Eugenia Abravenel

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Interviewer: Valia Kravva
Date of the interview: November 2005

My family name is Koumarianou. My paternal grandfather was called Kleanthis Koumarianos and he was born on the island of Andros, even though he lived with his wife in Constantinople [today Istanbul, Turkey] where he had eight children. My father too was born in Constantinople. My grandfather was a shareholder in the shipping line Aegaio. Because this was his profession, he traveled a lot through the Aegean to the Black Sea and Russia.

Grandfather Kleanthis died in Constantinople, having injured his spinal cord after falling in the hold of the ship that was left open. I only knew him when I saw his picture on his coffin. He was a strange man. Afterwards, earlier than 1910, when I was born, my mother together with my uncles came to Athens. So I don't remember my grandfather at all.

My paternal grandmother, Matroni Alexandrovna or Alexandrevna, met my grandfather Kleanthis in Russia. Her nickname was Mokia and she was Russian-born, from Nikolaev, near Odessa [today Ukraine]. I don't remember a great deal because at the time children didn't ask a lot of details. My grandmother became an orphan at a very young age. She didn't know her father, who had died when her mother was pregnant, and she had an older brother. Her brother studied in a school in Odessa.

One time, just before Easter, her mother, my great-grandmother, rented with a friend a carriage that would take them to Nikolaev, near the Black Sea. They were attacked, and both of them were killed by bandits, who tried to steal their money and jewelry. So my grandmother became an orphan at the age of three.

Many years went by and the brigands were not caught, but later on they identified one of them by an ornate bottle he had which belonged to my grandfather. It was too late though because my grandmother left a complete orphan grew up among very religious families. She had a difficult childhood.

When my grandmother was sixteen she met my grandfather and they got married. I remember my grandmother from a portrait I have of her, with a big hat with feathers, European style.

My maternal grandfather was called Dimitris Papadopoulos and was from Gallipoli in Thrace [today Turkey]. He was an Ottoman subject, and except Greek he knew Turkish and French and was appointed as an employee in a company named 'Agents des Phares,' responsible for the lighting of the lighthouses on the islands of the Aegean. Later on, in 1922, the islands of the Aegean became Greek. Originally, this was a private company, or maybe half-private.

My grandfather was responsible for the islands of Lesbos, Lemnos and Aghios Efstratios and had to supervise the lighting of the Lighthouse on these islands. When a big ship reached one of the ports it had to pay certain dues, now paid to the Port Authorities. In Mytilene [today capital of Lesbos Island] my grandfather had three Turkish associates. They each had one lighthouse and were responsible for its lighting and maintenance. These three were Turks but spoke Greek, even though my grandfather spoke Turkish perfectly, since Gallipoli when he was born there, was Turkish.

Grandfather Dimitris was doing very well financially. I remember that every month he came from the Ottoman Bank with a sealed and seamless purse. This purse had forty pieces in it, but I don't remember if these were gold Sterling or some other coins. He would take a small Swiss knife out of his vest and cut open the string of the purse and empty its content in a bowl. I still remember the sound of the coins falling in it and him watching them fall.

His wife was also from Gallipoli, was called Eugenia Pandermali or Pandermanli. The grandfather and grandmother on my mother's side I remember very well because they lived with us in Athens where we stayed for many years before I went to school. Later on I remember them in Mytilene where my grandfather built a small house. Actually they both died in Mytilene, Grandfather Dimitris in 1926 and Grandmother Eugenia a few years after her husband.

When my father was born in Constantinople around 1880, Greece was at war with Turkey. Like many other young Greeks, my father Christoforos went to the Greek consulate in Constantinople and volunteered to fight on the side of Greece. My father hadn't told anyone at home that he was going to war. His mother was crying while preparing his clothes and asked him, 'What do you need them for, my son, where are you going to go?' He finally went and fought, and had a very difficult time. He left behind a diary for the days of 1897 1.

The war ended with the defeat of the Greeks and because he could not return to Constantinople, he went to Egypt where one of his brothers, who was a pharmacist, lived. The war of 1897 became known as 'the unlucky war.' While my father was a soldier he kept a diary, and everyone knew him as 'pen pusher.' Except for Greek my father also knew Arabic and French perfectly. My father was a quiet and gentle man.

As for his brothers, my uncle Stamatelos [Stamatis] went and settled in Abyssinia [today Ethiopia] where he married and Ethiopian. He was a carpenter and woodcarver in the palace of Haile Selassie [(1892-1975): Emperor of Ethiopia]. Once, I remember, a young man came and told us he was the son of Stamatelos Koumarianos. He was, of course, dark skinned but spoke Greek well. He brought us some presents made of ivory and after he left we never saw him again.

Giorgos Manoussos, the husband of my aunt Efrossyni, was an important Salonican architect. Two of his household buildings made of red brick still exist in the Analipsi area. They belonged to his sister Dorothea and reached the sea. Aunt Dorina had adopted the illegitimate daughter of King Alexander of Serbia. He had an affair with a French artist, who lived here, but they had difficulties meeting each other. One of those two houses built by Uncle Giorgos became their meeting place. Every evening a car brought him and then left. The little girl we named Bebeka and her father gave her as a present a big plot of land at the corner of Petros Syndika and Queen Olga Street, where Uncle Giorgos had built a beautiful house.

Aunt Dorothea had married Patroklos Antoniades, a civil engineer, who had a brother named Sophocles. Uncle Sophocles was a calligrapher and a sketch artist, initially with newspapers and later on in the Ministry of Naval Affairs, where diplomas were awarded. They also had a sister, Maria, who married in Germany.

Their father was called Telemachos and was a medical doctor in the harem of Abdul Hamid [(1842-1918): 34th sultan of the Ottoman Empire]. He lived in an apartment for free, in 'Katrian,' a famous hotel in Constantinople. Everything was paid for him by the sultan and he had a carriage with two horses, but he was very wasteful.

My mother, Stella Koumarianou, was born in Mytilene in 1890. My father and mother met in Mytilene. My grandfather's brother was the family doctor of my mother's family. There was ten years of age difference between the two of them. My mother was then very young, and when she turned 18, my uncle Nikolaos had them engaged without asking them. My mother, who was very shy, protested, 'What does Christoforos look like? I don't know him.' Once, when they seated together, my father's gun fell down – he had a gun since he had been in Egypt where everybody carried a gun – and my mother was very upset when the gun was dropped.

My uncle Notis, my mother's brother knew German and Italian. He had worked with a German called Richard Raibel. He had visited us in Mytilene with his wife. He was an admirer of Ancient Greek and knew Homer by heart. Uncle Notis represented many companies such as Michelin tires and Iris chocolates. The ION chocolates didn't exist yet. Later on, Notis married Christina Klonaridou.

My parents were an endearing couple and I don't remember my father even looking at my mother in a strict way. Couples were different at the time. Family members loved each other. Nowadays one hears things... Especially when we were young, we didn't know what 'No' or 'Don't' meant. My mother, on the other hand, was a mother to all the children in the neighborhood. She read fairytales to them, sang songs and advised them.

My father died six months after my mother, on 16th February 1960. Six months less nine days; he almost committed suicide. They were such a loving couple, a rare case. I mourned for both of them. They were very good parents, and had great understanding for their children. But I never cried as much as when I read my father's diary, which he wrote for my mother, I was really sobbing. How much did he love her, how much did he suffer when his wife died, his companion in life, his angel in life.

The truth is that whenever he went out in the garden he would bring her something, some small flower, a little mint. The way he loved her, and how he wanted to kill himself when she died, but he thought of the children... How they would suffer.

Every day he would go to the cemetery. The women he met there said, 'We have seen many men love their wives but none as much as Mr. Christoforos...' And in his diary he wrote how he liked it when everybody left the cemetery, and in the quiet he could hear the birds sing for his beautiful Stella.

I never saw them looking at each other with disrespect. And that's why I thought that all couples are like them. Now, the things I hear... I think how we lived then and how it is now, how are the

young children going to live...?!

I was born in 1910 in Egypt, in Cairo, and lived there until I was three years old. In the house we had branches of bananas and dates spread out on the floor. I remember it was a two-story house and on the top floor was my father's office. I remember only the house, how one climbed up a curved staircase, the rooms. We also had a maid, Eleni, who came as my mother's 'dowry.' She spoke enough Greek to be able to communicate. We ate at a rectangle table and there was a couch with a cover, and in the corner stood my mother's piano.

In Egypt, my father wrote for a Greek magazine called 'Cosmos.' He was in charge of cotton fields there, but my mother couldn't stand the climate and we had to leave for Athens.

After Egypt we stayed in Athens for a while. I remember that my dad had brought from Germany balloons with a picture of Venizelos 2 on them. He had especially ordered them. He would fill them with gas and give them to us when the maid took us to Zapeion to give away to the other children as well.

We took the piano with us when we went to Athens but it got ruined when the storage room we kept it in was flooded, and all our things were ruined by mould. So the only thing that was left were the notes. These were inherited by my niece, but the piano's loss was my mother's regret.

In 1914, during World War I, my father had come to Salonica to visit his siblings and to supervise his business, and my mom with my brother went to Mytilene for the summer vacation. Suddenly a blockade took place because of the war and communication with the islands and the inland was broken. I was already in Mytilene, having been invited by my grandmother Eugenia, who loved me very much, and my uncle from Athens had taken me to her.

So we were on the island at the outbreak of the war, and because of the blockade only a small boat named 'Yperohi' reached the island. Our house was the only one at the port, there were no other houses around us. Just coffee houses, hotels and oil cellars.

I remember once – I must have been four or five years old – I decided to put a small rug on the balcony and lie down. I woke up because of the bombing and I saw a Turk who was wearing a fez 3 approach the boat and throwing the bomb inside the boat. I was so scared that I immediately disappeared.

While in Mytilene my mother couldn't get in touch with my father and the letters would come only every fortnight. Once, my mother Stella received a letter from my father saying that the next time the boat would come he would send a kilo of provisions that were not available in Mytilene.

My mother was wondering how come my father could send such a package, and the man in the post office, Tassos Skourtelis, told her that her husband was just joking. My mother was disappointed but one day we saw Tassos running and shouting, 'A package, you've got a package, Christoforos is coming home.' When we opened it, it was like Pandora's box: there were biscuits, matches, some coffee, sugar, rice – things that didn't exist on the island.

The house in Mytilene was built by my grandfather Dimitris, when he was still a young man. The port didn't exist yet. The plot of land he had bought was just sand. Later on they decided to make there the municipal garden, and when they put the cement our house became shorter. Our

windows were 80 cm high from the road. It was a plain two-story house, and had four rooms on the top floor, three on the ground floor, a cellar and a wash room, a kitchen and a toilet. We also had a flower and tree garden, as well as a vegetable one.

I stayed in Mytilene from the age of four until 1928. On 2nd September we left and on the 4th we reached Salonica. And since then I've never returned to the beautiful Mytilene. Ah, it was really beautiful on the island. I lie down in bed and I remember my unforgettable childhood there. We went to the countryside, jumped in the sea, went to the watermelon fields, put tobacco leaves on sticks. Five six summers in the island and they were the nicest summers of my life. An iron door separated us from my grandfather's offices.

