**Janet:** October 31st, 1995 and I'm here in [inaudible 00:00:06] New Hampshire with Mr. and Mrs. Boches. In their home on [inaudible 00:00:16] and I'm about to interview Mr. Chris Boches who came from Albania in 1929 when he was 15 years of age. Today Mr. Boches is 81 years at the time of this interview.

This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I want to say I'm very happy that I was able to get to see you and I'm looking forward to whatever you can remember. I'll start at the beginning, if for the tape you could say your birth date and where in Albania you were born.

**Chris:** I was born in Albania, September 22nd, 1914 and the village name Libohove.

**Janet:** And did you live in Libohove until you left for United States?

**Chris:** I left September 8th, 1929.

**Janet:** So up until that time you were living in Libohove? [Crosstalk 00:01:22].

**Chris:** Yes, I went to school there till up to 4th or 5th grade.

**Janet:** How could you describe the town? I understand it was a village.

**Chris:** It’s a village but they do have a church that was built in the year 554. Was built by the name of Gustilianos, the same architect that built [unclear 00:01:49]. Very museum place and one of the beautiful thing in the world.

**Janet:** Can you spell the name of the architect? [Inaudible 00:02:02].

**Chris:** Gustilianos, that’s in the Greek, name [laughter]. He was an architect and he happened to be in our area and he built that little church but then he went to Saint Sofia across [unclear 00:02:17] and he built a bigger.

**Janet:** Yeah, when we finish if we can figure it out [inaudible 00:02:30].

**Chris:** Alright, what else do you want to know now?

**Janet:** What was the name of that church in Libohove?

**Chris:** I've forgotten- Saint Mary’s, it’s an orthodox church and the whole alter because we have a closed alter like the Protestants don't have a closed alter. We have a closed alter with a door in the middle, the 12 apostles, six on each side and then in the middle is the last supper and the whole alter is built with white gold and also we had a cross.

That someone, those days brought a piece of wood that the same cross that the Christ was nailed on and they put it in there and they made the cross with the white gold and they also have a velvet that also like the one people used to borrow it and go to the different villages and pray for it. Pray to get well, pray for business, they believed so much on it that it did help a lot of people.

**Janet:** You mean they would take the cross?

**Chris:** The cross was in a box and then they take it home and they open it up and they pray and then different borrow it at home for sickness or different things. They believe in so much you know. Real real good Christians.

**Janet:** So this cross would have a piece of the cross from the cross that Christ was nailed to and then the white gold.

**Chris:** The rest of the cross was made with white gold but that piece of wood is in the center of it and then you couldn't see that. And then they used to travel with it and they go all different villages, they borrow it and that cross [unclear 00:04:27], people don't need money and then they bring to church to keep going.

**Janet:** Did you personally ever [inaudible 00:04:34]?

**Chris:** I went to school there which is right next to the school, the church there was and we used to play in the outside yard and they have this seated ridge. They go way up and then they're still there. When I left and they're still there now and we had a beautiful village, nice homes and people that went to Constantinople went to Romania and back make money and they liked it.

We had water, we had our own garden, we had fruit trees, we had grapes, they have a lot and lot of things and it was an easy life. We didn't have no hospitals, no doctors.

**Janet:** What did you do when you got sick?

**Chris:** They made their own medicine, most of them. Once in a while if it’s serious they will have to go with the mule or something quite a way to bring a doctor to take care of and when the ladies did have babies, they helped each other. My aunt had nine children, my mother had four but it was no pollution and when I got inducted in the service I had to go to Connecticut.

I went to doctor Hajid and he checked me and I asked the doctor, I said, "I hope I don't go in the pacific." He says to me, "If you can stand the New England weather you can stand any weather in the world." But he says, "If you go to Mediterranean," that’s his word, "Your life extends from three to five years." I said, 'Doctor Hajid why?" "Because oxygen is so pure." that’s what he told me.

**Janet:** So [inaudible 00:06:24]?

**Chris:** He did but today probably cars and all that maybe it’s not as good but still in the village it is no pollution.

**Janet:** So in the school there, what was it like going to school?

**Chris:** The school over there you had one big room, you had first class, second class, third class and they're all in the same thing but higher up they stay on the side of the small one, the other side the one teacher. Because the teacher I went to spoke three to four languages. French fluently read and write, Greek fluently read and write, Albania fluently read and write and I've forgotten the other one but we had discipline.

You respect, we never called anybody Hi Joe, Hi Nick, Mr. Then in the Sundays he designate one of the boys to tell him who went to church and who didn't and then if you didn't go you go in the end over there, raise one foot up, your hands up in the air and then you face the wall for 20 minutes then on the other foot [chuckle]. Punishment, they used to spank us [unclear 00:07:41].

