

**A micro-study of Greek Female
Immigrants to NZ in the 60s**
An Oral History Project

Interview Transcript

Interviewee: *Alexia Pendaraki*

Interviewers: *Athina Tsoulis, Evangelia
Papoutsaki*

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Additional material:

*Bio details/consent forms/photos/other supporting
documentation/transcript of interview*

Transcription by Lucy Anastasiadou - Hobbs

(**Ath:** Athina Tsoulis, **Alex:** Alexia Pendaraki, **Eva:** Evangelia Papoutsaki, **Fr:** Frank – husband of Alexia)

Alexia Pendaraki

File number 1

This is an interview with Alexia Pendaraki

The interview is for the 1962-1964 Greek Women project: interview is Athina Tsoulis and the interview has been recorded at 11 Pickens Crescent – Mt Albert

Ath - Alexia, can you tell where were you born?

Alex - I was born in the village Ayia Irini, eastern Sellinos, Chania, in Crete.

Ath – When were you born?

Alex – I was born in 1933.

Ath – Date?

Alex – 15th of August.

My mother should have named me Alexia – Maria, because it is the day of Virgin Mary, but I had an older sister who was called Maria, so she couldn't name me like this and she called me Alexia.

Ath – What was your father's name?

Alex – My father's name was Markos.

Ath – Markos.

Alex - My mother's name was Evthokia, nie Loubasaki.

Ath - Loubasaki was your mother's surname and Pendarakis your father's.

Alex - Yes, Loubasaki, from the near by village.

Ath - What were your parents doing?

Alex – Eh, farmers, the land, the property, the water, the goats, sheep, these things

Ath – Did you have your own land?

Alex - Our own land, our own animals...

Ath - What were you doing when you were little? Were you going to school?

I went to the Primary school for three years, up to the fourth grade. I went straight from the first grade to the third: first, third and fourth. First grade, second grade and third grade. I passed the fourth grade with excellent marks.

Ath - Is it difficult to remember these things? Why, what ...

Alex - Because I liked school and I was a very good student.

Ath – And why did you stop?

Alex - Eh, because the teacher at the fourth grade said that...

Ath – Do you want to have a break....

Ath - To have a break, all right..all right..

Alex – It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter..

Al: «Mrs Pendaraki, I have positions for two children to go to Chania and maybe to Athens without any expense and I thought Alexia could be the one».

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This is file number 2 and we are continuing our interview with Alexia Pendaraki

Alex - We were orphans because my father had passed away, he was exiled during the German occupation and just after that we were left orphans.

Ath - How old were you when you lost your father?

Alex - Eh, about twelve, thirteen....

Ath – Approximately..

Alex – Yes...

Ath - However before you lost your father they told you to go to Athens to...

Alex - . No, afterwards. Then, my mother was scared because our father had passed away and she always had us under her wings, as we say, locked and so, she said: «no, you are not going. You are not going and you are not going to go to school next year».

Ath - Was that very difficult for you?

Alex – Yes.

Ath – What did you want to become?

Alex – Probably a teacher, anything anything anything. I want to I don't know...anything...

Ath - Were you ambitious?

Alex - Yes I was. Afterwards and since I wasn't allowed to go to school anymore I started working in the fields, sheep, picking up the crop, very tiring jobs. We had to work very hard, day and night as they say, so to manage since we were orphans. Our house was burnt down.

Ath – Ah, how was it burnt down?

Alex – By the Germans.

Ath – Ah, during the war?

Alex – Yes.

Ath – What year was that?

Alex - 1942 – 43

Ath – Was your father away?

Alex - Yes, my father was exiled.

Ath - And you mother how many children did she have by then?

Al -7

Ath – 7, can you tell me their names?

Alex - Eh, my first brother in line was Dimitris, and my first sister was Maria, Eleni, Yiannis, Aryiro, Alexia – me, Katina the youngest one.

Ath – You were one of the youngest ones?

Alex – Yes, yes.

Ath - Do you remember the Germans coming in the village?

Alex – Very well.

Ath – Isn't it so?

Alex – Yes, very well.

Ath – Can you please tell what do you remember?

Alex - I remember that they, us the youngest ones, they arrested us after our house was burnt down and our father was exiled, all the children. My oldest brother and the second one in line went to the mountains and they became partisans. Well, the other five of us were taken to exile, to prison.

Ath – Exile, eh...

Evang - prisoners – war prisoners

Ath – Ah, and where did they take you?

Alex -Excuse me?

Ath – Where did they take you?

Alex - In Ayia, in Chania. Next to Chania there was a prison which even now is called Ayia.

Ath - And why did they put to prison? Your father was...they knew..

Alex - Whoever in the village wasn't executed, whatever they found, sheep big or small, goats, whatever was in the village, they wiped them off.

Ath – Ah.

Alex – Wiped them off.

Ath – Was it a big village?

Alex - I think there were about 57 houses.

Ath – And did you all put into prison?

Alex - Everybody, everybody. Everybody in the village was put into prison especially the residents of our neighborhood because we were by the gorge. There is a big gorge in our village that goes all the way to Souyia, next to Paliochora. And the Germans thought that we would be hiding there the partisans, or the crooks and all these peoples. For this they arrested everyone in our neighborhood, at the lower neighborhood, while all the men were executed on the spot. The children and women were put in prison, in Ayia, yes!

Ath – Was your father imprisoned too?

Alex –My father was exiled.

Ath – Exile, where?

Alex –Somewhere, I don't know where he was.

Ath – Somewhere in Crete?

Alex - In Crete. By the Germans.

Ath – Was he away for a long time?

Alex – Yes, yes. Very long. .

Ath - Were you 9 years old when you were imprisoned?

Alex – Just a bit older.

Ath – A bit older. What were you doing in the prison?

Ath – How was life?

Alex - In prison, they used to give us tea, but we wanted a lot of sugar with our tea so we didn't like it. The Germans were saying: «why don't you drink the tea?», «sugar, sugar». I

used to go out since I was a little child. The prison was surrounded by barbed wire, as they call it, the Germans were on one side of the wire, walking around and guarding the prison.

Ath – Ha, ha, ha, ha....

Ath – You wanted to go out.

Alex – Yes....

Ath - What did you think of the German soldiers...how they treated you?

Alex – Me, very good. Actually a German went away and little later on he came back, he came back, holding a bag of lollies and he gave them to me. So, when I went back all the women and children were shouting to me: «Alexia, lollies, lollies, lollies». And finally only one was left for me, and a woman said to me: «since my name is also Alexia, will you give me the lolly?». «Have it, auntie».