My brother Kleanthis was born in Mytilene in October 1911. He was fourteen months younger than me, and always a victim because he followed me faithfully in all my mischief. He graduated from the 12-grade school, the lyceum, and was trained as an accountant for a year in Salonica. During World War II he worked in the Telegraph Company. He got married twice. From his first marriage he had Elvina, with whom I am very close and she is living in Athens, from the second marriage he had Christoforos.

I remember the school I went to in Mytilene, and two or three of my mother's friends. We went together to parties, and we had a gramophone at home and listened to music. My mother and my uncle Notis had graduated from the French school. I remember that the kindergarten I went to on the island was in a private house, and a lady assembled a few children and taught them some Greek.

In elementary school we did not have fire. I remember she used to take my cloak to get warm and I was very proud she wore mine. In Mytilene there were only nine grades for girls. There was no need for them to learn more. But for the boys there were 12 grades.

When I graduated from the girl's school, my mother wanted to send me to the gymnasium [high school] but to our misfortune the high school dean, Ioanis Olymbios, told my mother, 'Are you crazy, Stella? Why do you want to send the girl there? What does she need more education for? We have two girls all in all and we do not know where to fit more. Never mind the fact that they continuously look at the boys. Girls don't need high school education, Stella.' As a result I only went to school for nine years.

We had three maids, Eleni, Katina and Yannoula. I taught Yannoula to read and write. And so she could write love letters to a sailor whom later on she married in Salonica.

My brother Kleanthis and I liked photography very much. We were young but devils. We did our own developing and printing and had our own studio. Our camera was square like a box, either Agfa or Kodak. When we came to Salonica we took a Kodak. We used to buy from Athens a special paper called zivaert. We had a dark room and melted the liquids, spread out the pictures on the lining with pins to dry. We photographed everything, scenery, and faces.

I remember when I was small in Mytilene they would illuminate a small electric lamp in the street. I remember that the whole island gathered to see it and how they cheered when they saw it. A small lamp the size of a candle and it impressed us tremendously.

During Pangalos's dictatorship 4 I was a student in Mytilene. They had us wear skirts, I remember, down to our ankle. If the parents had money they made clothes for their children, and if not they were outlaws just because they were poor. This didn't happen only to the schoolchildren but also to women. I had taken a picture with my classmates in their school uniform down to the ankle. Title: 'The sad schoolgirls.'

On the island we had dolls and played pantomime. Personally, I didn't like dolls very much. My poor godfather had brought me a big porcelain doll from Germany. She could open and close her glass eyes and move her hands. She would be kept in her box under the bed and she would only come out when my friends came. They were crazy about the doll but I preferred playing in the garden. I doubt I played with her more than once. The children of our family friends came.

During the catastrophe of Smyrna in 1922 5 I was twelve years old. We were in Mytilene then and were spending the summer vacation with Mother who had gone to the sea for swimming. Our father came with a two horse carriage and took us back speedily, and he was very worried. He says to us, 'Come quickly because they will put the house under requisition and we will be left out.' So we arrived and the coachman descended from the carriage to direct the horses on foot in Mytilene where there was such a crowd that he didn't have a choice. A crowd of people, all of them falling down.

We arrived at home and the place was full of people. Upstairs, downstairs. They had left us three rooms. We were better off and I remember we washed a big tank where we used to wash our laundry and cooked beans in it, and chick peas and vegetables to give to the people. I remember one could no longer see flowers or vegetables, but only people lying down. I remember one evening I was looking out and saw that the bay was full of people lying down, I cannot forget that scene.

My grandfather had a lot of money. We did all we could to help. But these people had come with nothing. Boats arrived continuously to unload crowds and crowds of people with only a bundle of clothes. One had lost his mother, someone else his father. What can I tell you, it was terrible. There were so many people. Later on they moved them to some neighborhood.

In 1928, when we came to Salonica, we couldn't find a house to stay, so in the beginning we stayed with my grandmother. She lived at the corner of Chalkidikis and Gravias Street. After a while we found a house on Kretis Street. My mother went to see it with my aunt Efi. Even though at first it seemed very old to us, we stayed there temporarily, and rented it for six months. We finally stayed there for 20 years.

It was a warm house, had upholstery and rubber floors and was long like a railway. First there was my room, after that the living room with a staircase that led downstairs, and then two more rooms, my mother's and my brother's. It was a two-story house, even though the downstairs part was used as a cellar. It had a very big kitchen like two rooms. Next to that the bathroom, a small storage room and a toilet. It seems they built it room after room. It also had a garden and a vegetable garden of 640 square meters. My father liked to take care of it and worked there often. We also were great animal lovers. We always kept pets, mostly cats. This area was called Exohes or Countryside.

Due to the fire that consumed Salonica's center in 1917 6, my father's restaurant and the cellar, where he kept provisions, burned. The room he rented in the old city didn't burn, but the restaurant that stood by the seaside of the city did and with it all the goods that were kept there. As a result he had to start all over again. Here in Salonica he became the manager for the concentration of wheat in Langada and in Zaglivery. We didn't ask him how much he made but we never lacked food. We didn't ask too many things. In Mytilene, of course, we had three maids while here my mother was doing the cooking herself.

Before World War II, we had a gramophone in our house in Salonica. It was made by 'His Master Voice,' you know that label with the little dog listening to a gramophone. My father had brought it from Egypt. He had very nice records, many operas. Oh, beautiful things. And later everything was lost. The first nice record we bought was 'Ramona.' We, the children, wanted modern records because we were young, but my father didn't want such records. And we had fights. I remember one day I took him to a small street to buy 'Ramona,' but the shop had only one record and that one was damaged. So even though it was damaged we bought it and listened to it with great joy.

My father had a couple of records with Venizelos's voice: 'I can assure you that today's crisis...' . I remember that he had brought them from London. My father also listened to these records on the gramophone he had brought from Cairo. Otherwise we didn't get involved with politics. At home there was no talk about politics, and Father didn't go to coffee shops. He was a house cat. Maybe he discussed these matters with his friends. He read the newspaper 'Makedonia' 7 and Louvaris's 'Fos.' He was one of our acquaintances and a royalist.

When we settled in Thessaloniki it was during September, the time of the International Fair 8, which must have started the year before, in 1927. In September 1928 we visited the fair, but most of all we visited the AGFA stand and examined the cameras. However, at another stand they convinced us to buy the KODAK model of the year. It came with a tripod so we could use delayed action shutter release and run and be in the picture as well. My brother Kleanthis created a dark room at home.

On the same day we moved, by mere but favorable coincidence, across us moved the family of Albertos Abravanel, who later became my brother-in-law. They were very sociable, outgoing and open hearted. I was then a young girl of 18. My mother started talking with Alberto and invited him to come and visit us. She was very outgoing too.

The Abravanel family had eight children: Rafael, Alberto, Paul, Ino, Isidore, Mari Modiano, Leon and Solomon. We would see Alberto every day; either we met while shopping from mobile donkey merchants, or when we bought ice. He would always ask my mother why I didn't go to their Saturday surprise parties, which they organized in their home together with his brothers. I was very timid. My mother had to push me to go, even though I was 18 and in my heart I wished to go. I could see them on the top floor of their house dancing, playing the piano etc.

Carnival season [orthodox] was at hand, and I remember I disguised myself and wore a clown's mask and went to their house. This is where we met. We all went to some dancing hall to have fun. At that time people used to stroll from one hall to the next, the notion of 'reservation' didn't exist. The most popular dances were Charleston and foxtrot. This is how we met Leo and Ino. They knew Zermain, Alberto's daughter, and her girlfriends and even though they too were disguised the boys could identify them. But not me since they didn't know me. Throughout the night they tried and

tried to identify me. I was the new face in their company.

Alberto had dressed as a medical doctor. He wore a Republican hat and held a box with his medical tools, which contained chocolates in reality. I remember that after the ball was finished we entered a tramway wagon and he was fooling around, wanted to check the pulse of the passengers, telling them what was the disease they suffered from. To cure them he would give them a small chocolate. Some people laughed and took it as a joke, others were a bit afraid.

Leo's family was not very religious, maybe only his father and his brother Isidor was. They read the Bible [Old Testament] and went to the synagogue. My father-in-law had built a small synagogue at the end of Mitropoleos Street and Pavlou Mela. He was a religious man, my husband was not, though he was a believer. Leo was a fanatic Jew, but not a fanatic believer. Neither were the rest of his siblings. The older one, Raphael – the only one I didn't meet – had gone to Spain during Franco's regime and he was killed there; I suppose because he hid priests, rabbis.

My mother wasn't very religious, but she believed. In the meantime the love affair with Leo had grown, and when one of my mother's friends informed her, you won't believe what she said to me, 'We know the family. Leo is a very nice man and often comes to our house. If you want to live with this man, we cannot tell you no. You decide.' Neither did my father or brother say anything. I don't know if you can believe it, nothing. We were from a different planet.

I remember another young neighbor in Thessaloniki, Erricos, who would calm down only near my mother. I remember that when Thessaloniki was bombarded by the Italians 9, the neighbors joked that it was Erricos's doing. He was a very naughty child, and then my mother said, 'Erricos would never do such a thing since Grandmother Stella lives here.'

Leo and I loved each other and had a very good time together. We didn't think of what could happen in the future. We had a very nice company of friends and we had great fun when we met. He [Leo] would come to my house, my parents knew him, even though they didn't at first know we had an affair. Maybe they did think something was going on, but my father and my brother never made a comment.

When my mother learned we had an affair she said, 'My child, we know Leo and he is a very nice chap. It is you who is going to live with him, and we won't interfere to tell you either yes or no. You are to decide. We do not care if he were a Jew and you a Christian. You will live with him.' Neither did I hear my other relatives, uncles, grandparents say something. Only the landlady of our house said "Good, one more will become Christian". But my mother did not speak, she laughed and did not speak, because the landlady was a nice woman and meant well.

My husband's family descended from Spain. In fact my father-in-law's name is registered in a book in the synagogue of Toledo. I saw it with my own eyes when I visited Toledo with my niece several years ago. I entered a hall with mosaics and there was a bookstand with the name Jacques Abravanel. It was in Latin characters. I always had paper and pen with me so I could make notes on whatever I saw and be able to read them later in my old age. So I copied part of this text. During the reign of Isabella, the Catholic, one of my father-in-law's ancestors, was Minister of Finance. So upon my return I asked Mari to go to Spain and find this synagogue.

My husband's family would speak Spanish very rarely – especially Isidor's wife – they would speak in Greek between them. They never spoke in Spanish in order to keep something a secret from me. And Leo had learned to write in Greek very well. His father had sent him and his younger brother to study in Switzerland and they stayed there for many years. When they returned to Greece, they had forgotten their Greek.

When they disembarked from the boat in Patras they went to a restaurant and couldn't read the menu. They wanted eggs. So at first they spoke to the waiter in literate Greek asking for 'oa' [almost ancient] and he didn't understand them. And then they started moving their hands like wings while making chicken sounds.

During the occupation my mother undertook to teach Leo Greek. Sometimes Leo spoke with his parents in Spanish. Mari chose to speak Greek properly, she used to speak with a French accent. She sang operas very nicely.

The '151' 10, 'Baron de Hirsch' and 'Campbell' were Jewish neighborhoods. Poor neighborhoods, very needy people. I never went there, I only heard about them, especially '151,' which was on Aghia Triada Street; I remember the girls that came from there and were my clients. They would come on Saturday when they received their weekly salary and would buy cosmetics, their face cream and their eau de cologne.

