

This is an interview with Sofia Kallos on Monday 8th April 2013 at her home in St Peters.

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As indicated in the Oral History Handbook:

Punctuation: Square bracket [] indicate material in the transcript that does not occur on the original tape recording. Sentences that were left unfinished in the normal manner of conversation are shown ending in three dashes, - - -.

Welcome Sofia, and thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed today.

Thank you too.

Can we start with you giving us your full name please.

My name is Sofia Pairithou Kallos. I was born in Platania, Kozani Greece, 10th January 1936.

Thank you very much. Now your family didn't always live in Kozani, where were your parents from?

My parents were in Metalia Tavra, actually my father was born in Pontos.

OK, and your Mum?

My mum also the same near Argyroupolis Cappadocia - they were both Pontian.

Now, Pontos is north of Turkey and is on the southern coast of the Black Sea.

Yes

Which at the time was part of Greece.

Yes, yes.

So, do you know a little bit about your dad's history?

I do actually. My dad was born 1907; he started school in 1914, and he also went to a Secret School because the Turks wouldn't allow them to speak the language. Also they had to speak Turkish also. That's why they went to a Secret School - but sometimes the Turkish --- what do you call it ---

Authorities?

Authorities, they went to test the Greeks - how they are doing in Turkish language - so the teacher said to my dad. "Pairithi we are having visitors today so you better learn the, the ----"

A little bit of Turkish?

Yes, and so they did - so when the Turks came my dad was the one who started reading and speaking in Turkish. So he was so enthusiastic he patted him and said. "Good on you - you did very well - I never expected you to be so well spoken." He left nice and happy. But, one of the people that were with the Turks said to them. "Something's going to happen and soon you will be going back to your country".

He warned them?

He warned them, and my father, as young as he was, he thought about it and he started telling to his brother --- and also he was getting aware that something's going to happen - and it did actually, years to come --- so he was working here and there to get some money ----

To get some money.

Yes, to get some money because he was an orphan - he didn't have a father - he had his mum and it wasn't easy for them to get by, so he went to this particular factory and they were making cigarettes - and actually he was passing by there and he saw somebody throw the paper from the window and he picked it up and he said. "Oh - I'm going to ask what's - so he went inside and he said to him - the factory man said to him. "What do you want?" He said "I want to work". He said. "You're too young to work". He said "But I need to eat" he said to him. He was very gutsy, my dad, at a young age. So he said. "Come in" and he gave him some paperwork and he took those papers and selling them to other people, and he got some money.

Excellent

And after that he went to another place, and said to him. "I want to work because I have nothing to eat". It was terrible - he was going through a lot --- anyway. He was selling chickens, eggs ---

At a young age?

At a young age to make money. And the French people - they start buying eggs and chicken, and one time they said to him. "Come in" and they gave him some meat to eat.

My father had his friend with him also and his friend started to eat the meat, but my father didn't because it was σαρακοστή [lent].

Lent

The Lent for Easter. The French man got upset and he smacked my father and said to him. "Why don't you eat - you don't want meat". He said. "No, I do", and he start crying my dad because he got bashed. He went outside and this other guy said to him. "What's wrong with you" and he said to him. "The Frenchman hit me", so he took him with him and went to the Frenchman and said. "Why did you hit him?" and he said, "He didn't like me because I gave him the meat to eat and he didn't want to eat is because he was - --

Because of his Lent?

Not only the Lent, but he thought he didn't like him because he was dirty or something like that.

Oh, right, right

He said. "No, because we have Easter now and it was the Lent that's why I didn't want to eat the meat". And then he said. "I'm very sorry" to him. He did say. "Sorry" to him. He took him away and he gave him some extra money and he said to him. "You just have a good Easter" he said to him, and my dad left χοροπηδώντας [jumping up and down].

Isn't that wonderful.

Like a dancing and he went home and again to his mum. That was it, but he never give up - he was going from one place to another and to make money to look after his mum and himself.

He was a fighter.

Yeah, he was -----

Survivor

Yes, a fighter at a young age. So the years go by and then 1922 - that's when the trouble started. My father, he was almost aware, that the moment will come, so they decided of course to come to Greece. So the government - the Greek government sent a boat to pick them up. So they gather a few stuff; they lock the door -----

They just took very few belongings - they couldn't take many belongings?

Very few, very few, so they lock the door and they looked for the last time.

And said goodbye to the country that they had grown up in?

That's right.

Now, let's go back to the Secret School. Now the Secret School was organised so that the Greek children would not lose their language.

That's right - yes.

Do you know if many Greek children went to these schools?

They did actually. I know most of them, and the teacher was a Greek - which his granddaughter married my brother.

All right. So that was the only way they felt they could keep their language and their culture?

And their culture and their religion.

Their religion of course, more importantly. The Greek Orthodox religion in a country which is predominantly Muslim. Growing up in that area - in an area like that, did your father tell you what it was like - what was his childhood like?

He was quite a happy child, my dad. He mentioned once to me that the old Turks were very nice to them. Only the young ones were the worst, they were very vicious, and started killing the Greeks, put them in jail, make them suffer, no food. A lot of them died, from being smacked. Yes, that was his childhood. I think he - because he was - must have been adventurous, my dad, he won't allow anything to get in his way to give up. He even learnt French. That's how he was taught in school - French.

So when he went to Greece, he could speak Turkish, Greek and French

Yes Turkish, and Greek very well of course because he was educated, and French. Yes!

That's wonderful - it is wonderful for that period - just after WW1

Exactly.

Now, what about your mother's family?

My mother's family were - her grandfather was a priest - they had lots of animals and they work very hard themselves also. My grandmother which is her mum, was a

wealthy person. When they left, they left with nothing, except they put some gold coins - they were using gold coins those days - and they put them in the sole of their shoes. And they came to Greece and they came to Thessaloniki actually, because they were well off. My grandfather bought a house in Thessaloniki.

So they brought money with them?

Yes they did - I don't know how, but they did actually and they bought a house in Thessaloniki for the three girls to inherit after he passes. And also they had a brother, one brother, the three girls, so ----

Ok. Now we are talking about the exchange of the population after WW1 - part of the Treaty in 1922-23 when it was decided that the Turks that lived in Greece were to go back to Turkey, and the Greeks who lived in the Turkish occupied area must go back to Greece. So your mother's family ended up in Thessaloniki, and your father's family went by ship but they ended up in Piraeus.

Piraeus

Originally, and then from there they both ended up in Kozani - in the northern Greece, because that's where Greece wanted them to re-settle, and that's where a lot of the Turks had left their homes.

That's right.

So what was happening was that the Greeks were going to live in the homes that the Turks left behind, and the Turks were going to live in the home the Greeks had left behind in Turkey. So it was literally an exchange of population.

Exchange, yes definitely, definitely.

Now what can you tell us about your dad arriving in Piraeus?

When my father arrived in Piraeus, the next day they took another boat to go to Thessaloniki. Of course on the way they had a hard time, and the two Turks [who] were on the boat they were travelling with, as security I must say - I don't know why ----

What - to make sure the Greeks got to Greece.

Yeah, and some of the Greeks, they wanted to throw them in the sea so they could drown - same thing they did to others. And Μπαρμπανικόλας [Barbanicholas] was the name of the boat, the Καπετάνιος [Captain], yes Captain, he said. "Don't do that, don't do that". So they didn't. So they arrived in Thessaloniki and from there they took train to go to Kozani. From Kozani they went to Neapolis, and by foot started to walk again aahh!---

What they had been through!

They had been through a lot. They went to Platania and when they arrived there, the government I think, they said to them start choosing where they want to live.

Because the houses were vacant.

Yes, vacant, and my γιαγιά - my grandmother - saw this particular house and she said to her son, the eldest son Μιχάλη [Michael]. "You go and see it out and have a look what is happening" and he came back and says. "Mum, it's only one room built at the moment, they haven't built any more" and she said. "No, we want it". So they went and stayed there but my γιαγιά [grandmother] in ten days passed away.

What a shame.

Yes, it's a shame - very sad. So she wasn't lucky enough to ---

Enjoy the house. So it was a new home that the Greek government had build.

It was a new home - only one room built by the Turks, I think probably. So when she died, my dad had to go to get a job, somewhere to look after himself, because his brother was engaged to a priest's daughter and they took him away to their side. And anyway, my dad after was called to the army - he went to the army, he ---

How old was your dad at this stage.

At this stage he was about 19, I would say.

So he was drafted into the Greek army.

Yes, yes, into the Greek army. Then after the army when he came back, he engaged to my mum, got engaged to my mum, because my mum was there too, they came back at that time.

Of course.

And then he has to get a job somewhere - so he was getting ready to get married - he had to establish his family. So he went away for quite a while in Thessaloniki to work in the railway stations. He didn't like it there because he wasn't getting more money, so he has to go to another factory. He didn't like it there either - he wanted more money. He came back - he started working in Vogatsiko - looking after the land - I don't know how they say it in English - he was like a - not a policeman, but agricultural - was looking after the land - the grapes - so no-one could steal things.

All right. Like a bit of security

Yes, like a security, yes. And then after that he went to another town - they offered him more money, so he took that, start working there, make some money. He started to build that house ---

Extension

Extension, put another room upstairs and downstairs, so he make it two rooms in the house. I don't know how to mention this - his brother took it away from him!

That doesn't matter - it's part of what happens.

Anyway my father got married with my mum in 1929-1930. In 1932 my brother was born, Yianni, and in 1934 my other brother was born. In the meantime actually, my first brother was killed in an accident - terrible accident happened - and my grandfather was responsible for - not that he meant to - but he just got killed while he was sowing the land.

In the fields.

Yes, the fields - and the two cows ran, and my little brother was sitting under the shade of the tree and ----

He got killed.

He was killed, yes. And then my brother was born in '34 and then I was born after that in 1936, and that's when I started to tell my story.

Your story begins.

As a young person of four years old.

Now, 1936 you were born just before the war. So, during the war years, WWII in Greece, you were a little girl growing up in there. Can you remember much about your childhood during the war?

I do actually. What I do remember, the first thing that I remember when the door was knocked so heavily, we all were very alert and my father went to open it, and two policemen took my father away, and I started to sort of --- I thought. "Oh what's happening" and I started to cry, and then my mother quietly, she closed the door and came inside, and then my γιαγιά, my grandmother, she was praying to God, and I said. I remember what I said as a young girl, I was a baby, what, four years old, and I said to my mum --- actually three years old I was, 1939 was that one --- and I said. "What's

happening". She said to me. "You go and pray and go to sleep". So I went to sleep, and what I remember after that when I wake up, nothing really --- I didn't care actually, I was just a child playing around. In 1940 my dad went to war again, in Albania.

So when you woke up - when you woke up, had your father been taken away?

Yes - he wasn't there.

He was taken away?

He was taken away.

To take part in the war?

In the war. That was, the war was between the Italians, and in Albania he went.

Anyway, so after a year I think, nine months, my dad came back home, and in 1940 - the Germans of course they [were] all involved in the war - they come through, passing through our little village.

And, so what do you remember of that?

What I remember about this one was that - they're passing through and they have - they put on fire the haystack of my uncle's haystack, but no animals were killed, or anything. They were looking - the Germans were looking for food, chasing chickens around. And straight away I went - I was wearing a little apron that my mum made for me. I went to my garden, I picked up some cucumbers and tomatoes and I went offer them - the only thing that I saw was boots - they were so tall and I was so little. The only thing I remember was the big boots. And they took the cucumbers and the tomatoes, but they wanted chickens. They started chasing the chickens. And anyway, they caught some chickens - they took them with them and they left. So, after that nothing happens. Of course they didn't do any damages, and all that. And my father was --- the Greek army started to retreat, and then he came home. So, not long after that the famine came.

Exactly, after WWII.

And people dying - not in my little village, but in Athens. They were coming all the way from Athens to --- our relatives actually, came to our little village and it was June actually - that's the time when the wheat was almost ready to be picked, and they were killing - you won't believe - they were killing turtles, to eat them, and the eggs of them too. I remember that - I can see it now.

The Athenians.

Yes, and many different incidences - they were terrible - and people going from house to house asking for food. But of course we didn't have that much enough for ourselves, so have to give them whatever we had. And I remember I took a little bag myself, copying them, I went to somebody else's house to get some - and my mother said. "Silly girl, what are you doing"? I said. "What they are doing? I want to do the same thing" as a young kid. She said. "Don't do that" she said to me, you know, so I went back and --- started playing.

In the village, the people coped, because you had your own produce - it was the cities that really suffered.

Oh, yes - they did.

So after WWII, we had the depression, as it were - then after that did you feel safe - did your family feel safe in your village?

Not for very long though, not for very long, because the civil war started. That was the worst one because they used to come in and take the young people away - what's the word ...

The children.

Γενίτσαροι [Janissaries] - you know, seventeen, sixteen, eighteen years old - to fight, and some of them, they had brothers in the other side, which were policemen - and they were the communists. And you would fight your own brother.

So you're talking about the guerrillas.

The guerrillas, yes, that was a terrible thing to happen. My father wasn't there at the time, he was in Kastoria, and of course he didn't want to come home because they would have taken him away. So, yes, they come and take whatever we had, fruit, bread, anything we had. They had to take it, they used to sleep in our houses, the guerrillas, a lot of fleas they had. You're obliged to wash them, wash their clothes. My mother, poor my mum she had to do all that, so I was not feeling safe. They could smack you or kill you if you didn't do as you told, but I was too young, so we were pretty safe - they wouldn't take us away. But the girls they had to hide, eighteen, nineteen girls ---

Young girls?

Young girls, they had to hide, so we left our little village, we left the animals, everything. Again we became refugees. I remember my mum, said to me - I had a little goat, and I was looking after it, feed it. She said. "Leave it", I said. "Why mum". She

said. "She's going to die anyway". She said. "Don't bring it with you". So I left it behind - I started to cry - that was my pet. So we left. We took what we had to take, our donkeys, horses to help us out. So we went across the river, to Vogatsiko. That place was our safe place.

So was it - it was another village?

Not a village, bigger than a village, a little town, of I would say 500,000 people.

So you felt safe in the bigger town?

Very safe because there was the police station there. And also it was away from the guerrillas, but they also came on that side on the mountains and at night times we weren't allowed to have the lights on, we had to pull the curtains and the war started. Believe me it was a horrible thing. I finish my school there, my primary school and I was twelve when I finished that and I went to this girls' school I would say, technical school, we learned how to cook and also how to sew, and many other things.

Domestic duties?

Domestic duties and yes, I stayed there for three years but in the meantime, in the meantime, as a twelve year old, we had to bury young men who were killed by the guerrillas, and bury them. It was a horrible thing for that young age to go through. Suddenly I became an adult.

You grew up very fast.

I grew up very fast. We weren't allowed to cry a lot because you have to get the flowers, you have to do this, you have to run from here to there, and anyway, so I stayed in that little school for three years. When I was fifteen I left, I went to Thessaloniki to learn my dressmaking. I stayed there for about three years and, I got my diploma. I came back home about eighteen years old, and that's when we buried my grandmother, great grandmother actually.

Oh your great grandmother.

Great grandmother. And my aunts from Αθήνα [Athens], Thessaloniki they came to χωριό [village] to my little village, and they stayed there for a couple of days. So they left, and then the years go by, the Immigration Department from Australia wanted people to come to Australia, so quite a few people left, to [go] Australia. One of those was my future husband, I would say. And that's when his mother actually was coming

to our house talking to my mum and started saying that "How about if Sofia marries my son"? My mum, I don't know what was her reaction, but she approached me, and I thought "Hang on, this is not good, that what she wanted before, this is the second time". And I said "No, I don't want to go to Australia because I have been away for so long, I will miss you a lot".

By this time - just interrupting you - by this time, when you left Thessaloniki to go back home, where was home? Had your mother gone back to Kozani?

Yes, that was in Platania.

So after the safe haven, being away from the guerrillas, at the end of the civil war, did your parents go back to their home, were they able to go back?

Yes, yes they were - yes they were.

So how long did they stay away in a safe place?

We stayed there for - because I left though ---

You left but your parents stayed?

They stayed. In 1950, they went back I think.

They were able to go back safely?

Yes, safely, very safely because everything was quietened down.

It was the end of the war?

Yes, the end of the war, everybody came home and ---

So you went back to the original village?

That's right, yes.

Ok

And that's when they approached me again, and I was back from Thessaloniki to the village, and I said to my mum. "No, I'm not going anywhere mum" and she said, "Think about your other two sisters". I said "What about them". She said "If you go to Australia" - she said - "You will help them, you will help daddy, your father". I thought "How do I help him". And she said "Well you can, you know, either send money, or you can take them with you, afterwards, or whatever". I was actually emotionally blackmailed. And I said OK, and I didn't give another thought of it. So I left for Kastoria because my youngest sister was going to high school. So I went there, started

doing some sewing, and looking after her. We went to a new place in Kastoria, and my father was coming and going to check on us. And, in the meantime - I don't know if I have to say this.

Entirely up to you.

Yes - I was about 19 years old - I had met somebody, and well, must have been fatal attraction, whatever, who knows what it was. And I approached my dad and I said to him "I'm not going to Australia". He says "why". I said "I love somebody else". I was pretty gutsy, just like him, I took after him. And, he says to me, "All right" he says to me, "Wait, when I come back - I'm going to Athens, and I'm going to talk to your uncle".

Continuing on with Sofia Kallos

Now Sofia we are up to where you fell in love with a local boy in the village and you told your father.

Not in the village in Kastoria

In Kastoria, and you told your father, and he said "Don't do anything until I come back from Athens".

Yes, so he went to Athens, he spoke to my uncle, and he [uncle] Anastasi says "Sofia likes a beautiful life, she wants the beautiful stuff so send her to Australia, she will have a better life there". So when my father came back - he wasn't keen to send me to Australia, I must admit, I must admit, he wasn't - but my mum was. So we started from there, in the 9th of September 1956 I said goodbye to my parents.

As you do, now how did your parents and the other people in the small town find out about Australia wanting, workers basically, because they wanted people to come and populate Australia. How was it?

It was the government, they started to advertise, and telling "Who wants to go to Australia?" and then you approach. They started to get families actually and young boys, girls not so much, there were boys and families with children, and quite a few from my little village they left in 1953, '54, from around the other villages they did the same so then, that is how it happened and then he [my future husband] sent for me, from here Australia, to come to Australia.

The person you were going to marry.

The person. Shall I say his name.

It does not matter if you don't want to.

The 9th September I left Athens with my dad, my dad stayed back of course, with the boat, and the name was Tasmania, mind you, and yes. That was my journey.

Was it an assisted passage like the government paid your expenses. Did you come with DEME? [ICEM - Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration]

It must have been DEME but I don't know if they paid or not, but he was, my future husband, was proxy to me to come to Australia. I don't know what happened. My dad did give me some money probably for my own.

For spending money, but probably did come out with DEME, which was the Assisted Passage to go to -----

I never questioned that, because I wasn't, I don't know, I didn't want to come to Australia, to be honest, I must have a very sad young lady, and leaving back my other person that I loved and I wasn't interested in anything anyway, so I did say to mum though "I will go to Australia because you want me to, I will marry that guy, but I will leave him also in the end". (laughter)

So you left Greece, unhappily.

Very unhappy, but as a happy person I was a very happy person, I tried not to be miserable. On the boat I had my cousin Kaliroi, and also my other cousin with his family coming to Australia with one child at the time, and I made a lot of friends on the boat. Actually, when we were passing Port Said, from there, it was a war there also, mind you, if you remember, we had to go all around to come to Australia, so that is why we took thirty-five days on the boat, but while passing Port Said, we had these little small boats, coming and saying "Maria, you want shoes" and all that? I thought, what was that all about, so we come out and we put the money on the string, throw it down, they tie up the shoes, and I bought myself a pair of white shoes with platform heels mind you. (laughter)

So it was your first shopping off the ship.

So we were quite happy, and we left of course. We continued our journey. When we came to Fremantle, we had to get out, do some more shopping, I don't know, I have to mention this, I bought myself a beautiful see-through (laughter) bras. I wasn't wearing bra at the time, at that age, I didn't wear bra, because I was pretty good, actually, and I

bought myself a bra, pink colour, see-through, a little kimono, and a little pants. So I thought "I am going to get married". Anyway, so I took them with me.

What did you think when you arrived in Fremantle and saw Australia for the first time.

I don't know, there were lots of shops and the smell got me there.

What was wrong with the smell?

I don't know a certain smell, it wouldn't go away for months and years, and it was a certain drink Cola Beer if you remember, and that smell, I had a drink, and I said "yuk" and I didn't want it, so I couldn't drink anything. There were lots of shops, they were beautiful actually, but as I said I didn't really care. I was coming to Australia without --- didn't really care. To be honest, I was switched off and I was caring about my friends, singing "*Volare*", oh God Dean Martin was singing that on the boat, and a lot of Greeks from Rhodes, they had made good friends from there.

On the boat.

On the boat and staying late at night, watching the stars, talking, being friendly, singing, it was quite nice actually, and also we had to learn English in the boat.

Yes of course, so you went to English classes.

Yes we had English classes. We had to say "Good morning, my name is" whatever and yes. It was quite nice, I met a family from Port Said also, she was coming to her husband with the one child, she was very nice, she was telling me stories, that how hot it was, I forgot the name of it, anyway she said "We used to cook" she said to me, "With the sun on the stones". I said "What is she talking about"? She said, yes she was very dark actually, and then I started believing what she was telling me. It must be like this, I told myself. It was too hot, very hot in Αίγυπτος [Egypt].

Egypt yes. So from Fremantle, back onto the ship and you come to Port Melbourne, was there anybody waiting for you in Melbourne.

Yes my future husband, my fiancé, he was waiting for me, and just because --- you see the first - not argument - it took a long time for me to get out of the boat.

You didn't want to get out?

I wanted to get out, but it took so long and he got angry at me, and I thought "What a start". You know what I mean, straight away, what you think. I didn't say much, I had my cousin there, I had my other cousin there, we lost each other and I took time to get

out. Probably it was meant to be like that. Who knows. I remember this particular girl, I will never forget this she was coming out and looking down to see her fiancé and she said "Oh, I don't think I see him". She was looking at the photo and the person she was looking at, he was much much older. She got down, he had some flowers, she took the flowers, believe me, and she threw it at his face, and she said "I am not coming", she rushed upstairs, back into the boat, and she started to cry and screaming, and I think the captain said to her, they all came out, I don't know what happened, and she followed them and he said to her "I will take you back to Greece". That is what I remember what happened. I don't know if it did happen like that or not, but I remember he said to her "I will take you back to Greece". She was such a beautiful girl, very lovely, beautiful girl. Well I don't blame her. He was pretty old the poor guy.

Didn't compare with the photograph that he had sent.

No no, not at all. It was a lie. So why would she build her life in a lie.

Exactly. So Melbourne then you get onto the Overland with your fiancé.

Yes we stayed one night at his cousin's in Melbourne.

And then Adelaide?

That night, actually, I sat down and spoke to my future husband, telling him that I don't want him, "I love somebody else, would you please go by yourself, I will wait here".

Oh my God, I don't know why I said that, how gutsy, fancy telling him to go and leave me in Melbourne. What would I do there by myself? Crazy. Anyway he said to me, "I promised your dad that I would look after you". But he did not really look after me, he was so jealous.

So we come to Adelaide, under sufferance, and you lived in Adelaide and you were married.

Not married straight away. I went to have a Register first. The priest, I will never forget this, he asked me if I wanted to marry this guy. I almost said no, and he stepped on my foot and "Ouch", I said "Yes". I married him.

We got married in two weeks time in the Greek Orthodox Church in King William, sorry, Franklin Street, was the old church in those days, 1956, it was November the 4th, I remember that. So from then on, well a married person, my life wasn't very nice, he was very jealous, struggling along, I couldn't get a job. I went and worked for a while in

Glen Ewin, the fruit cannery, conserves, jams, I worked there for a few months, and then come back. I think at the time we lived in, off Gilles Street, in a little street there, renting a place, got married in that little place, and in the first day of my married, his cousin, as a gift, he gave me this beautiful dress, Swiss cotton, the lace. Because it was see-through, he made me take off that dress, he was jealous and he slapped me. "You are not wearing this again". Oh God I thought, what is this. Anyway, so I persevered, I said nothing, the days go by and then we move from there.

Ok, so you progressed, you had children.

We bought a house, and my first child was born in 1958 in 178 Hutt Street, we used to live there, and after that, we rented that place, we went to Broken Hill shooting kangaroos.

Oh!

He was shooting kangaroos.

So he went by himself or you went as a family.

No he went by himself first, then he came back and he took me with him and my son, we stayed there in Broken Hill, about a year and I was doing sewing.

That is where you started sewing in Australia.

Sewing again. I had a beautiful rich lady that she was willing, she had the money, and she was making dresses and I used to charge her whatever. Also the nurses from the hospital, they were coming to me, and we stayed there for a year and then we left for Mildura, picking grapes. And I was a very good worker, and he was jealous because I was a very good worker, I don't know what to say. Doesn't matter. We left Mildura, we came back to Adelaide, we didn't go to the house, it was still rented, actually I lost all my stuff, they stole all my stuff. The furniture, my glory box everything that I brought from Greece, they had been stolen, and I went and stayed with my sister-in-law in Campbelltown and then from there I went and worked for Vogue overseas fashion factory.

So by this time, how was your command of the English language.

I was actually very keen to learn English, it took me almost three years to learn the English language. I worked with a lady from Hungary, she was a migrant here too, and she was putting, the radio, believe me, and said "Listen to it", and I used to sew there

with her and I was listening to the radio, and there was also as a theatre, like a theatre on the radio, series.

There used to be plays.

Plays, and I listened to that and this is how I started commanding the language. I was very keen to learn the language, I wanted to learn the language, I did actually, I am quite happy about it.

Yes you have definitely, and with that you were able to build your sewing business as well.

Yes, yes, and then after that lady, I left and --- yes I had my son then ---- (emotional)

That is Ok, how did you progress with getting more and more clients, building up your business.

We came back to my house, in Hutt Street, and I decided to have down stairs, turn it as a shop, a dressmaking shop --- yes --- in the meantime my husband left his job, not left his job, Holden, they used to sack people, they sacked him and something happened to his moral, I suppose, as a man not providing for me and for his child. He went a little funny, he started to drink, he was coming home very sad and all that stuff, but I had the shop I was sewing, making good money.

You were the provider for the family.

I was providing, but he didn't like that. He didn't like that. So things didn't go very well, I had to -----

So you decided to separate, you went your separate ways.

We went separate ways, he was staying at home and I left the house, went and lived elsewhere. In the meantime - I am sorry - I had another child after four or five years, a nice little girl, so I took my two children, left the house, went and lived elsewhere and there was my client, Mrs Boyce, she gave me shelter and she also suggested that I should put my two children into an orphanage, so I can work, so that is what I did at the time being.

Where was this orphanage?

Norton Summit.

So they were there for a short period of time.

For a short period of time, until I settled myself elsewhere.

And you could go and visit them.

Yes I was and also he was the same thing, but he had to get out of the house, because my shop was there and he didn't want to, so I went for custody of the children. I am sorry to say that, it is a very sad story, but, it happened that way, I felt sorry for him but it just had to happen that way so in the end he left. I came back to my shop, continued the dress making, I had my two children back with me living upstairs. When I went for my custody also, I had to go for the house also, because I was paying for it.

So you got your house, you got your children, you had your business.

I got my house, I got my children, I continued my sewing, I had a beautiful clientele, but when my daughter was about four years old - the hotel in Hutt Street, right on the corner - and drunken people were passing through from my back street, coming into the back street of my back house, the garden and sometimes I trip over drunk people and I thought "This is not good for my daughter and my children, I have to leave", so I put it on sale and I went and bought a house in Hectorville and of course I had a hard time then, because my clients would follow me from Glenelg to Hutt Street, was Ok, but from Glenelg to Hectorville, was a long way and they said to me "Sofia, we cannot follow you". So I thought to myself, "What do I do now"? So slowly slowly, I built up another clientele, and I was quite happy. I was looked after actually [by] my clients, some of them took my children out so I could do a bit of sewing, I was a very lucky girl, very lucky, very optimistic, I was by myself by then of course. I got my divorce in 1970, I had been with my children for five years, I was very very happy, they were very happy, of course, children do love both parents but they saw they were better off with me.

So you must have been a very good dress maker and you had a very good clientele and it was mostly word of mouth.

Yes.

You didn't work in department stores or anywhere like that too?

No. When I left my place I went - when I was going through my divorce - I forgot to mention that, I went in the city - Grote Street, I rented a little - the front of the shop - and I was working at the back ---

Continuing with Sofia Kallos

Sofia we are in Grote Street now you have got a little shop there to continue with your sewing.

Yes so I was sewing there, and after a while I left to go back to my house and I continued from there. In 1970, like to mentioned earlier, I got my divorce and I started thinking to go back to Greece.

To live there?

Not to live there, to visit my parents after eighteen years. So when I bought the other house in Hectorville, in 1973, I took my children and went to Greece. (emotional)

It would have been a very emotional time, going back there, seeing your family and after eighteen years, it is a long time. Once you arrived there, had anything changed in your village.

Lots of things had changed there, when I arrived there actually, the first thing that I did, I kissed the ground and I said "Πατρίδα μου" [my motherland] you know. "My country".

You felt you had gone home.

Yes (emotional)

Understandable, yes of course.

My children were stunned, they said "Mum what are you doing"? I said "This is my home, we are going to my parents". Anyway so they were waiting for me, and my brother there and the person was, not an interviewer, he was asking questions, "Come from where", "Australia", "Why did you leave your country"? What do you tell that person? I said I didn't want to go to Australia but I was forced to go. "Αχ παιδί μου", "My child", then after that he stopped he didn't say anymore. Of course my brother comes along, got into the car, and on the way my children, everything was new for them and my daughter, particularly, she was ten years old at the time, she saw the little lambs, the sheep, and she said "Mum are they dogs?" I said "No", because the Australian sheep are much larger than the Greek ones, anyway, so when I arrived home ---- (emotional)

It was home, it was an emotional time, now just diverting back, when you left Greece to come to Australia your mother had said to you that you would be going and helping your two younger sisters, either through sending money home or perhaps even bringing them to Australia too, did that actually happen?

I never sent any money to Greece, but I did bring my sister, she was seventeen, I found somebody that I liked very much myself, not for myself, for her, and he was a wonderful, and still is a wonderful guy, beautiful husband to my sister, so she did come. I did actually help out that way and she brought my youngest sister. We all helped each other.

So what your mother was sending you here for, actually happened in the end. You were able to bring out the other two girls here and perhaps help them out completely. Did your mother ever come out to Australia.

Yes she did. We brought my parents here in 1970.

After you had been back.

Yes, so when I went there, I met - I have to say this - when I stayed in Greece for three months I met a young guy, I was with my father travelling to see my aunties in Thessaloniki, and my two children were with me, and on the way back to Thessaloniki, I met him, he was travelling also from his village to Thessaloniki and I don't know what happened.

You fell in love.

It is a love story, I can't tell everything. But it was a love story, so in the end, when I went home with my dad, I said to my dad "Do you think I can marry a younger person than me?" and my dad said "Well, we can do that, if you want to, if it is the sensible thing to do, why not"? So I got his permission and continued writing to that person.

So when you came back here?

No I met him in Thessaloniki, but before I came to Australia, back, I met him again we talked about it and he wanted to come to Australia, but I was a little bit reluctant, because it was much younger than I was and anyway. I had a wonderful time with my parents. I came back to Australia with my two children and continued writing to this guy and I went and saw, not the Immigration Department, saw the MP [Member of Parliament], told him my story and said to me "Alright I will help you out". It was a Liberal actually, not Labor, even though I was a Labor, I must say that, doesn't matter. He helped me out to make a proxy, so I sent the papers, as a fiancé, he can come over, so in 1974 the last day of that [year] he came to Australia, believe it or not. He came to Australia and yes I was married in 1975 the 16th of March 1975, I married that guy.

And you had another child with your present husband.

Yes I had another son in 1977, that's when I decided to bring my parents over from Greece with my sister from Melbourne, she paid some and I paid some, they came over.

Why was it important for you to bring your parents here?

I wanted them to see how we lived, what kind of life we had here, I wanted them to know another life.

For a holiday was your intention or to live.

No not to live, for a holiday. They would not come to live of course because I had my brother there. Only one brother they were pretty close to them, so they came here, they stayed with me for three months, they had a wonderful time and yes my dad was a very happy man. He was travelling back and forward without the language, but he knew how to get on with the bus driver and all that, and yes then they went back to Melbourne, Sydney, they had a wonderful time, very happy. They left very happy, they were very sad actually, when they left, but you know they were very sad moments when they left to be honest.

Tell me, you said to me that when you went back to Greece, and you kissed the land, because you were going home.

Yes

Alright, when you left there and came to Australia, were you coming home again?

Yes

So you feel you have two homes.

Yes. That is the sad part of it, we have two countries to care for.

That is the sad plight of the migrant. Yes. One is the mother country ----

Yes yes and the other one is just a new country, another mother country. Australia, home. Yes because you struggled here, you created what you had to create, your life, your wealth I would say.

Yes of course.

Australia has been such a beautiful country for me.

It has been good for the migrant.

It has been very good to me, it does not matter if I suffered in other ways, but that is my country, my home.

You continued doing your sewing, and your husband got into business, now with your children, as they grew up here, did you send them to Greek school?

Yes I did actually.

How important was it for you that your children learn to speak Greek?

Very important, because I wanted them to know my roots.

Exactly, yes

But unfortunately my son did learn the language but not my daughter, she didn't want to.

They probably didn't see a need for it here.

No she got hit by the teacher, because she was very talkative, she had a mouth.

Bad experience.

She was only a little kid but he smacked her on the palm and that was it, she didn't want to go back to school. I said "Why not?" She said "No", and she never spoke the language, funny isn't it, and now she regrets it, but she sends her daughter to the Greek school.

Isn't it funny that the next generation -----

But she couldn't speak the language, little Artemis my little granddaughter. Her father started to go to Greek school too and he couldn't speak the language and he had to leave, they both left.

So your daughter, or that generation didn't see the need for it, but now that they are parents themselves they want their children to maintain the language and the culture.

Yes that is right.

Do you go back to Greece often?

My mother passed away and I had to go, but I was not quick enough to see her so she passed away so I went in nine days after her burial in '92.

When you go back do you feel you do for a holiday in Greece, or do you still feel you are going home?

I go for a holiday and go also ---- memories for my childhood.

But when you are there, after a while ---

You want to come back

To home?

To home, Australia, definitely, yes definitely, I went again in 2006, 2010, and 2012.

Each time for a holiday?

No in 2012 was a very sad thing, because my brother-in-law passed away, suddenly passed away, I went and saw him and then he passed away. Actually I am going back Helen. When my son was born, the third child of mine, I was keen to send him to Greek school definitely, and we did. We did and primary school and high school he had it as a subject and university.

Isn't it wonderful, he has maintained the language.

He has maintained the language, he was pretty clever boy, he still speaks the language, the writes, he even writes better than us, the Greek language, I am very happy about that. But I often said to him "Speak Greek to us" he does sometimes, but his father speaks English and I said to him "Thanasi" speak Greek, "Εντάξει μάνα, εντάξει". [Ok mum ok].

Just one question to finish off, because you are from Pontos, which was in Turkey, when you went to Greece they regarded as what?

Still I was a Greek young lady, being away too long and become Australian.

Prior to that, I am saying, with your family, when your family left Pontos, with the population exchange and they went to Greece, were they welcomed by the Greeks there.

I don't know, I never asked them.

That is interesting.

I know one thing they weren't allowed to speak Ποντιακά [Pontian dialect], that is sad, we had to speak Greek.

Who forbid them?

I think the government.

Encouraged them to speak Greek. Now coming here to Australia, how do the Greeks from mainland Greece, think of you from Pontos, do they regard you as Greeks as well or do they see you differently?

Greeks.

They do see you as Greeks.

Because I was born in Greece I am a Greek person, doesn't matter if my parents were from Pontos, like here, we are Greek migrants, my children were born here from Greek parents.

That is wonderful

Yes that is what it is.

Well that is all from me Sofia, is there anything else that you have to add to this interview.

I think my last word would be any young person who may listen to my story, don't ever give up, don't forget your roots, be optimistic in life, no matter what, if you kneel down, get up and try again. That is all I have to say and thank you.

Thank you very much Sofia.

And thank God for my life, I have no regrets.

That is wonderful.