealthy man but he had a lot for limited education. He knew how to acquire securities in things and oh boy do I know that

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

because when he passed away in 1985, I had to change all of the securities to my mother's name and instead of putting it in mom's and my name. I never presumed that I would outlive my brother. She wanted it just in her name because I think she wanted to see what happened to us you know before she decided who got what. So then when mother died in 2011, I again had to go through that and rather than have all that in my name just sold everything. And things 2 were split between myself and the three grandchildren because by then their dad was gone. So it was like 4 shares only. I got half and they got a 3rd of a half. So yeah we actually got nothing from my father. Everything went to my mother. He made no provisions for us. We were adults, he knew we could take care of ourselves. He knew I could. My brother was a little up and down financially all his life. He just loved to party and was married four times and I was never married. We're very opposite but I loved him dearly. So then after about 10 years I think in the Pantages location, he moved down to the opposite end of Congress Street and a bus barn turn around type thing is there now. I have a picture in the books of the sign that was next to the Woolworth Building.

That's another thing, I shouldn't get on a sidetrack there but I'm thinking about my mother and dad. They had a garden in the back yard. Half of our yard was vegetable garden you know and so Dad needed string and poles and things to let the plants grow up. And he would go through Woolworth's garbage you might say. It wasn't food garbage, it was like recyclables. And one time this nephew walked by and to say hello to Grandpa but he was with his friends and there was Grandma going through the garbage for poles and things. He pretended he didn't know her. He was really embarrassed to see

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

that I guess. Bag lady [laughing]. So none of the kids worked in my dad's shop. Just George and I at various times. I did and of course my mother did. She helped my dad run the business. And she stayed out of all financial parts of things until Dad got sick. And Dad never showed her how to write a check. In fact dad didn't deal with checks. He had no credit cards, everything was cash. So he trusted me to take the cash, get the change, pay the bill, bring the bill back so you know, he trusted me because every penny was there. My brother? Different story. He'd keep the change for his girlfriends you know? And he had a lot of girlfriends. Big social life from the time he was a little kid.

But George and I both after franklin school were required to go with my mom on two or three nights a week to the church to study Greek and George liked to play around and we talked a lot and we never really picked up a lot. Maybe the alphabet. (Interruption to close window). The alphabet and as far as constructing sentences, that has been a problem all my life. As I take different sessions I go over some of the same things that I've learned but my reading ability is much better. It was hard for me to read capital Greek letters and I don't have such problem now.

My mother primarily was the homemaker and the landscape architect. And she did most of the gardening. My father really worked 7 days a week. He worked at the shop 6 days, but when he was here after church on Sundays the kitchen table was his office and while Mother cooked the dinners he would do his books and I'd watch him and, not really too interested when I was younger you know, but then I helped him later on and I picked up a few financial things and looked at them and looked at that little chicken scratch and I

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

thought 'he knew what everything on it. Almost looked like Egyptian hieroglyphics to me, but he knew what everything meant. He kept great books. He never had a problem with the IRS, never was fined. He just was a man of character. And as I mentioned before he helped pensioners from the church who ran out of money at the end of the month. Gave them little bridge loans and they always paid him back. But he had an interesting experience with a Gypsy family and they were well known around the town. The leader of the Gypies was almost like a king to the family. They kind of walked and drove in bands you know? A band of people. The leader of this Gypsy group, they were Orthodox, we used to see them in church so they were Romanian orthodox I believe. And I don't know where they lived. They came in and brought in laundry and my dad had a little side thing where he'd collect laundry and take it to a specific laundry and a person was supposed to pick all of it up. Well this Gypsy would take 'I want that shirt' and he'd go out and there's the rest of his stuff there with all of this money owing, and finally my dad just let him have it one day and said 'you're not going to do business here anymore I don't have the space and the time' and they were so good about talking around the problem and getting their way but not with my dad. Once dad got a fuse blown he put his foot down and my mom kind of had to get behind him. Inspired him that this was not going anywhere you know, so she had a lot of common sense and my dad did too but Dad just like I said was a more trusting person. My brother was a more trusting person and got himself into a little trouble, lending money and helping people out that maybe weren't worthy of the help. But he had a soft spot for people and animals much more so than I did. So I was more emotionally like my mom maybe but she was such a strong woman. I've never been that strong. Both of my parents were stronger than the two of us.