Ath – And you didn't have any?

Ath - Must have been difficult inside the prison. For your mother having all the children.

Alex – *Very difficult, very difficult.*

Ath – Did you have food to eat?

Alex - They were giving us some kind of food but it was nothing, didn't worth it.

Ath - How long have you been in prison?

Alex - *2-3 months. 5. 6 months.*

Ath – And...yes...

Alex – *I don't remember and I might lie to you...*

Ath - And all that time you were idle, you weren't doing anything?

Alex - *Just like that. Nothing, nothing.*

Ath - What did the women do? Your mother?

Alex - *Eh, my mother, they were telling stories to each other, they were arguing, eh, you understand.*

Alex - *The prison was crowded.*

Ath – And when were you released from there?

Alex – *Eh, I don't remember.*

Ath - And how were you released? Did the Germans set you free...?

Alex - *When Crete was liberated, the prison was opened and so we went to our village.*

Ath - When was that? In 1944?

Alex - In '43-'44...yes...

Ath - Yes...

Ath - And did they burn down your house before they put you in prison?

Alex - Yes, yes...

Ath - And when you went back home, what did you find there?

Alex - We found a corner of the house, one third of it, hanging down like that. One third of the house, approximately one side of the house hadn't collapsed. And we were staying there.

Ath - What did you do? Did you fix the house? You were staying there in this condition....

Alex - We were staying there for years, until we built the one next door.

Ath - And when did you find out about your father?

Alex - My father came back home afterwards.

Ath - Did he come back?

Alex - Yes and then he died.

Ath - When did he come back?

Alex - He came back when the Germans left from Crete.

Ath - In '43?

Alex - yes, he came back to the village.

Evay - In '45?

Alex - Yes and he passed away in '47, I think.

Ath - How did he die?

Alex - He was very depressed, he had lost so much weight....

Ath - How - when he came back from the prison?

Alex - He was permanently sick, always depressed. Always. He wasn't the father I knew anymore....

Ath - Yes.

Ath - Did he say anything about the prison? How was it there?

Alex - Yes. He told us that every day the Germans were coming and they were picking up two or three men who were nowhere to be seen afterwards. They were executing them. My

father – the day Crete was liberated – was going to be executed. They even had made, indeed...

Ath - Yes, it must very difficult to remember those things.

Alex - Here, a mark to be executed, just right on his heart.

Ath - Yes...this must have been very difficult for him.

Alex – Yes.

Ath - He waited to be executed.

Alex - .Yes, one day, he had been in the farm and he was on his way back home, he fell on the ground, and that was it.

Ath – What did your mother do?

Alex - My mother had 7 children without their father. She always used to tell us: «don't ever tell lies, don't steal, don't disgrace me. I don't want anything else from you». And every day one of us, the five girls, was staying home to cook. The others were going out. Let's say tomorrow was my turn, then the next day was someone else's turn. Every 5 days her turn was coming to take care of the house and to cook.

Ath - So everybody was accommodate to share the errands...

Alex - We didn't have another choice. There was no other way. That was the one and only way to go ahead.

Ath - Every body in the village must have been in the same situation...

Alex - Eh, as I said before, our neighborhood was the one that suffered the most. Yes.

Ath - Did you have uncles and aunties? There?

Alex - We had uncles and aunties, we had other members of the Pendarakis family, in our neighborhood. We are talking after the war, when we became teenagers. Just below our house there was a square which the road was crossing going through the village. And there in this square, we used to call it «Liophito», we were gathered every midday, because in Greece, as you know, you go out at midday, you return.. Every midday we used to play there, all the children. We were 33 children from the Pendarakis family playing in «Liophito».

Ath – And what were you playing?

Alex - Hide and seek, we were singing, we were dancing, we were playing knuckle-bones. Do you know what is knuckle-bones?

Alex.- Knuckle-bones.[?12:43].

Alex – We used to call it in the village «alekatrithes». We were using 5 round stones which we had found in the river and we were playing like that...Yes. We were spending a couple of hours playing like that and then the afternoon was coming, so, back to the farm and to the sheep and goats.

Ath - And how long did you live like that?

Alex - *Until 1962, when I came here. That was our life.*

Ath - And why did you feel, knowing that you wanted to go to school?

Alex - *Excuse me.*

Ath - How?

Alex - *How was I feeling?*

Ath - Yes...because you wanted to go to school.

Alex - *Bad, really bad. I was feeling bad every day. And when the news came about going overseas, I, my mother was saying: «no way my children, no where», the ones she had locked in the house, so...I was the first one... «no way». I said «I am going, there is no other solution», and I enrolled in the school, in DEME as they used to call it then, but any hope to leave overseas? My mother had to allow it first of all, no way on earth. And when they gathered us and we went to Mitilini, she said: «go, but they will not let you leave and even if they allow you to leave, I will not allow it».*

Ath - Did your mother tell you that?

Alex - *First, you won't pass the tests and second even if you pass the tests I will not let you go.*

Ath - And how old were you - you were 29?

Alex - *29 years old.*

Ath - I mean most young women are thinking of getting married, what was happening in the village? Because 29 you would have been quite...

Alex - *Yes I know but...but I also had an oldest sister.*

Ath - Ah, for that.

Alex - *And two older ones married. In Crete these days you had to have a dowry and not only clothes but also a big chest with everything inside so to decorate the groom's house but also you had to have a lot of money. And if you didn't have the money, no one wanted you. Because I remember many times when our relatives used to bring around, our uncles and aunties, a good nominee, a good guy to have a look to the first one, and he was saying: «I want the second one, the third one and that amount of money». My mother used to say: «I don't have money and it is the turn of the first one to get married, I am not going to allow the second one to do so». So, I was left behind.*

Ath - And you had to wait for your turn?

Alex - *My turn otherwise there wasn't going to be any groom.*

Ath - Yes, because back then, the oldest ones had to get married first and then you, you were number 3.

Alex -3.

Ath - So, how old you were when you started looking at the boys differently?

Alex – To look at the boys differently, I never crossed my mind that I would like you to take me out. I would like to sleep with you. Never ever ever. That was how I have been brought up. When my time come to get married whoever is going to be my husband to be I will not even think about it.

Ath - So you didn't even find some boys attractive?

Alex - No no no. Yes I found boys attractive. Absolutely. But not to go any further than that look at them and say yes, maybe.

Ath - So, what age where you when you started noticing boys?

Alex – When I noticed boys I was 15, 20.

Ath - 15?

Alex -Yes, absolutely.

Ath - And what did you know about those sort of things?

Alex -Nothing.