**Janet:** Did you stand on one leg?

**Chris:** One leg.

**Janet:** So one leg up.

**Chris:** Yeah, one leg and hands up.

**Janet:** And the hands up.

**Chris:** For 15 minutes, 20 minutes but they spank us unless you're real bad but you respected them. Now, any older person we always called them uncle and I didn't smoke over there but when I came here I was ashamed to smoke in front of my father so my father happened to say me, give me and he opened the door and I see smoke and he told my mother, "Just tell him to smoke in front of me before he sets the house on fire [laughter]." You know we had a lot of respect for the older people and especially the real old ones.

**Janet:** So let me ask you about that [inaudible 00:08:31]?

**Chris:** Yeah.

**Janet:** How were they treated? How did you show respect [inaudible 00:08:39]?

**Chris:** Well, the respect was this. When you get old in place like that, either one of the boys or one of the daughters that’s married to someone else, they took care of them, took them home and took care of them till they passed away. There was no convalescent home and mostly there was no doctor but they had their own medicine that they knew from way back, somehow someway.

**Janet:** Did you know about any of those? Like [crosstalk 00:09:09]?

**Chris:** Well, they take in the dyed cloves, there's certain kind of small tree, they take the skin of it and they boil it and they'll never come out. Now, we have bleach in this country, over there do you know what they used for bleach? When they have the fire, they have a fireplace and they take the ashes, they have extra fine sieve, they sieve that thing and they use those ashes to throw in the water and those clothes come white as bleach because there's chemicals in it, see what I mean and a lot, a lot of things like that. They used to do their own clothes, the ladies.

At the age anywhere from 13 and up or 12 under 12, the mother teach them how to take care of the house when she gets married and then she starts to make her own clothes before she get married she has something [unclear 00:10:00] because they can't afford where they go buy buy buy. And my mother used to make stockings. She makes this, and makes sweaters and making all these and things like this here, all that stuff.

**Janet:** [inaudible 00:10:13].

**Chris:** They stayed with the son or the daughter that married somebody else and they take care of them and that’s the way life was and we're all close family and also a girl that’s 14,15,17,18 had to be near. Could not go like they do here today because if you did, it’s a big shame and nobody will marry you.

**Janet:** You mean you can't take [inaudible 00:10:56]?

**Chris:** No, now mostly it was the father's and the mother's and they look into the boys and this looking into the girls what big [unclear 00:11:08] and that’s the way they used to mess them up but 90% of them they never went wrong.

**Janet:** What about dowry? Did girls have dowry?

**Chris:** What do you mean by dowries?

**Janet:** I mean did the girl have to [inaudible 00:11:19]?

**Chris:** No, they made their own clothes and they brought it for themselves- for herself but they've nothing to give to them but while she was in the house she had to take care of her husband. For instance the family in another village, there were three brothers and they had money by the bush of gold but one in charge of the farming, one in charge of buying and stuff like that and the other one take care of the animals and sheep and stuff like that but not so when they got big, they had to break up and when they break up all the wealth was gone because they were all together, working together but they got too big and that if you build the home and of course the women sometimes they don't get along together. But it’s hard to explain how nice we used to live.

We have faith, especially the women they have to be very particular because if she want she had a bad name even there you get married. There was no such thing as divorce, never had one but if they did, she had to move somewhere else and go make something 50-100 miles away. Now the place nobody knows probably she get married again but not in the village and you know they were the old and when I came to this country it was almost the same.

**Janet:** [inaudible 00:12:59]?

**Chris:** Well, we spoke both languages, Albanian and Greek. We didn't have an Albanian school till 1912 I think. There was no such thing as Albania, it used to be about nine and half to ten million people they called it Liria. They were part in the Greece, part Yugoslavia and they were almost 10million and the king of that was Pyros.

**Janet:** [inaudible 00:13:39].

**Chris:** Oh God, before my father's time [chuckle], way back and of course they had wars and then the people moved here and moved there and you know that stuff and it’s pretty hard to explain things because some people then went to Italy, some went to Greece, some went to Romania.

Wherever they could make a living, mostly it was farming in my village. They’re farming corn, wheat and stuff like that. They had animals, they had sheep, they had goats, they had horses, donkeys, mules and stuff like that.

**Janet:** [inaudible 00:14:21]?

**Chris:** They're religious, now I’m going to tell you about the religion. Over there they have what they call- they don't eat eggs, they don't eat cheese, they don't eat nothing for 40 days, that’s how they believe then come Easter, the Good Friday.

They don't even drink water, they go and take the communion and that’s it till sunset and then Saturday night 12 O'clock, they come, they have what they call Christ has risen and they go outside of the church they have a thing made out of marble and the preaching then they have this about eight red eggs, you know dyed red and they hit each other and make it [unclear 00:15:24]. That means Christ has risen.

**Janet:** Do you know the significance of the [inaudible 00:15:28]?

**Chris:** They dye them red, yes.

**Janet:** Is it for [inaudible 00:15:36]?

**Chris:** I guess so, that has something to do with it.

**Janet:** And then they break the eggs and that means Christ is risen?

**Chris:** That’s correct, yeah. We have very very qualities and when I came to this country I found almost the same. Men came in with the horse and packet of bread, milk. They give us the bill, we put the bill in the bottle and put the money in the bottle, put it outdoor nobody will touch it. Today we got to have our [chuckle], eyes in our windows. They were real nice honesty. Only thing that when I got here my father lost a job, he was a machinist in the machine company, banks close up.