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

It seems like we diluted, the generations diluted. Now I see my niece and nephew making a lot of progress and living in nice places and buying boats. Not that that's the thing to think about, the material things, but they have a good lifestyle. You can't be happy all the time but their lives are good.

So my niece is very much like my mom. Lot of backbone. She was the sweetest thing on two feet. She married into Tony's family and she had two sisters and a mother in-law that she was kind of battling and it made her become very opinionated, stand up for herself. She had totally changed when she came back from California, and now she's so outspoken it's embarrassing sometimes. So that's changed. But she's for the good, the trouble is she drives herself crazy worrying about things. She gets a lot of irons in the fire at the same time. She has been behind the success of her daughter for sure. Her daughter was a cheerleader at Stadium (High School) and I think may have been a sub cheerleader at Jason Lee (Middle School). And then she went on to PLU cheerleading again and before that she was in a cheer group and her daughter got into a nursing honorary and like I said she was a Daffodil Princess. She did a lot of wonderful things that some of the other cousins haven't experienced so her life has just been totally full and my niece, I have to say she's the one behind, took her here took her there. Supported her here. We went over to the, used to be Kingdome, and sold hotdogs to raise money for the, I was right there with sandy, and we got to see Derek Jeter, uh and then when the New York Yankees were there we'd make the hotdogs and run over to the glass to see down into the pit where they were playing. It was fun, it was fun. Yeah I did a lot of those special fundraisers. I was always, Sandy included me because I had no children. She included me

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

in her daughters' growing up stages. And like I said her daughters, my god-daughters, was like, more than family.

M.K.- So can you tell me more about your mom and your dad's relationship with how she was taking him to work and coming back home? Tell me about the family dynamic

J.T.- My father's day, I don't think he missed any work until was in his 60's. And the usual thing was Dad drove to work and parked the car downtown. And when he started getting sick, she would drive him to work, he'd stay at work 'til noon, she'd come back, trade off, she would work, he'd come home and lie down. Because by then standing on his feet, even though there was a rubber mat, his whole job was standing. He had a bench but he was busy all the time. So he rarely sat. Once in a while when a favorite customer came in and talked he got to sit a little bit. But he was starting to have circulatory problems so that's why she wanted him to come home, rest, and also he was getting other health problems at that age in his 60's. He had relatively good health and stayed slender most of his life. He was just 5'6" or so and 140 lbs. or so. He was very trim and did not fluctuate much. He was moderate in drinking. He quit smoking in his 60's. He had been, I think maybe a heavy smoker but he quit and then the drinking totally quit you know after one New-Year's Eve party when he drove up on the neighbor's lawn somewhere around here [Laughing]. He decided 'nope, no more drinking and driving' and his wife was in the car too and so that settled that. He was very sensible and sometimes he had to have his head against the wall [smack]. Luckily he didn't have car accidents or anything.

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

And then my mother would, he would come downtown, Mother would take the car, go home fix dinner, then go back and pick him up and then we would have dinner and she'd always try to have the four of us there but when we got to be teenagers we had so many activities and she always said she became the taxi and took us here, there and everywhere. Well my brother learned how to drive at an early age and I saw friends of mine getting in wrecks and my brother getting in wrecks and I didn't want to drive until I was 24. All my friends had cars. 'Why should I know how to drive?' But then I saw the Ford Mustang and decided that was the car for me and I got a '66 Ford Mustang. That was my first car.

