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NEW JERSEY MULTI-ETHNIC

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH

Bjorklund

May 5, 1980

Interviewer: Carol Ann Raines

Transcriber: Pat Thomas

Cassette #1, Side #1

Raines: What is your name?

Bjorklund: Antonete Bjorklund.

Raines: Your maiden name?

Bjorklund: Antonete ???.

Raines: And your age?

Bjorklund: 50.

Raines: Your place of birth?

Bjorklund: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Raines: And your nationality?

Bjorklund: Greek.

Raines: These first questions I'll ask in relation to your parents. Since you were born in the United States. When did either of your parents first decide to leave home? And do you know why they wanted to leave?

Bjorklund: My mother came over when she was 15 years old. It must have been 1921. And my father came over when he was 19 years.

My mother came from a small town outside of Spartas.

And my father - Well his is quite a story. He lived in Cyprus which was part of the British domain, at that time. So, there were to many brothers and sisters. And there was not enough to eat.

And there was quite a bit of ??? on the island between British and the Turks. Ruined one end of the island.

So, he decided to leave and he stowed away on a steamer. And ended up in the coast of Africa and had no idea where he was at the time.

Just decided to jump on the first steamer and that's the way he ended up in, I guess, it was Morocco or one of those costal lands. And when he got there, didn't speak a word of the native tongue. But somehow he met up with several Britishers. And somehow they got him over to the United States. He never did quite say how. But he ended up in the United States.

Raines: Where did they first go after leaving home?

Bjorklund: My mother?

Raines: Yeah.

Bjorklund: She landed in New York city where I believe all immigrants had to go there originally. Because they had to register at Ellis Island. Which is the island right off of New York City.

And my father got there too.

Raines: You told me how your father got here. How did your mother? Was she brought by others and if so, like why did they come?

Bjorklund: Well, the whole family migrated to the United States. My grandmother, my mother's mother had a brother here. Who had migrated, maybe, 10 -12 years before that. And he had saved enough money to send to my grandmother to bring all her children and my grandfather over.

Raines: Did either of your parents plan to return to their home land and if so why?

Bjorklund: No they didn't.

Raines: How did your mother come to this country? You told me how your father did? For instance how were the travel arrangements made?

Bjorklund: Well, grandmother's brother sent the money and they all boarded a ship and they came over by ship. I believe that was the only mode of transportation at that time. There had a few airplanes.

Raines: Did your family know anyone in this country before coming here and if so who?

Bjorklund: My father didn't know a soul in this country when he got here. My mother, like, well he uncle was here at the time.

Raines: Did anyone tell them about the United States before they came and if so what did they tell them?

Bjorklund: Oh boy. My mother's family had great expectations of the United States. And you've heard that old story where they expected to see the streets lined with gold and they really did. But when they got to New York City they found things quite different. Now my father didn't know what to expect. All he knew that he wanted a whole new beginning. A whole new life. He was quite an adventurer.

Raines: Do you know what either journey was like? Like where did they leave from and how long did the trip take and what were the conditions?

Bjorklund: Conditions of travel then were very, very poor. My mother and her family when they arrived here, they came the lowest class on travel. You had the tourist which were above. Which were normally the

American tourists who had visited Greece and come back. And they were given the lowest level. I don't know what you'd call that but they were down with animals, machinery. Anything that was brought back. So sleeping was very, very bad. They were full of lice. The food was terrible. The whole trip was quite an ordeal for the whole family.

Raines: You said that they came from New York. Do you know what happened when they arrived? For instance, what did immigrants do and did anyone meet them?

Bjorklund: That was another experience for them. Of course, you know Greeks have quite long names. And most of them that ended up on Ellis Island would have their name chopped in half. And be called the last half of their name or the first half. Which ever the authorities could spell.

When they came to Ellis Island, you have to remember these people didn't speak a word of English and the authorities didn't speak a word of their language. So, they had to sort of communicate with one another in one way or another. But they didn't have enough interpreters there with these masses of people coming off the boat. Okay, we're talking about several hundred immigrants. So what they would do, the men would sit there as close to they could to the persons name is the way they would stamp their cards and write them out.

My mother, for instance, ended up with a maiden name of Thomas. Which is ridiculous because her name was <sup>P. J. Jones</sup> ??? So, I don't know where they got Thomas out of that but they did. So they kept the name.

Raines: Do you know where they were trying to get to and what happened



when they arrived there?

Bjorklund: My father, first of all. He had no idea where he was going to go. He did end up on Ellis Island. Because the arthorities took him from the stramer he was on. Took him strait to Ellis Island. And like I said, he didn't know a soul here.

Boy they did a good job with his name too. Because he ended up <sup>K</sup>???, okay.

And he ended up in New York City but it was just to crowded. These people weren't used to these masses of people and huge buildings. They were mostly farm people. So he just thumed it from New York City. And he ended up in Philadelphia. And he spent the night -Well, somehow these people had an instinct to find groups of people of their own nationality. And somehow or other he did. And he ended up in the Greek community in Philadelphia. Which at that time would have been, porbably, South Philly. Somewhere in South Philly. So they put him up for days at at time. And then finally he did get a job as a dishwasher in a restaruant.

Now my mother, they had people waiting for them when they got here. So, they ended up in Maine. They went up by buss. All the way from New York City to Maine. And they weren't used to the cold climate there. So, it was very difficult for them.

I suppose you could class them the same as when we brought all the Vietnamese over here. They weren't used to the cold, either.

And the same as these people. They had the southern ??? climate, Greese and and all the suddend they are <sup>they</sup> ??? and taken to Maine.

Raines: What was their first impression of this place? And was it what they had expected?

- Bjorklund: My mother cried continuously for at least two weeks, she said. And my father, he didn't care. Anyplace was better than where he was. He missed his family at the time but that made no difference to him. He as quite determined to start all over again. And his biggest dream was to save enough money to get the rest of his brothers and sisters off of Cypris Island.
- I think most of the immigrants that came over all had the same idea about getting the rest of their family. They were very family oriented people.
- My mother didn't like it at all. Of course, no one in the family did because it was totaly different than what they had at home. She didn't like the cold weather in Maine.
- Raines: What was housing like? Do you know how they got it?
- Bjorklund: Well, as I said, my father just went from home to home, whoever would keep him for a while. And then eventually he did get his own, I guess you would call it a small apartment. At that time he must have been about in his late twenties, by the time he really settled in with his own place. He wondered from family to family for about nine years.
- And my mother, of course, they ended up in Maine, in an old house up there that was rented. And families, then, all lived together. Almost like a commune situation. In that everybody lived together.
- And they had so much snow in Maine, at the time, she still recalls. They had never seen snow before they landed here. So, the first winter there they had so much snow in Maine that she wondered why they had second story doors. And the reason for that was the snow was so deep that they would have to out of the second story. So, they didn't

like it to much.

Raines: Okay, now, your parents. What was their neighborhood like? For instance, did it have, I guess after they were married, did it have many shops, businesses, factories? What other kind of people lived there and things like that?

Bjorklund: Well, when grandmother's brother came to take them up there, he was a fisherman at that time in Maine. So, I guess the expected them all to work in the canneries. Because this is on a costal, well, you can't say exactly costal, maybe ten miles inland. But they all did fishing and canning up there, years ago. And my grandmother didn't like that. I guess they did that for about 8 months. And then when spring and summer came one of the brothers, in the meantime, had gone to live with a cousin in Philadelphia. And all the family, then again, migrated down to Philadelphia. That's where they ended up. They were in Maine 8 months or so.

Raines: Why did they settle in this neighborhood?

Bjorklund: In Philadelphia there were more Greeks. You know, they all seemed to live in sections of the city. The Greek people in one section, the Italians people, Irish, so forth and so on.

And my father was the same way.

And then when they came down, my mother and her sister and one brother all worked in a cigar factory. My mother must have been about 15 going on 16 at the time. And they all had to work.

Everybody worked. Grandmom didn't work but the girls did and my one uncle. And they wrapped cigars. There was a big place in Philly that used to be - Then a Greek happened to own the factory. So, he

gave all these people jobs.

Raines: Okay, a few questions on your education. Did you go to school?

Bjorklund: Oh, sure.

Raines: How far did you go?

Bjorklund: I finished high school.

Raines: Where?

Bjorklund: Upper Darbey, Pennsylvania.

Raines: When did you leave? After 12th grade?

Bjorklund: Yeah.

Raines: Why.

Bjorklund: I had to get out to work. In those days you didn't go to college like they do today.

Raines: What type of school did you go to? Upper Darbey High? A public school?

Bjorklund: Oh yes, a public school.

Raines: What other groups went to your school and how did they treat you?

Bjorklund: I didn't have any problems in high school. I should say we had more problems in elementary school. We lived in an integrated neighborhood, at that time. But during elementary school we lived in an integrated neighborhood. Now, I went to the public school there. My father and mother were considered foreigners. Which was alright. That didn't bother me. But if your father owned a restaurant, which at that time most Greeks did. That's one thing they had, was good basic cooking. So, they would open a neighborhood restaurant.

Raines: Your father owned a restaurant?

Bjorklund: My father ended up owning a restaurant.



(tape is interrupted)

Well, if a youngster got mad at you at school, right, he would holler, "Your father owns the greasy spoon or your a grease ball." And you had no defence because at that time there was just terrible discrimination against the Greeks, for some reason. Because they all owned businesses. I don't know if it was jealousy or what it was. But this was one of the favorite sayings then. I think they still say it, if I'm not mistaken.

Raines: What were your teachers like and how were you treated by them in comparison to how others were treated.

Bjorklund: Well, when your parents were foreign born I think you strive more. Because you wanted to be accepted by your teachers and playmates a little more. Like, I used to take things to school. Candy, anything I could find at home. Just so the children would treat me as an equal. I made out okay, because by the time I got to 7th grade they made me president of the class of which I was quite proud, at the time.

Raines: What was your first job? And what skills did you have? How did you get these skills?

Bjorklund: My first job as a sales clerk in John Wanamakers Store in Philadelphia. You have to remember, that was 1948. It was right after the war and jobs were very difficult to find. And especially for young girls. Because all the veterans were coming back from the war. And even in 1948 they were still looking for jobs. So, you had to take more or less anything you could get. Conditions weren't too good in 48. And my first job was a sales clerk at Wanamakers. I sold toys.