**Janet:** Before we talk about that part, tell me about how it was decided that you would leave Albania and come here.

**Chris:** My father came here 1911 and then he came to visit in Albania and he got married.

**Janet:** He came back and got married.

**Chris:** But he couldn't come back in here because the law has changed. He had to be a citizen to get in and he didn't have no citizen. So he worked for a while in the village then he went to Athens Greece and he was locking bricks when they're building buildings then finally he got a job with the milk department and then one day one guy was on the street and my father were near the embassy and the lady, the ambassadors wife come out and was talking to the Greek fellows in English and my father heard it, so he went up there and explained it to them. So then he asks her he says, "Please see if you get me a job for the poor milkman." So they did hire him and he was there for many many years.

**Janet:** What was your father's name?

**Chris:** Spiro and the day he finally asked the ambassador, he says, "I like to go to the United States." So the ambassador said, "Fine Spiro we'll make the papers ready for you but we want you to find another man as good as you are." He was very religious man, well educated men. He spoke five languages. He grew up in Constantinople, turkey so he spoke turkey fluently.

**Janet:** Your father did?

**Chris:** Yes, because my grandfather was in Constantinople. He was in the cattle business, milking.

**Janet:** So did your father find a replacement for him?

**Chris:** Before he left the ambassador called my father and he says, "Spiro come over here, what do you see out of the window?" My father says, “A lot of buildings in the streets." Oh, no, no, he was from Texas. I do have a picture, I'll show you after and he says, "No Spiro, when you go to United States you're not going to see the blue sky that you have in here." and then they gave [unclear 00:18:50] as a present and Mrs. Jimmy pair shoes was $20 bill and he brought another man to take his place. The Ambassador looked and he says, "Spiro he's old." But he says he's a good man and they took him, he was there till he retired and he passed away. It’s a hard life but nice honest life.

**Janet:** What was your mother's name?

**Chris:** My mother is Catherine.

**Janet:** And her maiden name?

**Chris:** Gogos.

**Janet:** G-O-G-O-I-S.

**Chris:** Yeah, G-O-G-O-S.

**Janet:** And did you have brothers and sisters?

**Chris:** I have one brother and two of them, one born dead and one die afterwards.

**Janet:** So [inaudible 00:19:39].

**Chris:** I suppose should have been four of us but two passed away, died.

**Janet:** So did they die right away or?

**Chris:** One was born dead and the other one died about a week or a month later, the baby cribs and what they call it [unclear 00:19:57].

**Janet:** So you have two other still?

**Chris:** Yeah, I have a brother with me now. He leaves in [unclear 00:20:03.

**Janet:** Are you the oldest or?

**Chris:** I'm the oldest. I'm 8 years older than he is because my father when he got married and there was wars going on, so he left. He left me in my mother's tummy and when he came back I was six years old. He had to come to this country to make a living.

**Janet:** Do you remember when he came back?

**Chris:** I didn't know him so I never went near him, so it took about a week [laughter] but I was my grandfather's pet.

**Janet:** Tell me about your grandfather, what was he like?

**Chris:** My grandfather, he was in Constantinople, Turkey, milking cows and stuff like that, dairy farm and he spoke also three languages, Greek, Turkish and Albanian and then when he was over there my grandmother and her two sons Spiro and William they went to Constantinople because my grandfather sent a letter to go over, so they went there and stayed quite a while there but my uncle was born in Constantinople.

It was only Spiro that was born in Libohove and my father left from there he came to America. So he was over here for few years then he came over, made some money, got married but he couldn't come back in.

**Janet:** So then he came here and he came back when you were six [inaudible 00:21:43]?

**Chris:** He stayed three years, he was working in a farm or stuff like that but he didn't like the kind of life so he had done 20,000 0r 30,000 in his pocket so he went to Greece, in Athens. Started to find jobs like carrying bricks and then from bricks become a milkman and from milkman he got to the embassy.

**Janet:** Did he come back to Albania when he was working in Athens or he stayed?

**Chris:** No, from Athens he left for America, he never came back there but he sent for us to come here.

**Janet:** So [inaudible 00:22:20]?

**Chris:** I came with my mother and brother.

**Janet:** Your mother and your brother.

**Chris:** And Mr. Pete [unclear 00:22:30], we were in the same boat. He left the same time in the village. The day Saint Mary's they have a big celebration- that church that I just told you about it and the bell rings and they come all the villagers around.

**Janet:** And what is that celebration for?

**Chris:** That’s the name of the church and they got all together and they cook stuff and they roast lambs and stuff, they have a good time for about one or two days.

**Janet:** How did you feel about leaving?

**Chris:** Well, first when we went to Tirana, Albania which is the capital in the embassy. American embassy was there and I went by boat from Saranda to Durres and I couldn't smell oils and stuff like that because I breathe through pure air in the village [chuckle], so I was sick. I was sick also coming to the United States on the boat for three days.

