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CHARLES TARABICOS

514 Ruxton Drive

Georgian Terrace

Wilmington, Delaware

GREEK IMMIGRANT

Born: 1894

Immigrated: 1907

Interview and Transcription

by Irene H. Long

Feb. - Sept. 1968

CHARLES TARABICOS

A portly man of seventy-three, Mr. Tarabicos is of reddish-blond coloring, rare among modern Greeks. A semi-retired restaurateur, he still takes cash during noon hours at the Kent Hotel, where this interview takes place. It was an unusually busy day and there is a background of noise and confusion on the tape; however, Mr. Tarabicos is genial and talkative and provides an excellent interview. Although he is considered a pillar of the community, having served as president for the first seventeen years of its existence, there is an air of the flamboyant surrounding his reputation. For his wedding in Roanoke, Virginia, he hired two private railroad cars to pick up guests from Wilmington to Roanoke. And always his home was open for parties and celebrations during the years he was most active in church affairs. He is especially proud of his association with Arch-bishop Anthanagoras, now Patriarch of Constantinople, whom he entertained several times.

An immigrant child of twelve, nearly returned for claiming his uncle to be his father for purposes of entry, Charles worked day and night until at one time he operated four restaurants in the Wilmington area. His generous nature is obvious as he speaks of providing handsome dowries and of sponsoring numerous friends and relatives into this country.

Characterized by an ever-present cigar and unfailing good nature, Charles Tarabicos is well-loved by the Greek community and respected by all who know him.

TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES TARABICOS

"Mr. Tarabicos, where were you born?"

"In Greece, Naupaktos, Greece."

"Naupaktos, Greece. You told me it was close to the port of Patras?"

"Patra."

"When, what year were you born?"

"18 - 94."

"1894, I see. How much schooling did you have in Greece?"

"Very little." (Laughter)

"Very little - did you attend school at all?"

"Oh yes, yes - I was in grammar school. That's all."

"How many years, do you remember?"

"Let's see, about - uh - about five years."

"About five years."

"About five years, yes."

"How old were you when you began school?"

"I was six - six years old about."

"About six. And then were you about eleven when you completed what schooling you had?"

"When I completed, yes. Then I had to be around to help my parents, my father and mother."

"What did your parents do?"

"They were 'shippers,' you know."

"Shippers?"

"No, ships, you know."

"They fished?"

"No."

"No?"

"No, they had goats, ships."

"Shepherds!"

"Shepherds, that's what my father was."

"Oh, I see."

"And he had some - what do you call them? - properties which they would grow olives, cherries."

"Vinyards?"

"Yes, and of course I helped them till I got thirteen years old. Then I decided to come to this country."

"At thirteen you decided to come to this country?"

"That's right."

"On your own?"

"No, I came with my uncle."

"You came with your uncle."

"My father's brother."

"Uh huh. Had your father's brother been here before?"

"He was here before a couple of years."

"And he came back?"

"Yes, in Roanoke, Virginia, and he came back to visit and he decided to bring me along with him."

"This is about 1910 then?"

"1907"

"1907, I see. Did your parents agree to this?"

"Oh yes, yes. Yes indeed and in fact we were very poor, you know, and we - the old Greeks those days back - they

were sending their sons to America where they can - "

"This was something that more than one family did?"

"That's right; everybody did it."

"Even though you were quite young?"

"Oh yes, I was quite young but that I could make some money, you know, and help to marry my sisters - "

"To get a dowry for your sisters?"

"Yes, yes, all that stuff, you know."

"How big was your family?"

"Oh, there were six of us."

"There were six."

"Four brothers, four boys and two girls."

"Did any other of your family come?"

"No, I was the oldest one at that time and I came first. And when I came here to New York, at that time, you know, we had to go through Ellis Island. They kept me over there for a month."

"They kept you on Ellis Island for a month?"

"For one month because my uncle, you know, I came with my uncle and he was supposed to; I was supposed to be his son and some how or another they got him mixed up, you know, and he told the truth that I was his nephew, not his son." (Laughter)

"For Heaven's Sake! And were you alone at thirteen on Ellis Island?"

"No, well, he was with me."

"Oh, he was with you."

"Because they was going to send him back at that time also, you know, because on account him saying - didn't tell the truth, you know, in Greece when we left. To find he was trying to put me through as his son which I wasn't. I was his

nephew."

"And they discovered this because he slipped up?"

"Yes, lucky though. He had a very good friend of his in Roanoke, Virginia, at that time. It was the mayor of Roanoke, Virginia. Sent telegram to Ellis Island and told them he would take care of us and to let us through."