So my parents had this really democratic marriage I would say. She always showed him the utmost respect and I'm not sure if she had married a man her age I think she would have been that way, but being that Dad was 19 years older than she was, it was very evident to me that he had great respect for her and vice versa. And my father always treated women, there was never any deprecation. He never swore around women. I heard him use a few words, but he was very careful about his vocabulary. He opened doors, he walked on the outside and I was seeing that he was pretty meticulous in how he dressed and how polished his shoes were every Sunday for church. Yeah he was quite meticulous. I don't know where that came from to tell you the truth. I'm sure he wasn't that way in the village herding sheep. So he must have had learned just from magazines and from his friends. And his cousins were and incentive to keep making his life better.

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

And he had a library of Greek books. I've kept some of them. One of his friends from Texas sent him *History of the United States*. Like 20 volumes or something. They're in Greek. And then there was another book I gave to my friends or they're reading it now. It's on Herodotus and I don't even know if he ever studied or what. I never thought of him as an intellectual person but he did read until the eyes failed. The print was so small. I've got some of those books here today, I've just kept them. And he loved books. My mother did too, although one thing my dad did like is Cowboys and Indians so when I bought him a color T.V., that's what he would watch is westerns. And he had a great liking for British humor. I would watch British T.V. and I didn't get it. He'd just split his sides laughing. Is it Benny Hall? My mother liked it and I never got anything out of it myself.

He loved Greek dancing and during WWII it was the custom to take any service men who came to our church to take them home and have dinner with them. Well we had wall-to-wall carpeting in the old days. I'm the one who took the carpeting up because I wanted the floor, even though it's a little battered, I just wanted the floor. And it was the style to get rid of the carpet a few years ago, so I really like this. So we would dance holes in the carpet, all of us. Circle dances you know. And one time we went into the backyard or even in the street and we were dancing and we'd play the music out the windows. The neighbors all knew my parents at that time. We knew the people in that house over there and these people, but none of them thought it was weird. But if we did that now, the police might have been called. It was just something my parents did and their friends did. If we didn't have a party here on a Sunday, then our neighbors on Oakes Street, we had

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

one of our benefactors at the church, he left a scholarship and a lot of money to the church, and he entertained quite a bit. He was a close friend and his wife was really like a mother to my mom and so when she left Idaho, Mary taught her some of the things she didn't learn in Idaho. How to speak Greek, how to cook Greek style. My mom had kind of a Russian- Greek style and so Mary just tried to streamline her skills in the kitchen. And my mom was a wonderful cook. But our favorite thing we used to beg her for these Russian hotcakes. And they were like Crepe Suzette, except without the flames and the sugar cubes. So a pancake very thin rolled with cinnamon and sugar. We got them once a year. She would never make them more than once a year and I can't remember the occasion but it seemed to me it was always in the summer. I don't know if it was 4th of July or what. And apparently the rest of the family had the same hankering for those Russian hotcakes because all of my mom's siblings' children had a reunion. I was invited to it but couldn't go. And they got the youngest aunt in the family, she said she must have made 500 of them because the family was big and they had a good turnout. It was the grand children of my grandparents plus their kids and some of the next generation. So it was pretty big. So that came from Juliana to Urania to Martha to Joanne and I never learned how to make them.

There's another thing too. I had Juliana, Great-Grandma's rings. One of her rings. And I believe it was a white sapphire, so not really that expensive, if it had been a diamond it would have been, and garnet. And grandma gave it to Mom because she was a January birthday and garnets were her stone and Mom had it sitting for years and I had it sized. The gold in it was kind of the European pink gold sort of. Anyhow the stones

