

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Greek Culture Project

Impact on Campbell, Ohio

O. H. 645

PAUL PAPPAS

Interviewed

by

Wilfredo Rivera

on

October 30, 1980

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Greek Culture Project

INTERVIEWEE: PAUL PAPPAS

INTERVIEWER: Wilfredo Rivera

SUBJECT: prearranged marriages, interracial marriages,
church

DATE: October 30, 1980

R: This is an interview with Paul Pappas for the Youngstown State University Greek Impact on Campbell Project, by Wilfredo Rivera, at 593 Twelfth Street, in Campbell, Ohio, on October 30, 1980, at approximately 7:00 p.m.

Can you tell me something about your background starting with your childhood and working up to your present status?

P: I was born on June 30, 1957 in Youngstown, Ohio. My parents are Reverend and Mrs. Pappas. My parents were born in Detroit, Michigan. I lived with my parents on the north side of Youngstown for one year before the parish home was built in Campbell. I attended Penhale School in Campbell. I was there until seventh grade and after that I attended Campbell Memorial High School. I was on the football team for one year. I participated in many activities. I graduated in 1975. Right after high school I enrolled in Youngstown State University pursuing a degree in business management. I've been going part-time ever since. I plan on graduating this June with my degree in business administration. I am presently employed with Anthony Painting as a foreman for a painting contractor.

R: Mr. Pappas, can you tell me something about your parents and the structure that exists within your family?

P: My dad is a priest. My grandparents on both sides came from Greece. My mother's mother came from the island of Crete. My father's family came from Thessalia, which is the northern part of Greece, the mountainous region. My mom and dad got married right after high school. My dad attended theological school in Brookline, Massachusetts

for five years. Right after he graduated they were married and he became a deacon and immediately he was ordained a priest. His first parish was in Astoria, New York. He was there for one year and then they moved to Campbell.

I have an older brother Tom who is now married. He works as a security guard for Stambaugh Thompson's. His wife Anna is a teacher for a nursery school. I have another sister Maria who lives in Warren and has a little boy who is three months old. I have a younger sister Katherine; she is still attending Youngstown State University for secretarial work.

I'm married to the former Maria Cougras. We went to school together and grew up together and got married right out of high school. She is a first grade teacher in Girard.

As a child I would say I grew up really close with my family. We went on vacations every summer. Being that my dad is a priest I am really close with the church.

R: Mr. Pappas, can you tell me how you learned Greek and how was this institution established?

P: Most of my Greek was learned at home just listening to my mom and dad talk and my grandparents, although we do always speak English in the home. Our church has a Greek school and I attended Greek school for seven years. The first five years we learned the language and grammar, how to read and write. The next two years we learned the New Testament and the Old Testament; we studied the Bible. My wife's grandmother is Greek and we talk Greek with her. This past summer we had an opportunity to go to Greece and learn a lot more of the language. We learned a lot of the Greek customs and things like that.

R: Does Greek school still exist now?

P: Yes. We still have the Greek school and it's not mandatory that the kids attend. It's up to the parents if they want to send their children. Ninety-nine percent of them do. To start I think they have to be in second grade in American school. It's hard at the beginning when you start because you're still learning the American language.

R: Who is in charge of this Greek school?

P: It's run by the parish. We have a Greek schoolteacher, Mrs. Thomas. She has been teaching as long as I can remember. She is a good teacher. There is no principal, but my dad teaches the Old and New Testament. We have

our own books and notebooks. Every March the Greek school puts on a Greek Independence Day program; we celebrate the independence of Greeks; they sing songs and say poems and have plays. Usually there is a dance right afterwards. They do that every year. Every Thanksgiving and Christmas they have a party and after church is over or after communion they'll have what is called a communion breakfast.

R: While the students are participating in Greek school is anything about culture emphasized to the students? We live in a multi-cultural community right now, does the Greek school tell the students anything about the culture that exists out there or does it deal strictly with the Greek culture?

P: Basically with the Greek culture. They learn a lot of the ancient myths and stuff, but it's basically just involved with the Greek.

R: Since they're dealing specifically with the Greek culture do you feel there is a degree or level of prejudice that exists among the Greeks toward other ethnic background cultures?

P: No, I really don't think so. That is what this school is for, to learn Greek. It's learning about your language and customs. I don't feel there is any prejudice involved.

R: If you were in charge of the Greek school how would you try to change the social structure or the institutional structure that exists in the school itself now?

