



1980-01-01

Gonos, Sylvia interview

Carole Hensley

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/witw>

Recommended Citation

Hensley, Carole, "Gonos, Sylvia interview" (1980). *Delta Women Oral Histories*. 1.
<https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/witw/1>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Western Americana at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Delta Women Oral Histories by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact mgibney@pacific.edu.

Stockton Immigrant Women Oral History Collection

by Sally Miller

Gonos, Sylvia (Greek)

July 16th, 1980

Interviewed by Carole Hensley

Transcribed by Devon Clayton

[TAPE 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape.]

Hensley: Starting with your early life and I'd like to know where you born and when?

Sylvia Gonos: I was born in Aerioni, A-E-R-N-I-O-N-I. That's upside down in a couple hours(?). I was raised in Grezzo, you know that [?]. And I was born 1914, December 6th.

Hensley: Um, how long did you live there?

Gonos: Oh I lived there, I went two years old and uhh 16. So I lived there 14 years.

Hensley: When did you come to the United States?

Gonos: I came over here when I was 18, and that it was 1934.

Hensley: Do you remember during what month?

Gonos: February.....14th.

Hensley: [laughs] Valentine's Day. Um did you come directly to Stockton?

Gonos: No I came directly to Tracy!

Hensley: Tracy.

Gonos: And I live in Tracy for 45 years.

Hensley: How many brothers and sisters did you have when you came here?

Gonos: Eight. Four brothers and four sisters.

Hensley: Oh, and did they all come with you?

Gonos: No, I brought uh 3.

Hensley: You brought 3 brothers...?

Gonos: I brought 2 brothers and a sister.

Hensley: Um, your parents didn't come with you?

Gonos: No.

Hensley: Were you the youngest? Oldest?

Gonos: I was the oldest.

Hensley: The oldest.

Gonos: My husband came from Tracy, he was here before, and he came to Greece...1933, and we met and I got married Christmas Day...

Hensley: In Greece?

Gonos: In Greece. And then he brought me back, and I live in Tracy...and...1950 I went back to Greece.

Hensley: Did you stay in Greece when you went back in 1950?

Gonos: No, I just went for a 3 months. And in 51'...no 48 I brought my sister, and she lives in San Jose.

Hensley: How old was your sister when you brought her over?

Gonos: Uh...she was 19. And she married a boy from Manteca. Greek boy.

Hensley: And your husband, is he Greek?

Gonos: Yeah.

Hensley: Was he raised up here in Tracy or was he from Greece originally?

Gonos: He was from Greece, and he had came over here 19[0]8 and then he went to 1910. Then he went back to Greece 1912 for the war, then he got back 1914-1915 and that's when I was born, he was older than I am.

Hensley: [laughs] Yes.

Gonos: So...

Hensley: Did you ever go to school in Greece?

Gonos: I went to school in Greece, I have good education. I have go to high school, and I have going night...because the, the, grades from the konstanucoli (?) from Turkey, it came to this, you know when they have the war, and they suss him out they came to Grian (?) and because the school, they didn't have rooms, so the people used to live in the schools. So my father took me out of that school, and then I went to private school.

Hensley: Oh, what did your father do for a living?

Gonos: He was a...well...one time he was what you call police, and then after he didn't like to move around, you know have children, so he had a wholesale house. And uh, a factory that they cut the lumber, the wood for the homes and things like that.

Hensley: Oh so he had his own business more or less for a while?

Gonos: Uh for uh, 16 after 16, when I was 16 then he moved back to Aernioni, and he was secretary to the county and that's when I left and came over here.

Hensley: As secretary to the county, is that like a mayor or...?

Gonos: No, no secretary, like a secretary like we have over here like Larry Gills(?) now, and at that time it was...

Hensley: Oh, oh I thought it was some kind of position. Did your mother work also?

Gonos: No. Yeah. Excuse me. My mother had grocery store all her life. [laughs]. Because...uh...I had two sisters first, before me, and they died, so my father took two orphans in the house to raise them. And marry them after, because in Greek, you got to marry, you have to pay dowry how you call it. So then he took those two girls, you know after the family grow my mother, she, didn't have much to do in the house, you know two servants, you know there were plenty. So she always, our house, was upstairs and downstairs, and she had the grocery store

Hensley: You had servants, also?

Gonos: We had two.

Hensley: These two orphans, were they like brothers, sisters to you, or?

Gonos: Well...they were like the servants.

Hensley: Oh.

Gonos: But I mean my mother, my father mother they didn't call them servants or anything like that. They sit and eat at the table with us and the only thing, if anything has to be done, you know they do it. You know if someone wants water or some more bread they always get up. But uh, um, they raised with us, she got married, I got married 1934 she got married 1930. So my father had to pay her dowry, and all that.

Hensley: How did you and your brothers and sisters react toward them. Did you treat them like your own?

Gonos: We liked. We thought they were like us, we didn't separate them. Yeah I was, the (?), I was like over here you say the best man.

Hensley: Oh bridesmaid.

Gonos: I was the was the, (?) which was the...I don't know, have you ever been to a Greek wedding.