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

became loose, the setting became loose, and when they changed the stones, it was a Spanelle, and I think that's just 'blah' manufactured. It wasn't, you know a natural stone or semi-precious. But it meant so much to me to have Great- Grandma's ring. And so I took that ring and after I was in my 50's, I'd worn it for years, I'd had it repaired and cleaned, and the garnets were chipped and I gave it to my niece to give to my PLU god-daughter and I wrote the progression, who had owned the ring you know: from Juliana to Urania to my mom to me to Sandra to Alexandra. And I wrote that for her, put it in a box, and I don't think she ever wore the ring. It didn't mean anything to her. It meant a great deal, just like my grandpa Pete, Peter's wedding ring, and I still have Pete's wedding ring. I don't have Urania's garnet ring. But I asked my mom first whether she cared if I gave it. I said 'you know I'm in my 50's, I don't know how long I'm going to live, Mom. Can I give this to my god daughter?' And so she said 'yea that's a lot women.' Juliana, Urania, Martha, Joanna, Alexandra, and Alexandra, they both have the same name. But Sandy, goes by Sandy, Alexandra is the Greek name they gave her at baptism, so her baptismal certificate shows Alexandra. And the name she goes by, Sandra Dee, her mother named her after a movie star. San Dee she combined it. 'd' 'e' 'e'. Alexandra the youngest one goes by Ali.

M.K. -So you've inherited a lot of family items?

J.T. -Do you know how all this has come about? With the Mormons in my family. They have the wonderful library. I went up there and looked up the Baranov family. Couldn't find anything. I looked up Pete Liberopolous, I looked up Stavros Labropolous, and that's

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

when I found the Odessa, Kiev, and Ostrav, Romania connection. I found out a couple of grandmas, siblings were born in Ostrav. Yeah it's the Mormons in our family. I have a cousin whose wife has, every reunion she brings something new to it. Her name is France, they have a ranch. This is the one who worked for Intel. It's his Mormon wife who has collected our family history. But we're all interested the Baranov connection. We want to find out more. We'd love to find the family there if we could. Maybe someday, somewhere one of my cousins will do it. There's one other possibility too and I thought of this the other day. My mother kept touch with her cousins because as they were young men during the 40's they came to service here at the Army and the Navy. Well one of the cousins came and stayed with us for a while and then another one got out of the service and started a medical practice and that was her first cousin and he was a doctor here in town. He had a pretty interesting history coming from Burley, Idaho on a farm. This was my grandmother's oldest sister. My grandmother was second. And the same thing, my mom was the second in their family. So anyway, my grandmother and this older sister were close but there was something strange about the Russian dynamics and my aunts have told me that all of our quirky stuff comes from the Russian side. That there's like a war and that there's a little jealousy about who has what and where the kids go to school. And maybe that's accounted for the progress, because of this limited jealousy and competition. Anyhow this doctor became close to my mom. He was married to a nurse, he had four children. He divorced. This ruined him financially. So rather than crumple, this was the day in when her first cousin used to go house to house and then he opened a house in south Tacoma, and then years later he became head of the Washington Medical Association. He lectured at the UW, and then as he retired he was losing his eyesight and

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

hearing, he wore hearing aids in each ear, and he started working at the veterans' hospital so he kept very active.

The second marriage, he married an Italian woman from a very well-known family here and he had a really good life. She was in the medical field too, and they had four more kids. So they had four from the first marriage, four from the second. And we have kept in touch with the younger ones. But the older four, two of the four came to my parents' funeral. So they do have childhood memories of all the holidays we celebrated together. We had a lot of family dinners at Leo's house and Mom had a lot of dinners here, but the kids didn't always come to our house. They had big houses and they were well-to-do. And they out of my mom's first cousin's family, there were two doctors, an attorney, and an opera singer and they grew up in Burley, Idaho. One of the doctors had a clinic in the next larger town near Burley, I don't know, Boise? I don't know.

So the Snake River is where our family is. Most of them on the east side, some of them on the west side. And whenever we would go visit, we went to a cousins wedding one time we started at 4 o'clock in the morning and finally got to the wedding reception in Blackfoot, Idaho. The same night mother and I were just so tired, but the sisters always talked when they got together. They always talked and they would talk all night. And the husbands felt very left out. They knew that once those women started talking they had to go golf or go play cards or something because they knew they couldn't get a word in edgewise. That's when they did their catching up more than on the phone, they caught up in person. And then they lost one of the sisters right after that. When they were all