"Oh, I see."

"You see? Through his - my uncle's friend."

"Had he not intervened would you have been sent back?"

"Oh yes, we would have been sent back. God knows what would have happened then."

"Were there many other aliens who were sent back?"

"Oh, quite a few."

"Do you remember for what reason?"

"No, I don't remember but for different reasons like that, you know. See because they were trying to get into this country any way that they could. Of course at Ellis Island some they wasn't healthy, you know."

"Yes."

"If they wasn't healthy, they'd go back. Any kind of different reasons they would be sent back. So I came to - "

"Let me ask you about the trip over. Did you sail from Patras?"

"From Patras, yes. It took us thirty days."

"It did take you thirty days in 1910?"

"1907"

"1907 - What was the name of the ship?"

"Panormia"

"Panormia. What does that mean?"

"Uh, it's the name of a ship, the company, some

kind of English company. I think it was. *Pandora* that was the name of it."

"What were conditions like aboard the boat?"

"Terrible!"

"Terrible?"

"Oh terrible. Oh, I remember very well. Terrible it was more of a freight-like -"

"It was more like a freighter?"

"Yes."

"You slept in large compartments?"

"Oh large compartments, yes. There was so many of us that slept all in one room, you know. All that sort of stuff. And we all eat in dining rooms. All those things and uh it was some time."

"Rough one."

"Very rough weather, too."

"Was it the winter that you sailed?"

"It was in March if I'm not mistaken. I think it was in March."

"So you arrived in New York in 1907 and through the Mayor of Roanoke -"

"Roanoke, Virginia."

"You managed to stay in the United States."

"To stay in the United States and uh we went over there and wash dishes in the restaurant there for a while, for a couple months or so and then I come to work as a waiter, you know."

"With whom did you stay all this time?"

"With my uncle."

"Did he have his wife here?"

"No, no, no, just himself.. He and I, we got a furnished room."

"Furnished room?"

"Furnished room but - "

"Not much furniture."

"There was hardly any furniture in there. And we had no way of eating anything. All we had in was bread and milk in the morning for breakfast. You know, loaf of bread and bottle of milk. We used to get that day. And then at lunch we'd eat something very light - very. Didn't have no money those days, you know. I was making about four dollars a week."

"Four dollars a week."

"Yeh, that's all. So after that I became to understand the language a little better, you know. Associate with other boys there, American boys I mean and I got along pretty good. I got, you know, very well; begin to say 'Good Morning' and 'How are you?'"

"What did you do with these American boys? Did you play sports with them?"

"Yes, we played sports with them. I remember we used to ride bicycles, all that stuff."

"And you found no difficulty in breaking into the American community?"

"Oh, it was very, very hard when we first came here."

"It was?"

"Oh yes, of course, there weren't many Greeks in those days."

"There weren't many?"

"No, in Roanoke there was only one family which - I think there were about a dozen Greeks all together in Roanoke,

Virginia, at that time. And then I worked in that restaurant in Roanoke till 1911. In 1911 I went to Baltimore. I stayed there till 1913. In 1913 I came to Wilmington."

"What did you do in Baltimore? Work in a restaurant?"

"I was work in a restaurant as a waiter. And an uncle of mine was in the kitchen - cook, you know."

"Did your uncle go with you to Baltimore?"

"No, this is another uncle."

"Another uncle?"

"This was my father's brother, one that came with me. But this other one was my mother's uncle - I mean my mother's brother and we went in business together here in 1913."

"And how old were you then?"

"Eighteen."

"Eighteen and by here you mean Wilmington.?"

"In Wilmington, yes, in 1913."

"You came here in 1913 at the age of eighteen you established a business?"

"Right! Right!"

"Where?"

"Sixth and Shipley"

"Sixth and Shipley"

"Yes, Eureka Lunchroom"

"It's still there."

"It's still there, yes, that's right it's still there. It's still there."

"And how long did you stay there?"

"Oh, we stayed there till 1916. In 1916 we opened - So this uncle of mine - George Pappas, his name was, my mother's brother. He and I - oh, we worked eighteen hours a day. He

would be in the kitchen and I'd be in front. That's all - nobody else. You know, just the two of us. We started with twelve dollars a day - that's how much business we take in.. We were doing, you know. Take in twelve dollars a day. Any how we got it up to about three hundred."

"A day?"

"A day, night - day and night open."

"Day and night?"

"1916-1917, you know. When we had Carney's Point making powder, duPont Company."

"That's what boosted your business?"