P: I think the way they are doing it now is fine. I wouldn't do anything to change it.

R: In regards to religion, do you feel the majority of Greek people in Campbell are religious, or do they tend to deviate with the religion and use something else as some kind of reinforcement?

P: I would say seventy-five percent of the Greeks in Campbell have come from Greece and that is their religion. They are a very religious people. This past summer we were in Greece and we went to a lot of churches and a lot of monasteries.

R: How many times have you been to Greece in your life?

P: I was there once before when I was in high school; I went to a camp to more or less see the historical sights. This past trip was more informal and I got to meet a lot of my relatives. I did a lot more on my own. We saw a lot of churches and a lot of places where miracles have taken place.

We've seen a lot of relics of saints. This is a big thing for the Greeks; they are very religious. They have this feeling for their saints and they are just believers.

R: In Greece are there any specific customs that are applied now or are still used today in Campbell?

P: There are a lot of customs. For instance, Easter time at midnight they all go outside in front of the church and they sing a hymn, "Christ is Risen". Another custom that is not a very nice one as far as I'm concerned is that they have fireworks during Easter services. It originally started in Greece and we do it here in Campbell. It is to celebrate the resurrection of Christ. It is really abused now, the custom. There are a lot of good customs too. Our weddings, for example, they are all customs. We have crowns during the ceremony and they put the crowns on the heads and walk around the table three times which symbolizes the church rejoicing. Usually at the Greek weddings they have a Greek orchestra. It is a big, happy affair. They have Greek bands. That is one of the best things we have going for us is we really hold our customs. I think we hold them more in America than we do in Greece. For example, we don't eat meat on Friday. I've been doing this ever since I was a kid. Now a lot of people don't follow this. We fast a lot during the year during Easter time whereas in Greece they're moving away from this.

R: I was told that there are specific holidays that are celebrated in Greece that are still celebrated in Campbell? Can you name a few that can still be applied to Campbell? I understand they have a special name day, and Greek dances are supposed to be something out of the ordinary. Can you elaborate on these things?

P: January 1 is the feast day of St. Basil, so everyone whose name is William that is their name day. It's your obligation to open your house to anyone. My name is Paul, and St. Paul's feast day is June 29. I'm obligated to have an open house and to invite family and friends over for a drink.

So far as dances go, we have a pre-Lenten dance which is right before Easter time. All the people get together before Lent and dance and have a good time. We do have a lot of dances and get-togethers throughout the whole year, a New Year's Dance. Our parish is called Archangel Michael and Archangel Michael's day is November 8 or 9. In Greece on the island of Syme there is a monastery, and the monastery's name is Archangel Michael and they have a holy icon, which is a holy picture. It is about eight or nine

feet long and it is of Archangel Michael. People go there and pray and a lot of miracles have taken place at this particular monastery. Probably all this week now there are just loads and loads of boats loaded with people that go specifically just for that one day and they will say prayers to the Archangel Michael and they will make gifts for him. When we were there the monk was telling us a few stories; one of them was that there was a woman outside hanging clothes and she has a hammock outside and she had her baby on this hammock. She went out hanging clothes and she turned around to check on her baby and she saw a snake climbing down the tree. The snake's mouth was open and it was just about ready to bite the child and in Greek she yelled out, "Oh Archangel Michael, save my child!" Just then a huge eagle flew and picked up the snake and flew off. This lady felt she had to do something to thank Archangel Michael for helping her child. She had a carriage with a baby inside of it and an eagle holding a snake made out of fourteen karat gold and they gave it to the church. There were a lot of customs like that.

Another custom was on the island of Tenos in Greece. There is a church of the Virgin Mary and there is a miraculous icon and people prayed to this icon for certain things, problems or whatever that they had. During the Second World War there was a shipman and half of his ship was bombed. Half of the ship was sunk and the other half was still afloat. There were men inside of it and he prayed to the Virgin Mary, "If I get to the land safely I'll present you with something." He was a very religious man and he prayed and he made it back to the land with his fleet. He made a replica of the ship about eight or ten inches long and it is eighteen karat gold. He went to the church and told his story and he presented it to the church. There are hundreds of stories.

- R: I'm interested in the dance as an art. I understand they have a very unusual way of dancing; they dance in a circle. Can you explain to me why they dance in a circle?
- P: I really don't know. That is the way they've been doing it. Each island has a specific dance. Ninety percent of the people of Campbell are Kalymnians, so there is a special dance of their's. All the dances are in a circle, but the steps are different. There are basically eight or ten different types of dances. A lot of the Greek music is derived from Turkish music; they sound almost exactly alike.
- R: You mentioned that the Kalymnian group of Greeks are dominant in Campbell. Can you tell me why this is so? What makes the Kalymnians so cohesive in Campbell?