Hensley: No, I haven't.

Gonos: Oh you should once, it's beautiful. And they change the rings and they change the wreaths in the hair. So you have to have somebody they call (?), and I was the (?). So really we loved them, we did.

Hensley: Were they much older than you, younger than you?

Gonos: Yeah, oh they were older.

Hensley: Let's see. How did you feel when you left the old country?

Gonos: Uh, you know. When somebody comes from United States to Greece, they say so many things, you know. The nice days like Florida, even my husband used to tell me you know. And you know my father, he didn't want me to come, you know he said, no you still too young, but I wanted to; I like to see United States. I used to have an Aunt in (?), she used to say oh we have this and we have that. So I said to my father no I will go, so by leaving I came. Well in my inspection it was not what I expected, because it

was a Depression at that time, and my husband used to work 3 days on the regular he was can inspector.

Hensley: He was what?

Gonos: A can inspector.

Hensley: A cutting inspector...

Gonos: Yeah he inspects the cars.

Hensley: Oh a car.

Gonos: Yes. So he used to (?) tracks, and (?) house and I had 14 year old house, but because I asked to come over here, you know, I never have say anything, I never have brought anything from father. I have misfortunate that my father died year after that. So he left my little brother, the littlest one was two years old, and I was you know 18-19 when he died. But he work good, because after that I help him as best I can. And then the war start 1939, of course, I couldn't send anything, I couldn't get a letter, or anything. So I work over here, for the government for two years.

Hensley: Doing what?

Gonos: I used to drive a hoist.

Hensley: [laughing]

Gonos: You know whats hoist?

Hensley: Like in a factory or something?

Gonos: Yeah, well I used to you. Well you know the quarry masters, outside Tracy, I worked there for two years. First I went as a laborer because they needed a lot of help uh, to man tents and things like that. So I went over there and I had the lieutenant who used to come say Sylvia don't you like something else to do instead, you know, and I say no, he said don't you want to do in the office, I say I'm Greek I can't English, if you know Greek I will but I don't know anything like that, then he said, well one day I said you come teach me to drive that. I didn't even know the name, even you know.

Hensley: You just knew you wanted to drive it.

Gonos: So he said you think you can do you and said yeah I'll try. So I did very good, I used to be very good hoister. And I worked two years but then I have little kids and they were making it impossible.

Hensley: Oh when did you have your children?

Gonos: I have a 1937 and 1938.

Hensley: A boy and a girl?

Gonos: A boy and girl. So then I quit, and I went to work in a grocery store for 2 years. And because of that I went to work when my kids go to school and I get off when they, I take lunch for 3 o clock, and left so get them something to eat, change their clothes, go back to work my husband, 3:30 used to come home.

Hensley: So how long were you married before you started working at a hoist?

Gonos: Oh I met him in 1933, and uh, and I go to work 1942, well I worked from 40-44, 2 years in a government facility and 2 in a grocery store.

Hensley: And, while you were married did you work any other times besides that?

Gonos: No, just that. Well after that I opened my own store.

Hensley: Oh in Tracy?

Gonos: In Tracy, I open, you know it was the war and Tracy started to grow. You know used to be 3,500 people that's when I came, and then by 1942 it went to 10,000 people so they have a section in Tracy and I used to have a friend Mr. Stockens he was the mayor in Tracy. So I asked him can I open a neighborhood store down there, because I thought you know I saw that the town growth, and he said sure, go see Mr. Shaden, he was a lawyer because he was the one making plans for the city. So he said you go and ask him where, and make it happen. So I when I went and asked him and he said any place that you are two blocks away from school. They didn't want it close to school because they didn't want to mess with the kids, so I opened a store 1946, store and I had it up to 48. In 48 I sold it, because I was going to go back to Greece permanent. My husband wanted to go back. But then my brother-in law from Athens, he's a doctor, so he arrived and said you must be crazy because everyone wants to leave Greece because it was communist at that time and you want to come back. So then I told my husband if we don't go now, we never go. Because my kids, at the time start to go to school, and high school, and I hate to take them out of there, and now they're going to think it's nothing. I turned that on, and I built Groraco, and sell lots because we had 3 acres there, so I just build and I had it up to 1970 and I sold it in 70.

Hensley: You mentioned that your brother in law came from Athens, were he was a doctor during?

Gonos: He's a doctor in Athens, he still is, other there.

Hensley: He still is, over there, but he came and he was mentioning about the communists...

Gonos: He wrote in a letter when we told him.

Hensley: How do you think, how was he feeling about this, about everything that was happening there with Mussolini at this time?

Gonos: Oh, that it was awful. You know when I, all the times I went over there, it didn't feel as bad, when the Germans were there, or the Italians. They have hard times, but then it was different people, back when communists, they were you know, our people, Greeks to Greeks or something like that, and you know, it was hard. That was the worst thing.

Hensley: When you went over there in 1950 did you see? Could you see it more obviously?

Gonos: Oh yes.

Hensley: Um, let's see...when did you ever come to Stockton?

Gonos: With Stockton, I at least came 3 years ago. To see my son, uh...my son he is a priest, but then he did the, it's like [?] (Words jumbled)...but then he didn't like it very much; I know he didn't like the job, he was, he had some ire with the bishop, but then my son is a different person. He likes to help the kids, so he likes to...be with the kids. So he was in Layette and he worked in Danville, and then somebody told him, that the vice principal in Lodi, in the high school, so then he thought he'd try that. Well he came, and he didn't like that, being there, he said because I like to be able to help with kids, and vice principals is just to punish, or to call the police to pick up, you know, and he said that's not for me, I want to help the kids. So now he uh...he's for the, the retard children, and the bad kids, and the this and that. Oh...(talking to someone in background) Casey, what uh...what is the school, now?

Daughter in law, Casey (?): Well let's see, he is a uh a side administrator in Contra Costa County Special Education programs. He administers two schools, one for emotionally handicapped and the other for physical.

Hensley: Oh I see.

Gonos: That's all I want to know, I just didn't know.

Daughter in law: He's in special education, an administrator in special education.

Hensley: Um, what do you?

Daughter in law: I'm a district librarian at Tracy Elementary School.

Hensley: Oh, I see. So your commuting back and forth.

Gonos: Yes, one goes to Tracy, the other goes to Pittsburgh, Antioch.

Daughter in law: Pittsburgh, next to Walnut Creek.

Gonos: Walnut Creek...eh too much.

Hensley: Oh...and where does he live?

Gonos: Here, that's his house...their house.

Hensley: Oh, oh I see, I was thinking that you were her daughter.

Gonos: Oh no that's my daughter in law. My daughter is in San Jose.

Hensley: What does she do there?

Gonos: She's a teacher.

Hensley: Everyone's in education.

Gonos: Yeah.

Hensley: I'm sorry (laughs).

Daughter in law: Can I get you anything?

Hensley: I have some water thank you.

Daughter in law: Would you like a soda or anything?

Hensley: I'm fine, thanks.

Daughter in law: Would you like some coffee?

Gonos: No, no thank you.

Hensley: Um, when you first got here, you said you were living by the railroad, where your husband worked, how long were you staying there? Did you live there?

Gonos: Well I lived there, 1924-1937 and then we moved about 4 blocks down, still across the tracks of the railroad, but we had 3 acres, we bought the acres then we build our house there. So I still lived there until 1946, then 1946 I moved and build a house and stores and all that...

Hensley: Was your neighborhood; were there a lot of other Greek people there? Or were there other immigrants there?

Gonos: No, no.

Hensley: What was the neighborhood like?

Gonos: There were a lot of Mexicans and coloreds, and uh you know, but at that time people were good regardless what they were, we never even lock our doors. You know, and uh, I didn't like it...living there, on account of the railroad. You know, because after my kids grow up, I told my husband we have to take them back and forth to school, and back and forth to you know, they want to go some place, and that's why I wanted to move to the other side of town. See Tracy comes, I don't know how familiar you are with Tracy, but when you see, after 63 it was that side, and route 63 down, then the highway and the, you know. So then I told my husband we had to move from there on account of, when we go back and forth that was all I would do, you know, take them there, so that's why we moved. Then over here in the other house, there were a couple Greeks and some Portuguese, Americans.

Hensley: Did you ever meet, when did you start meeting very many Greeks?

Gonos: Oh so as I get in.

Hensley: Did they help you?

Gonos: Because I came to church here, see we had only one church here.

Hensley: In Stockton?

Gonos: In Stockton. So Tracy, Manteca, Lodi, and Pittsburgh all used to come here. So I used to come here every Sunday I was 19 years present, logged a lot of time in that church, the society for the poor to help the poor. So I was 19 years present.

Hensley: So you're very active in the church?

Gonos: I'm very active.

Hensley: Are you still as active?

Gonos: I'm still there.

Hensley: Really? That's great. Um, what languages were spoken in your home when you got here to the United States, did you still speak...

Gonos: I used to speak uh, my son was 6 I speak Greek, then when he went to school he didn't know any English, and he really was so mad, because he had no idea, that's why he stayed back a year in the first grade, and my daughter, they were a year apart, so they finished high school together, they finish college together, everything. Because I kept him back, and he didn't like that, so I started to speak English. After I had the store for so many years I think I did better then, than I do right now.

Hensley: Did your son or your daughter have any problems in school because of the language? Besides this sides academic...

Gonos: No, no.

Hensley: Nothing at all.

Gonos: Only the first year.

Hensley: How did you learn English?

Gonos: Uh, I tell you I just learn English, by the funnies. I usually have a brother in law living with us, and uh, every night he used to read the funnies to me, and by seeing the pictures, you know, that's how I start reading. I didn't go to school over here, I'm sorry to say, really, because, in this country that's the only thing that's good, it used to be bad, it's not now. But anything you want to make yourself you can, and I should have gone to school. But because I was living close to the tracks, and I couldn't drive or anything, and I didn't go to school, and my husband he didn't like me to learn.