Ath - Nothing.

Ath - Nobody talked about them?

Alex -Only the old ladies used to talk about like my aunties and my mother used to talking about the husbands and their lives and stuff like that but I didn't really know anything about it.

Ath - So, you didn't know how babies were made?

Alex -No. No.

Ath - And what happened when you got your first period? Was that a shock?

Alex -Very.

Ath - So, nobody prepared you.

Alex -I hided it and I went to the river and I washed it and I was shocked...

Ath - It doesn't matter we are all women.

Ath - And what did you think was happening to you?

Alex -I knew that this would happen – I knew about that but I didn't know what was happening

Ath - So, did your sisters tell you about that?

Alex -There were talking about themselves not told me. No no.

Ath - So, how did you know it was normal?

Alex -Because all the sisters was talking about it.

Ath - And what did they say to you about it?

Alex -Nothing to me.

Ath - Did you ear strop? How did you hear about it? Where you listening in the corners?

Alex -No, the older girls – like I say we were a lot of cousins. First, second, third cousins. And there were 32 of us and I told them what happened to me today.

Ath - And did they understand what was it about? Why every month?

Alex -I think the oldest one did help the next one. Yes, you will be surprised how much I miss that life. I much rather have. In some respects I would go back to that.

Ath - It was more of a community lots of you and you helped one the other. So, did you understand it was preparing your body for child – you know...to conceive at some point?

Alex -Not not really.

Ath - Just something happened to girls?

Alex – Yeah, yeah.

Ath - And what did your mother tell you around that? Did you tell your mother that you had your period? That started at some point?

Alex -I think I told my oldest sister.

Ath - And did they tell you all these weird things?

Alex -Yes.

Ath - You couldn't do this.

Alex -Yes yes.

Ath - You want to tell me some of those. They most probably are very familiar.

Alex -I can't really remember everything in details. But my oldest sisters told me all about it. And not to worry, not to scare and that it will happen again. Yes yes. All about it.

Ath - And did you girls talk about boys and what happened when you got married? Did you have those conversations?

Alex -No, it was no time. It was no time those days because you was fight for life you was fight for bread you was fight for breath. Breath of relief of five minutes rest. Is a hard to

understand is a hard to explain. But that was happened to somebody who lost your father when there is 7 of you and no house. It was no time to think about pleasure.

Ath - But you still had those times when you were with your cousins?

Alex -Yes

Ath - And what sort of food - so life was hard – what sort of food did you eat?

Alex -We had a lot of animals. We had 300 – 350 and we look after them. But all of us. Boys and girls did, it was no different. And we had plenty of milk and milk products staff in the house and we used to make our own things at the house own cheese – our own cottage cheese, on butter, on meat and we used to have a pig or two every year for Christmas and that's how I used to have a life then.

Ath - Did you eat that food or did you sell it?

Alex -Sell a lot of that

Ath - Where did you sell it?

Alex -My brother or when I get older I used to go myself too – used to take it to Chania. And sell it or have some shop keep us over there or somebody who drop it there and they sell it for us and give us the money or whatever what was left.

Eva - And that was the «mizithra» from Chania? The cheese?

Alex - Malian mizithra, haven't you heard of it? There is nowhere else. Also the Malian cheese and the malian «malotira».

Eva - Was it made from sheep or goat?

Alex - Both. The goat one – mizithra is best made from goat, yes. The yoghurt made out of sheep milk is the best. Mizithra made out of goats and yoghurt made out of sheep.

Eva - Did you use to go to Chania often?

Alex - After the German occupation and after dropping out from school, as I was growing up, any how, my mother realized that I was very upset with what happened and sent both my sister and me to Chania to become dressmakers.

Ath - Ah, that's what I wanted to ask you. How old were you when you went to become a dressmaker?

Alex - 20.

Ath - 20 years old?

Alex – Yes, certainly.

Ath - Were you going every day?

Alex - Yes, because we had a house in Chania, after we built the house in the village since we had many goats. Goats, yes!! We bought some land in Chania and we built a house,

there we, Aryiro and I, used to live with my oldest, my first brother, Dimitris, and we went to become dressmakers.

Ath – Why did you build a house in Chania?

Ath - We built it in Chania because we were thinking that one of us was going to get married there. It would be nice to have a house. As a dowry, yes, indeed. And probably they were two, because we built a house for the first but also we paid the deposit for the second one.

Evay - The Greek way of doing houses.

Ath – And how many years did you go to school?

Alex -To school?

Ath – Yes. To become a dressmaker.

Ath - Was it a school or a lady who was teaching you?

Alex - It was a lady but she also had a school. I must have stayed there for 5-6 years.

Ath - 5-6 years, and what were you doing all that time?

Alex - To use the scissors. This is the way they used to phrase it: «to use the scissors».

Ath – So many years and...

Alex - I will be telling lies about the years but I stayed few / a lot of years.

Ath – The whole day or just in the morning?

Alex -In the morning.

Ath – And what were they teaching you?

Alex - They were teaching us how to pick the threads, to put them together slowly until you learn to copy the fashion-plate or to complete it yourself as it was.

Ath – And when you finished that, could you work as a seamstress or did you make clothes for other people?

Alex - As soon as I finished there, I went straight back to the village. And I started my own business.

Ath – In the village?

Alex -Yes, yes...

Ath – And how did that go?

Alex -Good, very good.

Ath – On your own?

Alex - Eh, with Aryiro but she was going back and forth to Chania while I was permanently in the village.

Ath – Where was the shop?

Alex –At home.

Ath - You had a room at home?

Alex - In the mezzanine, as they used to call it. What was the name....

Eva - E - Mezzanine.

Ath – Did people used to come?

Alex - I was doing the measurements, I was creating the fashion-plate, cutting the fabric, and then the lady was coming for the first fitting, then for the second i, it was completed by the third.

Ath - You were creating only women's clothes?

Alex - I was doing also men's clothes but mostly for women.

Ath – Did you make good money?

Alex - Good money that was never mine.

Ath – Where did the money go?

Alex - It went for the older ones, wherever there was a need. We weren't using our money independently – only one, my mother, was dictating where the money went.

Ath - And who was keeping the money?

Alex - The oldest brothers and sisters. They were collecting it, we weren't even asked.

Ath - Your mother or your brothers and sisters?

Alex – My oldest brother.

Ath - And where was he putting it? In a container?

Ath – Don't you know?

Alex - Probably in the bank. Wherever there was a need for.

Eva - For the house in Chania for example.

Ath - However the oldest brother was keeping the money and if you wanted anything....

Alex - I didn't want anything...there weren't any shops those days to buy something....where to go?