"That's what boosted business up, you see. That's when we did very well and then we opened the Presto Restaurant in 1916, 817 Market Street."

"Right here."

"Yes, right here. Fellow named Bacon used to have it. We bought him out. Cleaned it up, fixed it up. We spent about thirty thousand dollars at that time to remodel the Presto, you know.. And then we had another one - Wilmington Dining Room. We had the Eureka."

"Still had the Eureka?"

"Still had the Eureka and then we opened Wilmington Dining Room; it was about 1917. I think it was 1917."

"Where was that?"

"At 7--- , where Federal Baking Company, where the Federal Baking Company - "

"Between Seventh and Eighth?"

"Between Seventh and Eighth, yes. Federal Baking Company there now. Federal Bake Shop, rather."

"I know where you mean."

"I think that's the number. Then, little later we bought Pappas' restaurant on Fourth Street. Halt's used to be."

"Halts?"

"Halts Restaurant, yes. Remember?"

"Fourth and what?"

"Fourth and Market. Just right off the corner. Number two, I think it was, or number four."

"I know where you mean."

"It's a tap room now. Used to be hotel and restaurant. American fellow had it then, Halts. So we pay him five thousand dollars and we got it."

"How many restaurants did you have now?"

"Four restaurants; four restaurants."

"And what year was this?"

"From 1913 to 1919."

"In six years you had four restaurants?"

"Right!"

"All going?"

"All going."

"There was more than you and your--"

"Four restaurants, just me and my uncle. Me and my uncle. 1916-17, James Boines and his family they came and we sold the Eureka to them, you see in 1916 or 17."

"Oh, I see."

"Then Dr. Boines and all them, you know. They were working in there. But we sold it to them."

"Dr. Boines worked at this Eureka?"

"Oh yes, yes. I was the one who took him to school. Took him when he came from Washington.. You see how they came here. My uncle, the one who was in business with me, married his sister

James Boines' sister, you see."

"I see."

"That's how we - they were in Washington, D.C. So after my uncle married we brought the whole family here because we needed help, you know."

"I see."

"And we sold the Eureka credit, you know.. Like a pay in one year or so like that. They didn't have any money, you know."

"Sure."

"So I took Dr. Boines- he was a little fella, you know. And I said, 'You want to go to school and become something some day or you want to wash dishes?' Dr. Boines can tell you this today. Remember that! So he said, 'No, I want to go to school and I want to become some kind of a doctor or so on.' "

"About how old was he then?"

"He was - I forget now how old. Any how I took him to this Sixth Street school, old school was down there on Sixth Street. Was an old lady which I knew. She used to come to the Eureka then. So I took him down there and she took him. And I said, 'Take care of this boy,' I say, 'He wants to become something, you know, one of these. He doesn't want to be a dishwasher.' "

"Was this a private school?"

"No."

"No?"

"No - regular."

"But you knew the teacher?"

"I knew the teacher."

"From coming in the restaurant?"

"From coming in the restaurant."

"I see."

"Really, it was really interesting. So he started to, you know, and he went to school and he stuck it out."

"He certainly did."

"Oh yes, he worked hard. He worked at nights and he worked at lunch through the day times and he worked at nights sometimes. Then when he was going to college, he worked at nights at the Eureka. He came up very hard way."

"But he stuck it out."

"He stuck to it. That's right."

"Now let me ask you about this. Where did you live when you were managing these restaurants?"

"Well, when we managed these restaurants, we had a room on French Street. I think it was between Seventh and Eighth on French Street - rooming house."

"With Pete Metaxas?"

"I don't know."

"Was he there then. He said the same thing."

"Is that so? I don't know; I don't remember now."

"Were there a lot of Greek boys there?"

"No, no, just two of us, my uncle and me - furnished room."

"Oh, I meant in the area - were there a lot of Greek boys?"

"Weren't so many in 1914, you know. After he married 1916, then we moved to Sixth and Rodney, right on the corner where Dr. Boines had his office, you know, years back, you know, that was our home."

"That was your old home?"

"Yes, my uncle and mine. And we sold it to Boines."

"I see."

"You know, so 1919, you see, he decides to sell all the other restaurants and -"

"Your uncle?"

"Yeh, my uncle - and go back to Greece and live.. And he did. And I stayed at the Presto. I said, 'No! I'm not going to Greece. I'm here. I'm an American citizen and I'm going to stay here.' "

"When did you get your citizenship papers?"

"1919"

"1919?"

"Yeh, 1918 or 19."

"Did you have to pass a test?"