I'd never come up and it’s pretty hard what the people go through in the world but it’s the only way you can get somewhere but at least we had family love, we love each other, we love lots of relatives, we believe in the church whole heartedly and in all the stuff and there was no dishonest, anybody who was dishonest the villagers they dishonor. They wouldn't do business with him no more.

**Janet:** Now [inaudible 00:24:04]?

**Chris:** Well no, we're not Albanians because the part that we are on is very close to the Greece border and when they made Albanian, they switched us to then instead of going back with the Greece because they always they had Greek schools, they didn't have no Albanian. There was no such a thing as an Albanian school till after 1922.

**Janet:** So do you [inaudible 00:24:36] or Albanian?

**Chris:** I spoke Albanian with my mother because we didn't know Greek but my father, my uncles and my grandfather all went to Greek school and then there's religious, right across from us is a mountain that village all the way to the Greek border, always spoke Greek. In the back of us few towns they all spoke Greek, very little Albanian.

**Janet:** So do you consider yourself Greek?

**Chris:** I learnt the Greek language in this country.

**Janet:** But when you think of yourself, do you think of yourself as Greek or Albanian?

**Chris:** Well, they call them the northern pyros-Epirus, that’s where we belong to actually but of course like now Yugoslavia is fighting and Liria was a big country is gone, Greeks took some, this got some and disappear and that’s why in the Balkans we're having troubles because it is such a small land and so many people and they're always fighting because you can't live and that’s the way that’s happened.

**Janet:** So when you think of yourself now, do you think of yourself as a Greek American or an Albanian American?

**Chris:** Well, I spoke Albanian so I have to say I'm Albanian. I mean I didn't speak Greek, my mother didn't speak Greek but like my father says and my grandfather only those who went to Greek schools.

**Janet:** Okay, so do you remember leaving on that September 8th when [crosstalk 00:26:12]?

**Chris:** Oh yeah, I never forget that day [chuckle].

**Janet:** What was it like when you left?

**Chris:** It was kind of tough and my uncle took us to the ship port and we hug each other, he cried, I cried and all that and then we took a boat and we went to [unclear 00:26:32] Italy and we took a train from there and we went through Italy and then France and that’s where we [unclear 00:26:43]. The waiting for the boat, the Leviathan to bring us back to the states.

**Janet:** Do you remember being struck by anything particular? I mean have you ever been out of Albania or [inaudible 00:26:58]?

**Chris:** No, never went anywhere, from the village to here.

**Janet:** So were there things that struck you on your route to [inaudible 00:27:08]?

**Chris:** No, first thing I done over there, you see a lot Frenchman those big sticks. You have no idea in the villages when you do have a war, the change the government, Albanian and all that we didn't have no flour, so we used chickpeas to make coffee. We used chick peas to make bread. Many nights I went to bed I didn’t' have nothing to eat and I go without it, whenever something get something, real tough life.

Believe me those days but now it has changed, it’s not the same as those days a little bit. The only thing that [unclear 00:27:52], he never give them the freedom to people to go in and out of the country but he's done something good. At least a doctor goes once or twice a week, visits the villages. The government they give him a car to go and they have a little roads, they're not exactly paved but some on that road but at least you got a doctor.

They used to have a telephone in the villages, they got lights in the villages and there we had a lot of spring waters and then they took it in one place and they build the thing with cement with the cover on it and the water get in there and go to the houses and over there you don't have to dig in the ground because the ground never freezes over there. It has little cold and if it snows it’s one two days later it’s all gone. Its warm climate.

**Janet:** So you were sick trip over?

**Chris:** On the boat, all the way [laughter], I didn’t eat nothing.

**Janet:** Do you remember [inaudible 00:28:53]?

**Chris:** I don't remember anything when it comes to that, the only thing I remember when we got to Ellis Island and they used to holla [unclear 00:29:05] in Italian and I used to go there and I see that Italian bread which we didn't have home and I ate like a pig [laughter]. I was there for three days in Ellis Island.

**Janet:** How come you were there?

**Chris:** I don’t' know they found some little thing, I don't remember what it was.

**Janet:** You mean in the physical exam?

**Chris:** Well, something. I don't know what, I never knew what, my father didn't even know it either and of course he had to wait for us and then he brought us to Connecticut.

**Janet:** And so your mother and you and your brother had to wait a couple days, for three [inaudible 00:29:39]?

**Chris:** No, the three of us inside, of course they won't let them two and leave me in so they had to stay too until they released me then they will all come out.

**Janet:** What was your brother’s name? [Inaudible 00:29:51]?

**Chris:** Constantine.

**Janet:** And so was anybody put in hospital?

**Chris:** No, it was no serious thing, I don't know what they found, I don't know what’s up but they had to be careful because you know they bring diseases that they didn't have here and things like that. They had to watch.