Ath - You never had money in your pocket?

Ath - Ok, it seems that you had good time because you heard that some people were leaving.

Alex - Yes.

Ath - What did you hear?

Alex - I heard that New Zealand, the New Zealander ex-service men , who had fought in Crete and particularly in Chania, but in Crete, for the service we offered to them and because the destruction they had seen, they wanted to help poor girls.

Ath - Had you met a soldier from New Zealand?

Alex - Not even one, neither I had heard of but probably I hadn't heard even of New Zealand, we didn't know of New Zealand.

Ath - And how did you hear those things?

Alex -It was in the newspaper, someone must have put it in a village wall, somehow like that.

Ath - And what happened when you read that, what happened?

Alex - .It wasn't me who read it because I was at home, my second brother read it and he explained it to me, "I know you have many problems with the school", he knew.

Ath - How did they know that you had difficulties, what were you doing at home? Were you telling them?

Alex -Eh, if I was upset, I was telling them, once twice I was explaining to them, often....

Ath - And what were you saying?

Alex -The reason why...

Ath - Why?

Alex - Because I wasn't allowed to continue school.

Alex - I was explaining to them, I wasn't keeping it inside me.

Ath - What did you want for your self?

Alex - I wanted to be educated. I wanted to go to school, to graduate, until I became old enough.

Ath - Why did you like education?

Alex - It was a gift from the God, I assume., I am not sure. I was good in school, I liked it, I couldn't understand why not.

Ath - And when they didn't allow you to continue, this upset you.

Alex – Yes, yes. Well my brother explained to me and also said to me: “if you want, we can go to Chania”, I was working in another village these days, picking up, so my brother came and said to me: “if you want us to go to Chania to make the application and we will see”.

Ath – Ah, was it your brother who put the idea to you?

Alex – Yes, we went to Chania with Yiannis, we applied, came back, came back to my job, the season for picking up the olives had finished, so I went to the village one day and a notification arrived to go to Chania to go through a Board.

Ath – Had you talked to your mother, had you? And what did she tell you?

Alex – Yes, yes...

Alex – We said it before, “go, but they will not let you leave and if they allow you I am not going to let you go”.

Ath – Ha...ha...ha...

Evay – did she have the impression that they will not let you pass the tests?

Alex – Eh, because I was, really, a girl from the village, an illiterate.

Ath – This is how your mother talked to you? – She was hoping that you wouldn't.

Alex – Yes, so we went to Chania, we went through the Board, returned to the village and soon after, I cannot remember how long did it take, they sent me a notification, I think it probably came through the phone, I don't know how. I had to contact them because I needed to go to Mitilini.

Ath – And what did your mother say?

Alex – We were gathered, ...she couldn't believe it. She wasn't believing it. All the girls we were gathered in Chania, we went to Athens and from Athens to Mitilini. There was Janet, that teacher we mentioned, a very good lady.

Ath – Janet?

Alex – Yiakmis. Her Greek surname. Her husband's surname because she was married to a Greek. Janet Yiakmis.

Ath – Ah, Janet Yiakmis. Yakmis? Was her son an actor?

Alex – Indeed.

Ath – Ah, yes. He had been to Australia before.

Alex – That's the one.

Ath – I knew him.

Alex – That's his mother.

Ath – That's his mother.

Alex – Yes, yes.

Ath – Α, εντάξει και αυτή ήτανε στην...

Alex – At Mitilini and was expecting us. She picked us up, taught us English, just how to serve the tea, how to become housemaids, to work at the hospitals and such things, to get an idea about the life in New Zealand. We stayed there for 5-6 months. Was it 2-3 months, I cannot remember.

Ath – In Mitilini?

Alex – In Mitilini.

Ath – How many were the girls from your village?

Alex – It was only me from my village.

Ath – You didn't get to know anyone?

Alex – I got to know the girls there.

Ath – Ah, did you make friends?

Alex – Yes, yes, yes, indeed. Where is the photograph with all the girls together? At Kingseat, 5-6 girls.

Ath – Ah, we will find it – so, please tell me, did you make friends there?

Alex – But the first choice of the New Zealanders was the girls to be from Crete. Because of the destruction that Crete had suffered and that person was the ex-service man Mr. Nathan, you must have heard of him.

Ath – N a t h a n – Yes. We have heard of him.

Alex – He got married to a girl from a near by village.

Ath – Ah, did you know her?

Alex – I didn't know her, but I know her village and her surname.

Ath – What is her name?

Alex – I think it is Katina Phouraki.

Ath – Phouraki.

Alex – Yes, yes...

Ath – K a t i n a P h o u r a k i

Alex – Katina. Yes, these are the girls.

Ath – Which woman did you meet first?

Alex – All these, all at once.

Ath – What are their names?

Alex – Here is Tasoula.

Ath – Tasoula Despotaki.

Alex – Yes, her sister, Evangelia.

Ath – Evangelia Despotaki.

Alex – Despina Prasianaki who died in Kingseat. My sister Aryiro, me, Kiki who is in Australia, Maria in Kingseat, Roula Tzirtzilakis, Ioanna Siphodaskalaki - Ioanna Tsivouraki. His flower-girls are two – here is my maid's of honor little girl, but she is not here. And two other Greek children.

Ath – Wasn't your sister Aryiro in Mitilini these days?

Alex – No no!

Ath – Did she come later on?

Alex - She came here later, after I have come.

Ath – You were in Mitilini, you went to the school, you passed, what happened afterwards?

Alex – I was crying every day.

Ath – You were crying every day? Why?

Alex – And I used to say to Janet «I will not pass the tests. I will not leave». Janet used to say to me: «do not cry, you will leave, you will go away».

Ath – Ah, you were crying because of that? You thought that you weren't going to go.....

Alex – Yes.

Ath – Why did you want to leave so desperately?

Alex – To escape from the hard times.

Ath – From...

Evay – From the difficult life

Ath – What hard times? Was it because of your mother?

Alex –The life in the village, didn't we say that, every day, all day.

Ath – Labour?

Alex – Yes, in the farm and with the sheep.

Ath – But you were a dressmaker....

Alex – I was a dressmaker but I had to do the other jobs too when it was my turn to do so.

Ath – And when you were 29 years old, were you worried that you will not get married, that you will not find a man?

Alex – Not really. I knew that my time would come one day. And it didn't then it didn't really worry me. As long as I survive.

Ath - And how old the girls were normally – what age did they get married?

Aλ – Those days about 30 – 35.

Ath – 30 – 35 because of the war?

Alex -Yes

Ath - But before the war?