Raines: Do you remember how you got this job and how long you had it? If

you liked it?

Bjorklund: Well then you didn't write resumes you just used foot work. You went from store to store and office to office and filled out, in those days it was a very short application. As long as you could write, that was good enough for them. To write a sales slip. That's how I ended up in Wanamakers. I think I talked my way into that job.

Raines: How long did you have it and did you like it?

Bjorklund: I liked the job but I didn't have it to long. I think I was there about 6 months.

Raines: How far was your job from your work and how did you get to work?

Bjorklund: Oh boy. Well, I had gotten married a year after that. But before that, let's see. From where I lived you had to take a buss into 69th Street and then from there you would take the elivated train into work. Mass transportation.

Raines: What were your working conditions? Like your wage and what hours.

Bjorklund: You started out at \$17 dollars a week. And that was a full 48 hour week, in those days. Not 40 hours. 48 hours, you worked 6 days. 8 hours a day for 6 days at \$17 dollars a week. And a big thing was you made 1 percent commission on your sales.

Raines: How were you treated by your boss? And were you treated the same as the others?

Bjorklund: Well, I wasn't treated very well by my boss, at the time. Because, I guess, I had a lot of ambition. I wanted to get ahead as fast as I could. And at one time, I'll never forget it. I infringed on a womans territory who had been there for years. But she was out of the store at the time. And she had the doll section. And she was so furious at

the fact that I helped a customer and I made a sale at her doll counter that she reported me to the chief buyer. Who at that time was the manager of the department. And the manager really said some nasty things to me. So, I had a lot of spunk in those days. I just looked her right in the eye and told her she was horrible and so forth and so on. So, I just quit. That was my first experience.

Raines: What other ethnic groups did you work with? And did you get along well with the other workers?

Bjorklund: I got along fine with everybody except the one in the doll department. I think I really got along with her too. It's just the fact that that doll department was sacred to her.

Raines: Was there a union?

Bjorklund: No union, no. There weren't to many unions.

Raines: You've already told me why you left your first job. What was your next job?

Bjorklund: My next job was in an office. And I worked for a Philly magazine called "Your American Hardware Magazine". It was a very dull job. But I went there at \$20 dollars a week.

Raines: How were you treated by your boss there? Were you treated the same as the others?

Bjorklund: Yes, he was okay. But the magazine folded so I lost that job. I didn't even know about unemployment in those days. I don't think they had unemployment then.

Raines: Did you get along with the others?

Bjorklund: Oh sure.

Raines: Did you ever do any casual or part time work?

Bjorklund: No, not really. Well, yes I did to. But that was years later.

Raines: Were you ever unemployed?

Bjorklund: Oh yes.

Raines: How did you manage?

Bjorklund: Well, I was married at the time.

Raines: Okay, you've already told me your father's name, where he was born. And you've already told me your mother's name and where she was born. What were the names of your brothers and sisters? And where were they born? In what order and like how many years were between them? Things like that.

Bjorklund: First was Andrew. He's the eldest. Andrew is now 52. And there is myself. I'm 50. And then came Peter. Now Peter would be 42 -43. I've forgotten. Isn't that awful? Then there was Tina who came along quite a few years later. She's only 35.

Raines: Where were they all born?

Bjorklund: We were all born in Philadelphia.

Raines: What kind of work did your father do? Did he like?

Bjorklund: He always did restaruant work.

Raines: He was never unemployed?

Bjorklund: I don't think so. Not that I know of.

Raines: What kind of work did your mother do? Did she work outside the home?

Bjorklund: Her first job was in the cannery. Then she made the cigars. And then her brother started a restaruant and she worked in the restaruant. I guess after that she got married.

Raines: Who took care of the children while she was at work?



Bjorklund: I did. First my grandmother did and then when I was old enough I did.

Raines: As far as your parents are concerned who was the most influential member of the family. For instance who made the key decisions about where you would live?

Bjorklund: My father.

Raines: And housing?

Bjorklund: My father.

Raines: Disciplining the children?

Bjorklund: My mother.

Raines: Food?

Bjorklund: My mother.

Raines: Church?

Bjorklund: Definitely my mother.

Raines: Friends?

Bjorklund: My father.

Raines: Furniture, clothing?

Bjorklund: I guess my mother made all those decisions.

Raines: How about medical care, doctors and things like that?

Bjorklund: Mom.

Raines: And family trips?

Bjorklund: There were no family trips.

Raines: And the family budget?

Bjorklund: I don't think they had a budget in those days.

Raines: Who took care of the money?

Bjorklund: My mother.

Raines: What duties did the children have and did they differ according to age and sex?

Bjorklund: Duties, well, I can't remember duties when we were really small. But later, as soon as you could pick up a spoon you worked in the restaurant. Because they always had restaurants.

Raines: Then all your brothers and sisters worked in the restaurant?

Bjorklund: Definitely. On top of that, beside working in the restaurant I had to clean. And you didn't do the wash because you didn't have a washing machine. We used to send the laundry out. The ironing, cleaning, all that stuff.