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

staying up 'til 4 o'clock my mother, her older sister, and the one that died in her 50's, wonderful Aunt Peggy, they stayed up 'til 4 o'clock in the morning and I just went to bed because I'd been driving since 4. So we got to see the bride and groom but just for a few minutes. Oh yeah, there could have been a lot more close celebrations but we weren't able to get them. We were over here in Washington. The only family in Washington. They were all in Idaho. Eventually they went to Utah, and then ended up in Arizona. The sisters kind of stayed together with their husbands. In fact they had a thing. When the sisters would get married, the others would help them with the down payments on the house and pay them back of course, but that's how they all established themselves. And the younger ones got the bulk of the money. My step-grandfather's money too. So they were really well set up plus well educated and active. The one who died at the earliest age was into politics and philanthropy. She was just a wiz at everything. Plus her dad's executor, he trusted her a lot. She was very fair and very loving. I admired my aunts a lot. They had a great influence on me even though I rarely saw them. Mother would talk to them on the phone and then she'd relay the information to me and I didn't always get to talk to them but they loved her because she had taken care of them when they were young kids.

My dad always said that when she got married to him in the Greek church in Pocatello that afterwards the girls decided to throw tomatoes at my dad for taking her away [Laughing]. So dad had very little money I think that my mom thought he might have had a little bit more money when they married. He didn't have very much at all. They had some little two room apartment called the Charlesbee and believe it or not it's

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

still here by Central School in that area. Wright Park area. So I always wanted to find their apartment, but I forgot to ask Mom where it was because she used to tell me that the people she met here, who like were the cream of the crop in our church, you know used to very fine things and kind of set the tone for how the new immigrants would be, 'buy this for the living room, you buy this kind of carpet.' My mother didn't go along with that program, she had a mind of her own. And she was really just a little on the outside. She didn't want to be a lockstep person. So her two older ladies who kind of took her under their wing and taught her how to talk, they were a trio, and these other people were their little click. But my dad was one who didn't get into cliques he just talked to everybody. He really had a nice way about him and not ignoring people. He only had one argument I can ever remember with a gentlemen he was in business with. It was three men from the church who owned a restaurant and the restaurant went belly up. And he has always worked so hard for his money that to lose any amount of money he had to mortgage the house to pay for his loss, or go bankrupt. Well he wasn't going to go bankrupt. So anyway that ended up in a 20 year no talking type thing. And one time my dad talked to the priest and the priest told Dad that he needed to apologize to this man, and he said 'why would I apologize? He cheated me!' He did, he apologized and it released all of this build up because you know he'd really never had enemies. And he talked to the man just before he died too, so it allowed him to settle down and not carry the animosity and he felt much better about himself you know. So he told him before communion that he needed to make peace with this person.

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

M.K.- So the church was very influential in the community and families lives, relationships between families?

J.T- Yeah. And, there were people who liked the priest, and there were people who didn't. And they made trouble for the priest, and moved him outta here. We had priests for three years for two years. Finally we had Father Anthony from Chicago and stayed for 19 and built our community. He built our festival. And he had the big city ways. A lot of people didn't like him, he was, our family always loved the priest. If we didn't, we wouldn't do anything to hurt the priest. We just got onto the council. My dad and I were on the council twice together; and that kind of didn't work out because we'd get frustrated at the meeting and we'd drive home and talk angrily about subjects and I'd say 'Dad, you know, this is just going to eat us up, we've got to be more laid back about this. We have to back off, and it'll work out because it's not just on us because there's 10 other members of this council, you know 12 people on the council.' Anyway I served on four or five councils for several different priests. I never really felt any animosity to any priest because to me I analyzed their education and why should they come to a community like Tacoma and be treated in an underhanded way? These priests, some of them just broke their necks for people here and then people would turn on them. And I don't know if it was, I always thought that you go to confession, and you tell the priest something, and then you feel guilty about it or something and then come back and try to get at him, I never felt that way. I always had respect for authority, for my teachers. It's something my dad taught me by his behavior. And I see a lot of people in our church now who will resist anything that's against their way of thinking. And they do cause the problems at our