Hensley: Why?

Gonos: Because he wanted to go back to Greece, that's his downfall, you know, he really, he was a very good man and he loved this country, and um...when the president Roosevelt, he used to tell me, you know, that man is gonna give the United States to the dogs, because the first time he was alright, but then after with all those unions and things like that, and he thought, and he was right, that he really, people did demand too much, the more you give them and the more they want. You know, when I work in the government, and you know they used to give us 10 min an hour for smoking or anything like that.

Hensley: An hour?

Gonos: An hour!

Hensley: That's a lot!

Gonos: It is a lot, and you know some people they took it, they it, I don't know, everything to take. So one time you know, they...when I blow the whistle for them to come to work, instead of coming back they go to bathroom, when they stay 10 minutes out to smoke and 10 minutes in there, that's 20 minutes, you know. So then the government stop it, only one rest period, you know, so the ladies start complain, I say we brought that on ourselves, I said why, don't you go one time to bathroom, one time to smoke, you know, like you don't have to. And that's what happened with that. So my husband anyhow, he didn't, he wanted to go back, we didn't.

Hensley: Did your husband go to school at all over here?

Gonos: No, he didn't. No and he really had excellent education, he was through high school and that time to have been through high school. My father in law he believe all his kids, all go through high school, and he had a doctor, a lawyer, and he really believed in education for the boys, not for the girls.

Hensley: Not for the girls.

Gonos: Not for the girls because that was 1910 you know.

Hensley: Did you and your husband ever have anyone else living in the house with you besides your children? Like any relatives at all.

Gonos: No. Only when I first came it was my brother in law and his wife, and we share a house, those two rooms I was telling you.

Hensley: Did you all come here together?

Gonos: No, they were over here, she was an American girl. But you see at that time it was depression, so Hugh used to work on the railroad but then he was laid off, and my husband he was working the railroad since 1910, 1912, then he came over here. So in 1934 only two people who used to work in Tracy, there was an Italian (?) and my husband, and they worked 3 days a week, then after a couple years, then my brother in law went back to work, you know. In meantime my sister in law died she was 27 years old.

Hensley: How did she die?

Gonos: Typhoid fever, and then people, the doctors didn't know she had typhoid fever, they took her to the hospital there, and up to 10 days to find out she did have, so they put them outside in French Camp, outside the room because they don't want to the disease and all that. So she die of double pneumonia, so then he died in 1929.

Hensley: Um, when you were raising up your children, were you pretty strict with them? Did you give them, did you make them work around the house or did they have chores?

Gonos: They sure did. They sure did. Although my son uh, my daughter more. You know I was uh, I used to have the store of course, and then the house it was always in the back, and if I come to cook, and then the kids come in the store and then there was the dishes, and my son he used to like to Sea scouts...Sea scouts they're like boy scouts.

Hensley: Sea scouts...cub scouts maybe?

Gonos: No it's the boy scouts and then it's the sea scouts, like the navy. They have boat, my son loved that, I used to give, I gave a spaghetti dinner one time to collect some money because they wanted to buy that boat. So they collect \$600 I think and bought a boat. And so Saturday he go to that, and then he stay in the store Sunday, but if he doesn't go then...they love work.

Hensley: Do you remember when they first started working for pay?

Gonos: We don't pay.

Hensley: Oh, no I'm talking about when they went out and found a job on their own, like were employed by somebody else?

Gonos: Well they didn't.

Hensley: They didn't?

Gonos: They didn't. The only, they did after they finish, well my son he went to Boston for 5 years.

Hensley: He went to Boston? For what?

Gonos: To become a priest.

Hensley: Oh I see.

Gonos: And then my daughter she went to New York to become a Greek school teacher.

Hensley: A Greek school teacher?

Gonos: And I told her why you want a Greek school teacher, you know the Greek school teachers, they only pay \$250 a month at that time, you know. But she said well you want your son to go, but you don't want me to go, she took it that way, so I said okay go ahead. So she went to school outside of New York, it's across the street, I mean across the river from the West Point, you know. And really it's a beautiful school and uh the street, and it runs by a church. And then Boston is still run by a church, that is for to become a priest. So he went over there 5 years, and she went over there 4 years, so when they get back they decide. You want some more water?

Hensley: (coughing) No it just went down the wrong way.

Gonos: So when they get back over here, they went to work. And she was working for the Greek school here, Tracy, Lodi and Manteca, and Stockton, and it paid \$250 and by then she get tired, you know, so in the meantime she went to College of the Pacific. So they give a two years credit.

Hensley: For what she had done in New York?

Gonos: In New York, she went to the Modesto one for the first year of college, and then she went to New York for 4 years. So then they give her 2.5 years here, so she had to go a year and half. And then my son, he want to work in uh, ah (?), well it's a jail in French Camp, outside of French Camp, it's a jail for kids.

Hensley: Juvenile Hall?

Gonos: Yeah. That's what it is. So he went to work to over there, my son loves helping kids, and he really...so he work over there at night and go to college in the day time, so he finished in a year and half, and they give him more credit than they give to Mary. So then he became a school teacher and counselor.