Raines: What did your parents hope that you and your brothers and sisters would grow up to be?

Bjorklund: Probably restaurant people. They never said.

Raines: How did your family get along with relatives? Did any relatives live with you?

Bjorklund: In the beginning all the relatives got along fine. Because everybody was rather poor. You always had somebody living with you, grandmother, grandfather, uncle, I guess until, we'll say World War II. Which sort of changed everybody's way of living. There was always somebody that lived with you. Whether it be a grandmother, grandfather, an uncle. There always was another member of the family that lived with you. It just seemed to be the way it was.

Here's one example.

For instance, okay, my grandfather hated Philadelphia. My grandmother loved Philadelphia. My grandmother always lived with my mother as long as I could remember, until she was quite old. But my grandfather loved Chester, Pa. where his one daughter had married a man that had a restaurant there. And he decided he just wasn't going to live in

Philadelphia and he went to live with the daughter in Chester. And help them care for the children and what have you. And my grandmother lived in Philly. And he would come home to Philadelphia every weekend. And that was the way their marriage went for years and years and years. They liked each other well enough but - See, most of the marriages were arranged. I'm sure their's was years ago.

Raines: Your mom and dad's was too, wasn't it?

Bjorklund: Oh sure.

Raines: Were your relatives willing to give financial assistance in times of need?

Bjorklund: Oh definitely.

Raines: How were terms such as uncle, aunt and cousin used? What persons were called such?

Bjorklund: Well, all close friends were all aunts and uncles, definitely. It was ??? or ???. ??? meaning your aunt or ??? meaning your uncle. And it got to the point where you had so man ??? and ??? you didn't know who was for real.

Raines: What role did they play in the family?

Bjorklund: At that time there was not much entertainment. So, there was a lot of family and friends gatherings. You would have a party at the drop of a hat. Any occasion was a time for a party.

Raines: Do you ever remember a crisis in your family such as death, illness, unemployment or fire? And what happened and how did your family manage?

Bjorklund: I think death was an axcepted fact with the Greek people. They morned and morned but as a child you were always, you know. You had to go

to the viewing which lasted for several days. And you just accepted it all as a part as living.

But I think the time I do remember is during the depression years when I was very young. And I can still remember walking down. My father, at that time, didn't own his own restaruant. He had lost ??? because of the depression. And he was working for my uncle. And part of my father's pay, at that time, was a quart of milk and a loaf of bread each day. And I can still remember my brother, my older brother, and I walking down to this place to get that quart of milk and a loaf of bread. Because that was part of his wages.

Raines: Okay, now some questions on your marriage. Who did your marry?

Bjorklund: John Bjorklund.

Raines: When?

Bjorklund: 1949.

Raines: Where?

Bjorklund: Upper Darbey.

Raines: Was he someone from your own group?

Bjorklund: No.

Raines: And what did your family say when you married outside your own group?

Bjorklund: It was dreadful, horrors. In fact, my mother was so against it, she didn't even know him but she was so dreadfull against the whole thing that she would not come to my wedding. And my father didn't either. I don't think he really carred. But my mother, ???, she wouldn't come. So, my brother was my best man. Not my best man. What am I saying? He gave me away.



Raines: How did you meet your husband?

Bjorklund: In school.

Raines: How long did you know each other before you married?

Bjorklund: 3 years.

Raines: What kind of work did he do?

Bjorklund: Well, when I knew him he went right into the service after school.

Raines: What are the names of your children and when were they born, where?

Bjorklund: Carol, she was born in 1950 and she was born in Upper Darbey. Well, I should say Landsdown, really.

And then there was Catheryn and she was born in Philadelphia in 1953.

Then there was Johny, he was born in Philadelphia in 1954.

Raines: Now, I asked you some questions about your family structure according to your parents. Now I want to ask in your marriage. Who was the most influential member of the family and who made the key decisions about the following, where you would live?

Bjorklund: John did.

Raines: Housing?

Bjorklund: John.

Raines: Discaplining the children?

Bjorklund: I think we both did on that. I think that we didn't have much of a problem with discapline when the children were young. They were just good. And we never hit. We didn't believe in hitting. We always explained things to them and so forth and so on. There were a few times, I guess, they did get ???. Not beatings or anything to that respect.

Raines: How about food?

Bjorklund: It makes me laugh because I can remember my mother never hitting us. Like she would chase us with the broom, my brother and I especially, my oldest brother. And we'd hide under the bed and she'd try and reach under the bed and my brother would get her laughing and then she would forget why she was after us. So, I kind of did the same thing.

Raines: How about food?

Bjorklund: Who make the decisions about the food?

Raines: Yeah, did you cook ethnic foods or did you cook what your husband likes?

Bjorklund: My husband was not Greek so I figured I should cook what he liked. Because to me it didn't matter that much. I used to watch his mother cook and I sort of picked up a lot of her tricks in cooking and follow through. And that seemed to make him happy. And then I would throw in a few Greek dishes here and there. But that's how we ate. Of course in those days you didn't have much choice about what you ate. Because money was hard to come by.

Raines: How about church?

Bjorklund: In my childhood?

Raines: No, in your marriage.

Bjorklund: Well, we both attended the Episcopal Church.

Raines: That was who's decision?

Bjorklund: I think that was both our decision.

Raines: How about things like furniture and clothing?

Bjorklund: I'd say it was mutual decision. I can't say. We would always go and look at things together and so forth and so on.

Raines: Medical care, since you stopped it.

Bjorklund: I guess it was both. I don't know.

Raines: Family trips?

Bjorklund: Family trips in those days was a trip every Sunday out in the car, if you were lucky to have one. And that was usually made my dad. That was family day, Sunday. Always a trip in the country.

Raines: How about the family budget?

Bjorklund: You just try to stretch the dollar as far as you could. He took care of the bills then.

Raines: What duties did the childred have and did they differ according to age and sex?

Bjorklund: My oldest daughter had most duties at that time because, let's face it, I had to go to work to make ends meet. Just like they do today. Right? So, she took over and she learned to cook. She's a great cook.

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Begin Cassette #1, Side #2

Bjorklund: Carol, as I said, did the cooking and light cleaning. I never asked her to scrub the floors or anything like that. But I made all the children make their beds when I could. Just lite duties like that. Of course John took the trash out, Johnny that is. And Catheryn, well, she was a little hard to push. (chuckles) But what are you going to do?

Raines: How did your family, this is your married family. How did they get along with relatives?

Bjorklund: Very well. But of course living the distance that we do, of coures, lining in Milville we were quite a distance from the grandparents. Now, they seem to get along better with John's grandparents. Because they saw them more often, I suppose.

- Raines: Did any relatives ever live with you and if so who?
- Bjorklund: Just for a very brief time, John's mother lived with us when she was ill.
- Raines: Were your relatives willing to give financial assistance in time of need?
- Bjorklund: To us?
- Raines: ???.
- Bjorklund: Well, they'd have to be very dire time with me. I had two relatives that helped us at one time.
- Raines: How were terms such as uncle, aunt and cousin used in your family?
- Bjorklund: Actually, just ??? aunts and uncles other than a few close friends. Which they still call aunt or uncle.
- Raines: When did you first realize that you were a Greek?
- Bjorklund: I guess I was about 6 years old and starting school. Then I realize there was a difference than what my background was. Now you have to remember one thing. Like I said, we lived in an intergrated neighborhood. My father did own a little business and there just seem to be some prejudice right there. Between all the other kids and my own family. Although we did have friends but it seem like we had to kind of buy them, most of the time.
- Raines: What language was spoken at home?
- Bjorklund: Greek. And that is due to the fact that my grandparents, at that time, didn't speak English. And that was strange because my grandmother was a very loveably person. And she loved the comic papers for some reason. The comic strips in the paper. And we children, she would look at the pictures and we children every night, it was a ritual,



we would read the Phantom and Dick Tracy to her. Although she didn't understand the writing, she loved the pictures. And we would translate the words into Greek for her. And she followed Dick Tracy and the Phantom for years.

My grandmom used to travel all the way up to Maine by herself to see her brother who stayed in Maine. And we would pin little notes on her jacket. Imagine, a woman who didn't speak English, not one word, at that time. She was some gal. But that's how she traveled. All the way to Maine and other areas all by herself.

Raines: Tell me about some of your traditional holidays and festivals?

Bjorklund: Holidays were joyous as a child. Because Easter, at that time, was a bigger holiday than Christmas was, with the Greek people. ✓✓

And the biggest holiday, your birthday wasn't so terrific. We didn't celebrate the birthdays like children do today with the cakes and candles and so forth. Your name day was the most important.

For instance almost everybody, I would say everybody, was named after a saint in one way or another. We had many saints. And like for instance, my own name, Antonete, would be the feminine of Anthony. So, on Saint Anthony's birthday you would celebrate your own birthday.

It was very big.

Especially for the boys. Their name day was a bigger holiday than their actual birthday. They had big parties too. Big parties on name days.

Raines: How about marriages?

Bjorklund: Marriages were big affairs. Quite big. I don't think if you married outside of the Greek faith you were just looked down upon. You were

more or less cast out of the family group. Now, every thing - The war seem to change. The Second World War changed a lot of these feelings. We never dreamed of going out with anybody other than Greek boys and so forth and so on. But then thing just started to change for some reason or another. But if you marry outside of the Greek religion than you were just totally looked down upon. Sort of an outcast.

Raines: What other traditional Greek customs did your family follow?

Bjorklund: Well the traditional baptizimal which were big. Your Easter celebrations which were quite big. In other words, like for instance, Easter, all the children, everybody of any age went to church Easter Eve and that service used to last 3 or 4 hours with lit candles the whole times. Easter Eve was the big celebration for Easter Day. It was quite a beautiful ceremony. And like I said, Easter was one of the most joyous holidays of the year.

Raines: What did you usually eat and drink at your meals?

Bjorklund: Well, mine was kind of crazy. I mean, when I was young it was one thing and then when I was, you know, teens. . . .

Raines: I mean at home, when you lived at home.

Bjorklund: We never - The way they worked, Carol, we never ate that many meals together. In our later years, like teen years. My father used to work all days and my mother used to work all nights. So, I had to do all the cooking.

Raines: You cooked mostly Greek foods though, right?

Bjorklund: For my father I did.

Raines: And your grandma cook Greek and your mom cooked Greek?

Bjorklund: ??? ??, yeah.

Raines: Could you tell me what some of these foods and drinks were?

Bjorklund: Well the drinks. There was no soft drinks or anything like that. The men always drank, years ago, what they ???. Which is a very strong liquor. I don't know what it would be comparable here. I guess something like ??? only very much stronger. That was a traditional Greek drink. That ???.

And as for the foods, their Greek pastries were very sweet. Made with lots of honey. The Greeks used lots of honey in their baking. Lots of tomatoes in their basic cooking.

Lots of lamb. Lamb was the traditional food. Lamb and chicken and fish.

They didn't use beef much because, you see, when they all had lived in Greece beef was something they didn't have because they didn't raise cattle there like they do here. So, they ate the lamb, chicken and sea food.

Raines: How much did you learn about your families history other than what you told me?

Bjorklund: I learned more about my father's side of the family than I did my mother. My mother was always a very quiet closed person. She was never an open person where you could just sit and talk to much about family history. So, I didn't learn to much from her.

Raines: What about your dad? What did you learn about his?

Bjorklund: My father, he was something else. I learned lots of things about his native land and his brothers. And like I said, till the day he died, I guess, his fondest dream was to bring his whole family over here. I

think the think he regreted most in his life was that once he was here he never got back to see his mother who died while he was here. He always regreted that all his life.

Raines: How important was the church and religion to your family? This was when you were a child. And did your family attend a ??? ???.

Bjorklund: Religion was extremely important in the Greek faith. You went to church every Sunday, regardless of no matter what happened, you went to church. And the church services were very long. They tool 3 hours, at least 3 hours. And you didn't understand a word they said. Because most of it was done in ancient Greek. So, of course, the children, it was very boring. And then you had Sunday School. And it was just a part of life.

Raines: What community organizations did your family or you belong to?

Bjorklund: Well, we didn't belong to any. We were to busy working.

Raines: What did your family think about your playing with, working with or marrying persons who did not belong to your group? You told me about the marrying but how about playing.

Bjorklund: There weren't any other Greek children where I lived. Because it was in a rather poor neighborhood and we had blacks and Irish. We even had Chinese. And then there was us. So there weren't any Greek children in our neighborhood. For some reason, I don't know how we ended up in that particular neighborhood.

Raines: When the members of your family were not working, what did they do? How did they spend their leisure time?

Bjorklund: When I was a youngster? It was just family get togethers. When I was older there wasn't any leisure time. When I was a teenager the

war was on, Second World War. And your whole life seen to revolve around that stupid war. Because your parents worked 24 hours a day. My mother worked 16 and my father worked right along with her. They just worked day and night. There was no family life during that period. And my little sister arrived during that time too. So, I didn't have much time off. In fact they bought a home in the suburbs at the time. And then they had to travel from Upper Darbey to Philadelphia where the restaurant was. I was left in charge of the children at that time. I still had a younger brother and sister at home. So I had off Sundays from 2 to 4.

Raines: How did your family get along with other groups? And do you recall your family being treated badly by other groups and which groups?

Bjorklund: No they weren't treated badly by other groups. I can't say that. My parents got along with all kinds. Because they were in business and they just learned to adapt to any group, I suppose.

Raines: Did your family stay in touch with relatives in the homeland?

Bjorklund: Very much so.

Raines: Did you or members of your family make any return visits to the homeland? And when and what did they find it was like?

Bjorklund: Well, as I said, my father never did get back. It was just one thing after another. The depression and then the great war and then there were bad times after the war and so forth. So, he never got back. And my mother - That's interesting. My mother made it a point, after she retired, she was, I guess 65, with her first trip. She took a trip all the way over to Cyprus to find all dad's brothers and sisters over there. And she's had a very close relationship with them, there.

And they treat her royally when she goes. Because she took them a lot of things that to them were luxuries. To us they're just, you know. ??? ??? but to them they were luxuries.

And then she also rekindled all her family ties that were left in Greese. So, that's how that ended up. But dad never got back.

Raines: Now, as far as your community is concerned. What language was spoken in your community?

Bjorklund: English.

Raines: You lived in an intergrated neighborhood, you said, so there were no specific community holidays or traditions or celebrations?

Bjorklund: In our neighborhood? Oh sure. We had big block parties. We had children in those days though.

We were black and white and even yellow, right. But we all used to get together every night, during good wheather and play group games. They weren't organized group games. You would play like, if you were lucky enough to have a pair of skates you would play crack the whip on the skates. Or you would play half ball with an old ball and a broomstick. Nothing was organized then and the kids seemed to get along a lot better then for some reason. I guess because we were all fairly poor. Not that I was so poor but I joined in with the other kids to play these games. It was fun, the more I think about it.

Raines: What did the community think of other groups?

Bjorklund: Well, I can't say there are any special thoughts on that. I don't think we had as much - I can't answer that.

Raines: For instance who were the leaders in the community? Not names but like, you know?