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

council meetings and our general assemblies and we really dislike being around them sometimes. Not so much for their ideas, as the way they present them. Try to force you, or demean the person who's speaking. I've been on that end of it. When I was on the council a few years ago, we had a wiz president and he was from Iowa, and he was a doctor, and he was used to running hospitals, big scale stuff. Anyone who comes in from the east just really seems to get taken to the cleaners by our community. He was so lovable, he was such a wonderful person, and his wife was such a worker. They were well educated and knew how to do things. Throw dinners, everything was just... When they handled something it was a fundraiser that was successful, you know for the church. So this man wanted to move fast on remodeling the church and we just stepped ahead and oh-my-gosh there was so much flak from that. We felt like we were, I was the treasurer, we felt like we were stealing from the treasury to have the work done on our church. Our roof was leaking. When we came on the council, the roof was leaking in four spots. Because of the way the roof was constructed initially, it never was corrected and they tried and tried and tried. We had buckets in our narthex, that's the entryway of the church before you go into the sanctuary. We had buckets by the priests' office, by the candle holders. I can remember four or five and so we had to do some work, and so we just couldn't stop it. And a couple years ago the ceiling fell in in the kitchen. A very large hole. So before the inspector got there for the festival we had to have that all done so they did a little patch-up. You couldn't even see it was done. But it was bound to happen again because it wasn't done, it wasn't done in a correct manner, or the way it should have been. So that's all got to be done, so you know we still have the problem. Recently we put in over 100,000 dollars in a dome painting. Two artists came from Crete,

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

no from Athens, a man, an American man, who came here with his son and they painted the dome. Just beautifully. They worked on it for a couple of months, we had scaffolding in the church and they still carried the church service on. And when it was done it was magnificent, just magnificent.

M.K.-Would your life have been different if your family had not had the opportunity to journey to America? How do you feel your Greek culture has influenced your life?

J.T.-I try to transplant myself into how my cousins live. Now, in the old village they are very modern. Just amazing. A couple of cousins have opened a tanning parlor in Tripolis which is just a few minutes right from my dad's village. They live in Tripolis, their parents live in Tripolis, but their uncle lives in grandpa's house that he's remodeled because they used to store animals in the winter in the bottom of the house. When I first saw the house in 1980 it had holes in the floor, nobody lived there. There were a couple of icons up above the fireplace, and my aunt, my dad had twin sisters who were there in the village, and my aunt picked them up to me and I looked at them, and I still have them upstairs. But they aren't the real Byzantine style. So I asked someone who's really an expert on Byzantine painting and I asked him 'why do they look so Rubanesque?' Not the painful style that we have in our church where the faces are distorted and the eyes are and the hands are very small. It's a typical style that we've tried to get back to. Apparently a church in Greece went to this more Italian style of painting and also he pointed out that because Dad lived in the Peloponnese that was like an area like a foreign invaders passing through. You'd have many influences. You might

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

have Turkish, you might have Moroccan, maybe Scandinavian somewhere along the lines so wherever there was painting, you know using the style of the country. So some things are very different from the northern part of Greece where things were more sheltered. But I think, I'm not really sure. If I didn't know the United States and I were over there, I'm not sure what my position would have been. I don't know if I would have made it to trade school. You know you have to have the grades to go to college. You can't even be considered, and then if you do get into college, the University of Athens or others, it's all paid. You don't have to worry about it or any of that. But I kind of think I might have just been a trade school person. I don't know for sure. One of my cousins berated me. I met her for the first time. She lived in Athens but she was very old country. She never changed. She was a widow. She was looking at me and criticizing me almost all the time I was there. And so I thought 'I'm going to do something really outrageous, embarrass my mother'. The custom is to take a siesta and I never went for that. I couldn't get my system into that so I'd go up on the roof and take a fix beer and drink the beer and write to my dad. I have all the letters in a book there. I'd write to him my experiences and my opinion of what I saw. And I'm sure he read every one, and I asked him to keep them for me and they're all there. So it's really neat because I wrote these at age 40 to look back 35 years and see how I felt about things on my first visit.