The rich neighborhoods were situated beyond Markou Botsari Street, and area which was known as 'countryside' – Exohes in Greek. Many of the houses there were Jewish. We then considered this area as out of town, and it would reach up to the Votsi area.

I remember that when we came from Mytilene, we could buy a house in Votsi quarter with the money we had, but it seemed very far away to us. I remember that I had gone only once to the Old City to a visit my sister-in-law Mari, who had an aunt there. One could only go there on foot because there was no tram connection. The tram would only reach Depo, even before one gets to the municipality building. There was also a line that would go through 25is Martiou [25th March Street] Harilaou, and Vassilissis Olgas.

Most of the time, even up to the age of 20, we went by climbing the back of the tram 'Scala Maria' and traveled without paying. Why should we pay [the interviewee chuckles]. Until the ticket collector reached us, we would climb out on the stairs and hold on to the door knob. Then we would let go and jump down on the ground, and run to greet him. Follies, many follies. We played 'cherki,' 'snail' [something like hopscotch with stones] and 'pendovolo' [with five stones].

I remember the seaside road reached all the way up to Antheon Street, back then it was called Georgiou Papandreou. Whatever construction waste was there would be thrown away to the shore. I remember we intended to buy a plot of land on Gravias Street, which was then a ship courtyard. Back then, if one wanted to take a walk by the seaside the only way was towards Nikis Avenue. All the brothels were in the Vardari area, and so were the whole sellers. It wasn't a well reputed area. In what is today the Ladadika there were also wholesale commercial houses.

There were refugee neighborhoods in Constandinopolitika, beyond Harilaou. I was never there. The 3E 11 set the Campbell neighborhood on fire 12. It was a nationalist organization. I remember that people were very upset after that. Thessaloniki had so many Jewish schools as well as synagogues.

They were all destroyed during the German occupation. The people would travel by tram; there were very few cars until the war. My family didn't own a car. Leo bought one only after the war.

The Jewish cemetery 13 was where the university is today. The Germans ruined all the graves. I used to have a nice picture of my mother-in-law's grave. A nice marble grave and all around it the children and their brides standing at the grave, looking sad. I think I gave this picture to Nelly Sephiha as a gift.

Famous ballrooms at this time were the 'Olympus Naussa' by the seaside and 'Remvi' out of town. We went there with Leo. We could sit outside in the summer. There was music and we used to dance. The two of us went to 'Remvi' in the beginning. Afterwards the company grew. I remember that in 'Flokaki' there were performances by Domenico de Thomas. He was an Italian and we went to listen to him.

Other ballrooms were the 'Luxembourg' and the 'Phare' near the Allatini flower mill. They served delicious fried muscles; I've never eaten any quite as tasty anywhere since. In 'Luxembourg' we danced foxtrot, tango and Charleston. Leo was an excellent dancer, and so was Solon Sevi. Ah the poor one, he was lost for no reason.

I remember the lighters [type of boat] carrying wheat at the Allatini mills 14. We would get on the boat and take a ride from Koromila Street to the Mills. There we would jump in the sea, swim and climb up the lighters and dance there. Oh what follies we would do there. There the wheat was grounded and the flour was given to the bakeries.

I cannot say there were no differences between Christians and Jews before the war. There are always differences. Rumors had it, even in Mytilene, that during Easter a Christian boy would be missed, that the Jews slaughtered him and prepared matzot with his blood. I've heard of that rumor. I believe that someone who was mad at a Jew spread this rumor. Besides, an evil rumor is spread instantly, but never a good one. Luckily this rumor has disappeared now.

I remember that when we were in Athens and the maid took me out on the balcony, she pointed at a field, where there was a wall and a man with a bag on his shoulder. The maid told me then, 'Be careful, if you are not a good kid, the Jew will put you in his sack and into a barrel with nails and will roll you over and drink your blood.' I remember I was very scared and cowered in a corner and didn't make any trouble. This is what I remember; I was very young then, maybe four years old.

With Leo and his friends, we went on many excursions. We had a big company. My brother and some of his friends had bought a big sailing boat. We went everywhere in the summer. We went to this beach towards Koromila innumerable times and knew it by heart. I was an excellent swimmer, I even competed with boys and won. I also ran fast.

Peraia wasn't known then, we showed it to the world. It is not a lie; our company used to rent a boat, some 45 people shared the cost. People from Salonica didn't know Peraia, and there was no other way to communicate with the village. In Peraia there was only a ballroom called 'Cote d'Azur,' where we used to dance. We stayed there for many hours and the boat would take us back in the evening. All day we ate and danced in the 'Cote d'Azur.'

One night the boat Poseidon didn't show up. My brother and a friend, who later became his brother-in-law, Pavlos, came back in the early hours, with a carrier filled with watermelons and

notified the port authorities, and in turn notified the owner of Poseidon, who came and picked us up. For his parents it was an agonizing wait. We usually returned at midnight, one o'clock at night, but not in the morning.

We also went to the mountains, to Asvestohori, Peristera. We went on day trips.

Aunt Doudou, Leo's aunt, had a house on Koromila Street. It was built upon a rock and one got the impression that half of it was built in the sea. The windows overlooking the sea were always closed because when the waves hit them the water would get inside the house. We had a ball there. Every summer we would gather in the house and would create a chaos. Watermelons, melons, bread and cheese. The nautical club was very near and we did whatever we wished. And my aunt was also there, where should she go? It was a small house.

When we left, her complaint was that we simply left and afterwards didn't ask her how she was doing. Not even her nephew. Only a friend of ours, Odysseus Papadakis, who took pictures, he was the photographer of our company, but also our tyrant until he had us posing, he was the only one who went to visit her.

There was a lot of matchmaking going on among the people of our company, Christians and Jews, from various neighborhoods. I remember Sol Levi, poor one, he didn't return [that is, didn't survive the Holocaust]. I remember we used to tease him because he stuck his tongue out and we laughed. Pavlos Yiotaris. Then came Jackos Gabai, who used to call my parents Mom and Dad. He was a good friend of mine who did survive.

As a young girl I became a member of the YMCA, in the section exclusively reserved for women. I registered there for French language courses, decorating and photography, and assisted the Italian School. During that time I was appointed in the Third Army Corps as a secretary. I remember that the Ierissos earthquake took place at the time [in 1936] and we had to publish a news report. All this happened before the war. At the time, I was a typist in the army headquarters and was making good money. All my friends were unemployed. It is I who used to take them to the 'Luxembourg' ballroom by the seaside and to 'Floka's' where Domenicos used to sing, as I mentioned before.

I don't know how Leo' s family took our affair, maybe his sister was the only one who was surprised and didn't wish it. I didn't have any such reaction with the rest of his siblings. They welcomed me and spoke to me nicely, they defended me when I had disagreements with Leo – as every couple does – they always defended me.

His father was very good person. His mother died of cancer shortly after I met Leo. I didn't meet my mother-in-law, I only know her from her photograph. She had breast cancer and didn't accept a nurse cleaning her wounds. She only allowed Leo to do it. She had a weak point for him. We lived a few years with his father, and I often went to Leo's house to cook. Meantime they had left the old house and only Albertos, the second son, continued living there.

Many Jews lived in Salonica at the time. I cannot say there were no arguments with the Christians, even today people cannot make peace. They say about the Albanians that they are all thieves, murderers, bad people. There are very good families that have settled here, they are not all evil. Unfortunately there is always a racial hatred among people. For me the three evils are fanatic priests, independently of religion, fanatic politicians of all parties, and money. These are the three

world evils, at least in my opinion.

I remember my father-in-law very well. I closed his eyes when he passed away. He was a very good man, and a good eater too. He had to watch his diet and he never did, that's why his eyes were always red. When we had a shop in Aghia Triada, a Jew named Manuel had a grocery shop there. He went there and bought pickles and goodies and ate them secretly at the shop.

My father-in-law had a picture showing him with his brother Haim, who was thin and short. Haim had two daughters, Sarina, and I don't remember the name of the other girl. They left as a family, all of them, to the camps and didn't return. Maybe they were Greek citizens, not Spanish. My father-in-law was a kingly man; we had a very good relationship. He died sometime just before the occupation. He lived in a house on Athanassiou Diakou Street, together with Aunt Doudou and her two children.

Aunt Doudou taught me how to cook Jewish dishes, mainly sardines cleaned of bones, dipped in egg and fried in oil, beans with fried onions and Jewish meatballs made of leek and spinach, and of course lake fish, sazan [carp] which everyone cooks for Pesach, but also throughout the year.

I also had vine leaves stuffed with rice and onions, spring onions and dry onions, dill and parsley. I prepared at least 150 pieces, because we had many big climbing vines, and plenty of grapes.

Doudou taught me how to prepare carp in a ceramic pot covered with crushed walnuts and matzah. During that time we bought matzah from the mobile merchants in the street: they sold it in big pieces covered with a piece of cloth – nothing to do with the way matzot are sold today. You have to fry the fish, then place them on the matzah with the walnuts, cover them in the same way, then pour a good amount of oil over it and let it cook until the oil has disappeared. After that you had to put it in the refrigerator, or, before the war, into the ice-cupboard.

Somebody passed by everyday selling ice and we usually bought one quarter. They used to divide every large piece of ice into four pieces. Of course there were some thieves. As was Manuel, whom I mentioned before, who used to divide it into five pieces. And he would say, 'Never mind, I make more money this way.'

As long as Doudou lived she used to cook, then I cooked and I also cooked them Christian dishes. They didn't say anything and ate them with pleasure. Except for the fish we also made 'enhaminados' eggs, which were put in water to boil with lots of onions and we added a little salt too. They had to boil on a low flame, or, like we did in the old days, when we cooked them slowly in the oven. I remember my niece Lilica used to tell me how in Israel they used to bake them in the oven. We liked these eggs, and often put them in salads. My father-in-law asked for those Jewish dishes. But he also ate others. He never complained; he was a very easy-going person.

As far as sweets go, I only learned the 'toupischti,' and my recipe was published by Fytrakis publishing house, and I even got a price. Mari had taught me this recipe when she stayed in my house. It was very tasty and very easy to make. I didn't like preparing sweets, but I liked to eat them. I never made cookies or other sweets.

Leo was ten years older than me, he was born in 1900. He had gone with his father to Germany, to spas, and that is how he knew German. He had pimples then and a German doctor had given him an ointment, the recipe of a face cream. We started from that: he prepared this cream and

distributed it to barbers at first, for men's skin after shaving. As time went by we were successful with cosmetics and started making face creams for women too.

We started selling face creams together. At first we didn't have a shop, and prepared them in the basement of our house and sold them from home. Later we asked for a permit from the Ministry of Hygiene. This happened between 1930 and 1932. I remember we sent some specimens and the permit – which we had to renew – was sent to us. Of course we also had to pay a Greek chemical engineer because the permit had to be issued in his name.

I remember that we used to pay the income tax every week then. Barbalias, a tall man, came with his notebook and we gave him a hundred drachmas every week. We had a book for expenses and entries. After the war the income tax office charged Leo a fine of 75,000 drachmas.

I remember it was when the Queen of England got married to Philip. My brother-in-law, Paul had rented a room in London, on the street where it would take place so he would be able to watch. We were supposed to go also, but our trip had to be cancelled because of the income tax fine. After that we went to court and they reduced it to 61,000 drachmas, but it was taken by the lawyer. So we neither got to see the royal wedding nor did we get the three-story house in Olgas for which we were negotiating.

Afterwards, when we opened a shop on Aghia Triada Street, our business grew and we had many employees: Marika and Toula, Efharis, Kostas, and Iordanis in a workshop on Kapodistriou Street. Later on, in my shop, I had Rebecca, Nino and Alberto. There was a lot of work and I should not boast but I was the one who used to make everyone work. I had to guide them. I told them that work is different when one has to deal with two hundred or with five hundred pieces. So I used to manage the staff when we had a lot of pieces to produce. I was always in the shop. Later we opened a soap workshop, a small one, not a big factory.

At the time we had Davico Beja, who later converted and became Christian under the name of Dimitris. He was very clever. One couldn't find someone better in the world. He could turn a piece of shit into a jewel. He wasn't an employee, he was a traveling salesman with a percentage. And he traveled everywhere. He bought face creams from our stores and sold them cheaper. It became known that Beja sold cheaper and in addition to the face cream he also sold other cosmetics. From those he made a profit. Finally we had to stop providing him with our face creams.

After the war he came back broke. He left his watch to his uncle and borrowed from him 200 drachmas. With this money he did great and beat all his competitors. His first shop was a warehouse on Frangon Street. He was smart, he created things out of nothing. That is what one needs in commerce. The well-known 'Bejas' shops probably belong to his children. His children too were baptized Christians. His wife was a Christian, a very nice lady. Unfortunately I never met her.

On Sundays she would visit the house in Harilaou, which my father bought so we could hide Leo, but finally he never hid there, so she could see her husband Dimitris or Mimis. He would hide there and managed to survive. He was so bright, so competent…

Leo, who was a Spanish citizen, didn't have the right to vote and hadn't fought in the Greek-Italian War. When the Germans entered Salonica in 1941 our life changed. We were all upset and had a bad feeling in our heart. After that things started to get more rigorous, Jews had to wear the star of

David. Leo's family wasn't so scared because they had Spanish citizenship and the Germans were allies of the Spanish.

At the time, we rented two rooms near the shop, because there was no transportation up to 25th March Street, where our house was. We rented two rooms in a Jewish house, which belonged to Jacques Levi, a doctor who was very old, almost blind. He lived there with his wife and their house was very big. Later when they deported everyone, his wife was already died, and blind as he was they took him on a carriage…

After the star was introduced, they gathered people on Freedom Square [Eleutherias Square] 15 near the city center. These things we didn't see, we only heard of them. They had them make exercises. Leo didn't have to present himself because he was Spanish. Some time later they sent all the Jews to Poland, and only then did they send for the Spanish Jews.

The Spanish citizens had remained in Thessaloniki, among them Leo and his family. His two brothers, Albertos and Isidor, went to the synagogue where all Spanish Jews had to present themselves under the pretext that the Germans wanted to speak to them. But Leo didn't go, he went to the building across, where his dentist, Fanis Anagnostopoulos, was and from his window he could see what was happening. In the meantime, while many went to the synagogue with their own cars and others on foot, Leo suddenly saw they were driven away on trucks that the Germans had brought.

I was at home, in the two rooms we had rented, and suddenly my father came and started telling me what had happened in the synagogue. In the meantime Leo had left the dentist's place and gone straight to my father's house. My father reassured me that Leo was with him.

In my neighborhood, which was between Aghia Triada and Fleming, it became known that the Germans had caught the Spanish Jews. The neighbors knew we were Spanish and started bulging into the house, taking this and that. There were many doors and verandas. I would scream at them 'Wait, we are not leaving!' In the meantime, my father came, he closed the doors, and in that way we saved certain things.

The people probably thought: 'Since you are going to leave only with a bunch of clothes and the furniture will stay behind, why should the Germans take it.' I don't blame them on account of the looting, partly they were right. Meanwhile the Germans had requisitioned one room in the house of Jacques Levi – after he left for the camp – and Leo and I were still staying in the other room.

The German who stayed in our house – he was a carpenter – knew that Leo was a Spaniard, but not that he was a Jew. Maybe he was suspicious of that. I remember that in a neighboring small house, also requisitioned by the Gestapo, lived another Jewish family with its children that didn't return – there too lived an Austrian or German. A good one. He was a painter, may have painted my house close to ten times, and he also gave me as a gift a painting with a boat in the sea. The carpenter fixed and mended whatever was broken.

Individually we maintained a certain friendship with certain Germans, and they gave us a lot of things. Leo knew German and they spoke with him. Some showed us pictures of their children. Whenever they heard shooting outside their house by Gestapo men, they would freeze and become different people. They were terrified of each other. They were afraid that their friend would

denounce them of treason. They were terrified of their own friend. That is how Hitler strengthened his power, which was based on traitors. One would fear the other.

Leo couldn’t stay at home any longer when they kicked out the Spanish Jews, because he was afraid that someone in the neighborhood would betray him. No one of course had threatened us in the open, until the very end no one did. Maybe because my mother was a very lovable person, and so was my father. My family didn’t have close relations with any one. It was a good neighborhood.

I cannot say we had great difficulties during the occupation, even though there were things that were missing. But we kept on working – especially with the cosmetic products – which were very much in demand, especially in the countryside. We continued and I later even did so on my own when Leo was hiding in Athens. I sold face creams, colognes, perfumes and they gave me wheat, barley, corn and beans in return. Those I sold or distributed to people I knew. I never took money, everything was done by barter, and I only took money from certain clients. I bought the required material for the preparation of cosmetics.

We lived conventionally, we only cared to go through the day. One couldn’t plan for the day after. Once I mixed certain products with paraffin oil and gave it to a German in exchange for olive oil. One should not get the impression that there was no hunger and shortages: I remember a young lad dying in front of me from hunger. We ran to assist him, and when he passed away we all continued our life… Seeing carriages with corpses was a common sight.

In the meantime, Leo had to leave Salonica. At first he had to hide in the villages of Aghia Triada. My brother knew a boatman whom they called ‘black,’ because he was very dark. So Leo went to Aghia Triada and there he rented a room. He spoke German, went openly to coffee shops and the Germans didn’t know he was a Jew. On the other hand the peasants watched him speaking German with the Germans and thought that he may be a German spy and they brought him figs and grapes so he would not turn them in to the Germans. He was scared.

Leo was audacious. Once we went on a boat to take a ride to the big Karabournou. We never reached it. In the meantime it became dark and there was a blackout. The peasants got worried. We were still somewhere in the Thermaic Gulf, and to think that all we wanted to do is take a ride.

I had two Armenian girlfriends, who were acquainted with the Italian consulate, Rosel and Meliné, and they told us that if we gave a sum of money to the Italians – I don’t know who took the money in the end – he [Leo] could go to Athens which was under Italian occupation, and the Germans hadn’t reached it. Indeed, one day they called on Leo and handcuffed they took him out of the Italian consulate and to the train station. On the train to Platamon they took of the handcuffs and told him he was free. We considered the Italians our friends not enemies: ‘Una faccia una razza’ [Italian proverb commonly used in Greek, meaning ‘one face, one race’].

This is how we moved to Athens, to Nea Ionia. We were led there by a woman who agreed being promised a loaf of bread as a reward. But when we finally went there I also gave her beans and wheat. She was overwhelmed with happiness. There was serious hunger in Athens. Almost every week I had to bring them food provisions from Salonica.

It was in Athens where the two brothers of Leo were hidden. This is where they accidentally met in the street. At first Leo stayed in the house of an uncle of mine called Notis Papadopoulos. His wife,

Christina Klonaridi, and he had a son called Mimis from Dimitris, which was his grandfather's name. This child from the time he was four years old had a heart and kidney problem because of his tonsils. When this bad thing happened Mimis didn't want to play, go to school, he couldn't get excited or laugh.

I went to visit them regularly to take provisions to them, but Leo had to leave from there because one evening a friend of my uncle's came and said, 'Quickly, Kostas has to leave this place.' He had issued for him two false identity cards in the names of Nikos Raftopoulos and Kostas Mavromatis. The Raftopoulos one was real, it belonged to my aunt's husband. The other one was issued from the 2nd Police Precinct of Salonica. It was a false name on a false identity card. They knew he was a Jew, but they wanted to help him. Many Jews issued false identity cards at the time. Someone who wanted to get back to my uncle, turned in Leo. Of course I was surprised because my uncle was a good person, a saint. It could be that it was a bad neighbor.

A little while before the Germans showed up to blockade the area, my uncle's friend came and told them to leave. I remember it was at night just before curfew time. Luckily the house had two doors, one good one and another one that led to a small passage that led to a small bridge that took you to Patission Street [the longest street in Athens]. So we both left in the dark, there was a blackout and there was no moonlight either. My husband held me, and we walked very slowly so that I wouldn't fall into the river. That's how we, step by step, got to the little bridge; it was the first time we took this road. It was completely deserted, not a soul on the road.

Where should we go? Should we go to Adela – her father and mother were siblings of my husband – her surname was Mano. She lived with her Christian husband. Adela was a Spanish citizen. For us to get to Athens was very difficult, a long way and there was no road from Nea Ionia to Skoufa Street in Athens. We did not have anywhere else to go.

Zermain with her brother Jacko, Leo's nephews – they too lived in a house, they were the children of Albertos Abravanel. I used to take some food to the people we knew in Athens. Luckily while on excursions or swimming, or in the Langada Thermae with friends, my husband had met someone called Sotiris Christianos, who lived in Athens, on Koliatsou Street and my husband had once gone to his house. Luckily, he remembered the house, even though it was in a small street, and we knocked at the door – it was past midnight.

We had set off to go to Adela's house but ended up in the house of Christianos, that was his family name. We knocked on the door, someone from inside jumped out and asked, 'Who is it?' 'Leo,' my husband answered. As soon as he heard the name he opened the door and took us inside.

He started asking how come we were there at this hour, and says to Leo, 'This is where you will stay.' He kept him there for a long time, two months. I was commuting. He lived in a house of two rooms with his wife and daughter. And he gave Leo his daughter's room; he pulled her out of bed literally to give it to us. Sotiris, he is the one who saved us.

In Athens, I remember, once we had gone for a walk in the National Garden and we met an SS man from Thessaloniki – near the shop there was a Gestapo station, and they used to come to our shop – at the corner of Aghia Triada and Velissariou Street, and this is how they knew us. This man recognized Leo and he asked him whether he had come to Athens and where was he staying? We approached him and felt terrified, thinking it was the end. Leo froze. And before Leo could think of

an answer he said, ‘Actually, don’t tell me,’ and disappeared. He surely guessed that Leo was a Jew, and didn’t want to be seen by some other German.

In Athens I tried to sell certain things I made by myself. Once, I remember, I had brought many walnuts and Sotiris had a license for a carrier because he had been wounded in the war. We put the nuts on the carrier and sold them, and to make more money we cleaned them before we sold them.

There was great hunger during the war in Athens, that’s why I brought provisions from Salonica. Except for the little money I made at the shop, I also had some traveling salesmen that took some goods to the villagers that worked in the black market. They asked for our face creams and gave us wheat and barley in return. I would take that to my parents but also saved some for Leo and his niece’s children, Dimitri and Despoina, who were baptized, but after the war they became Jewish again. Despoina married a man from Larissa, some Moise Moissis. A very nice chap. I went to their engagement party. I and Mari were the only relatives, and they really took good care of us.

So it was time for him to leave Athens, and he returned to Salonica. My father thought we should open a hole in the wall big enough for Leo to fit in lying, so he could hide there whenever some Gestapo men should come looking for him. We shut this hole with an iron sheet and in front of it put a chest we had at home so that it wouldn’t show.

From a certain point that wasn’t covered one night I managed to see Germans in our courtyard and heard a shot. They had seen the light that was turned on. It was difficult for me to pull the chest on my own. In the meantime the Germans jumped in our courtyard and started kicking at our door downstairs.

Then my mother went down to open the door for them. Our cat had given birth and my mom had put it at the entrance, so she told the Germans, ‘Be careful please, don’t step over the cat and its kittens.’ They were surprised: Germans come in your house in the middle of the night and my mom tells them to be careful of the kittens. She showed great courage. I couldn’t believe it. She was such a fearful woman that we used to tie her head so her jaw wouldn’t tremble from fear.

It was clear that someone had turned us in, because the Germans must have had gotten some information from someone. They searched the house, all the rooms, thoroughly. Our hearts were beating faster. I forgot to tell you, they were not all Germans, there were Greeks with the Gestapo too. Afterwards they went to Filellinon Street and caught a few people.

In the meantime the sun rose and the whole neighborhood started asking us about Leo. My husband was very restless: though we hid him, he would take a stroll in the courtyard, look out the windows. And he went outside too. I once met him in Salamina, on the street. We had a warning signal, this is how I knew, because it was night and he couldn’t be seen, he was across the street. We had to use the hiding spot at home just once. But if we hadn’t had it that night, the Gestapo would have caught him for sure, and none knows what would have happened…

Before the war, when my husband’s father was still alive, I got engaged to Leo. The ceremony took place in our home. His father was present, and his brother Isidor with his wife. My relatives too were there, my grandmother, my uncles, and we exchanged rings. There was no discussion with regard to religion, and we hadn’t really thought of it. We got engaged so that people would stop

talking, because Leo visited us frequently at home.

We married after the war, and just before the wedding I became Jewish in a public bath, in Charilaou. I remember it only vaguely, like a dream. I only remember Mari. There were others that I didn't know and they spoke a language I didn't know. It happened in the afternoon.

After the war when I converted to Judaism I didn't feel any difference. The Jewish religion is very similar to the Christian one. Almost the same holidays and the same ceremonies, the beginning of the holiday on the eve of the holiday. After the war, I started going to the synagogue with my husband, especially during the fasts but also on other festive occasions. I hadn't been to church as many times as I've been to the synagogue.

The issue was never raised with Leo who would become Christian or Jewish. It never preoccupied me. I remember I was still young, when I heard my mother say, 'We must respect all religions.' I remember we were very young then but this impressed us very much. We were tolerant. We were not a religious family. My mother lit a candle, but very rarely lit incense, because it bothered us. I remember once I had fainted in the church.

What was really important for me was my love for Leo. I believe that if there is a God, he is there for the whole world. The priests divided the world for their own interest. They all say, 'I spoke with God and this is what God told me.' It is all a matter of power, that's how all religions were formed. Everyone claimed that he was God's representative. They did well to guide us to be good people. In the beginning we were like animals. Religion holds people back from evil doings.

I remember our wedding was among the first that took place in Thessaloniki after the war 16. Before that the two sisters who had returned from the camp got married: Iza, who married Dario Pinhas and Marika, who married Jim.

After the war we went to stay with my sister-in-law for a while in the house my father had bought for Leo to hide in Charilaou. It was one of these houses that belonged to the allies, something like a bunker. It was at the end of Charilaou, during the occupation, when my father had bought it, it was almost in the countryside. It was going to be turned into a big park, but I don't know what happened. The past owner had treated my father badly, and this made him decide that Leo should not hide there, because he considered it dangerous.

After the war my husband and I continued the same business. We were so successful that wholesale shops had bigger stock of our cosmetics than Nivea. They sued us and took us to court because we were using Nivea's tin jars and just added a sign with our name. We had four different face creams: Leonar, Neo Leonar, Kathrine and Jane. Ours was neither as thick nor as white as Nivea because as soon as you used it for acne it was absorbed.

There is no doubt that after the war Salonica was empty of Jews. I remember that a short time before they were deported Jews entrusted us with the gold sterling savings and their jewelry to hide. These people didn't know where they were going, they didn't know they were destined to be turned into soap. [Editor's note: During World War II it was widely believed that soap was being produced on an industrial scale from the bodies of Jewish concentration camp victims. Soap from human fat was never produced industrially. The Yad Vashem Memorial has also officially stated that the Nazis did not make soap from Jewish corpses, saying that such rumors were used by the

Nazis to frighten camp inmates. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soap_made_from_human_corpses] We always called on them to check, but they trusted us even though we insisted. They came to the shop to sell us useless things, empty bottles or jars, but we bought them just to support them.

We had invented a technique to hide gold sterling inside the soaps we made and which we stored in some wooden boxes where Germans kept cheese. In each soap one could fit three to four sterling coins, which we put inside just before the soap got cold, wrapped in some delicate piece of cloth. We also manufactured laundry soaps and bath soaps. We manufactured many such things. We wrapped the soaps in nice paper and sealed them.

We even put gold coins in toothpaste. We opened them at the wide end to take out the toothpaste so the gold coins would fit in, and then we closed them again to fit in the box. It is certain that some of them fell in the hands of the Germans. Imagine their surprise. Later the Germans – when an uncle of ours betrayed us – destroyed our machinery for manufacturing soap. I won't say his name, God should forgive him, because both him and his son are dead.

Leo wasn't drafted to fight in the war because he was a Spanish citizen, for the same reason he wasn't drafted to fight in the [Greek] Civil War either 17. The biggest mess took place in Athens. At the time we lived in Charilaou. They had requisitioned our house, and I don't know how the resistance people got in. The house had three rooms, and us they gave only one bedroom. They would come and go from our house, which they had turned into a transit center, but I don't remember how they got inside. Who they were? I don't remember. We didn't face any problems, neither I at work, nor Leo.

Leo and I didn't have children. Unfortunately, I don't like them. I couldn't imagine myself taking care of children. I feel for them, I pity them, especially those that starve and grow up in divorced families. From my balcony in the old people's home I can watch some gypsy children playing music. How I pity them and how much I admire them.

If you remember the story I told you about the doll, you will know that I didn't like dolls either. Once, when my girlfriend broke the porcelain doll's head they all cried so much that even my mother got worried. It didn't trouble me at all. I had never played with it. I can't stand watching people mistreat children and I want that all of them get educated.

After the war we stayed at Charilaou. Because this house was bought during the occupation the state took it and gave us some indemnity. Needless to say they gave us much less than what it was worth. They gave us 3,000 drachmas whereas we had paid 7,000 for it.

Originally the house belonged to a certain person named Pavlos Yannatos, whose in-laws were friends of the family. Normally we should have sued him, but not only didn't we do any such thing, but Leo also tore Yannatos's checks apart. My uncle Giorgos Manoussos, who was an architect, saw the house and he told us that the price we had bought it for was fair.

Leo had a passion for photography. He always took pictures, but didn't print them himself. He had them developed somewhere. After the war he used to take many pictures of the places where we used to go on our summer vacation, in Mihaniona. He would photograph everything; I don't think anybody took so many pictures. He was also a photographer at weddings and took pictures of all

our friends during excursions. He may have forgotten to put on his trousers, but he never forgot to take along his camera.

At the time I used to keep the shop and I would come and go. My husband was very sociable, the opposite of me. He also used to take pictures of foreigners, from Yugoslavia, Romania. He made friends with them when they came to Mihaniona for a vacation. Usually he went to Mihaniona with his sister Mari and his brother-in-law Henri. He made copies and send them the pictures after they went back to their home countries. They kept a correspondence. I tore some of the photographs and others I threw away. Do you know how many albums I had, how many family pictures? Now I don't have any, not even of my parents or my wedding…

My husband knew many foreign languages, he could manage many things. He knew Spanish of course, German, French and a little English. Leo had to become an interpreter at the Thessaloniki Fair. I remember he had bought a Linguaphone, because he wanted to go to London and told them that he would learn English in two months. He would study and listen to the records all day long.

My husband's oldest brother was Rafael, who was killed in Spain. He was married to Corina, whom I put up in our house in Thessaloniki for a while. After him was Albertos, who was married to Bella, and they had four children: Zermain, Jacko, Lilika and Gaston. Gaston, poor him, died in Hirsch hospital. They didn't manage to save him. The oldest, Zermain, married her cousin Moise Abravanel, and Lilika married a widower, who had a child in Israel. She had a child with him called Jacko. They are all dead now.

Jacko had married a Polish woman who was tall and virile. He was very tall himself and very thin. He got killed by a bomb. They had a daughter who became an air hostess. We don't have any contact with the children of Jacko and Lilika, who must still be alive.

After that was Paul, that handsome man who was honorary vice consul and had a Swiss wife, Jeanne. Leo and Monis had gone to Switzerland during World War I to study. My father-in-law was very wealthy. Paul was already there when he met Jeanne, a petite and very likable lady. I only know one of her sons, Eve. What a sweet kid, happy and smiling.

He received a hotel in Beaulieu – between Nice and Monte Carlo – as dowry from his wife. A huge two-story hotel, with swimming pool that had been built with blue tiles, and two hundred people for personnel. When Leo and I went there for a visit we could see the water falling like waterfalls. The hotel started in the mountains and ended by the sea.

Once when Eve offered us a meal in a different suburb in Beaulieu, where it was a little cold, and my husband, who was a little talkative, told the waiter I was cold. So the waiter returned with a fur to warm me up. I think my husband spoke in French, maybe even in Italian. Paul stayed in France because when we went there he was already retired.

Inos married twice. He first had a Jewish wedding, as he got married to a niece, Marika Evgenidou, of my uncle Manussos. Together they had a child, Jacques. After that they divorced and the child was taken in by my sister-in-law Marie, who didn't have any children, and she brought him up with a nanny. She lived in a house on Vassileos Georgiou Street opposite Sarandaporou Street.

At the time we didn't ask too many questions. Marika's grandparents stole the child from the hands of the nanny when it was still very young, maybe two years old. The child grew up and was

baptized Christian under the name Dimitris, and he was also raised a Christian. He then went to the military, the navy.

After the occupation, a young man came to the house in Charilaou and asked us if we had any family ties with someone called Ino Abravanel. He was this child that had been stolen and found out about it in a mature age, as he was by then a married man with children. He found out that he wasn't his grandparents' child but the grandson and child of the woman whom until then he had considered his sister. While his alleged nephews – in the meantime the mother had married a Christian banker and had two children with him – were his half siblings. Not a word about his real father.

I remember him crying at the threshold of our house in his wish to learn about his roots. In other words, that he was not Evgenidis, but Abravanel. He had come to the house in Charilaou. He looked like his father. Ino was then living in Paris where he had married a Spanish woman and had with her two children, Jacques and Rachelle. I remember that the young man didn't even want to sit down in our living room. We gave him the address of his real father. I don't know what happened after that.

Izidor married a certain Dora, she was Jewish and they had two children, Jacko and Sylvio. They had decided to leave for the USA. They made all the preparations and sold their house and they were going to leave by boat. In a week both children got diphtheria and both of them died. All of this happened before the occupation. Dora didn't want to leave for the USA after that and leave her children buried here. And so they didn't go.

Time passed and they had two more boys whom they named once again Jacko and Sylvio. Very spoiled kids. Their mother wanted to bring down the moon for them and Jackos was a monster, but Sylvio was quiet. They went to the Stratis restaurant, to the Terkenlis patisserie and the children ate what they wanted and Izidor paid afterwards. All this happened before the occupation.

Leo's family, except for himself, Ino, Solomon and Paul, who was in France, were Spanish. Jackos and Zermain also didn't leave; all the rest were deported. They returned because they were Spanish citizens.

Marie, who was four years older than Leo, married Henri Modiano and they had no children. All siblings had married before the war. Only Leo married afterwards. In France, Monis, who was the youngest, met Andree, a widow with two little boys. They married and I remember she was very kind, she came here with Monis twice and we met her.

I also went to France, it's a different thing to shop there, and they treat you differently. Greeks, as much as they try, don't manage to behave in the same way. I went to shop with my niece Eveline, and while we watch to take somebody else's turn, there they watch out not to take your turn. Greeks don't do that. My friend Vassilis Tsilis who was a radio operator and traveled to London used to tell us that people were queuing even on the road in the rain.

Ino's nephews are still alive. He remarried, a Spanish woman, and has two children, Jacko and Rachelle. Jackos lives in France and has a souvenir shop for tourists. Some time ago he used to send us nice presents. I remember he sent me a very nice Spanish fan in a luxurious box. I went to Spain but never found a similar one. He also used to send us crystal objects. We corresponded but

then we stopped.

We were also in touch with Jacko Izidor's child, who was in the USA, this very naughty child who became a simply perfect person when he grew up. I remember I used to tell my husband that this child would shame the family. He was a mischief-maker and a rebel, because their mother Dora had a weakness for her children. When he went to the USA, I remember, Izidor received a letter from his professor congratulating him because he came first among 2,000 candidates. I cannot believe it. He was brilliant. His brother became an electrician. Now I maintain contact only with my brother Kleanthis's daughter.

The truth is that only Marie seemed not to approve of my relationship with Leo at first. She was a little cold with me and we didn't have talks together. She didn't show that she despised me but she was never close. I never remember her saying, 'Ah, I have a nice sister-in-law.' But all the rest of the siblings and their wives treated me very nicely, and so did Henri.

However, when Marie met my mother she became very excited. My mother was very nice. I was a little wild, maybe because they 'took me from the gypsies.' I wouldn't give in. So they met and were enchanted by each other.

Marie also had very good relations with my brother Kleanthis. She adored him. I remember once I invited them for dinner at home and I had cooked fish. My brother found it was very tasty even though I had used frozen and not fresh fish. He said, 'Very nice fish, and it smells of the sea.' Mari had a soft spot for fish, but fresh fish. So just because Kleanthis liked it, she pretended to be thrilled herself.

I remember that Henri and Marie had a cottage in Mihanionia, where she would go out on the balcony and sing arias from operas. And since her name was Marie everybody said, 'Here is Maria Callas.' All this took place after the war. She would sit in the sun and get tanned. When we first arrived in Salonica, tanning was not in fashion.

Marie didn't do any housework, she stayed in a hotel, because Henri couldn't stand her complaining about the maids. When I sent her the woman that cleaned for us, she threw her out, and guess why. She said that the woman worked too fast! 'No, I want the work to be done slowly,' she told to us.

After the occupation I had her staying in my home for a year while her husband lived in Charilaou. After that they went to the Hotel Continental and Henri got sick and unfortunately he died there.

They went to Athens, to Kifissia, to spend the summer. Henri smoked like a chimney. They went to see a doctor in Ascleipeion and he said Henri needed an operation and kept him there. At night he felt unwell. Mari ran to find a clinic on Alexandras Avenue. We were in Salonica at the time. I was there on my own and Leo was in Israel. Mari called me the next day and told me: 'Come to Athens fast, Henri is not well, he is swollen and has become like a ball.' She also called Kleanthis. When Kleanthis got there he found Henri swollen and black.

A whole hospital and Henri had a suite on the top floor. They operated on him and from then on Henri did not speak again. They used to feed him with tubes. When they returned in Salonica they went back to the Continental Hotel and took another room with two nurses day and night. When he died none of them was on his side. Roula Shoel's mother, who was a niece of Henri [Roula's

grandfather and Henri were brothers], went to see her uncle and found the nurses smoking in the living room, and Henri dead. None was there next to him. He could not speak, he did not drink water, whatever he wanted he had to write it down.

Henri was in real estate, but not in renting apartments. He rented offices and big plots of land. The monks from Athos mountain came with gold sterling coins and bought offices on Aristotelous Street. They brought Marie presents, handmade embroideries. I remember a very nice mortar, and a grater

During World War I my father-in-law had a boat called ‘Marika’ in honor of his daughter Marie, and brought wines from Crete. This boat sunk and after that the way down started. I remember my father, who had a restaurant during World War I, used to buy his wines from Abravanel’s cave.

I remember we used to keep kosher, mainly on certain days, not all year round. But I remember there was a kosher butcher on Aghia Triada Street, owned by two brothers. I remember them all day cutting and cleaning the meat. It was hard. Many Greeks used to buy meat from the Jew because they considered that meat cleaner. The meat they give us here every Sunday has no fat at all. The old people cannot chew it and there is trouble. Jews don’t eat pork or salami, but neither do Muslims.

My husband ate salami. He was nevertheless a true Jew, you could not touch him, but to the synagogue he wouldn’t go. All the family were true Jews, but only Isidor went to the synagogue regularly, the others didn’t.

Marie too was very Jewish, oh one should not touch her. She kept on saying, ‘I am a Jewess.’ But go to the synagogue – no. They also didn’t have friends that were Jewish. Leo too only had Christian friends. Maybe he got it from us. We only had two Jews in our company, Jacko Gabai and Sol Sevi. They were very nice people. My mother and father used to call them ‘mom’ and ‘dad.’

My husband went out with Christians mainly, he was a merry man and spent a lot of money. He wanted to show he was very generous. He may have wanted to disprove the stereotype of the stingy Jew [the interviewee laughs]. He was a steady customer in the ‘Opera Nest.’ He even went to their home. I didn’t follow him always. I didn’t like this way of having fun. It is not that I feared the money wasted, but he could have given it elsewhere, where it could have been more useful.

Alberto Ouziel was one of our Jewish friends. He sold locks for suitcases, and his wife Loulou was like my sister. I would call to visit and the tray was behind the door already: with sweets and everything. They had a daughter, Roula. We also socialized with Nissim Menashe, whose wife was Christian, Kaiti was her name. We went out together and went on excursions. Alberto was a bit difficult, but Loulou was a treasure of a human being. We had great times. When we were visiting her, she’d say, ‘Oh I forgot to offer you some candy, to sweeten your life… it’s New Year’s today.’ And things like that.

In Loulou’s house together with Roula we celebrated Jewish holidays. There I could feel it was a holiday. Where I am today, I can’t. At home we would invite friends and we didn’t have a maid. I would prepare everything by myself. But my husband never warned me in time. Because I would have to clean, to take out the silverware, nice table cloths, prepare the salads etc. At that time everything was prepared by the housewife: the mayonnaise, the Ikra salad. And I worked all day.

Albertos and Loulou had hidden in Athens, like the grandparents. Take into account that Alberto on Pesach, used to go where Marie was hiding and where Loulou was too, somewhere in Erythrea, and I don't know where Loulou was – he had to prepare the matzah by himself, without yeast – and bake it in the oven, so he wouldn't have to eat bread. They really sounded like true Sephardim, especially the grandparents, who spoke Greek in a singing way.

During the holidays Albertos read in Hebrew, and there was a deadly silence. I didn't understand, and maybe Loulou didn't either, and even the grandparents didn't know Hebrew. They were Spaniards and spoke Spanish between them, more than Greek. In the Book it is spelled out what is the order one must follow during the celebration: how to set the table, and what exactly one ought to do. One has to pick some lettuce, the lamb's leg, the egg, the charoset, the matzah, cut a piece and eat it with charoset, and put the rest under your table towel.

Loulou cooked nice Jewish dishes. Meatballs from chicken breast, and those made of leek and spinach. Albertos wanted everything to be precise, and looked for detail. This is the way to cut the lettuce, the matzah should be placed over there, and the charoset over there.

I learned how to cook beans with fried onions, and sardines with eggs. And of course peche en salsa, with a lot of nuts and matzah, and plenty of oil.

Leo too wanted those dishes, one always seeks what one is used to, but he never refused eating other dishes either. I was a good cook.

My favorite holiday was Pesach. If I compare it with the one we celebrate in the old people's home – they don't understand anything. Here, the rabbi reads and the rest of the people eat. 'Eh, wait a minute my dear, close your mouth, nobody is going to take it away from you.' But back then I could understand the holiday, and I was very sorry once when Elvina, my niece, was in Thessaloniki that Albertos didn't want her to come and see how we celebrate, because she wasn't Jewish. She was very sad, because she would have liked to watch other customs. It's a long time ago. At the time when both Roula's and Elvina's parents were still alive.

I remember we went on excursions. Once we went together to the Patras Carnival. Leo didn't especially like excursions and usually all our friends joined the excursions. So this excursion was organized and we went together with Loulou, her husband and their child. My brother lived in Athens and I called him, saying that we would stay in a hotel for the night and then leave for Patras. We took a bus, which was in a bad state and broke down all the time. So I called my brother to ask him not to meet us since we were still in Lamia because the bus broke down.

Finally we arrived in Athens in the morning and got to Patras dead tired. On Easter Monday we had arranged to go to a restaurant somewhere between Athens and Patras so that my brother Kleanthis could come and meet us with his wife and son. But we ran out of time and my brother had to pay a big sum for canceling the reservation.

We got to Patras only in the afternoon to watch the parade. Everybody went off the bus, except for me, because Leo wanted me to watch the suitcases. They all went to the parade, apart from me. When they returned it was already dark and I didn't even feel like watching the carnival scarecrow burn.

I remember we used to go to a place called Poroya. Our company had grown, but except for Loulou and her husband all of them were Greek Orthodox. Along with us to Poroya came Antoniades with his wife and daughter, Panayotes and Marika with their two boys, and Apostolos with his wife and their son.

Among the few events I remember well is the engagement of Mazaltov, who was the niece of Leo's cousin, in Larissa. Mazaltov was the daughter of Adela, who was Leo's first cousin. It was a very nice engagement. They had a lot of trays with delicacies, pies and everything.

I also went to Roula's wedding. She married a Jew called Jacko Soel and their son was also named Jacko, after his father. They got married at the big synagogue on Syggrou Street and afterwards a small feast took place in a 'taverna' but the food wasn't typically Jewish, it was mainly Greek. Roula's uncle had a jewelry shop in Athens so they brought her as present many jewels. I remember the house was full of flowers.

Neither Leo nor I were involved in politics. We only cared about our work. Law-abiding citizens. I remember I used to buy the newspaper 'Makedonia.' I don't know how, but one day I bought 'Thessaloniki,' and there I read that in Chalastra they tortured and killed animals so they wouldn't get rabies. The teacher and the priest of the village were present. I was at the shop and in came Mrs. Olympia, the mother-in-law of Nikos Gadonas, a high-ranking military official during the time of the dictatorship 18, and I said to her, trembling, 'How come Mr. Nikos allows this barbarism. These are acts performed and watched by criminals.' It seems she spoke to her son-in-law because we didn't hear of this again.