"Oh yeh, yeh. Oh, I had a tough time getting it, but I got it. (Laughter) I think maybe Judge Morris was then, you know, U.S. Judge at this Post Office here. Do you remember the old Post Office used to be?"

"No."

"No? Oh no, you're too young. (Laughter) So - and then we sold the other three restaurants and he went to Greece."

"And you were by yourself?"

"And I was here by myself. You see but I was all right then. I was able to go ahead with - by myself and I bought him out - bought his interest out and I stayed here."

"Did you have any time for recreation?"

"Not those days."

"No?"

"No, no, no."

"Was there any community life?"

"There wasn't any community life at all. No, no."

"Greek"

"No, later, later after 1920, I think, or 1919.

We had a school here.. We had a teacher, a Greek teacher and a Greek school.. That's all we had."

"No church?"

"No church, no."

"No priest?"

"No, no priest or nothing."

"Where did the Greeks go for services?"

"We used to go to Philadelphia or the church up there.

Oh, what was the name now? Oh, I forgot.. Anyhow that's where we all used to go. Then in '22 I got married and went to Roanoke and got a girl from there where I first came to this country.. That's where my wife's from - Roanoke, Virginia."

"Your wife's from Roanoke. And had you met her the first time you were in Roanoke?"

"Well, when I was in Roanoke the first time, it was the only family came to this country at that time. I think they came here in 1900 or 1904-they came to this country. Of course, I came to Roanoke in 1907."

"The family came to Roanoke in - when?"

"They came in 1904."

"1904 - the whole family?"

"The whole family."

"Mother, father and children - that is unusual."

"Yes, mother, father and children.. And I used to see them, you know. They had a little confectionary.. I used to go over there and see them. She was only little, you know, seven-eight years old, I guess, you know, my wife."

"Certainly."

"And I remember her and so sure enough 1922, I went back and - uh -"

"How did you get there? Did I hear something about hiring a car?"

"Oh yeh, I had a railroad car, two of them."

"You hired two railroad cars?"

"Two railroad cars. And going to Roanoke we went to Washington - Baltimore, Washington and then all the way down, you know, most all the Greeks that I knew I invited them all there. I guess we was about one thousand people there altogether in Roanoke at the wedding."

"At the wedding?"

"At the wedding, yeh. Great big hall. And I had, I don't know how many, from Wilmington."

"What did you do, pick up all the people as you went along and take them to your wedding?"

People as we go along. Of course I wrote to them. I knew about them from the -----, you know. I wrote them and told them and they all come along - you'd be surprised. A lot of them came from New York and a lot of them came from Baltimore; a lot of them from Washington; a lot of them from Wilmington. A lot of American friends, too. They were in the wedding, you know. They all glad to go down - free."(Laughter)

"Was this something done then - to hire a private car to go for a special affair?"

"It was something big, you know, something big! Very big affair. And everybody thought, I guess, that I was very rich, but I wasn't."

"You were young and happy."

"Young and happy - that's right. When my uncle went

to Greece 1919, then he sold his home then - Sixth and Rodney, you know, I went to the duPont Hotel and lived for about three years before I got married."

"Oh, I see."

"Oh yeh, I was living up there. I was paying ohe hundred dollars a month."

"One hundred dollars a month then?"

"A hundred a month then. Yeh, had a nice room and all the conveniences, you know. So but I was doing good business at the Presto, you see."

"Did you feel at that time - this was after the First World War - any anti-foreign feeling? Did you experience any of that?"

"Well, I didn't, but I know in a lot of cities they did.. Now for instance in Roanoke, I forget what year it was, they had a riot down there against the Greeks.. Oh yes!"

"Particularly against the Greeks?"

"Against the Greeks, yes.. They had to call the police and fire engines and so on to keep this mob. They were against them. I don't know why. I never did find out why it was. They were restaurants and they were dirty, you know. Run by old-time Greek people in this country years back and they didn't know any better, you know. And, I don't know, they was rough, I guess, to the customers. I don't remember just exactly now."

"But there was none of that here in Wilmington or you didn't experience it yourself?"

"No, no, no, I didn't experience nothing like that."

"Then you were married in 1920?"

"1922"

"'22 and you brought your wife from Roanoke?"

"Yeh, from Roanoke, yeh. And then I bought the house on Lovering Avenue and we lived there. Before I was married, you see, six months before - I bought that house."

"In preparation?"

"Yeh, so I left the hotel and went there and lived at the Lovering Avenue address."

"I see."

"And we lived there for thirty-three years, thirty-four years.. And just about, let's see, ten years ago -let's see, about ten - we moved up to Georgian Terrace where we're living now."