I feel fortunate to have grown up here and this town. When I was 18, I hated it. There was nothing here for me. I wanted to go to Seattle. So I stayed up in that area in King County for a long time and when I came back here I never had any desire to have a house, but once I moved back with Mother I started doing the yard work, and I used to do yard

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

work. It's very healing. If you have a problem you get out there and just dig in the soil and plant a plant and watch nature, the birds, the squirrels. There's something so peaceful about it. My mother and I had that in common. She loved it. The year my father died they took a picture out by her vegetable garden and her flowers were up over her head. They were huge you know? She had the nicest garden she ever had. And the oval in back was started with a topiary shaped azalea, white. Her cousin gave that to her, the doctor, and so she planted it in the center of this oval. We dug it out together, then when she couldn't go out there, I started buying roses and I'm afraid because of my illness this year I might have ruined a lot of my plants I had, but I'm slowly cleaning up the bits now. She loved flowers. When I go to cemetery I take the flowers from her yard, as much as possible. Like the other day I took like 5 different colors of Rhodies out there. And my mom and dad are buried together, and my brother, because they're so [Undistinguishable] take the flowers to all of them at the same time.

So I might have been an American hater too, if I were still there you know? I don't really know what my cousins' children, what their view are on the United States. And they don't come to visit us here. For some reason they think that they're so far away from Chicago. They'll get to Chicago and visit there, but they don't come to us. One time when my father was very ill, he was on his deathbed, his niece and nephew, sister and brother, came. And I have pictures of them around his bed. They were talking to him you know. And I always felt beholden to them for taking the time to give their uncle attention. It meant a lot to him. But the other part of the family, uh, one first cousin came, Tom, he's the one who remodeled my grandpa's house and put the marble in and has the fancy

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

bathub. See my brother had gone to Greece and would have had that house. But he wouldn't have done anything with it. Tom knew how to do this because he was a school teacher in Greece, he couldn't be a school teacher in Chicago, so he went into the building trade and then was able to go back to the village and pave streets and have water fountains and you know do a lot of things that were Americanized. And our village looks totally different than that 1980 village that I saw. With the holes in the floor and you know abandoned houses. There is a house there, my cousins told me that I could have it or come and visit there. It belongs to another cousin who was in Australia. Part of the family went to Australia because they couldn't make a living in the village. They said I could stay there at any time. My fear is of going into a house that's been vacant. You've got rats, mice, snakes, who knows? If you don't want to hurt the relatives when you visit we've kind of devised a plan that we'd stay for a while and then we'd tell them we had to get to Athens to go on a cruise. Because they'll want you to stay there for a month. 'Stay for 6 months!' And we have friends at church who do that. So they're very hospitable. Very much so.

And they love to have you celebrate their Saint's Day, because that's big. My mother always kept our house open on January 7th, St. John's Day. That was dad's name day. John, his grandson John, and me Joanne, because Joanne's a derivative of John, so we celebrated the name day together, and we'd have open house. And couples from the church would come in, sit around, there was a custom of serving a glace of water, a shot of whiskey, and a sweet, a spoon as they call it in books that I've read, it's translated to spoon sweet, so it's like a jelly or something. And that's what you would take is the shot,

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

and then the sweet, and then drink the water, cold water. And then my mother would work two weeks cleaning the house, baking the pastries. She made the cookie that we'd call Mexican wedding cake with a lot of powdered sugar. She had one called a reeplless, and you may know what that is. It's a deep fried and rolled with cinnamon and sugar. And then there's another one that looks like a football. It's brown, you bake it and then put walnuts on top. That's one I never failed on. I have failed on almost all the others. And luckily my nephew likes that one. So I think I can make those. Another of course baklava, we did make. Mother had her own style of baklava.