Alex -My mother was 19 I think, young, very young.

Ath - There was a shortage of man too.

Alex -Yes, yes. And the money. And the money was the biggest obstacle.

At - And because there was the shortage of men they wanted more.

Eva - The brothers had to work to get money to marry the sisters so it was the brothers were getting married too.

Ath - So it was in your brothers interest to send you here where you could work.

Alex - Yes. I remember in 1982 or 1992 we went to Crete and I went to do some shopping at Chania and was two men over there and there was talking amongst themselves and they had a girl's married to a girl's to Yugoslavia...

Ath: Albania?

Al: Yes. Somewhere there and there was not very happy about them. And then I told them "it is your fault".

Ath – Why?

Alex - «It was you fault, because you sent us away, you wanted money and not a woman. We left, built houses, found men and you took back your Bulgarian men/women».

Ath - That is alright. So, what was your attitude towards the dowry?

Alex -Very bitter very angry. I could not understand why I have to pay a man to become a slave to him. Why? Sure. You marry somebody and you have no right to talk, talking about the Crete now and maybe that side of Crete. You do as you told, you pay him like a gold and you just work.

Ath - So did you have these used then or have you developed them now? When you were getting in Crete?

Alex -I had those used then. I had those used forever since I noticed that a girl have to buy a husband.

Ath: And what did you think of the male female relationship in the village? Did you observe married couples? What was your view?

Alex -Well, I don't really know. My mother and my father a couple of years they lived together after the war they were very very happy. And for sure a Cretan couples they look after their children. They get them like...ye.

Ath - Is it that the man always sees what happens?

Alex -Most of the times.

Ath - And were you aware of that?

Alex -Yes.

Ath - And were you aware when you get married you have to do what your husband told you?

Al: Yes, yes.

Ath: And what did you feel about that?

Al: I didn't know any difference. I thought that was normal.

Eva - As you mother used to say «whatever you father says».

Ath - So you just hoped to get a good one – a good man.

Alex –“Not to spoil my name”. And I didn't know any different.

Ath - So do you think you wanted it to get away from this too? Or was it just hardship?

Alex -All of it. All of it together.

Ath - Yes, yes.

Alex -All of it together. I was uneducated, country girl but I wasn't stupid. And I knew exactly what I want and what was right and was not right.

Ath - So, after Mitilini, they told you that you could go to New Zealand? What happened?

Alex -No, you go back home and we let you know.

Ath - So, you went back home

Alex - I went back home and then they tell us they give us about a week to say goodbye and back to Chania and back to Athens

Ath - What, did you get a letter saying?

Al: Yes, yes.

Ath - What did the letter say?

Alex - That you been accepted so far but you have to go to Athens, stay overnight or maybe a week – I don't know how long we stayed in Chania...in Athens and we have to go through a lot of questions and I really don't know how many doctors. You been examined for everything. And recorded down. There been measure, everything. Everything, everything, how tall, how heavy, what the colors of eyes, what religion, what family. Everything.

Ath - At that point did you tell your mother that you are going?

Al - Yes.

Ath - And what did she say?

Alex - She was not very happy. But she said to me...

Ath - It is alright...I cry every time I think about my mother too.

Alex - The last thing she said to me: «go my child and have my blessing, even the dry stone I wish you to spring water for you to drink».

Alex – Yes. She accepted.

Ath – Your brother talked to her and explained...

Ath – Did you go alone in Athens?

Alex – No, with Yiannis, my brother. The second one...yes....

Ath – Your second brother, where were you staying in Athens?

Alex – We were staying in a hotel. I think that the hotel might have been paid by DEME. I am not sure what DEME was exactly. When you were referring to DEME, you were saying that they were responsible for taking people overseas. Yes. And after we went through doctors, we went back to the village.

Ath – Ah, you went back to the village again.

Alex – Yes, we fairwelled, went back to Athens, left.

Ath – And what happened in the village when you went to see them for the last time? What happened?

Alex – The usual things. Tears...

Ath – Tears...

Alex – *Everybody? Was everybody crying?*

Alex – *Yes.*

Ath – You thought that you were coming back, what did you tell them?

Alex – *3 years. Because of that, when I met my husband, I knew that he was handsome, il knew that he was educated, that he had a good job, but my intention was to go back to Greece.*

Ath – So, you said that you were coming back in 3 years' time with a lot of money.

Alex – *With money.*

Ath – For to make your dowry?

Alex – *To use it where there was a need for. Nothing belonged to any of us, the seven in the family, nothing was mine. Nothing was absolutely mine. Everything belonged to everyone.*

Ath – So, you had a big party, how did they tell you goodbye?

Alex – *Nothing, just the family, nothing else. Nothing, I guess but sadness.*

Ath – Sadness.

Alex – *Yes, sadness!*

Ath – And can you tell me please what did you do the last day you were in the village?

Alex – *The usual. No different. If there was a need to go out, I went out. If I had to sweep, to cook, I did sweep and cook. If you ask me «did you prepare your suitcase?, «what suitcase? What did I take? Nothing!!».*

Ath- Nothing!

Alex – *Nothing!!!*

Eva - Did you buy new clothes to take with you?

Alex – Only a new set of clothes to change in my bag.

Evay – Just that?

Alex – *Just that.*

Ath – You were a dressmaker, hadn't you made anything for your self?

Alex – *I became a dressmaker so to make money and not to buy fabric to make clothes for me.*

Ath – So, you left with empty hands.

Alex – With empty and tied up hands.

Ath – Tied up?

Ath – Did you brother take you back again to Athens?

Alex – Yes.

Ath – Was it Yiannis?

Alex – Yes, the youngest one.

Ath – And you went to Athens?

Alex – Straight to the airplane.

Ath – Did you go straight to the airplane?

Alex – Straight away. We got on the airplane.

Ath – Were you afraid?

Alex – Yes.

Alex – . I should tell you another story to figure out how afraid I was. But I have to mention names and it is difficult, you have to delete it afterwards.

Ath and Evay – Don't mention the name.

Alex – I need to mention it.

Ath - Why?

Alex – Let's say, I got on the airplane, we got on the airplane, we had a stop, I don't know where that was, second stop was in Karachi, India. That's what they told us, they took us to the hotel, «don't leave the hotel and don't eat anything. Only whatever we will give you. You will go nowhere to have something to eat». Next day back on the airplane, we arrived in Wellington, how many of us, we must have been 200, I am not sure, we were many.

Ath – There were 200 on the airplane?

Alex – I am not sure how many we were, we were a lot. Most stayed in Wellington.

Ath – Were you with Klio and Adrianna?

Alex – No, no!

Ath – Different airplane?

Alex – Yes.

Ath – Adrianna came much later. I came along with Ioanna Tsivouraki, she is in Wellington and Theano Phountoulaki who is also in Wellington, we came together. Many

girls that we came together stayed in Wellington. We got into the train to Auckland in the afternoon.

Ath – Ah, you were talking about Karachi!!!

Alex – Ah, the next day, we embarked on the plane from Karachi and we came here.

Ath – You told us that you were very scared. You mentioned a story.

Alex – .No, it happened here, it happened here.

Ath – You came here, you came to Auckland?

Alex – To Wellington.

Ath – Ah, you went to Wellington. How many hours you spent on the plane?

Ath – Did you travel for 2-3 days after you left from Athens?

Alex – It took us 5-6 days. .

Ath – Really?

Alex – Yes. Back then, yes!

Evay – You don't remember where was your first stop?

Ath – You don't remember. Karachi, Melbourne, Sydney....

Evay – Ah, did you also go to Sydney?

Alex – Yes.

Ath – Did you stay there at all?

Alex – I think for a night..

Ath – A night and then you went to Wellington?

Alex – To Wellington.

Ath – And what happened there?

Alex – In Wellington, the Ambassador, Mr. Thalanis, came and took us to fill in some paperwork, we signed them and then they cried out the names of the girls who were going to stay in Wellington, and indeed they did stay.

Ath – Ah, you didn't know where you were going?

Alex – Nowhere, I didn't know where I was going and what was going to happen to me.

Ath – And what did you think when you saw New Zealand, Wellington?

Alex – It looked like a village to me.

Ath – Village. You believed that it was a big city?

Alex – . Yes, yes. After we completed all the paper work and such things and we were registered according to their needs, they told us «you and you are going to the North Island». So we got on the train. From Wellington all the way here, to Papakura, where us the last ones came off the train, we stopped at Palmerston North and dropped some girls as it was arranged.

Ath – How many were you when you arrived to wellington?

Alex – I don't remember.

Ath – Don't you remember?

Alex – I don't remember.

Ath – And the train was dropping girls everywhere?

Alex – Everywhere. Yes!!.

Ath – Did you know where you were going?

Alex – Not at all.

Ath – Not at all.

Ath– Was there anyone that you became friend with?

Alex – There was. An interpreter got on the train from Wellington, a Greek young lady, who knew which girls to leave behind and where. We were the last ones her in Auckland. But when we embarked on the train from Wellington and we reached Taumarunui...

Ath – Taumarunui

Alex – Taumarunui. It was midnight, about midnight. And the lady said: “ we will stop here to have something to eat, don't worry about the food, everything is paid, you don't need money”. We came down of the train, and we went to a lunch bar, I don't know what exactly it was, everything was self help, everything was nice, I was hungry, salads and everything else. So I pilled up a plate up to here. I went to the table, sat down, but I didn't like it, it wasn't what my mother used to cook for me, not what we used to eat back home. “Take back the plate, I don't want anything

Ath – Was it because it here wasn't any salt or olive oil?

Alex – I didn't like it, I didn't like it.

Ath – It wasn't tasty?

Alex – While the others were eating – I wasn't eating, I want you to pay attention to this point: I wanted to go to the toilet. I stood up and said to the girls that I will go to the toilet. I went out, they showed me where was the toilet, I didn't know how to open or close the door of the train cabin. I came out of the toilet but the door was locked. The train was about to depart, chaf chaf chaf. I was panicky, I don't know how to scream, what to tell,

how to open the door, what shall I do? I turned back and I saw a policeman and I realised that he was my only hope. I ran back, reached there, looked around, I saw a dark guy, I had never seen a colored guy before. And not only that, but when I was a little girl, my mother used to say: «my poor thing, if you are naughty, a black guy will come from Africa and he will eat you alive». And I said: «here it is, what my mother had told me is fulfilled», seeing the black guy in front of me. I went straight back. To the train. The train was just about to set off. I started to run behind the train and managed to climb on its stairs, the train was pulling me like this.

Ath – For how long?

Alex – The train set off and little later on they counted the girls and discovered that one was missing. They stopped the train and I was hanging behind the train.

Ath – And did you see any black in Karachi?

Eva – Eh, Karachi is in Pakistan.

Alex – Not really black, they are dark not black.

Ath – Was he Maori or black?

Alex – Eh, I don't know.

Fr - Indians

Ath – The one here would have been Maori.

Alex – Maori or maybe African.

Ath - And it was night.

Fr - No Africans there.

Alex – I don't know. I don't know. I felt panicky and ran back.

Ath – And you arrived at Auckland.

Alex – We arrived at Auckland.

Ath – Ok we just stop.

This is file number 3 and we are continuing the interview with Alexia Pendaraki.

Ath - So Alexia, you arrived at Auckland, you arrived and what happened? You must have been tired traveling so many days. How did it appear to you?

Alex - Me, personally, as we said, we knew that it wasn't going to be restful, when...I didn't feel tired neither on the airplane nor on the train, I didn't consider it tiring at all. We arrived at Auckland, and Mrs Papakonstantinou was there to pick us up.

Ath - Papakonstantinou.

Alex - Eyli Papakonstantinou.

Ath - What was her first name...Elli? What is it?

Alex - Eyli. She has passed away.

Ath - And who was she?

Alex - She was a Greek lady. Her husband was Greek. She came to the train station and picked us up.

Ath - Who...she came just because she was Greek?

Alex - No, maybe she was appointed by the immigration.

Ath - From the immigration, she was working for the immigration

Alex - I assume she was.

Ath - Yes.

Alex - And she told us, it was about 10 o'clock in the morning, that: « we will walk up Queen Street, which is the main road and where all the shops are, so you can have a look at them». So we walked all the way to the top of Queen street. I said to her: «Mrs Papakonstantinou, are these the shops, where are the shops? Where are the shops in New Zealand?», «these are all», she said to me. Indeed, New Zealand became an open society after 1950, 1960.

Ath - And were you disappointed?

Alex - Yes, very disappointed. But I knew that I came here to make my life and not just to see shops, to see clothes, or grooms, I came to work. I knew that there was a job arranged for me, a room ready for me, so, I said that I am not interested in anything else. Nothing for the time being.

Ath - Where did they take you after going up Queen street?

Alex - They took us...they left some at Auckland, some at Otahuhu and us, the last ones, they took us to Kingseat, 7 of us. 7 all together.

Ath – 7

Alex – 7 all together.

Ath – And did you stay there?