"I see. Mr. Tarabicos, you were instrumental in beginning the Greek community here?"

"Oh yes. Well, the reason I was because, as I say, we worked hard - long hours - and that's how we became successful because we worked hard, you know."

"You were accepted because people --"

"In business, you know. We worked twelve hours a day, fourteen hours a day. We didn't know what a day off was. And then I was from young age, I wanted to see the Greek people in Wilmington to have something that would remember the Greek way, like church and school and so on, you know, the Greek language and so on. And so that's how I got interested in more than anything else, the Greek affairs in Wilmington, Greek community. And that was - those days back in 1920-1929,30 - most of the Greek people that there were here - the old Greeks, John Gavotos, George Rigos, Nick Johns, they married American girls."

"Did they?"

"They married American girls - all of them. They

They didn't care nothing about having a Greek church because they went to Catholic church and they went to Episcopalian church. But other Greeks like me, you see, that were actually later in Wilmington and I was younger than them, you know.. Well, you didn't have no place to go or what church to go or anything else, you know what I mean. So that's why I was interested more than anything else because the first ones they came to Wilmington they married American girls."

"I didn't realize that - they didn't return to get brides?"

"No, no, they didn't - that's right. Now like Mike Johns, he married an Italian girl.. And oh, alot of Americans - Rigos, George Rigos; Mike Jones, John Govatos. Of course, John Govatos was the first one who came to Wilmington, you know. But anyhow, all those years - "

"Yes?"

"We didn't, the rest of the Greeks, didn't have no place to go or nothing.. So 1926 we started the Ahepa."

"The Greek organization?"

"The Greek organization."

"What does Ahepa mean?"

"Ahepa means - uh-"

"What does it stand for - or?"

"Yes, I know, I know.. American Hellenic -"

"It's an abbreviation in other words."

"Educational Progressive Association."

"Very good! Thank you. So you began that organization?"

"Began that organization. Was twenty-eight of us and I was the ----- . We began to work and have meetings, you know, and some place to go."

"Where did you meet?"

"We met in second floor between Seventh and Eighth on Market Street, the other side of the street. I've forgotten the number now, where Plaza Restaurant used to be, upstairs."

"Did you have community affairs there, too?"

"No, no, nothing but that. Then later we had the school."

"And where was that?"

"That was - on top the Presto Restaurant."

"Uh huh."

"My place, you know, second floor."

"Who was the school teacher?"

"Uh, fellow, I forgot his name now, but he was a man and he came from the other side. In fact he came from - one of those islands over there."

"But he had more education?"

"He had more education, you know."

"And school-teaching was his profession?"

"Wasn't profession but he had more than we did, you see.. And we know he could do very well. That's why we started to send the children to him to learn the Greek language, which he did very well. This fellow his name was Kokopandanis."

(Laughter)

"Did he shorten it?"

"Yes, one of those islands over there in Greece. I forget now; I think it was Rhodes."

"Rhodes?"

"Not Kephalaria where your father's from."

"No, in the Aegean."

"In the Aegean."

"I see. Well, you started a community by establishing this organization. Now how did you build up to getting property for a church?"

"Well, in 1939 the - we established the Ahepa -----, you know. Well, at that time the Greeks in this country they were helping to build Greek churches and Greek schools ----- the Ahepa, you know."

"So the general organization all over the country - "

"The general organization all over the country, see, started in Atlanta ----- and that was to better the Greeks, the Greek people coming in this country, you know, to make them naturalized. That's what the Ahepa stands for - to make them good American citizens."

"I see. That's the purpose."

"That's the purpose, yes. But then in the meantime we were working on to better ourselves in our - "

"Within your own community."

"Own community, yes, our own language."

"You had a dual purpose then - outside the community and inside the community."

"Yes.. So in 1939 - Well, then after '29, '30 we had a priest come here once in a while and we had services in different churches like Eighth and Shipley, you know."

"At different denominational churches, you held - ?"

"Eighth and Shipley, we were there seven, eight times, I believe. Then many times we were out at St. Johns, you know."

"The Episcopal church?"

"Episcopal church. We were more Episcopal instead of Catholic because the Episcopal was more with the Greek religion."

"It's a higher Protestant church."

"Yes."

"Did you find that you were accepted. That people understood the religion or they looked upon you as - "

"Oh yes, yes, yes they did; they did; they did!
Did you mean the Greek people or the - "

"No, the other people.. Did they understand what you were?"

"Oh yeh, yeh. I mean they wanted to see us get along and have religion and everything else."