P: I can't tell you too much because they were here long before I was. There were a group of people in Campbell that did not have a church; they used to go to one of the churches in Youngstown, St. Nick's Church. A group of people in Campbell decided they wanted to build their own church. There are basically two groups of people, the Kalymnian people and the Symian people. These two groups of people got together and decided they wanted to build this church. Now a lot of the Symians have passed away and there are mostly all Kalymnian people.

Over half of the Greek people in Campbell are painters, and they are mostly all Kalymnian people. They come up from Greece every year and pick up the trade. There is a lot of money in painting. For example, a husband would come up from Greece, paint here a few years, paint a few summers till he made enough money to bring his family up. That is how a lot of families got started.

There are also a lot of Kalymnian people in Tarpon Springs, Florida, and Gary, Indiana.

When I was in Greece this summer we went to see this island of Kalymnos. We were walking down the street and all we saw were Campbell people. So many people from Campbell go to Greece.

R: So kinship does exist in Campbell and is very strong?

P: Yes.

R: Why is painting an occupation favored by Greece?

P: I really don't know.

R: Are there any other factors that you know of that contribute to this cohesiveness beside the language and religion?

P: Campbell is a small town to begin with. Everybody knows each other. All the kids go to school together. Greeks do stick together. It's something that we've always had and we're kind of proud of it. We just seem to be like one, big family.

R: I was told that Greek people have a tendency of grouping together at these coffee shops.

P: Coffeehouses. They do that in Greece a lot. These men have nothing to do with their time. They just sit outside these coffeehouses and have coffee and pastry. They play cards and backgammon; they gamble a lot. We have a few of them up in Campbell. They sit and gossip. I don't go to coffeehouses myself. When the painters in Campbell are

laid off they go down to the coffeehouses hoping that a contractor will come in and say, "I need a few men. Does anyone want to go out of town for a few weeks?" In the afternoon in Greece all the businesses close down. These coffeehouses stay open and people congregate there.

R: It is something that was handed down.

P: Right.

R: Greek men being superior over Greek women, was that handed down from your ancestors or would you say that is a new generation?

P: I think that was handed down. I think the new generation is sort of getting away from that. It is like that in the old country. There are a lot of people here that do that too. They want to be known as the top figure; they want to be the powerful one.

R: Does that contribute to the cohesiveness of the Greek structure in Campbell?

P: In a way, but not too much.

R: Intermarriage among two different races, I understand that the Greek people aren't for it. They used to have prearranged marriages for their sons or daughters. Can you elaborate on that for me?

P: It does exist a little bit here in the United States, but more so in Greece. On this one island in Greece they have what is known as the bridal bazaar. All the mothers walk up and down the street. They walk up to this chapel up in the mountains with their daughters. The eligible bachelors walk up and down checking the girls out. A lot of the weddings are prearranged over there. The dowry plays a big part in the wedding.

We visited one of my uncles and he wasn't there. They said he was out trying to make a deal to fix his daughter up. He was making a deal with his future son-in-law's father. It sounds stupid, but it's true.

Here in America we're getting into the problem of mixed marriages; Greeks will marry a non-Greek. This is starting to be a problem now more so than it was before. I don't see too much wrong with it myself.

R: I understand that the Greeks in Campbell are not totally for intermarriages.

- P: It goes back to their early heritage. Some parents think it is wrong and they will disown their child.
- R: Do you have any political aspirations for a candidate that is running that you feel the Greek people in Campbell will probably be in favor of just because he is labeled a Greek?
- P: I don't like to vote for a person because of his religious background. In fact, we are the only school system in Ohio that closes the schools down for Greek Easter. Harry Meshel is a Greek and has done a lot for the Greek people. I guess we can thank him for this. I think Senator Meshel has done a lot for the people of Campbell so far as Sheet & Tube. He is involved in CASTLO and got all this money for us.
- R: What are your political attitudes? Do you feel that most of the Greek people feel the same way?
- P: I don't get involved too much in that.
- R: Is there a political structure among the Greek people themselves that enables them to vote their opinion about certain issues that exist in Campbell, that affect their ways of life? Or would you recognize the church as doing all the speaking for the Greek people?
- P: I think you hit it right on the nose there; they depend on the church.
- R: So you would consider your father as the political motivator or mouthpiece?
- P: Right. Campbell is always having problems with their school levy, and the superintendent will write a letter to my dad to announce to the parishioners to vote for the school levy. My dad will forward the message. I think my dad has a lot to do with politics.
- R: So he is a major mouthpiece among everyone's eyes in Campbell?
- P: I think so.
- R: What does the church do besides getting involved with politics? How does it assist the Greek people in making them constantly aware of their culture, and to remain cohesive? How does your father approach this issue?
- P: Once a month on the last Sunday of the month, right after liturgy is over, my dad will preach on a certain subject, for example marriages in the Greek church. He'll make a few comments and then he'll open it up for discussion.