Bjorklund: Ah, your politicians.

Raines: Why were they thought of as the leaders?

Bjorklund: Your local politicians, in those days there was a lot of graft and dishonesty in the city. And your politician, your local committee person, what ever have you could get almost anything you wanted done for you, at the time. That's who you saw. He was like a little godfather of the neighborhood, was your committee person.

Raines: What important community publications existed?

Bjorklund: I left one person out of that group. That was your local policeman. He was look at as your authority figure. Everybody respected him. And if he said jump you jumped. They were sort of looked at. And the family, in those days if you were catholic, your priest was your sorce of guidance, at that time. Because they were a lot stricter than they are today. I believe.

Raines: What important community publications existed?

Bjorklund: None in that neighborhood.

Raines: What major changes have taken place in the community ??? ???.

Bjorklund: Where I was raised? Oh, that's a terrible slum area now. In those days it was poor but it was clean. Everybody took pride in their home. And it was just, you could walk the streets at night. There was no fear. There was never any fear of muggings and all that nonsense. But today, I understand, as a matter of fact, I saw it on TV. That where I lived, right in that same block is considered the most dangerous in the whole city of Philadelphia. Which is almost unbelievable, as far as I'm concerned.

And as we got older, when I married, where our second apartment

was is one of the most beautiful middle class Jewish neighborhoods in all Philadelphia. It was a wonderful place to raise children. And now that's just a ghetto slum. It's horrible. Everybody has -

We went back to see my old landlady and lo and behold she's still there. She's the only person left of the original neighborhood that's still there. Bars all over the windows to protect themselves. It was just heartbreaking to see the area like that. It was just so lovely at one time. And that's going back to the 50's when it was like that.

Raines: A few things about political activity. I'll ask you these about your parents because they don't apply to you. Did your parents become citizens?

Bjorklund: Oh definitely. That was a proud moment of my father's life. But to my mother that was one of the happiest times of her life. Because they were so proud to have been - They had to study. Years ago you went before the judge or whoever, you know, swore you in at that time. And you had to answer all those questions. And I can still remember, when I was a youngster tutoring mom so that she would know the answers. I can say that she knew more about American history that I can remember today.

Raines: Were either of them ever afraid of being deported? And did they ever know anyone who was deported?

Bjorklund: No, they weren't afraid of being deported because they were hard working citizens. And they did it the legal way coming through the island and so forth. I don't think they knew of anybody that was deported. If they did I don't know of them.

Raines: This is about you. Have you ever voted?



Bjorklund: Yes.

Raines: Why?

Bjorklund: I just always felt it was the thing to do.

Raines: Are you a regular voter.

Bjorklund: Yes.

Raines: What political organizations have you joined?

Bjorklund: At this point, well, I'm republican committee woman. I have been for a few years and that's the party I belong to at this point.

Raines: Do you belong to any other organizations?

Bjorklund: At this point of my life just the woman's club.

Raines: Now, here's a few other questions.

Bjorklund: Can I just inject something about my parents political views at the time?

Raines: Sure.

Bjorklund: When you lived in Philadelphia in those years, now we're going back to the late 30's and 40's. If you owned a business and you lived in a democratic neighborhood you deninitely were registered democrat. Because you went with the tide. You more or less did not have a choice of which party you belonged to. In other words, you rode the coat tail of any party that was in power at that time. Becuas they all had their graft and they all had their crooked politicians. There was an awful lot of graft in Philly in the late 30's and 40's. And I can still remember, when I was in my early teens, talk about graft. And having to pay off policeman. Pay off inspectors and anybody else who had their hand out. My father always had envelopes ready. And that's the truth.

Raines: Few questions about foldlure and folklife. What do you think were the main differences between the way of life in the homeland and after the immigration took place to here?

Bjorklund: When they migrated. It makes them sound like birds. (chuckles) Over there life, I guess, was very simple. They all worked on the farm. And I guess when they came here they thought that - I don't know what they thought they really thought they were going to find. They just were followers. If one got over here and they said you come, they came. And that's the way I think a lot of them got here. They weren't sure what they were going to find when they got here. I know my mother said that she was very unhappy for the first few years she was here. She had just always lived on a farm. It's a lot different.

Raines: What kind of games do you remember in your family that were played by the children or the adults?

Bjorklund: The men always played cards. Greeks are great card players. They ✓✓ are gamblers at heart, I suppose, about everything in life. But anyhow, as childre we played just about the same games. We were Americanized children at that time, of course. And we played bingo and checkers and jump rope and all that sort of thing. Hop scotch and crack the whip with skates. Our big treat of the week was, then we had a local playground. That was the only place you could go swimming. And everybody went there and they had girls days and boys days. They even segregated the girls from the boys in those days. And like the girls all went swimming for 45 minutes and then they'd blow the wistle and we'd get out.

They didn't have cars. If you had a car in those days you were wealthy. You went by trolley car or bus. And that's why there were no family trips.

Like a vacation we'd be getting on the trolley car and visiting a relative 12 or 13 miles away. That was your vacation.

Raines: Do you remember any special songs or stories, proverbs, things like that that passed down through your family? Like for instance what occasions were they performed and are they still remembered?