Alex – I stayed there until I met my husband.

Ath – Was there another girl in the room you were put in?

Alex – No. Every girl had her own room. But all the Greek girls were in the same corridor in which also the supervisor was. So she can keep an eye on us.

Ath – And how many Greek ladies were there? Which ones?

Alex – We the Greeks, we were, it was me, Kiki Siphothaskalaki, Roula Tzirtzilaki, Vagelia Siphothaskalaki, Despina – I have forgotten her surname – and also Ioanna Tsivouraki.

Ath – And what did you do? You went into your rooms – you slept – what happened that night? The first night.

Alex – The first night we all slept in our rooms. The next day the supervisor came and told us to go the kitchen, we would be working in the kitchen, and also we would be going to the other hospital departments, whatever job was available.

Ath – Did they give you a uniform;

Alex – Yes, yes. Also shoes and uniform.

Ath – And what job were you doing?

Alex – Initially we went to the kitchen or we were cleaning the corridors and similar jobs.

Ath – Were you cleaning plates in the kitchen?

Alex – We were cleaning potatoes, doing the dishes, helping the cook, according to what anyone could do. I, immediately, since as we mentioned before, my mother made each one of us to work one day a week in the kitchen, I knew what «kitchen» was about and usually they were keeping me there longer.

Ath – And were you in the position, were you able, to choose which job you were going to do?

Alex – No!

Ath – No.

Alex –No, no!

Ath – So, they put you in the kitchen....

Alex – There was a roster and you knew the job you were going to do.

Ath – And what time were you getting up in the morning?

Alex – The supervisor used to wake us up, I think, about 7 o'clock in the morning. We were going for breakfast at 8 and afterwards to work.

Ath – Did you use to eat with the nurses?

Alex – Yes. There was a large dinning room and we were eating together.

Ath – You didn't like the food?

Alex – I didn't like it.

Ath - You must have been very slim.

Alex – Very, very slim, indeed.

Ath – Were you able to speak English?

Alex – Good enough. I was trying my best whatever job I was doing. Even if I was working in the same job for years.

Ath – Were you keeping company with the nurses?

Alex – Yes.

Ath – Yes, and how was that?

Alex – Good, good. Very good.

Ath – What did you think about the people? The New Zealanders?

Alex – . Very nice people. And very helpful. Very polite. Very polite for the sake of Crete. Crete during the war created its glorious name throughout the world.

Ath – So, It was just the girls who came from Crete? What about other people?

Alex – All, all the girls without any exception, there wasn't any exception here. There was no exception here in New Zealand. The only one is that they asked firstly for girls from Crete. But we couldn't cover the requested number so they asked for girls from all over Greece.

Ath – Where the other immigrants here just Greeks? Did you know any immigrants?

Alex – No. No. For me everybody was New Zealand.

Ath - So, the Pakeha and the Maori are all the same?

Alex – All the same, all the same.

Eva - What did you think of the Maori people?

Alex – I like them. I like them.

Ath - What did you like about them?

Alex – *Maori people you got a friend and it's a friend. True friend. But if you have an enemy it's look out.*

Ath- Did you make any enemies then?

Alex – *No. No.*

Eva - Like Cretans.

Alex – *Exactly like...just like Cretans.*

Ath – And you were going, you must have been every day.

Alex – *Yes.*

Ath – Since morning.

Alex – *. Since morning, we used to have a break at midday and we were finishing at night.*

Ath – And what were you doing at night?

Alex – *In our rooms.*

Ath – And what were you doing there?

Alex – *Sometimes we were going to the next room but we had to be quite, because the supervisor was there. You weren't allowed to make loud ah....we were singing. Songs.*

Ath – Songs. What kind of songs?

Alex – *Songs. Any kind of songs.*

Ath – Which one were these?

Alex – *Wedding songs, bride songs.*

Ath –What songs from this country?

Alex – *Which country?*

Evay – Cretan, traditional folk songs?

Alex – *Cretan, of course Cretan.*

Ath – Do you remember the songs?

Evay – Will you tell us one?

Ath – Come on.

Alex – *Ah, I don't remember.*

Ath – Was Aliki Vouyiouklaki on those days?

Alex – *Yes. Yes.*

Ath – Yes. And also that blonde one, what’s her name? The one who sung «Never on sunda». Also «Piraeus’ Children».

Alex – *Ah, Nana Mouschouri.*

Ath – No, not Nana Mouschouri, the other one. Who became, you know.

Fr - Eirini Pappas?

Ath - Al: No, no.

Ath - No, no, the other one. Melina Merkouri. Yes, yes. «Piraeus Children».

Alex – *Yes.*

Ath – Where they familiar to you then?

Alex – *Yes, yes, yes.*

Ath - What did you sing village songs;?

Alex – *Village songs, we sung folk songs about the sea, wedding songs.*

Ath – So, you did a lot of signing and that made you feel home sick?

Alex – *Not really.*

Ath - Not.

Alex – *Not really but now I am.*

Ath - But why you think you weren’t because not only did you leave your family but you were at the other side of the world.

Alex – *Because I already told you, I wanted to make a better life.*

Ath- I know that but also you were a close family, you had lots of brothers and sisters.

Alex – *Yes, but when the pressure of the – I say money and food and life – pressure what you leave behind – then I think you would choose to look for that life.*

Ath- So just the food that you missed.

Alex – *Yes, I missed the food, yes.*

Ath - Could you buy any Greek things at that time?

Alex – *No, no. Nothing was here, e Frank? Not olive oil, not anything Greek.*

Ath - So, what did you eat?

Alex – *Wellington... We tried to go to the farms around Kingseat to pick up some greens.. Greens.*

Ath – Greens.

Alex – Greens, and after we cooked the first lot, the supervisor came out: «we will all die, what are they eating? Is it poison?».

Ath - So, greens, were you cooking anything else?

Alex – *We couldn't cook anything. The only...*

Ath - So, you didn't eat very much?

Alex – *No. I learn afterwards. I eat fruit, a lot of fruit and slowly I didn't have any choice.*

Ath - So, when did your sister come, Argyroula?

Alex – *Then I was at Kingseat, I don't know about 2-3 months and somebody from the immigration came and ask us how we settle down, do we like New Zealand, do you like to go back and all those things and I told them. Then he said – he was a man - would you like – do you have anybody you would like to bring over? And I said yes, my sister. And by October my sister was here.*

Ath - Had she told you that she wanted to come?

Alex – *I know she wanted to come. I knew she would of.*

Ath - Did you get any letter from home?

Alex – *Yes, yes.*

Ath - How often would you have letters?