**Janet:** So then did your father come to Ellis Island to pick you up?

**Chris:** Yes, he left the factory and he told them, "I have to go and pick up my family." So they give him a week and I don't think he got paid for it [laughter], those days there was no such a thing.

**Janet:** Where was he working?

**Chris:** Handy Machine company, he was a machinist.

**Janet:** Here?

**Chris:** In Torrington, Connecticut.

**Janet:** Oh, Torrington, Connecticut. So do you remember the reunion with your father at Ellis Island?

**Chris:** Oh yes, then he brought us to Torrington, the houses over there they didn't have no ceilings, they didn't have nothing, these are plain old homes and right next to they had a little animals you know the horses and the donkeys and the sheep and everything. They had a place on the side over there and it was not sanitary like it is here.

So when he brought us and I look in the house I see nice beds, white sheets, nice [unclear 00:31:16] floors [chuckle], I was amazed I said, "Papa, this is our home?" He said, "Yeah." So my father and my mother used to make bean soup you know that’s our favorite.

**Janet:** How did she make it? Do you remember how she made it?

**Chris:** Well, you get those white beans, they call it northern beans but they're bigger. They come from Italy and we were careful how much oil we put into our foods because when you pour you got to watch.

I said you got certain things and that’s it there's no more and then [unclear 00:31:52] for the extra oil then and we had the Italian bread and all that and the baker brought at the house then I started to go to school but it was hard you know and I got pushed here and pushed there.

**Janet:** How was the school here different from the school in Albania?

**Chris:** The school was the same but of course those days they were more stricter than they are today but I went to school and I got in a fight with a guy and I pushed him and he banged his head on a- they had a little drinking water fountain and I quit. So and then I had to go to a night school, the high school at night time. There was lots of Italians and different ones like that to learn the language.

**Janet:** Did you have a tough time learning the language?

**Chris:** Well it’s hard at the beginning, you can say the words but you don't say it plenty. Probably I have an accent now. Yeah, this is the cross that I was telling you about. They stole it and they can't find who took it.

**Janet:** Now, it’s stolen?

**Chris:** It was taken by somebody during the day where those Muslims over there and all the stuff.

**Janet:** [inaudible 00:33:21].

**Chris:** Oh, it’s a beautiful thing. There people really believed on that thing, really believed and everybody went to church every Sunday, everything the women dressed [unclear 00:33:37].

**Janet:** How about in Torrington in Connecticut? Was it the same? Was there a large community of people?

**Chris:** At Torrington, I don't think it was more than 14-15 thousand but maybe a little more but they had a lot of factories.

**Janet:** But were there a lot of people who had come from Albania or Greece in Torrington?

**Chris:** There were quite a few but you see what happened is where one, four, five gets in an a certain village and there's factories there the rest of them come to live together so they spoke the language and they have the food together and all the stuff and of course when the factories close up they had to disperse and go anywhere. Some was in Chicago, some New York, some everywhere, Massachusetts and over here quite a few and then the rest of them coming in we all know majority even at the church from my part of the world.

**Janet:** Did your mother cook any of the same kinds of dishes that she cooked over in Albania?

**Chris:** Oh yes.

**Janet:** Like what did she make here that she also made there?

**Chris:** Everything that she done you see the mother taught her from the beginning. Like I said, they teach them how to cook, teach them how to sew and crotchet, teach them a lot of thing so when the woman got married that’s part of her job at home. When you have family you got to take care of it because the husband brings so much money she got to make it.

If you make $100 and you spend $150 it’s impossible to live but this is why they lived and they lived good life. They didn't live fancy life but there were three classes of people, rich people, middle people and poor people. Always will be because God didn't make us- you see the fingers are different, one is short one is long some like that. So some got brains, some willing to work, some is lazy, everybody can't live rich.

**Janet:** Tell me how you were affected by the depression?

**Chris:** Depression was very very bad. We left Torrington Connecticut we moved to New York, Manhattan and the Delancey and Rivington Street. It was all Jewish section.

**Janet:** Why did you go to Manhattan? Why did you leave Torrington?

**Chris:** We had to go somewhere to work. There was no work in Torrington. The factory closed everything was dead. Banks closed people I remember in the 42nd street, people lost their money, the little money that they had they were crying. They lost.

So my father went to work early in the morning, it was 2 o'clock the next morning he's not home we cried, we thought we lost our dad. So he quit the job, he got another job and worked in the restaurant or something like that, so one day I went to a Jewish pretzel place and I got a basket with a handle on it and I bought Jewish pretzels two for a nickel.

They put around the basket and then I carry it with the street car to 34th street and I'll sell them two for a nickel and of course the policemen chase you because you don't have a license and the fireman and policeman had same blue uniforms. I made $2 and some cents, those days it was big money.

So next day I got a bigger basket but the [unclear 00:37:12], the rain was fussing like today, they didn't bother like milk and everything we used to get it and there was no pasteurizer or anything like that. Then I got promoted so I started selling hot chestnuts, Times Square, 7th Avenue, Broadway.