"You had helping hands then, in other words."

"Oh yes, yes, everybody helped at that time. All the Greek people helped to build the church and do something, have a school and so on.. They all paid so much money to care of that. So 1939 we were up here on Ninth and Market on the third floor."

"Ninth and Market on the third floor."

"You don't remember that?"

"1939?"

"1939"

"I think I was christened there."

"Oh, there you are. We had two halls - one was for church; the other was the Ahepa Hall and then they called it. We had elections and they nominated me as the president for the community in 1939. So then I - "

"How long were you president of the community?"

"Seventeen years"

"Seventeen years!"

"Seventeen years."

"And in that time you saw - "

"Oh, I saw a lot of things happen in Wilmington.. In fact we bought this property from - well, in 1939 they wanted me to become president for the community.. And I said, 'All right, if you people all want to help me to do what I want to do, I'll take that; otherwise I don't want to have nothing to do with it.' So they all promised me they will. And so I got 'em a book to sign their name, you know."

"You put it in writing."

"I put it in writing and I had about sixty people, I remember, sixty of us, you know, that obtained that hall, you know. They all signed, men and women and - "

"The women were there?"

"They were there. Oh yes, they promised me. They promised they would help me. So then right away I got busy and I - uh - we were looking for a some place where you could build church, you know, schoolroom and - uh - John Govatos and I. It was this property on Broom Street, Eighth and Broom - now where we have the church - belonged to -uh- duPont, I forget now.. Let's see, one of them duPonts. Uh, his home - was William duPont - that's it, William duPont, William duPont. The property belonged to him and he died, of course, way back . He had a boy; his name was Victor duPont."

"Victor duPont?"

"So we went to see him and told him that we want to buy that property and build a church. And he said, 'Well, I have to think it over with my trustees and so on.' Because he was born there, you know, at his hime."

"Oh that property?"

"On that property."

"What happened to the house?"

"They took it out. They moved it out in the country some ways."

"They took the house?"

"They took the house, everything, and moved it out in the country."

"I didn't realize that. I always wondered what happened to the house."

"Yes, they did. He was born there."

"Because where we met was the garage."

"Well, that's it. But where the church is now, that's where the house was."

"Where the house was."

"Yes."

"But for how many years did the church convene in the garage?"

"Well, for about ten - oh, about - ten years, ten years. '39 to '49-'50, somewhere there - yeh, for about ten years. Then we, meantime we were trying to build the church, you know on Broom Street. We had church affairs in the garage, you know."

"Which was a large garage, really."

"Large, yes. Then we got these architects from Chicago, Greek fellows - Eugeni - they were brothers, you know. And they come in and gave us sketch how to build the church and so on. First though we had another sketch to build the church like a Catholic church - wasn't nothing like ours."

"Wasn't Byzantine architecture you decided on?"

"No, no, no, it was regular Catholic church so we had at that time, we had Messina and duPont architects. It cost us seven thousand dollars by dropping them."

"By dropping those architects?"

"Yes."

"You finally decided then to change the architecture to Byzantine and hire Greek architects?"

"Yes, that's right. The Eugene Brothers and then we had a drive to raise money and we did raise." We had the first drive to raise \$150,000.00 and we had a banquet, dinner, at the duPont Hotel and we had the Archbishop from New York and then we had some people to organize the drive from Chicago. They..."

"You hired professionals?"

"Oh, yeh."

"Oh, I see."

"Oh yeh, we had it very well organized by them and we did raise \$50,000.00 that night."

"One night you raised \$50,000.00, a third of your whole total."

"One night, yeh."

"From pledges?"

"From pledges, yeh."

"Is this when the men used to get up and pledge the money?"

"Yeh, that's right."

"I remember my father telling me about that."

"Yeh, that's it. All the Greek people bid plenty. You see, they were thirsty for something like that."

"To establish themselves as a community."

"To establish themselves as a community. Hey, Jack! -
(interruption)

"The people were thirsty then to establish a community life?"

"To establish a community life, you know.. That's it. Church, school, and different affairs, you know, like get-togethers, you know, dances - like how it used to be."

"You would hire halls prior to this?"

"Yeh, we did before, before we built our own on Broom Street. I mean the garage, you know."

"Did you find that Greeks stayed to themselves or they....?"

"Oh no, no!"

"No?"

"No, they didn't. No, theywell, the first ones did. They very first ones, you know, that they first come here. They were more ... but the rest as we went along; why it wasn't anything like that."

"You almost led a dual life then?"

"Oh yes, yes."

"In your business?"