Hensley: Oh really. When they were growing up were you strict about dating or anything like that?

Gonos: Yes. I mean, I didn't believe in a date. I mean I did mine when they go with groups. My daughter she was a rainbow girl, she went out to the church and she an advisor and my son was in the...and he was the you know. It just happened when she was advisor, he was I don't how you call the president of, you know. So I had to have two dinners, and one time I was so mad because they just happen, you know they brought one, and I had to have one party for her, and it was just so much.

Hensley: Now that you mention foods, um do you still celebrate Greek customs and holidays here, now that you're here? Like what are they and what do you do?

Gonos: Well we have almost the same holidays. But you know the only thing we have a name day celebration that is the saying your name out. So like if my son is V(?), is him name day. So we have open house and you know, and then we have the Independence Day, that's 25th of March. Then we have Christmas and Easter, and Easter is a, is not the same time, you know every four years we have the same time.

Hensley: You're on a different calendar...

Gonos: Yes, different calendar, but is the same thing, you know? And, I think that's about it.

Hensley: Do your children...well naturally your son does because you live here, but does your daughter, does she still celebrate these in her home also, like you might have?

Gonos: Yes, she does.

Hensley: Well she married a Greek man. Um, how do you think people now, who come over here from Greece, react to the United States as it is?

Gonos: I tell you, the Greeks that come now, they are very lucky; they find everything easy because they have somebody here. Like my brothers when they came, they have me, you know, then they find easy and they and the money is different. You know that time we used to get \$55 every two weeks to make a living out of it. But then, now it's a much easier, and the new generation from Greece is like over here, they are more open. They work hard, but they make something out of themselves, that we didn't have chance, you know. Very many Greeks they have hard time when they first came, like my husband, you know 1910, 1912, they have to wash their own clothes, you know all that thing, they didn't find this easy, as the new generation finds it.

Hensley: Did your husband help you with your store, at all?

Gonos: Well my husband didn't help me in the store because he didn't like the store.

Hensley: He didn't!

Gonos: No. My husband believes to work 8 hours, and then come home, and have yard and have chickens, and they have rabbits, and they have pigeons and go hunting, he used to love to go hunting, you know. And after I open the store, he said "you put me in jail" because he got his pension, you know, so of course he helped me in store. And uh, no, the Greek people they came now, they find easy, not like in depressions. You know, like used to tell my husband all the time, I said why with all the education, you know, to do something better of themselves, they didn't know anything about anything about a road, or how to make tracks, they didn't you know they worked so hard, I said "why" you know. They should do the thing that know, they used to be in farming, they used to have a lot of lambs, they used to be...you know things like that but instead, they go to work, to put the track, that's all they did, hard.

Hensley: How do you like living with your son?

Gonos: Oh it's fun. I love it because they both working, and I did want to come and live with them. My husband pass away in 1969. So 1970 I sold my store, and I went because I didn't want my grandchild to grow up by babysitters. So my daughter was good, getting along good, so and they are away from home all day long.

Hensley: How long have you been living here, with them?

Gonos: Since 1970.

Hensley: Since 1970. Why did you sell your store?

Gonos: Well, I sold my store because I was tired, and you know it was really hard, um because it was...you know, it didn't work as good as I thought it would. In the first years it did work good, I used have a, but a 5 school around me, it was a couple blocks, and in the morning I had to open at 7 o'clock, you know because a lot of kids go to school, a lot of candies. I used to get mad with the mothers, you know, I used to see some kids come and spend \$1 for candy. I'm calm during, but why do you spend so much, and they say oh that's my lunch, and you know. But the mothers that time, they work, and the kids, they had money and they give the kids more money. I didn't like that, that's the only thing, to tell you the truth I think, I think the woman in the United States is a little bit, and I'm sorry to say but this time I went to Greece it's the same. It's too much, they think they be the same of the men, and that's not nice. At least the men, should be 60% and the women 40%, not half and half, no 50/50, no 50/50, you have to give the man a little more you know. I mean, the women lost her femininity, you know she's not more, she's, she thinks she can do everything the man does.

Hensley: You don't like that?

Gonos: I don't like that. You know, I like the woman to be a woman. If she has to work, that's fine, you know. I don't think, it we would be in this fix we are right now if the women's freedom it was not so much.

Hensley: Oh really?

Gonos: Yes. I'm sorry but that's how I think. That's how I think.

Hensley: [laughs] Do your children have children?

Gonos: My children has two, my son has two, a boy and a girl. One's 11 and one's 16. My daughter doesn't have any.

Hensley: How long has your daughter been married?

Gonos: 10 years now.

Hensley: Just doesn't want children?

Gonos: No, no, she's had a hysterectomy, so she couldn't have no children.

Hensley: Oh, that's too bad.

Gonos: It is too bad, because she's really good, she would have been wonderful mother.

Hensley: Do your children, well do your grandchildren here, do they have very many Greek friends who they've met through church?