**Janet:** [inaudible 00:37:32].

**Chris:** I used to have a baby carriage but we take that part, the cover part then we made a platform on it with some kind of wood and then we carry. I sold [unclear 00:37:48] and Brazil nuts and Indian nuts and stuff like that I done that for.

**Janet:** And you had [inaudible 00:37:55]?

**Chris:** For the hot chestnut yes, charcoal fire and then you cook them and you cut them like that and then you stick them up, put them on top of the pen and they buy them for a nickel and it was hard living but we lived in that section for not very long and then we moved on west side.

There where they call Hell’s kitchen, it was rough, that’s where all the boats used to come in all those days and my father and two other gentlemen they rented up a little store on 39th between 9th and 10th Avenue and they put cement on the floor and they got a machine with ice and salt, old-fashioned and we're making ice-cream.

They used to make 30 gallons a day and then they go down, each one had their own push cart but the push cart had this kind of wood holds the coal and they go down to the garment factory or they go down to the fur factories on the 7th Avenue and 8th Avenue, they used to sell it and we made a pretty good living.

**Janet:** So were you selling things on the streets?

**Chris:** My mother used to work in the Madison Square garden, the old one.

**Janet:** What did she do?

**Chris:** After they have the games and stuff like that, they clean up the chairs and stuff like that. We were there till 1933, I saw Roosevelt in 1933 going across the ferry. Going to Washington as the president of United States. Oh [unclear 00:39:46] may God bless his soul, he's a good man. We all loved him and then we moved to Torrington, Connecticut.

**Janet:** Tell me about Roosevelt, what do you remember about him? What made you think he was such a good man?

**Chris:** Well, he tried to help the people as he said if I remember, I was a youngster. He told the big money people, he says, "Either you give or you lose everything you got," because he was afraid they might go socialist, might go something. When you’re down, if soup lines from here to across the street the gas station, people have no food to eat. Big line, soup line, terrible, it was bad.

**Janet:** Was it as bad here as it was Albania?

**Chris:** It was, at least over there we had our milk, we had our eggs, we had our [unclear 00:40:40] in the farms, it was alright but here you had to buy everything and where are you going to get the money? So I saw Roosevelt going over there and then 1933 we come here to Connecticut because we have some country men over here and we've got a little store. In 1936 we lost a big flood, broke again.

**Janet:** You and your father?

**Chris:** Yeah, broke again.

**Janet:** What was the name of your store?

**Chris:**  It was a little grocery store, neighborhood store. Those days there were no supermarkets, a lot of little neighborhood stores. We didn't have no meat but we had beverages and when the beer come out we had little beer and then a little hamburger and stuff like that and then across from our stories used the boss on the main rail road.

They were fixing the cars and the engines and some of the guys just come over and have a hot dog and things like that. 5 cents for a hot dog [laughter].

**Janet:** So what happened after the flood?

**Chris:** And then after the flood we lost the store, my father didn't have no money to open another store so we moved back to New York when a fella named Mexicon. At the flood, Mexicon his family used to live in the background story, he had his own house and of course red cross they never looked at him so my father says, "Maxi, you take your children," he had three boys and two of them five and four of us nine and we lived Kelly’s drug store. The end of the south main street.

It’s after we had [unclear 00:42:18], some sleep on the floor, we stayed with them till the water went down, we kept Maxi and the whole family because they were nice people, they were hardworking people.

They can say anything they want about the Jew people but they work hard and he was a very nice man, so he took us in open truck, we didn't have much furniture and he took us back to New York.

**Janet:** Where did you go in New York?

**Chris:** Then when we went to New York my father was in Manhattan, I went to work in the village in Long Island, sunrise highway pit designer. I used to take the Pennsylvania rail road until my father got called back in Torrington Connecticut machine shop. It got opened up and the things got together but there was no pay. I worked with the handy machine company. I was only getting $20 a week and working Saturday every day.

**Janet:** So did the whole family then go back to Torrington?

**Chris:** Oh yes.

**Janet:** So then what did you do after- you really weren’t getting paid much in the machine shop?

**Chris:** Then my father went to Torrington and my mother moved with him. I was still in Long Island, I finally came over and I worked in a handy machine company with my father and first I work in the paint shop then I got through my father [unclear 00:43:49], not only the ambassador in Greece but at the factory.

I forgot the guy’s name, there was the superintendent, they always like my father, he used to bring lot of guys and he got them a job he says, "Spiro but he's no-- "But he’s a good man, you got to help him, he got a family." So he used to take him in, Patrick his name was. So I worked there then 1941 they called me in the service. March 13, 1941. I left home March 13, 1941 went Fort Devens from Fort Devens.

**Janet:** So you must have been a citizen by then?

**Chris:** No, I was still youngster yet in the 20s so we went. They took us and [unclear 00:44:38] give us a shot and we took a train, we didn't know where we were going to go. We look and you know how those days it used to be down south, terrible.