"Oh, yes. At that time and of course, as I say, hard work, long hours, that's why we were successful."

"You, by in large, most of the Greek people in those years were successful."

"That's the only way. We didn't know the language, didn't have enough school, you know; but by working hard and long hours, why we got something that we really wanted."

"Did you ever return to Greece?"

"I did. I returned to Greece in 1930. From 1907 to 1930. I went over there and married my sister. You know years back you had to pay 'prika,' you know."

"A dowry?"

"Yeh, for instance if you're a girl you had to pay

so much money."

"To marry?"

"To marry."

"Yes."

"Yeh, I remember one time it was 150,000 drachmas, you know, Greek money. It was about five, six thousand dollars, you know, to marry my sister off in 1930 and then I stayed three months over there and I came back."

"Were your parents alive then?"

"Yes, my mother was. My father died in 1911 when I was in this country. But then 1950 I went back with my daughter."

"Second trip?"

"Second trip-1950-with my daughter and my wife and they enjoyed it very much. First time we'd been back, you know; it was very well (worth) while."

"But you never had any desire to return permanently?"

"Oh no, no, never!"

"Did you bring any other relatives over?"

"I did 19 uh 1940 no 1950 to '51. I must to bring fifty of them all together."

"Fifty?"

"Fifty in this country."

"And what was the year again?"

"1950 to 1951."

"'50 to '51."

"'51, yes."

"Within a space of a year you brought about fifty relatives?"

"Relatives and friends from the same place where I'm

from, you know, in Greece. That's Naupaktos."

"Did you have any difficulty doing this?"

"No, because I had ways, you know. At that time this country allowed so many to bring over here."

"About three-hundred eighty."

"Yeh, I think it was and I had to make ...get the what you call it: *Wabea* that's the ----- from the authorities here in Wilmington that I would give them jobs, I would give them place to stay."

"You had to promise all these things?"

"I had to promise all these things. Of course, at that time, you see, I had these two restaurants going and I had the Presto Restaurant and Kent Hotel which I bought from Jim Boines, the Kent Hotel - 1944. So I needed a lot of Greek help to run these two restaurants. I had.....well, at one time I had one hundred twenty people working for me, you know."

"For Heavens Sake!"

"Oh yes, these two restaurants."

"Just the two restaurants here on Market Street?"

"Because the Presto was opened twenty-four hours, you see, and"

"And, of course, this (Kent) is a hotel too. You ran a hotel, too."

"A hotel, a restaurant, and cocktail lounge, and so on. And as I say, at that time, I need a lot of help and I got all of them. They're all in business today. They come over here and they pay me, you know. I paid their fares to bring them over. Bring them down here to the Presto; broke them in there for three, four months, six months, a year. So much they can. Then they leave. They go different places in the country where they had

relatives, friends, you know, like Detroit - lot of them; Cleveland, Ohio - there's a lot of them; Chicago - there's a lot of them; Baltimore - a lot of them; which I brought."

"You brought them here and nursed them and then set them on their wings."

"Yeh, yeh, but they did very well for themselves, did very well. You see at that time, you know, it was right after the Greek war - when they had the Greek, when the Greek war, we had big war in 1944, you know."

"Uh huh, yes."

"Well then, Greece was very poor and they had the problem in Greece, you know, with the, with those guerillas, you know."

"This is after World War II."

"Yes, that's right and then Greece was very poor and everyone wanted to leave Greece and come to this country."

"But they still had that immigration restriction."

"Yes, yes, it was hard, hard. If you promised them a job and place to stay, they would let you bring them. I had to get a permit from here."

"That was during Roosevelt's administration still then? That wasn't during Truman's, was it?"

"No, during Truman's."

"During Truman's, and he is known as a friend of Greece, is he not?"

"Very much, that's right, that's right. You know they built his statue in Athens."

"Yes?"

"Yes."

"Did you ever have any inter-action with politicians

or...ah?"

"Well yes, yes we did. I did, I mean. And most all the Greek people here they did also. We were mixed up in politics.... but more Republicans, you know."

"With Governor Boggs, who's also known as a friend of the Greeks."

"Governor Boggs, yes, Governor McMullen."

"Uh huh."

"At that time he was. And especially Governor Boggs. At that time he was Philhellen. Do you know what I mean by that? Lover of the Greeks."

"Yes, the 'philo' of the Greeks."

"Yes, that's it and he was very good."

"He attended many of our affairs."

"Many, many affairs - many. And as I say, all the Greeks liked him, liked him very much. And well, when we had that first drive, as I say, we had the Archbishop, you know, which now - from New York we got him - Athanagoras. You remember him, tall fellow."