Gonos: They have some, yeah, they have some. They have, they go to church every Sunday and my grandson is altar boy. And my granddaughter she's president of the GOYA, Greek Youth of America. Yeah, they have, they have a lot of American friends, and they like it better and they don't like the Greek's as much. I'm sorry to say.

Hensley: What do you think about that?

Gonos: I don't like it, but they do it to please me so that's fine.

Hensley: And do they know the language, Greek?

Gonos: No. All my friends they blame me, because I should, I should. My granddaughter said that's pretty, good she understands me, but my grandson no. But he's going to learn because he wants to go to Greece next summer.

Hensley: Oh, have you gone back to visit Greece since 1950?

Gonos: Oh yes.

Hensley: Oh really, often?

Gonos: I was fortunate. I went 70', 74', I went 78'. Well you know what happened, in 1970 I went after, I came 1934, I went 50' after 16 years. 1950 to 70' was 20 years and my mother was alive, and then 74' my mother was alive, and then my sister, I brought my sister's boy over here, when he was 27 years old and he was going from Tracy to...above Modesto...Sonora. And he was killed in automobile accident, 27 years old. So of course my sister felt so bad, so I went for her because I didn't send, I should have sent back the body, but I thought it would be heart breaking for her. **[Tape cuts out]**. And then I went back in 76' because she felt so bad my mother was sick, so that's what happened. But then in 76' I took Sylvia home, my granddaughter, you know, so she liked it, oh she loved it, she had a wonderful time.

Hensley: So how old was she, 12 years old at the time?

Gonos: Mhmm.

Hensley: How nice! What do you miss most about Greece?

Gonos: Well, I...over here we have all the...very houses, and things that you don't have over there, although right now they do have over there too, washing machines and dryers, but still they don't have the houses we have. And I love Aerioni, you know the town I was born, that was my mother's place. Because it was, it is beautiful, my house was right here, and right there's the ocean. Our back yard used to be the ocean, it used to sit there, it was about 50 feet up, our yard, but then they, my dad and brother give permission to city and they pave it, so they open a road, and they go, and the ocean is

still there, but before I liked it better, you know. Nobody used to walk behind there, but anyhow it's beautiful, and now, and not since I can't live there.

Hensley: You can't?

Gonos: No. It's too noisy, it's impossible to sleep, because the houses are not like here, over there in the summer time everything is open, no air conditioning, you know. You know sometimes I say I love to go back and live there, but I've been spoiled.

Hensley: Do you still feel close to the old country though? Do you still consider yourself a Greek woman?

Gonos: Not as much, you know. I used to, I used to be a Greek, I wanted...and still I like to be, to be a Greek, because like when I went to take my citizen papers...

Hensley: When was this?

Gonos: I took my citizens papers 1950. And you know, when...no more than that 1940, something like that. So anyhow I went to the judge and he, I read that book from one end to another, I know all the questions, you know. So when I went over there, he took my marriage license, because he wasn't Greek, and he read the names, and he said how come over here you have Gonos-(?), because I'm a (?) and a (?), and after I read it 2-3 times, he said how you say the truth, and then he asked me another question, whether I like my country better or this country, so I said if I didn't like my country, I will never love this country, but because I love my country, I like to be good daughter to this country, I do like this country. So that's that. I really do like this country, you know before to me, the American flag was just another piece of cloth, but you know after I took my citizen papers, you know how your hair stands up, when I see the Greek flag that's how, and then when I see the American flag it's the same thing. So you know after I took my citizen papers, I said well I'm no Greek no more, you know.

Hensley: But your husband, he always wanted to go back Greece...

Gonos: But he never go after that.

Hensley: Did he ever visit at all?

Gonos: No. 1934, you know it was not easy though, the money at that time, that's what I mean. Now some people come, stay 10 years and they already go 2 times to Greece, because they work, you know good wages, so they send money. At that time we have hard time, we couldn't save money.

Hensley: Um, is your son's wife, is she a Greek woman also?

Gonos: Yes.

Hensley: And your daughter's husband? Being here in the United States have you ever felt discriminated, because you were Greek, discriminated against?

Gonos: Well, I tell you when I first came, I used to feel, because the old Greek they felt like that, and you know when you used to go to restaurant or something like that, they didn't want you to talk politics, you know because they didn't like it, that after the war everything changed.

Hensley: The war changed everything.

Gonos: The war changed everything. You know, because before that, they didn't want you, the old people, the old timers, they didn't want to show off that they were Greeks, then after war, 1939, that the Greeks had fought the Germans, everybody felt so...they were Greeks.

Hensley: Did you ever feel discriminated especially because you are a Greek woman? Do you think being a woman complicated it even more?

Gonos: I never felt it, no I never felt it.

Hensley: How about your children, while they were going to school?

Gonos: My children...nope.

Hensley: Never...besides the church organizations and activity, have you ever been involved in any other groups, organizations?

Gonos: Greek?

Hensley: No...well anything, yeah they may be Greek organizations...

Gonos: Well I have the Daughters of Penelope.

Hensley: What is that?

Gonos: Well that's a haven, you know lodge, you know it runs, it's all Greek, there are American people too, they are daughters of Penelope. Other than that...oh I've...no...

Hensley: Do you have any hobbies or anything, any activities that you do around your home?

Gonos: Activities, uh...not much, other than cooking.

Hensley: Oh are you a good cook?

Gonos: I'm a very good cook.

Hensley: Oh.

Gonos: I make a lot of sweets, I'm chairman of the bazaar we have every year in Stockton, sweets, I was for 14 years I was chairman until 1970, when I came back from Greece, I was sick, and then somebody else took it over because I couldn't do it, but I do help a lot. Like I said, we have the lodge that belongs to the society, that's run by our church, and then when I was in Tracy, I was in the hospital auxiliary, I was a pink lady.

Hensley: A pink lady, for the hospital? That's great, how long were you doing that?

Gonos: Until I moved from there to here.

Hensley: That's great! Do you help out with the cooking over here?

Gonos: I do the cook over here, they work.

Hensley: How lucky for your daughter in law, that's great!

Gonos: Yes of course she works, and my granddaughter she wants, and then for the chores, and for the schools, and for the American school, Christmas. Sylvia wants this for the school, Michael wants that for the school, they want the baklava, you know all the time.

Hensley: What's baklava?

Gonos: You never had it. Well that's a pastry, and its hard like a diamond, like a tissue paper, and its long and stringy.

Hensley: Oh like a strudel...

Gonos: Like a strudel, but it's bigger, I mean it is more, it's a lot more work. This year when there is a bazaar, it will be at the end of September and it's going to be at the Delta College. So you come and visit over there, and I'm in the pastry department.

Hensley: I will! I will come and see you.

Gonos: So come and see me.

Hensley: Okay, now I'm suppose to ask you about you and your husband, but when did you meet him? Your husband?

Gonos: Ah I meet him in Athens when he came in 1933. And we meet, and uh, my father he wanted to know the family, so we had to go to S(?), he used to be from Athens, so we went over there, and you know we baptized some of the babies, and we wanted to show off, and I baptized my sister in laws baby, and we meet there, and we got married.

Hensley: Did your parents have...

Gonos: My family didn't like him, they didn't want me to come, because I think, most of all was because he had a brother over here, and he came and never went back, he never even write. He really, anyhow, that's why he sad, but then the day I married, the day I was leaving, I turned around to my mother and said something broke in my heart, and I said I don't think I'm going to...and the same day that I left...February 2nd, and then my father die the next year, same day February 2nd. So you know, he had 10 kids, but I think...everybody, he...I used to have a cousin, we used to tease my father, and say Sylvia is you know, he's going, you going to die, and you love her more than anybody else. He used to say no, everything finger if I cut it hurts, but not every finger is not for the same reason. So I have very good father, excellent father. I guess that's why I did what I did over here. I work hard, I did a lot of things, you know the Greek (?) I work really hard, I pick up clothes, and they used to take all the clothes you know wrap it over there in the boxes, they were very good to me I like them. I love the people over here, especially all the educated people they are excellent, and it's different from Greece. The Greek people there, they rich people, and in Greece, either you're poor or you're rich and it just happen I was from the rich. We were not very rich, because a lot of things happened between that and my father, I had a good home. But you know the rich people over there are just like us, you know, the people over here they are educated and they are much much better. You know when my husband came to Greece, he wear, I wanted him to wear a tuxedo to get married in, and I want him to wear gloves, and he said no I'm not going to wear the gloves. I said but you have to, he said when we go to United States, I show you, I educate you, college people you know, and how they work with the books, and come to the houses. So the first day when we get over here, he took me in Tracy, a house, a beautiful house, but a man and a woman, they were rich, Mr. and Mrs. Bonda, they even name the town Bonda from their grandfather, you know. And he took me over there to show me over there to show me he was proud. He said you see how they live? It's true, it really is. We used to have a like a say Mr. Stockin, so a couple doctors friends they used to go hunting, you know, they work in the yard, they cut lawns, you know people over there they don't.

Hensley: They have servants?

Gonos: Oh sure if you can afford them.

Hensley: How long were you and your husband dating or how long did you know each other before you got married?

Gonos: Couple months.

Hensley: Couple months...and he had come back from here, what was he doing, was he still with the railroad?

Gonos: Railroad.

Hensley: When you got here, did you, you didn't start working so did you just take care of the whole household all the time? Did the other woman, was it your sister in law?

Gonos: My sister in law.

Hensley: Did she help you at all?

Gonos: Oh yes, yes. We didn't understand each other but...

Hensley: You didn't, oh...

Gonos: Because she was American and I was, you know.

Hensley: Did you have problems with doing that?

Gonos: Well not much, but you know, but pointing, and my brother in law was very good, and he helped out, because he didn't work that time, you he was...

Hensley: And your husband knew English did that help you very much, too?

Gonos: Yes, yes.

Hensley: Let's see...I think...let's see...What do you think since you have been here have been some major turning points in your life, like would it have been setting up your store, or would it have been moving here with your son, or seeing your kids go to college or maybe your father died, what has been really big turning points in here to change your attitudes towards this community?

Gonos: Well, I think, I like the point, turn point, would be when my son was ordained priest, because it was beautiful, because it is not something that everyone can do, and the bishops and the archbishops, so beautiful to hear so many, things you don't here any other times in a church.

Hensley: When was this that he was ordained?

Gonos: He was ordained a priest, in San Francisco 195...1960...so the best is that, when I have my kids, and of course my store when I open it because it was great, you know because I thought I would just open a little neighborhood store, you know, little store, and it became I had 42 by 48 store and had everything inside. But I did good.

Hensley: What was your greatest satisfaction as being a mother?

Gonos: Well to being a mother, to have good kids, and to be well, and that's the most things everybody should think, to have war children. Because right now when you see

so many things, so many sickness people, I really, I don't care if they are rich or if they are anything if they are well, and good they can make it. Because this is the country you can do anything you want. Like in Greece, you know, like I say you have to be poor or rich, it's not in-between, you know middle people. Now they starting because the rich start working, the girls started, I mean before it was decided over there that nobody work, but now they do work, and of course, they have their grandmas there and that's the one that raise the families, over there, and something it's not there. But I mean to me, in this country you can do anything you want. Because you have the opportunity, I wish things they were a little better than they used to be. You know I used to live across the street, like I say from the tracks with the Mexicans and such, we didn't even lock our door, nobody bothered, you know. Now you got to lock the door, you got to have alarms; you can't go out at night, you know, it really is...

Hensley: Ugly.

Gonos: Ugly. That's what I say it's a beautiful country, but we spoil ourselves.

Hensley: Do you think that's the biggest change you've seen in this country since you've been here?

Gonos: Yes. I hope this year, I just pray, that we have a good president.

Hensley: Do you stay in touch with most of the politics here?

Gonos: Oh yes, oh yes. I used to be a democrat all these years and when George Christopher from San Francisco the mayor, he was running for Governor and I know he would have make an excellent Governor because he was really good mayor. I turned to a republican, well, I didn't go to change it after that, I said alright when the time comes I'm going to vote the way I want anyhow. So I just pray that we have good president.

Hensley: What do you think about this coming up election?

Gonos: That's what I mean I hope they just get a good one. Because really, you don't know they, who to vote or what any more...you know in Greece now they have better things, and I like to have let's say Kennedy for the reason he said he'd have the doctors and students and that things, and right now you do need bad things, you can be sick and broken and you just can't, and the...and really it's just awful. You go to Greece the doctors is free...it's not like what it is over here. I went for a check up to one doctor and it was doctor in Tracy, I got same things and it was \$87.50 and I go over here to the doctor and it was \$175 for the same things, you know.

Hensley: That's terrible!

Gonos: It is terrible.

Hensley: That's really terrible!

Gonos: You know it just, and you know the way everything is...you know how you go to the store, I go to the store every Friday...I have to...\$70-75 I come out with 3 bags that's it.

Hensley: That's a pain.

Gonos: And I cook! I don't do like a...I really am mad it's not because they give to the poor or they give to the people they bring from...Philippinos or up to Cuba...well the Cubans they just came, but I wish they didn't, but anyhow, if they were good people and give something instead of take, you know, everybody is suppose to look out for other people now, and I believe in that...but gosh help yourself so you can be helped. If you fall in the water, you have to swim, otherwise...I go to store here, and I saw of those Cubans over there they fill the basket up to the top, and you know what they don't look at the price, steak, this...and they put, \$110, she takes out and pay with stamps, alright go ahead and get help, but gosh don't buy canned potatoes buy a pound of potatoes and cook them, don't buy can of beans or can of spaghetti that you can buy whole spaghetti for 35 cents and make for your whole family. You know I used to when I had the store, I had some neighbors over there, you know she stay all day with the TV, all day, soap operas, you know, and then the time it was for dinner time, she comes she buys two cans of spaghetti, two cans of potatoes, two cans, I said why you do that, she said well its quick, I said what did you do all day, you know that's the things. You know when I go out and buy I look the price, and if the cherries is a dollar I'm not going to buy them I'm going to wait until next week when they drop, and like yeah, I couldn't figure out. That's what I'm against. It's not bad to help the poor, yes, but my gosh, help them to help themselves.

Hensley: Yeah they need to be taught, that too.

Gonos: You see they just don't, they...easily you can get a pound of spaghetti and feed four people, very easily and very nice.

Hensley: But not four cans. Yeah.

Gonos: So that's the things, I hope the new president whoever he is...do something.

Hensley: You're a registered Republican do you think you'd vote for Ronald Regan?

Gonos: I really don't know, and that the truth, I really don't know, I'm going to see how Anderson's come out, because I like what he's talking about, and if I see something more, but I really I don't like Carter...I just don't. He's very good man but he's not good president and also Ford, I don't think he was a good president, I mean for Vice

President, that he became a president, Mr. Truman he was the best, from Vice President to President so I don't know.

Hensley: Well Mrs. Gonos I think we're just about done...

[TAPE END]