Some shack those poor color people used to live, the roof is there, they pick them out of the same place, "Oh my God, Where the hell are we?" We went to camp, Willy Georgia, Macon, Georgia and I was over there for quite a while, it took 17 weeks of basic training, I mean hard training and the captain of the company was Philip Wertheimer and my lieutenant was Helmut K. Schmidt, two Germans.

He was strict and we took 17 weeks of hard training. Finally I got in the kitchen and the rest of them because after 17 weeks they're leaving, new ones coming in all the time, so I stayed in the kitchen long then I became mess sergeant, get that thing over there [unclear 00:45:37] and I come mess sergeant.

**Janet:** The picture of the service. Maybe we wait till we finish [inaudible 00:45:57].

**Chris:** That thing right there and I can become mess sergeant and that’s the one I had by the commanding general [unclear 00:46:18] general brown, he give me superior mess whole.

**Janet:** Is that a commendation?

**Chris:** He came in then he says to me, "Sergeant you're not cooking according to the menu." They used to make the menu once a month and I said, "You are right sir but the way that the menu says we through half it away and this way I don't have enough." He says, "The other boys say you're looking after the men." And he looked were clean, they go with the knife like that and I'm here with the white towel look and see if the dirt in it, the floor, the outside but I'm fussy. I love nice clean things. I

always liked that and I don't want to go somewhere and say well, " I don't have nothing today I go without," but I'm too proud of myself and her and I we work hard all of our lives and we got the home, we got little money, we don’t' have to bother anybody but it was done by hard work and think to buy umbrella for rainy day and that’s how we've done it and there's a lot of people from my part of the world here that they work hard, they economize but the never bother the city of Connecticut.

The welfare, the food stamps and all these stuffs nobody like McDonald told me, “I never saw Greek going to get food stamps or anything,” he says, "You ought to be proud of yourselves." And that’s the only way you can live. You got to work and you live within your means. You don't see me I got a car, its 1977 Lincoln, I fix it, I keep it because I figure I'm 81 years old, what am I going to spend $50,000-$20,000?

**Janet:** [inaudible 00:48:12]. So when did you meet your wife?

**Chris:** I meet her after Second World War then I went to France.

**Janet:** Wait a minute. You were in the kitchen doing the [inaudible 00:48:33]?

**Chris:** Yeah, I was there but they wouldn't let me go, finally the order come everybody had to leave. The commissioner officer and everything, I become a major also, masonic temple in Macon, Georgia.

**Janet:** [inaudible 00:48:51].

**Chris:** What’s that?

**Janet:** [inaudible 00:48:54]. So then you were sent to France during the Second World War?

**Chris:** I went to France.

**Janet:** You went to [inaudible 00:49:06].

**Chris:** I was on the Le Havre, our boat landed in Le Havre and it took them quite a while about 4-5 hours and then we went about 30 kilometers out and pitched tents there to recuperate a little bit because they were out in the ocean for quite a few days because they never take a straight [unclear 00:49:28] was exact, it was 400 boats when we left.

I mean the whole division 75th division and then you had your tankers, then you had your foot troops and then you had the navy going in between and in then in front they had one in the front, sub chaser and they go this way and they go that way and they go this way and they go, they never take a straight- to avoid the submarines and then I went to France from there, we went through France, went to Germany.

First city we went Manheim and from Manheim we went all the way to Austria, Wels, Austria and 7:30pm and then concentration camp broke loose.

**Janet:** Which one? Do you remember the name of it?

**Chris:** The name of the concentration camp, no I don’t but I remember it was in Wels, Austria and it was 7pm and it all broke loose and they had all those wooden shoes and when you look at them you're not a chunk of meat, the skin and bone, you're scared to look at them you think they come out of the grave and they give order to shoot up in the air so we did [unclear 00:50:47] in Germany water.

**Janet:** What was it like for you, to see all these people?

**Chris:** I saw more dead people and blown up people over there, dead over there and blown up and everything else you know I saw a lot of it. I saw enough of it. Sometimes I dream at night, I jump in my sleep, you never forget those things, bad things, bad things.

**Janet:** [inaudible 00:51:14].

**Chris:** Then the government took over and they got hold of this soup factory, dehydrated soups and they took them all, I don't know how- the trucks or something, I don't know what they done with them but they feed them two ounces, three ounces every day the soup because there was nothing in them. Some of them probably died but most of them I hope they survived but I saw bad things.

In fact, I don't want to say this because it’s very terrible thing but I saw a shade lamp make out of Jewish skin, this is no joke you could see the pores of the hair you know [unclear 00:52:02], they've done bad things those Nazis, bad, bad anyway.

So, when I got to Wels, Austria and it’s the first time that I ever slept inside the building. [unclear 00:52:15] we sleep there in snow January and cold, tick my feet working you know a lot of guys lost their feet because if the blood don't circulate then you lose their feet so I rub mine and he rub me and they keep going like that because we had all [unclear 00:52:35] because we had cold beans and cold cheese and [laughter] during the war you can't build no fires because if they see it then they hit you with their things.