Next week our bishop is going to be here at the church and we will have coffee and stuff after church and we'll open up to questions and answers, any questions you want to ask the bishop. If you have a problem that you want to discuss with him you're welcome to talk to him.

Our church has different organizations. We have a choir and a ladies' society that does a lot for the church. Around the holiday season they have a lot of Christmas parties. We have two youth groups: We have the GOYA, Greek Orthodox Youth Association; those are high school students. They have their own club and meetings and go on field trips. We also just organized JOY group, Junior Orthodox Youth; they are seventh and eighth graders getting involved with the church. We have youth retreats and will rent a camp for a week. It is more or less of a spiritual renewal. The bishop will come and read things out of the Bible. In our parish we're trying to get the youth more involved. You'll find in all the churches the youth seem to be leaving. I don't know why.

R: How has the present crisis, for example laying off at the Youngstown Sheet & Tube, the economy shaking with inflation and the threat of recession . . . how have the Greek people in Campbell reacted to this situation?

P: When this first came about there was a panic. Our church was just in a panic--How is the church going to stay open? Half of our parish works at Sheet & Tube. Campbell is going to become a ghost town. Our bishop came and told us not to worry about a thing. They were going to cut the dues that we pay in half to try to scrimp as much as possible. We never did anything like that; as a matter of fact we did just the opposite. We had a lot of fund raising things and people really stuck together. We paid off our community center. It affected us at first but now I don't think it bothers us too much.

R: So a transition was made?

P: Definitely.

R: Can you tell me what the years from 1970 to 1980 were like for you?

P: I would like to start with one major area that affected not only the Greek people in Campbell, but all over the world. It was when the Turks invaded Cyprus. That was in the early 1970's. Our church set up a Cyprian Society and once a month we have these discussions. Some women collect donations and we send it to an orphanage in Cyprus. During the Cyprian Crisis we had a lot of rallies.

This year we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of our church. We're having a few dances and a big dinner. We're looking forward to that.

Personally, the past ten years hasn't affected me too much. For the future for the Greek people in Campbell, our community is expanding. Every year we're getting bigger and bigger. Our church is too small for us now. We're going to have to build a new church or expand our existing church. We have about 500 families in Campbell and every year more and more people are coming.

- R: One final question, can you tell me something that has happened in your own life that has changed your own outlook about the Greek culture in Campbell? Can you tell me something that has happened in your life that has changed your own outlook towards the Greek people in Campbell?
- P: I think this trip to Greece has helped me out a little bit. I learned a lot about Greek culture and a lot about religion.
- R: Is there anything you would like to touch on that I might have missed?
- P: The Greek people do have a lot of customs. We have a lot of dances and get-togethers. Greeks are known for their cooking. We have a lot of pastries.

Another thing I would like to touch on are superstitions. A lot of the Greek people have superstitions, especially the older ones. One of them is that after a woman has her baby she is not supposed to leave the house for forty days because the first time Christ left his home was when he was forty days old. His parents presented him to the temple. They think that if you leave the house before forty days and go to someone's house you will bring them bad luck. Another one is that if you have company and they come in the front door they had better leave out the front door or else they'll bring the house bad luck. There are a lot of silly superstitions like that. I guess that's about it.

- R: Given a position like your father's, being a priest, in Campbell, what would you do to change the way the Greek people have structured themselves in Campbell?
- P: This isn't that much of a problem. The behavior of the Greeks in church is that you should be quiet. If you go into the church in Greece while there is liturgy it is like a circus; people are running around and little children are screaming and running around. Parents have no control over their children. Of course when they come to America and they come to our church my dad is trying to maintain some sort of order. I would try to have a little more

PAPPAS

11

control with that.

R: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW