

GREEKS IN WA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Transcript of an interview with

VLACHOU, Peter

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SIDE ONE

005 Born April 1948.

*1 Parents were separated for about 10 years. Mr V. father was a sheep-utter originally then a hawker of fish and ice-cream. Then ran a restaurant before entering the army in Darwin. Was discharged on medical grounds.

Heard from a friend, George ~~the~~ Pinos, that his dry-cleaning business in Sydney was successful, so he went to Sydney and deemed its success, returned to Perth and by 1947 was operating his own dry cleaning business - "Popular Dry-Cleaners."

028 Mr V. also remembers his father as a ~~part~~ partner into the early 1950s of National Butchers along Aberdeen Street near Lake Street. Mr Nemos and Mr V's uncle (his dad's brother) ran the butcher shop. Uncle had arrived 10 years before Mr V's father. ^{Spino}

See interview with Mr V. N. (Sonia) 042

On arrival from Greece in 1947 Mrs Vlachou was stayed with the Nemos' at their Aberdeen St abode near St Brigids. By time Peter V. was born they had moved to 356 Charles Street where Yambos Traders is. A white out infested location. The owners were the Gapanos'. Vlachou's didn't run Yambos Traders. Rented the house.

3 Then moved to Floreat after his father purchased a State Housing block through a War Service loan. Gunn Street, just off Brookdale St. Moved there in 1954. Was viewed as being in the "sticks". Brookdale was a ~~bad~~ ^{and} track.

061 When he started at Floreat Primary school he couldn't speak English. During that school period "I had an identity crisis. Didn't know if I was Greek or English. Red eggs or chocolate eggs." "We weren't allowed to participate in the wider community activities." YMCA or sleeping over at other kids homes etc. Remembers games of cricket in the area and his mother calling out for him and his brother Nick. Collecting them before it got dark.

3 Played a little sport as he got a little older. Went to Perth Modern High. Here he met a few Greeks. His cousin Peter Petrides, Margaret Pinos, etc. at Floreat Primary no Greeks.

100 Some of the kids were also attendees of Greek School. Would go to Greek School 3 times a week. Catch the 82 bus - Mon, Wed + Friday. Father would then pick them up or they would walk to the club and wait for their father to finish his game of backgammon ~~or~~ or whatever.

Greek school was in the old hall with Persephone and Kyria Anna. Also had a

male teacher who went to America. Mr V. father went to the club in James Street. Would go to International Club and then sometimes the Mega. Otherwise, would go to the dry cleaners and wait.

(4) Name days were very important to us in helping us ~~stay~~ with our Greekness. Father's name day on New Year's Day was a huge celebration. 50-100 guests, coloured lights and mother would be preparing for a week.

153 Predominantly mixing with Australian-born Greek kids.

Picnics were also important for social contacts - places like Yanchep, Coogee, Sawyers Valley, etc.

Comparison with Northbridge Greeks. "We never really got exposed to those sort of things (Community Dances etc) till much later." Geographic location affect this.

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(4) His father did become ho. of Megas Alexandros in late 1950s/early 1960s. This was at about the time they moved into their own premises. Had been part of the International Club, then moved upstairs from Benjays at 80 James Street and was here for many years. Then moved to corner house on Woodrow. Father was president when they opened up their own club rooms.

"Not until I turned 17 and got a driver's license and could choose my contacts did I really notice regional identity of Greeks." "Observed that people did things differently to ~~we~~ us". Greeks weren't all the same. Social circle changed esp when started playing football for Hellas. Realized that some had been here a long time, some could speak Greek, etc. Foods and values were a bit different. Didn't have that experience of interaction at an early age because of where Vlachou's lived.

220 Never had any real racial antagonisms. Didn't experience significant racial animosity.

*"Did strike me as a bit odd that they couldn't speak Greek."

Upto 16/17 all Greeks were the same. Then came into this more assimilated flatter attitude.

24# Peter Vlachou made it known that he and his brother were "altar boys" and this was an important part of our life - was a type of social outing. Expanded Greek network.

(4) Bishop came over to conduct the service when English church was made into a Greek orthodox church.

Was an "altar boy" for a few years - Manassis was the priest. John and Spiros Karras and Alec Litas were "altar boys" at St. C+H around the same

time. As they grew they came to resent going to church because there were other things to do. So, as teenagers church attendance wasn't as regular but did go. Their father remained very involved in the church.

(4) Parents didn't really provide enough info or background to religious occasions etc. They were determined to build a new church. Mr V. father went to Camberra and came back with a set of drawings etc. John Kalafatas was instrumental in the early days in establishing this church. At the time Mr V. realized that some sort of break away group was involved, but only later did he appreciate the level of tension and reasons for dispute etc.

314 MacLeach and Mathews built the Evangelines Church. MacLeach was a neighbour of the Vlachois in Forest.

His father had many meetings about the church and the plans, taking him away from the family and causing some resentment. "He always seemed to be involved in something besides family."

Peter V. had always wanted to be a farmer, but his father discouraged it because it was the life he had come from.

He failed his junior because he truanted from school regularly etc.

His father took over the dry cleaning business again and so Peter went and worked with his dad. from Soutomzis'

375 Initially played sport with local Forest teams. "Biggest thing that happened to us in terms of social impact was the H.I.A." (4) It gave us so many options - sporting and social interaction. There was a journal. "It opened up a whole social - for us it became a way of life."

"Was so strong in that era for us. For them it may not have fulfilled anything, but for us it was very important." "Friendships just blossomed." allowed for mixing with girls etc.

SIDE TWO

004 Mr V. knew his wife from an early age through picnics + family outings etc. In teen years drifted apart. Bumped into each other again through H.I.A. functions and H.I.A. this allowed a relationship to develop. see Bellos.

When chosen to be a national serviceman Sandra (his wife) organised a farewell party for him hosted by his cousin Peter Petrides. While away she was the only panning youth.

or person
female¹ who wrote to him ~~and~~ right up till the end.

"I missed a lot of social contact for these 2 years I was away." Relationship with his wife grew from that.

024 Mr V was drafted as part of the 14th intake of national servicemen - October 1968. The year he turned 20.

(4) Though wasn't certain he'd be going to Vietnam when conscripted, the possibility was there. "It was pretty real".

Never crossed his mind to object or become a draft ~~dog~~ dodger of conscription.

"It was the luck of the draw, its the way it is and my number came up."

Other Greek who Mr V. was aware of who had been drafted was George Vassilev - the welfare officer. They went to Pukapumel together and did 10 weeks training together.

16 but

This was the first time Mr V. had been away from home, so his¹ buddies became important and "what I latched on to." George Vassilev didn't go to Vietnam.

Vietnam

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Reported at 2pm at Karakatta and later that day were bussed to the airport. After 10 weeks at Pukapumel it was Christmas time so was sent home for a couple of weeks leave. Then went to Sydney - to Holdsworth Camp - spent rest of his time prior to going to Vietnam there doing infantry training. Involved in the re-building of 1st Battalion and realised they would be going to Vietnam. 7th

031 Battalion was due to do a tour of duty from January 1970.

(4) There was some concern and anxiety within the family, but I accepted it as a fait accompli. Maybe I was naive or immature. "My mum was crying."

Was stationed at Nui Dat - went to Vung Jow. (Phuoc Joy province.)

7th Battalion was on "Search and Destroy" missions/operations. A lot of guerrilla activity in the area. They tried to ambush and track down the enemy - V.C. Some times would be involved in a large operation, sweeping through areas etc. Could be in platoon size - upto 34 (operationally usually 20-25) or in sections which involved just 7-8 people. Under Australian command.

Training involved 2 main things - an awareness of mines and to win the hearts and minds of the people.

Another local in the army at the time was Paul Naoum, but he didn't go to Vietnam. He's about the only Greek Mr V. came across.

"I come back from Vietnam relatively unscathed." "I think I'm okay." It made me more conscious and proud of being Australian." "Have a more broad interest in Australia and world affairs." "But time has passed it was nearly 40 years ago."

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4 No, I didn't see a lot (of combat)." Fluke, coincidence seems to have helped in this regard. Gave the example of spotting a location for 3/4 nights and they saw nothing. Next night when they had been relieved at the same spot and they had 3 kills.

Fired a few shots, saw some enemy but not often or very severe or intense as others in the battalion.

Vietnam (cont)

Was in Vietnam for 6 months. Returned home via Sydney. Returned in 1970.

Public opinion had changed so you didn't admit it to having gone. "You didn't feel proud of having defended your country." There was a stigma, you weren't welcomed or respected. Mr V. hasn't embraced the war legacy and become a student of the war or a champion of the cause etc.

Went to a re-union in 1995. Been to 2 or 3 ANZAC Day Marches.

275 How did your Greek friends respond to your return?

They were terrific. He was accepted back into the group, but he had missed much of what had happened and it took some time to "catch up". He had missed out on many experiences and so felt a little "outside" eg hipposwallow showbags and the HVA. Felt a little denied. And then on his return he went straight back to work ^{at dry cleaners.} Had Sandra in his life now as well.

4
+
8 No hostility from Greek community because he'd been to Vietnam. Some coolness and questioning. Others were dismissive "an idiot who went off to Vietnam or a wanker or something like that." The deep or political questions were often beyond him.

337 [Broad issues of the community were filtering through to the Greek community.] Re-kindling in Greek community affairs happened when Hellenic Football Club began to falter. Lacked players + coach + financially struggling. Got involved with Jim Manfisi and Peter Economis. Basically worked on the committee and did a few "hard yard jobs". Loyalty to Club and a sense of responsibility to the club as it had helped him socialize etc when younger. Felt it was wrong not to try to save it.

Hellenic Football Club

377 The Club re-juvenated. Economis was good at organizing functions and administering the Club getting it back on its feet. School

How do you reflect on your time on the Board now?

Joined HACC I in 1984. Saw this as a vehicle to assist promote Hellenism and by helping the School this could be done.

TAPE 2. Side ONE

shop - food outlet. * Conscious decision not to get involved in Megon Alexandros, It fulfils the need for a

because of father's involvement and waiting for him on his casual recruitment. "Near" done anything for me. "Small group of people."

130. Have you experienced any regional snobbery? "Yes." "In dismissive ways. Interest dissipates when you tell some people your from Macedonia and father was a timber cutter or whatever." "People have a little bit of snobbery." "usually from islanders."

Can you tell some people your from Macedonia and father was a timber cutter or whatever.
vs
Non
Can 3ie.

(16)
SAG

We (HACCI/GAPBA) saw ourselves as an organization that could help the community through our expertise etc.

Arthur Linnis and Tony Messios asked us to a meeting explaining the School project and grants received plus land etc. Project sound exciting. They wanted our help to do a presentation with some forecasts, viability etc about the project. Had some slides done and helped with a presentation to members at an EGM. The project was accepted and thereafter Mr V. was asked to go on the School Board.

016 Once board commenced its work "wheels started to fall off"; Divisions emerged. Ken Michael became Minor roads Commissioner - a promotion. Dr Paul Boyatzis resigned. (A. Yamakis was present etc).

The Church and elements of the community were ~~at~~ against the Project and against the people etc.

School started with 7 students at North Morley. If all that money and energy had been harnessed and focussed on the School not divisions etc. Half a million dollars spent on legal fees.

(6)

"The demise of Arthur and Tony was their formation of an inner sanctum and marching forward." "But then this was the only way they could get things done." Obstacles and hindrances all around them, so they acted in this way with only 3/4 people making decisions. This conduct also opened them up to attack.

For a short time after being HACCI President, he continued on the School Board.

"When Beratis took over as President he wanted to turn everything upside down and make sure numbers stacked up. He was against Linnis from the beginning."

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At this time he was working for "Spotless Services".

Mr V. sent his kids to Greek School, took them to church, they played netball with Hellans and then NUGAS - two served on Committee. These things helped instill some degree of Greekness in them. Infrastructure not there because needs not there and because needs not there, infrastructure is not there - ie within Greek community.

All 3 have married Greeks. Didn't expect that this would happen. Hoped that one would, anything more a bonus.

108

(6)

As they develop as family units, interesting to see that these circle of friends is dominated by Greek people. "A bit has rubbed off on them." Wished them to be proud of their Greek heritage.

Had worked as a dry cleaner till 1984. Moved business to Morley. Australian Institute of Dry-cleaning and this led to work for "Spotless." In 1990 left and went into small business.

Born
April
1948

Peter Vlachou

29-3-2005

Yonkas Jachos - GUPANIS'

Pimis.

Greek Clubs

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Megan Alexander → at International Club, then Bensley @ 80 James St then Woodrow Ave in Dionello.

M^C Leach + Malters - built Evangelinis Church.

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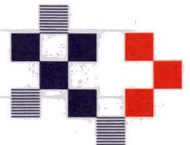
Plans from Canberra

HACCI - Brooker involvement.

1990-91

- Vehicle to maintain Greeks.

Spoken services - Management



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