So when we got the wales house we slept and in the morning I got up, I looked out of the window, I saw a Greek flag you know stripes of blue with the cross on it then I say to a fellow named Van from Iowa. I say, "Van, look we've got some Greeks over here [laughter," and I spoke a little Greek because I picked that up in this country you know hanging around with them and I picked it up pretty good. I can get [unclear 00:53:13] start fancy Greek then I get lost, so we went up there and I can hear them playing the phonograph and I said to him, "[foreign 00:53:22]" that means [unclear 00:53:24]. Oh they hulled through their heartbeat, I feel like crying the poor guys.

**Janet:** [inaudible 00:53:31].

**Chris:** They were Greeks from Greece and I say, "How you guys got here?" "He says the Germans got hold of that end of the street and this end of the street," whatever German then they put them on the truck they didn't know where they were going to go so they took them to Germany as slave labor and then it’s just me, I work in a shoe factory and their wives were there also but they couldn't see their wives for many years, they weren't allowed.

Then the old man says, "Help me sir to get some clothes for our wives," because finally after we got there, they got free and they got together, get some clothes. So it was tanks going through planes going through the noise and everything else. So I went to the store and I hit the window with a butt of a rifle broke it, he went in there and grab all the clothes, he didn't care what size they were important they give it to their wives and that’s when they told me how they got there and then one guy says to me, "You got to do me a favor," the Greek fellas, "What is it?"

He says, "There's a guy, he lives here in certain street here," He was a foreman in the soup factory excuse my expression, he said, "He made me go and kiss the dog fenny and I had done it so quick because it was a German shepherd they were able to bite me." So I went and I say, "Where?" So we went up there and I got a hold of him, I took him to the headquarters and I told them what he'd done and what the headquarters done with him after I do not know but they went through hell the poor people and those poor women with the belonging on them, the children.

Everything was bombed, they didn't have no home where to go winter time. It was bad, it was bad. I hope they never have another one like that. The one that they had in Iraq it was nothing compared to ours, you had to fight a man with the best equipment in the world than ours in those days but we had the superiority and they didn't have no more gasoline for the planes otherwise they would have left and then of course when the Russia, they froze at that.

**Janet:** So when you came back- we're getting close to the end of the tape, I want to find out when you met your wife?

**Chris:** I met my wife here. I opened up another grocery store [laughter] with my father and I you know I had to save- because in my pay I tell them to send it home. I had $2700 when I came back and we went Fort Deven in 28th of December, 1945 after this I had four years and seven months in the service, so I opened up a little grocery store with my father and we were working hard, no pay for about three four months just eat and that’s it to only build it up.

She used to come by [unclear 00:56:50] [laughter], so finally which is my brother in-law he told me, "See I got a good girl for you." I had that family, we had a big name, my father had a big, he was nice men, God struck me dead, he was a good man and I'm in love. He stayed with me here with his wife for seven years in my house, no rent, no lights, no nothing.

I took care of them because they were down and out, they were old. One of the sons in the air force and he used to fly the B51 and 54s and protect the bombers when they went over Germany and finally he retired as a full-fledged colonel flying the B52 bombers, now he's in Laconia up here.

So I had enough of that, I wished a dog like that kind of life believe me. Those poor people. Frankfurt Germany there was nothing standing, everything was bombed, nothing everything bombed. One night 12 hours our artillery, the war from here we save 2miles long, boom, boom, boom, boom finish all for 12 hours and we go to sleep in marginal lines were there for [unclear 00:58:17], you get in like that and you go in like that and you couldn't sleep because the ground was shaking [chuckle] from the bombs in the morning the shelf over the eye and they had two kinds of shelf. One goes on the ground blows up the other goes about this high in all the streets were [unclear 00:58:34].

**Janet:** How did you feel about serving in the army? Having immigrated to this country? How did you feel about fighting in this country?

**Chris:** We would have different than the guys have today, we knew that Hitler he was up to something and the day that president Roosevelt made a speech, I never forget that then he made a speech I knew that was stuck for good and he made the speech and we knew. The people were different then than the young people today believe me, love the flag, love the country, willing to fight for the country. Today I don't know maybe certain amount yes but we went through hell you don’t' know.

**Janet:** Tell me what you’re most proud of? What makes you feel very satisfied?

**Chris:** Well, I'm proud that i went and fought for the country and I came back because I left poor and I got a little more than what I had in the village. I felt good myself that I went down the job that they wanted me to do.

**Janet:** How do you feel coming, immigrating to this country? Do you think that made a difference in the kind of person you are? The fact that started out--?

**Chris:** Of course.

**Janet:** In what way?

**Chris:** Well, those days the people were more honestly, more decent people, the word is the word, there was no crimes here. You can walk in the streets or anywhere and you never heard anything, nothing like stuff like.

Now it’s still is a beautiful country but I don't know how they're going to get rid of them, the criminals and stuff like that and the guns and everybody has a gun stuff like that. When they're going to do it I don't know.

**Janet:** Okay, this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I was speaking with Chris Boches here in [inaudible 01:00:54] New Hampshire on October 31st, 1995 and I'm signing off.