Would you believe it that, even though I visited Athens I never heard of the Polytechnic events 19 and neither of Papadopoulos's doings. When my niece in France asked me about these events I didn't know what to answer. Maybe I didn't read the papers thoroughly enough. But people here didn't know. Not even in Athens. At the time my uncle and my brother lived there.

My husband went on many trips. I joined him in France and in Turkey; our first trip together was to Istanbul. We went there because my husband wished to see some relative, a cousin. We stayed for one week. We saw Aghia Sofia and the Blue Mosque. We would take our shoes off, how nice that everybody prayed! During the Ramadan one could see them all bending down. Me too, I listen to music with my eyes closed. Especially when I used to go to a concert, I remember I used to close my eyes. This is the only way to enjoy it. One uses one's imagination …

We went to Italy, to Spain, and to Paris I went with my niece Elvina. Leo even traveled as far as America. He went to the United States with friends because he knew English. His friends found out that in New York they sold things cheaply in certain shops. They left Greece and went shopping in New York to save money. Leo had brought with him only a light jacket and there was snow. He was freezing.

Luckily he met his friend Nissim Menashe, who only had a bench when he first got there and later opened a huge shop. Before he left for the States he had a clothes shop on Leoforos Stratou and Aghia Triada. He too had married an Orthodox Greek and they had two small children, little Jews. Very good children. At first it was very difficult for him in America and he suffered a lot. In the cold, in the snow.

He had Blacks as clients and because they had many children they bought not one pair of socks, but socks by the dozen, blouses, many things. The owner of the shop where he parked his carriage died, so Menashe bought his shop and then another one and started selling furs and clothes. That is how Nissim got rich; he became a big businessman though he started as a mobile merchant. But he was smart and thrifty. He didn't spend his money, he was a true merchant.

He came twice or three times to see us. But both he and his wife died in the States. Kate, however, left a will to be buried here in Thessaloniki, her home city, where her mother had died and where her sister and her nieces lived.

After the war Leo socialized almost only with Greek Orthodox friends. Everyone asked for him and wanted him to join them. If Leo didn't go there was no way an excursion would take place. He wanted me to join him on the excursions, but I didn't go.

I had a good time in my marriage. Maybe because I was a tough character and he would not dare say anything. He knew that if Eugenia said something, that was it.

Leo and I were a very loving couple, but not like my mother and father. He told me some things for fun, but I was unyielding and very stubborn. Often I regretted it, but I never gave in. I wouldn't give in, ever.

Leo said to me one day, 'I've had enough, I want to have fun, get away, I can no longer work.' So I told him, 'Let us split the shop. I will take the small wares, which I had introduced in the business during the occupation, and you take the cosmetics. Which do you prefer?' Finally he sold me the cosmetics for 2 percent less than we sold them. I paid every penny, slowly because the truth is that I didn't have all the money.

I gave him the money when he stayed here in the old people's home and had three ladies look after him. No one has three ladies looking after him! One squeezed him oranges, the other came in later to bring him his newspaper to read – even though they give us a newspaper here he wanted his 'Makedonia' to be bought – and the third came in the afternoon. She was married and had a child and when the weather was nice she took him for walks and also to 'Jani,' the patisserie. There, Leo would eat an ice-cream cone. She was worth it because she took him out for walks and took him around.

What can I tell you, every time I saw dust in his room he would say to me, 'Eh what is there to say, we talk so that the time passes.' Otherwise he would ask Eugenia to sew his buttons.

As I told you, I was very stubborn. I did everything, squeezed his grapefruit, prepared his salad, I always prepared food to have in the refrigerator so he could eat at lunchtime, even though he usually ate out with Kleanthis Anthomelidis at the Athenaikon restaurant, opposite the Continental hotel, where Henri and Marie lived.

I remember one morning when I didn't leave early. While I was making his bed, I must have said something and he replied: 'Women's work is not such a big deal.' If he had said that only about me, maybe I wouldn't have reacted. But since he underestimated all women, I said to him, 'Oh is that what you think?' And I remember it as if it was yesterday, I had my back turned to him, grabbed the bedspread and threw them down, saying, 'Go ahead then, do it yourself.' And he replied, 'Oh women, they just don't get it when you are teasing them…'

At the time we didn't have a help. A few days went by, and I didn't squeeze grapefruits, nor did I do anything else. I ate by myself at the shop and didn't pay any attention to him. 'Well, won't you come home for a while, as before?' he asked. 'No,' I said. 'There are feathers under the beds, and soon there will be cockroaches.' 'I'm an animal lover,' I answered.

He started asking his friends for a help. Finally he found one that had a sister in Kilkis. He paid her to come once a week from Kilkis with her daughter, she did the housework and left. At night when I returned at home we only said good evening and goodnight. We loved each other, but there is a limit. He came to the shop, left the merchandise and went. This went on for a while.

Of course these women that cleaned the house did nothing: the bathrooms were filthy, the balcony full of dust, and even the neighbors commented. 'So,' I told Leo, 'What do these women do?' After this lady from Kilkis, the barber's wife came to clean for him while she left their two kids with the barber. She left too.

So, he didn't know what to do and went to the old people's home. My husband stayed there for three years. I stayed outside, because I didn't want to leave the shop. I kept it until 1994 when a car hit me and I broke both my legs. I wouldn't have left it otherwise. We made face creams. The same cream with four different names. The same thing is done with medicine. After the car hit me and broke my legs, I closed my little shop and didn't open it again.

I used to go to the old people's home and celebrate the high holidays there, such as Pesach and New Year's [Rosh Hashanah], I gave something to the institution, something to Maria the cook, and Leo asked for a 500 note. It was a good salary at the time. I always came on the high holidays and we celebrated them together. But I would never sit in the restaurant during weekdays. Besides, no outsider is allowed to sit in the restaurant. Only Alvo's mother-in-law came and ate with us. She used to be delighted with our salads. How nice the oil is, she used to comment. It was 'Altis.' And she would say, 'I use the same, but it doesn't taste as good.'

Sometime after my husband's death in 1992, I think it was on 15th January, because I remember that he wanted to have a big party on 17th January, which was his birthday, I decided to come here myself. It was in November 1993. Now that I am here permanently, I don't feel the holidays, but I participate. Some time ago I went to the synagogue, on the ground floor of the building, when there was a commemoration of a friend's death anniversary…

Here in the home, we prepare for Sabbath and on Friday we get together in the dinning room and eat. First of all we light two candles. Not the men, only the women. The woman is the pillar of the house. After that Bourlas reads a blessing. If he is away Iakovos reads in Hebrew. He holds the glass of wine and then drinks a little.

We then take the bread, the challah, which we have to break by hand. We are thirty people here and we each must have two little challot, and I thought, 'Why would we break it by hand?' So I took the knife and cut them in 15 pieces, and instead of hearing a praise, they reproached me that I'm supposed to break it with my own hand. So, we drink the wine, I don't, I only touch on the glass with my lips, and then we tear the bread by hand. The give us an egg each, an 'enhaminados' egg, spinach and cheese pie, bourekitos 20, and yoghurt at night. And then we leave and go to our rooms.

My best friends in the old people's home are Mois Bourlas and Mr. Zak Bensussan, who died a few days ago. I remember that when we came from Mytilene I was registered in an athletic club, in Panlesviakos, and we had as a coach Kleanthis Paleologos. When I was to come to Salonica he advised me to get registered at Heracles.

Indeed, a week after we arrived I went there, and at the time I got registered the president of the club was Mr. Cosmopoulos, the father of the former mayor. I remember that until I got used to the environment, I would see some young man and everybody said, 'Ah, look Isaac has come, Isaac has come.' And the president would come out of his office to welcome him. This one Isaac Bensussan was the father of Mrs. Rena Molho. When he walked in it was as if there was a demonstration.

The truth is that I met him there for the first time, I appreciated him, I admired him. He was a tall handsome guy. Our eyes never crossed, I only saw him from a distance. Also I didn't stay at Heracles long.

In Mytilene we were a different group. When I came here I was a stranger among strangers. I also registered in the YMCA and took gymnastics. Afterwards I started working. I didn't meet Isaac in person back then, I met him here, in the old peoples' home. We used to say then, 'I love Heracles and I always want the team to win.' And it is here that we spoke a few words together, but always in connection with Heracles, if they won or lost.

In the past I used to tell stories about Mytilene to friends here, about excursions to Molyvos and from there to Eftalou, the home city of the poet Argyris Eftaliotis, whose real name was Kleanthis Michailidis 21. Maybe they were a little bored, I don't blame them, as they didn't live in these places. How can one explain to them that we went fishing for squid and crabs, how we threw the net? When I told them I could visualize these scenes.

I'm a Spanish citizen and therefore I don't vote, but until now I vote in the Community. I watch if we are having a good time with some committee, but if someone else offers me something else, well, it depends. I care about how the Community is doing, because I live here. This is my home, and who supports me here now? Greece? No, the Community.

By the way I have a complaint: Here in the old people's home they don't let us know about the death of our friends. For instance, when Mr. Jackos died, I found out about it on the day of his funeral from Bourlas. Shouldn't I have known?

Last night I saw by chance a documentary on the Jews of Thessaloniki and their hardship in the camps. Why didn't they let us know? I saw Bienvenida who was also here and died last year, on the table where she sat. She used to live in the Baron de Hirsch neighborhood 22, and because it was a Jewish neighborhood she always spoke Spanish. She had a lot to say, and she spoke Spanish, even in the interview they made with her. She only learned Greek here. She was very nice, very joyful. We truly miss her. She had asthma since the time she was in the camps. This is what she died of.

People came from various places to learn something from Bienvenida. They conducted interviews with her and with Bourlas. They had a lot to say. We spent a lot of time with Bienvenida. She was very tidy. She wanted everything to be tidy, and her bedspread tightened up. If her pillowcase was a millimeter larger than her pillow, she asked me to alter it with the sewing machine. She wanted

everything to be perfect. And I was happy to do so, because I don't like sitting around doing nothing.

I love work. With my sewing machine I altered everything in the first years. I sew curtains for them, hangers for the towels. All the towels were torn when they brought them from the cleaners and I mended them, for the whole house. I also embroidered. I sew sheets and pillowcases, and put two button holes in each pillowcase. My wish was that they bury me with my chair at the shop and my sewing machine. Later on I gave it away, because I started not to see well.

I am a fanatic ecologist, which is why I keep the flowers even when they have withered. You see, I have aged, maybe they too have a reason to do so. Maybe there's a purpose behind it.

Glossary:

1 Greco-Turkish War of 1897
Also called the Thirty Days' War and known as the black '97 in Greece. A war fought between the Kingdom of Greece and Ottoman Empire. Its immediate cause was the question over the status of the Ottoman province of Crete, whose Greek majority long desired union with Greece. As a result of the intervention of the Great Powers after the war, an autonomous Cretan State under Ottoman suzerainty was established the following year, with Prince George of Greece as its first High Commissioner. This was the first war effort in which the military and political personnel of Greece were put to test after the war of independence in 1821. (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greco-Turkish_War_(1897))

2 Venizelos, Eleftherios (1864 - 1936)
an eminent Greek revolutionary, a prominent and illustrious statesman as well as a charismatic leader in the early 20th century. Elected several times as Prime Minister of Greece and served from 1910 to 1920 and from 1928 to 1932. Venizelos had such profound influence on the internal and external affairs of Greece that he is credited with being "the maker of modern Greece." His impact on modern Greece has been such that he is still widely known as the "Ethnarch." (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eleftherios_Venizelos)

3 Fez
Ottoman headgear. As part of the Imperial Prescript of Gulhane (a westernizing campaign) of Sultan Mahmud II (1839-1876) the traditional Ottoman dressing code was abolished in 1839. The fez, resembling the hat of the Europeans at the time, was introduced and widely used by the Ottoman population, regardless of religious affiliation. In the Turkish Republic it was considered backward and outlawed in 1925 by the Head Law. In the Balkan countries the fez was regarded an Ottoman (Turkish) symbol and was dropped after gaining independence.

4 Pangalos, Theodoros (1878 –1952)
Greek general, who briefly ruled the country in 1925 and 1926. On 24th June 1925, officers loyal to Pangalos, overthrew the government in a coup. Pangalos immediately abolished the young republic and began to prosecute anyone who could possibly challenge his authority. Freedom of the press

was abolished, and a number of repressive laws were enacted, while Pangalos awarded himself the Grand Cross of the Order of the Redeemer. Pangalos declared himself dictator on 3rd January 1926 and had himself elected president in April 1926. On the economic front Pangalos attempted to devalue the currency by ordering paper notes cut in half. His political and diplomatic inability however became soon apparent. He conceded too many rights to Yugoslav commerce in Thessaloniki, but worst of all, he embroiled Greece in the so-called War of the Stray Dog, harming Greece's already strained international relations. Soon, many of the officers that had helped him come to power decided that he had to be removed. On 24th August 1926, a counter-coup deposed him, and Pavlos Kountouriotis returned as president. (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodoros_Pangalos_(general))

5 The Smyrna Campaign

In the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, Greece was granted West and East Thrace and a mandate to occupy Smyrna (Izmir) (1920). The landing of Greek troops in Asia Minor in 1919, the defeat of Venizelos by the royalists in the elections of 1920, and a protracted campaign against the nationalist forces of Kemal Ataturk (the father of modern Turkey) led to defeat and the expulsion of 1,300,000 Greeks from Turkey in 1922. These destitute refugees descended upon a Greece of barey five million and became the foremost consideration of all interwar Greek governments [Source: Thanos Veremis, Mark Dragoumis, Historical Dictionary of Greece (London 1995)].

6 The Fire of Thessaloniki

In the night of 18th August 1917, an enormous fire, fed by the famous Vardar wind, destroyed the city centre where most of the Jews lived. It was a region of 227 hectares, where 15,000 families lived, 10,000 of them were Jewish families which were deprived of their homes. The Jews were hit the hardest, since more than two thirds of the property destroyed by the fire was Jewish and only a tenth of that immense fortune was insured. Nearly all the schools, 32 synagogues, 50 oratories, all the cultural centers, libraries, clubs, etc. were annihilated. Despite of the aid of a sum of 40,000 golden pounds collected from all over the world, the community never recovered from that disaster. The Jewish face of the city that had been there for more than five centuries was wiped out in 36 hours. 25,000, out of 53,000 of the stricken Jews that belonged mostly to the lower and middle class, were forced to live in the working-class districts that were hastily built in a rudimentary fashion. (Source: Rena Molho, 'Jewish Working-Class Neighborhoods established in Salonica Following the 1890 and the 1917 Fires,' in Rena Molho, 'Salonica and Istanbul: Social, Political and Cultural Aspects of Jewish Life,' The Isis Press, Istanbul, 2005, pp.107-126.)

7 Makedonia

Daily newspaper in Thessaloniki, written in Greek and published since 1911. It supported the liberal Party and was strongly distinctive for anti-Jewish article writing and journalism.

8 Thessaloniki International Trade Fair

Taking place every September since its foundation in 1926, it has always been a very important economic as well as cultural city event. For the last few years the Fair has been a pole of attraction and the "place" where the political program of the government is being presented and assessed.

9 Greek-Albanian War/Greek-Italian War (1940-1941)
Greece was drawn into WWII when Italian troops crossed the borders of Albania and violated Greek territory on 28th October 1940. The Italian attack of Greece seemed obvious, despite the stated disagreement of Hitler and the efforts of Ioannis Metaxas, who was trying to trying to keep the country in a neutral stance. Following a series of warning signs, culminating in the sinking of Battleship 'Elli' on 15th August 1940, by Italian torpedoes, and all of these failing to provoke the Greek government to react, the Italian Ultimatum was delivered on 28th October 1940, and it demanded the free passage of the Italian army through Greek soil, as well as sole control of a series of strategic points of the country. The rejection of the ultimatum by Metaxas was in line with the public opinion in Greece and led to the immediate declaration of war by Italy against Greece. This war took place mostly in the mountains of Hepeirous. In the Greek-Albanian War approximately 12.500 Greek Jews took part and 513 Greek Jews died fighting. The Greek counter-offensive pushed the Italians deep into Albania and the Greek army maintained the initiative throughout the winter capturing the southern Albanian towns of Corce, Aghioi Saranda, and Girocaster. [Source: Thanos Veremis, Mark Dragoumis, 'Historical Dictionary of Greece' (London 1995)]

10 '151'
After the Fire of 1917, the Jewish Community acquired the large No. 151 hospital, which belonged to the Italian army and was located east of the Thessaloniki. 75 wooden structures and many brick and cement structures were subsequently built to house the fire-stricken Jewish population.

11 3E (Ethniki Enosi Ellados)
lit. National Union of Greece, a fascist nationalist organization, founded in 1929 by George Kosmidis. It had about 2000 members, of whom the majority was immigrants. [Source: J. Hondros, 'Occupation and Resistance: the Greek Agony,' New York, 1983]

12 Campbell Fire (Pogrom on 29th June 1931)
Responsible for the arson of the poor neighborhood Campbell was the Ethniki Enosis Ellas - National Union Greece, short: EEE also known as the 3E or the 'Iron Helmets.' This organization was the backbone of fascism in Greece in the period between the two World Wars. It was established in Thessaloniki in 1927. The most important element of the 3E political voice was anti-Semitism, an expression mostly of the Christian traders of the city in order to displace the Jewish competitors. President of the organization was a merchant, Mr. G. Cormides, there was also a secretary, a banker, D. Haritopoulos, and chief spokesman Nikos Fardis, editor-in-chief of the newspaper Makedonia. The occasion for the outbreak of anti-Semitism in Thessaloniki was the inauguration of the new Maccabi Hall in June 1931. In a principal article signed by Nikos Fardis, from Saturday, 20th June 1931, it was said that Maccabi of Thessaloniki had placed itself in favor of an Autonomous Greek Macedonia. The journalist "revealed" the conspiracy of Jews, Bulgarians, Communists and Catholics against Macedonia. Two days later, the Ministry of the Interior confirmed the newspaper's allegations despite the strict denial of the Maccabi representatives. All the anti-Semitic and fascist organizations were aroused. This marked the beginning of the riots that resulted in the pogrom of

Campbell. Elefterios Venizelos was again involved after the 1917 fire, speaking at the parliament as Prime Minister, and talked with emphasis about the law-abiding stance of the Jewish population, but simultaneously permitted the prosecution of Maccabi for treason against the state. Let alone the fact that the newspaper Makedonia with the inflaming anti-Semitic publications was clearly pro-Venizelian. At the trial, held in Veroia ten months later, Fardis and the leaders of EEE were found not guilty while three refugees were found guilty, but with mitigating circumstances and therefore were freed on the spot. It is worth noting that at the 1933 general election, the Jews of Thessaloniki, in one block voted against Venizelos. [Source: Bernard Pierron, 'Juifs et chrétiens de la Grèce moderne,' Harmattan, Paris 1996, pp. 179-198]

13 Destruction of the Thessaloniki Jewish Cemetery

The cemetery of Thessaloniki existed since the 3rd century B.C.E. and was the largest of the Balkans with 500,000 graves. It was completely destroyed on 6th December 1942 by workers of the Municipality of Thessaloniki under the orders of the mayor and the governor of the city, Vassilis Simonides, who had been authorized by the Germans. Today the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki stands in its place.

14 Allatini Flourmill

Rich Jewish families coming from abroad contributed immensely to the economic and cultural revival of the Jewry of Thessaloniki. The Allatini family, a rich Jewish family from Italy, settled in Thessaloniki and established the first flourmill in the city in 1898.

15 Eleutherias Square

On 11th July 1942, following the order of the German Authority published by the local press, 6000-10.000 (depending on different estimations) male Jews aged from 18-45 were gathered in Eleutherias Square, in the commercial center of Thessaloniki. The aim was to enlist/mobilize them to forced labor works. Under the hot sun the armed soldiers forced them to remain standing for hours and imposed on them humiliating gymnastic exercises. The Wehrmacht army staff was taking photographs of the scene, while the Greek citizens were watching from their balconies. [Source: Marc Mazower, 'Inside Hitler's Greece' (Yale 1993)]

16 Group Marriages

The destruction of Jewish families in Thessaloniki led to the practice of group marriages that took place after the Holocaust and a related increase in baby births. According to Lewkowicz (1999), between 1945 and 1947 almost 39 marriages took place and between 1945 until 1951 402 births are registered at the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki.

17 Greek Civil War (1946-1949)

Also known as Kinima or Movement, fought from 1946 to 1949 by the Governmental forces, receiving logistical support by the United Kingdom at first and later by the United States, and the Democratic Army of Greece, the military branch of the Greek Communist Party (KKE), was the result of a highly polarized struggle between leftists and rightists which started from 1943 and

targeted the power vacuum that the German occupation during World War II had created. One of the first conflicts of the Cold War, according to some analysts it represents the first example of a post-war Western interference in the internal politics of a foreign country, and it marked the first serious test of the Churchill-Stalin percentages agreement. (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_Civil_War)

18 Colonels' coup and regime (1967-1974)

Led by Colonel Georgios Papadopoulos, army units overthrew the parliamentary government on 21st April 1967. The Colonels' coup was partly motivated by the likelihood that Georgios Papandreou's moderate Center Union Party would have won the impending elections. It established a seven-year long harsh military dictatorship that ended in July 1974.

19 Athens Polytechnic Uprising in 1973

a massive demonstration of popular rejection of the Greek military junta of 1967-1974. The uprising began on 14th November 1973, escalated to an open anti-junta revolt and ended in bloodshed in the early morning of 17th November after a series of events starting with a tank crashing through the gates of the Polytechnic. (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athens_Polytechnic_uprising)

20 Bourekitas (or borekas or borekitas)

"They are the culinary representatives of Greek, Balkan and Turkish Jews. The name comes from the Turkish word 'boerek' for pie... They are closer to Spanish and Portuguese empanadas." (Roden, 'The Book of Jewish Food', 1996: 240). In pre-war Salonica the Jewish women made the pastry themselves but nowadays mostly ready-made pastry is used.

21 Argyris Eftaliotis (real name

Kleanthis Michailidis) (1849-1923): Greek writer, who among others he propagated the modern language (dimotiki) and defended it against any accusation of being vulgar.

22 Baron Hirsch camp

One of the poorest Jewish working class neighborhoods near the old railway station in Salonica. During the German occupation it was turned into a ghetto, the so-called Baron Hirsch Camp, where the Nazis assembled the Jews before they deported them.