"Yes, I do."

"Now he's Patriarch, you know, in Constantinople. So he knew us in Wilmington very well because I brought him here when I was president of the community so many times, you know. And I had him home, you know, for dinners and so on. And 1950 my daughter went to Constantinople and see him over there."

"For Heavens Sake!"

"And you know, he recognized her right away."

"Right away?"

"Right away he recognized her. Oh, he's brilliant this Athanagoras. He's Patriarch now, you know."

"Yes, he's the one who has met with the Pope."

"That's it. That's him. And Stella, you know my daughter, well, he got her to get up, you know; to speak, you know, in Greek, which she did very well; and dance the Greek dances and so on. You know where they had the -----, you know, for them because it was 1950 for this Ahepa convention that we all went to Greece, you see. A lot of them from this country went to Greece, 1950."

"Yes, I remember the circulars."

"Yes, that's it. So that's about all I know. I don't know"

"Did you ever have any war service? Were you ever called to the army?"

"No, no, but I did help a lot with the Greek War Relief."

"Involved in those drives."

"Involved in those drives. I was the, one of the (ones), to raise money in Wilmington. I was head of this committee that we had from the Ahepa in order to raise money for the Greek War Relief at that time. And I did raise so many thousand dollars and a lot of clothes we sent."

"I remember packing those trunks, yes."

"Yes, that's right."

"Did you ever attempt to obtain documents from Greece, birth certificates, or any official certification of your birth?"

"Yes, I had to do that in 1919 when I got my uh citizen Greek papers."

"Did you have any difficulty?"

"Oh yes, yes I did because they didn't know the age

and they didn't know where I was born and all this other stuff.
Finally got it."

"You did get them?"

"Yes, finally."

"Do you celebrate a birthday or a name's day?"

"Oh yeh, we have birthdays, name's day - name's
day more than birthday."

"So do you really know your date of birth?"

"Oh yes, yes."

"Oh, you do know that. Many Greeks don't. They
just know that -"

"I know, but I do."

"You did get those documents."

"I got those documents, yes."

"Did you know that before?"

"No, I didn't know that before but all I know is
name's day, ."

"Yes?"

"You know like Constantine, my - Charlie."

"Speaking of names, what does your name mean? Does
it have a Greek translation?"

"Well, Constantinos..."

"No, I mean Tarabicos."

"Tarabicos, no, I really don't know what its
meaning. For generation, I guess, like that."

"But it has no clear definition?"

"No."

"In the town where you lived in Greece, were there
many Tarabicos people?"

"Well, uh, not many - relatives like brothers and
cousins, so many - "

"But it wasn't a clan that settled in that town?"

"No, no, nothing like that."

"Going back to those early days in Greece, had you traveled in Greece? Of course, you were so young."

"Oh no, I didn't."

"You had never seen a big city before?"

"Well, I seen.....well the only big city I saw was Patras."

"When you left."

"Yes."

"Then you came over here and were thrown into New York and Baltimore and all these big cities."

"That's right. That's right."

"What's the most difficult phase of your naturalization: learning the language, the custom?"

"Well, learning the language more than anything else."

"Did you do this by any special means or just by word of mouth and listening?"

"Well, word of mouth and being in business."

"By necessity."

"It's necessity and another thing is you learn a lot when you are in business."

"Uh huh."

"You know what I mean. You learn the language ----. I didn't know how to write at all neither. Now I can write."

"You taught yourself to write?"

"Oh yes."

"You never had any schooling?"

"No, never had any schooling but I taught myself to write. That's right."

"Amazing! Can you think of anything - any story that comes to your mind now that you used to tell your children or....."

"Oh, well I"

"Were you ever discriminated against for being foreign, you, yourself?"

"No, no, never!"

"Never remember any?"

"No."

"Ever had an advantage for being Greek?"

"No, I don't ... no."

"Not any special occasion?"

"No special occasion. The only thing is, I think, is because we came to this country to make good and make money."

"You came for purely economic reasons?"

"Purely economic asset really. I think most all the Greeks they came over here and they say well they go to America and make five thousand dollars and go back to Greece. But they all been here. They stayed here. None of them went back to Greece and they've been here for years and years. You know what I mean? They had that first idea, though. Come here, make five thousand dollars, and go back because five thousand dollars was a lot of money in Greece those days, you know. But they make the five thousand dollars, and then we want to make more and more, and they stayed here in business and make more."

"And it became their country?"

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

"I see. Well, thank you very much."

"Oh, you're welcome, honey."