Bjorklund: Well, there was one tradition, for instance, the breaking of the dishes. I guess you've seen that at Greek weddings. That's supposed to mean good luck.

And then names days especially, the men loved to show off with their dancing. And that was a big occasion, the men dancing. And the women were sort of on the sidelines. After a while you were allowed to join in. But the men dancing at the name days and christenings and weddings was the big event of the night. My father was a fantastic dancer, Greek dancing.

And then they would have like a ritual of throwing money. Silver coins at that time. I don't know, for some reason they'd get around and the men would all dig in their pockets and pull out all the silver change they had and just throw it up in the air wildly and all the children would scramble to get it. And that was the big event of any party for the children.

Children were included in every celebration. They weren't excluded. If you had a wedding everybody went. You didn't say, you know, adult only or no children. Everybody went. It was a family thing, in those days.

A lot of these traditions have vanished and I think it's all because of television, the automobile. Families aren't as close today as they were years ago.

Raines: Do you remember anything about crafts that were practiced in your family or in your community?

Bjorklund: Crafts? I used to make a few jugs of wine illegally but, you now in the cellar. (chuckles)

Raines: (chuckles)

Bjorklund: That's about all the crafts we had.

Raines: What kind of heirlooms or traditional clothing had been kept?

Bjorklund: My mother - When your husband died years ago you wore black. Or if your father died, for him you wore black. So, I can only remember my mother in black for the past 30 years. Because she just wore black because my grandfather had died, her brother had died and then my father died. And it's only been the past couple of years that she has come out wearing black. She always black. So, that's one of the old customs.

You always had to wear a hat or something on your head when you went to church. Out of respect, the women.

As for the clothing, I can't say that any of the traditional garb is still here.

I'll tell you what they all do though. All the old timers still have their own little shrines in the bedrooms of their home. Or it could be in their livingroom or their kitchen or their diningroom. But they have the ???. That's holy pictures. And incense burning. And they

still have that. Most of them. The old timers. I can't say that the modern people do this. My mother, for instance, still in her bedroom she still has her ??? and her incense burning.

Raines: How about any other heirlooms? Can you remember anything that she kept and treasures?

Bjorklund: No, anything that she had and kept and treasured, thieves had broken into her house one time and taken all her treasures. All her little things.

But when she goes to Greese she still brings back the holly water from the monks in Cypris when she visits my father's people. And she still brings back the little homemade crosses that the monks make there and that the sisters make there in Cypris. These little things still mean a lot to her.

One time on one of her trips when she came back she brought back 12 bottles of ???.

Raines: Do you know of any traditional home remedies or cures?

Bjorklund: I sure do.

Raines: Are they still used?

Bjorklund: No. They're not used, thank god. There was one I shall never, never ✓✓ forget. When you had a cold, I can still remember this so vividly. They would get a round drinking glass. A heavy drinking glass. And they believed that heat would get rid of a cold. And they would actually take a piece of cotton throw it in this glass and lite it with a match and then plunk it right on the back of a person, on a persons back. And this would create a suction. And they would leave it on there until the persons back was all red and then pull it off. It was

unbelievable but that's one thing they did. That's an old one, right.

Get a rid of a cold. You had terrible burns.

Another one was every household if you had a grandmom in it had the old turkey quill. This sounds crazy but it worked every time. If you were chokeing or you had to vomit something up or what have you.

Any reason what so ever that quill went right down your throat.

And Castoria. When the Greeks found out about Castoria they used that for everything. There was always a bottle of Castoria in the house. That brought up a bad experience one time.

But anyhow, this quill I was telling you about. That's very famous and it worked. Think about it. A long flexible quill. And if a child was choking. You know how childred get things caught in their throat. Down went the quill. Solved that problem right away. You didn't have to go to the hospital for x-rays. Probing and all this. The quill either got it down or your threw it up. So, that's about the two I remember the most.

Raines: Okay, that concludes the official questions of the interview. Is there anything you want to talk about?

Bjorklund: One other interesting point that I do remember is when we were ✓  
youngsters to keep up the language and so forth and so on you had to go to what they call Greek school on top of American school. And twice a week you would treak up to Greek school. And it took Greek lessons to learn to read and write. And we kept that up for years. I guess I was about 12 by the time I finished.

My brother never did learn. But the girls were forced to do a lot more than the boys were. Like my mother insisted I take all these

different lessons when I was a youngster. Whether I had any talent or not you went to dancing school. I don't know whether it was trying to keep up with the American group or what but you went to dancing school. Even if you couldn't dance and didn't have any interest in it. My mother found an old mandolin one time in the closet that belonged to an uncle. She insisted I take mandolin lessons which I didn't do well at all.

One time she insisted I play the piano. I don't know why she thought I had all this talent. I had none. Paid a fortune in those days, \$50 dollars to have this horrible piano hoisted up to the second floor over our restaurant where we lived. Brought it in the house. I took 8 lessons and we left it there when we moved because we couldn't get it out of the house.

But my mother, I guess secretly wanted me to be some kind of performer but I didn't turn out to be one. Thank heaven for show biz. So, I guess that's about everything.

Raines:      Okay, thank you.