For New Year's people from a certain part of Greece would have certain other customs like there was a bread in a round pan with sesame on the top and you would bury a coin and whoever got that piece, you would cut a piece for your business for your father your mother siblings, and for your school or your studies. And whoever got that coin that's baked, it was put into wax paper and then baked in one of the filo dough you know, in layers. And then as it baked, the filo opens up a little bit and we'd all try to look and see if we can see where the coin is. So we'd do that at church too on St Basil's day. First of January. A certain woman in our community makes about eight loaves of bread and then the philanthropic group called Philoptochos, it's 'Friends of the Poor,' cuts the cake and each person coming out makes a donation to Philoptochos. So you buy that piece and Philoptochos does a whole bunch of philanthropic things around the city, but nationally too. It's a national organization. All the churches have it they are like the right arm to the priest. Assisting him. And they go to visit people who are ill, and take baskets to ailing people, shut-ins, make telephone calls for community members you know. I've noticed

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

that the Mormon people are so good about taking care of older folks who might have a house, need house cleaning, they bring people from the wards and clean their homes, and do their yard work. And it's just amazing. I saw them do that for a little fella who lived here and couldn't move around readily. They just cleaned his house up, cleaned his windows, did his washing, you know it was wonderful.

So sometimes we hire folks from the church but we never really got to that extent of helping. The visits though, the nursing homes, going to help people. There to talk to people, keep them company a little bit. One time when I was on the council I went with the priest when he would go see dying people. Now that was something I'd never done before. And I mean like they were in the fetal position you know and I'd listen to him pray and [gets emotional]. Anyways it was sad when you knew something who was that close to passing away. And you've known them all your life and then to listen to those beautiful words. He would, one woman, he actually got on his knees and leaned close to her to tell her it was okay for her to die. Everything I did with the Priests was a learning experience.

We have a cancer camp, and this Philoptochos group runs it, and they run it with two or three churches in Seattle. It occurs at the end of July and they elect young children with cancer. Elect their families. They have to apply at Children's Hospital in Seattle. And this camp is over in Gig Harbor. And it's called camp Agape, 'Camp of Love' you know? The work they do is fantastic. They raise about 60,000 dollars or more a year by various activities. One of them is called the chocolate ball and they have it down in an area in Seattle, a rented place, it's a dance and auction, silent auction now. And so this is in

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

December and they raised the money for the camp use for the following July. So all these women get together, have board meetings, decide how they're going to do things, who's going to raise the money, they kind of change the experience. And then they'll have the whole family of this cancer victim come to the camp, and they stay with their child. And the child gets to go to crafts, he gets to go with nurses and doctors who have volunteered their time. Plus kids from our church who volunteer, and they have to be screened to be around the children, and so they put on a theme day. 5 days. They'll have maybe Irish day one day, and Greek day another, and Mexican, and they have a band at night. The kids get to go out a there and dance, and these little bald headed kids who are having chemotherapy are out there and if they can't, they don't have the strength, they still can be in the arms of their little advisor dancing to the music. And then the fire department comes up and they run a kind of a streamer thing and pour water down it and so they use it as a slide cause it naturally slopes. And then down at the lower part of the park is a dock. Of course they had to be very careful you know, (drowning) and watch the young kids. But they'll take them out on boats and things. And then there's one night when they take the parent and entertain them and have the children kind of baby-sit at the camp while the couple goes to a home to have a dinner. Somebody from our church will entertain them from Gig Harbor, you know on that side generally. And so they'll take them in a bus and then bring 'em back and their kids have been taken care of. They get one night away. And there is a group from Montana. They're kind of camp advisors. And they come to manage the camp. But a lot of the workers are from our church. So now all the churches up and down the coast have started these camps. And ours was one of the first. There was, Portland had them and San Francisco had them, outside of San

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

Francisco, and Los Angeles has got one and I think they've got one in Phoenix. And it's been tremendous. These kids they're not orthodox kids they're just kids that are taken from Seattle Children's Hospital. So that's a very big project. And my part in that has been very limited this year if I feel well I'm going to try to go out again. But I've been with the group that decorates at night for the following day's theme you know, put streamers up and decorate. So yeah!