Alex – *Once a month. Don't forget the letters take a long time to go and come back.*

Ath - And, so, what did you hear from home? What sorts of things did they tell you?

Alex – *The normal things, everything is ok, mum is alright but please send more letters because she really worry.*

Ath - And what did you do with your money – did you open a bank account here?

Alex – *I left with 10 sterlings from Greece, my brother gave me 10 sterlings to have a soft drink somewhere. That was the money I took with me. When I come to New Zealand I save it and my first pay and the 10 sterlings I sent them back.*

Ath - You sent them straight back? And how did you do that? Through...

Alex – *You go to the post office or to the bank and you make money draft I think.*

Eva - You didn't buy anything for yourself as a treat?

Alex – *No. No.*

Ath - So, did you do that every payday?

Alex – *No. No. No. I save money because I know I had to start save money to go back and then I got...*

Ath - So, tell us how you met Frank?

Alex – *I was in the hospital but a couple of weeks and sister Kennedy – it was their home sister was very friendly with me and she said to me one day 'Alexia I want you to do a job for me'. And I said 'OK'. By token by sign. She said every morning I want you to go to the main office, take my paperwork to them and take their paperwork to me here. Every morning you do that. And I said ok. After few times, I was walking because the nurses home I was leaving it was lower than the offices up and I saw a little Ute – a little van coming down the offices direction and it come very close to my side and I thought 'Bugger you - what do you want?'*

Ath - You'd learnt some English swearings, hadn't you?

Alex – *I said in English – stupid.*

Ath – Stupid.

Alex – *And then they went. I look and I see this blonde.*

Ath - So, you did look.

Alex – *Oh, yes.*

Ath - You said before that you didn't look because you were a good present girl.

Alex – *But I didn't do anything about it. Of course I look. Of course I look and I see this blondie, blond young man. And I thought he is nice. That was him and his boss. And he say to his boss who is this young lady? And the boss says to him she is one of the Greek ladies who arrive last week. And he says to him 'God will that she is going to be my wife'. You be careful because they are under the protection, the government protection over here. Be careful with that. And then he used to come to the restaurant and have dinner with us. In our dining room.*

Ath - So, he just turned up?

Alex – *Yes. And he start asking me to go out and I say no. But why not. Because I want to go home. I come for 3 years and I am going home to my family. And he keep asking. And he keep asking. And then they start to roster me in different villas to go to work. And every day I went to a villa he was there for morning tea. And I say how does he know where I am.*

Ath - We should say that Frank has just joined us.

Alex – *Then, there was a couple of months before, that year, there was the host of the ground fair, the gala fair yes. And they gave us the day off to all the girls and we go to gala to the fair and he was there. Follow me everywhere I go and he say I buy that you pay, I buy. You pay I buy. He do that and then he said to me can I take a photo? Can I take a photo of you? Not. Why not. I don't want strangers to carry my photo everywhere and then he say to Kiki. 'Kiki, can you stand with Alexia and I take a photo of her?' And he did. He did and he*

took a photo. And later that night he says to me 'It's a Greek film in town, called 'Zorba the Greek'; would you like to come with me'? And I said 'No'. Oh, come on it is a Greek film. Yes, but if I come all my friends will come with me, I am not coming by myself. He say ok. So, 7 of us go on a mini bus.

Ath - So, did you do that because of your honour? Was this part of the Greek thing? Not being with men on your own.

Alex – *Yes, if somebody see me, go back to my village and say I saw her with a man – that was the end of me.*

Ath - But did you fancy him at that state.

Alex – *Very much...oh for sure.*

Ath - So, you were not been horrible to him, you were just being a little bit cool.

Alex – *Watch out – be careful. And we went to the film, we sit down, he was in all of us, at the end he is next to me. The film was playing and the airplane was coming zoom zoom towards the Zorba the Greek and Eirini Pappa. And she said to the airplane: 'You buggers, what do you want from us?」 When she said that, the seven of us, all, we cried shouted and started to laugh loudly. And everybody was looking what was going on. Why?*

Ath - There was not subtitles.

Alex – *Yes, and we saw the film and we went home. And he was going to his quarters and I went to my home and he start to come to where I was working and he start asking me 'How do you say this?' and I told him.*

Ath - In Greek?

Alex – *Yes and how do you say that? And I told him. And he had the dictionary there of course and then way later, ye, was Christmas and was Christmas and they had the staff Christmas ball. And he says to me 'Would you like to be my partner to the ball?' 'No'. 'Why not?' 'I don't want to'. 'Come on'. 'No'. So, he got a girl from one of the girls and organized to go to the ball with her, Shelley was her name. And we know she was upstairs getting ready and us girls, all 7 of us, was downstairs on open fire already dressed because we knew was coming and going people, and sitting by the fire and the doors was open and this Blondie walk in with the dark blue suit and I was 'Oh, my God' and he walks straight to me 'You come to the ball with me', 'No', 'But why not', 'Because Shelley is waiting upstairs for you', 'Never mind, I want you to come'. So he say 'You go and get Shelley'. So I went and get Shelley and she get downstairs and they went out, to the ball. About an hour, a couple of hours later, he came back again, 'Come on I want you to come to the ball with me', 'No, you got Shelley', 'No, I want you'.*

Ath - So he came to you back, have you not gone yet?

Alex – *No.*

Ath - Why, what were you waiting for?

Alex – *All of us in the open fire. Sit down for the evening.*

Ath - So, you were not going to go to the ball?

Alex – No.

Ath - Ah, ok. So you were not dressed for the ball.

Alex – *No. No, just for them, the people to come and pick the partners and friends. A Greek girls they always do that, you look best and you don't look ready when something is going on. And he went back, come back, early that night to pick me up again and I say no. He went back and that was the end. And he carry on to come to the village where I was for ages, for ever and one day I got a letter from my mother. He sent a letter with the words stealing from me or learning from me. He make together a letter and he sent it to my mother and I got an answer back and she said to me 'I can't be there to choose the right man for you but he seems to be a very sincere. And if you like to marry him I am not going to stop you'. And then we got engaged.*

Ath - So, when you got engaged, when you said yes to him, did you think that means I won't be going back in 3 years?

Alex – *Oh yes.*

Ath - So, you made that decision?

Alex – *Yes. I was quite happy by then.*

Ath - Why were you happy by then?

Alex – *Because by that time I know I could work in New Zealand and I could make a lot better life. And I know that my husband will not ask the world for my marriage. And I know he was truthful and sincere with me. And I know he will marry on a Orthodox church and we baptize our kids in an Orthodox church and that was good enough for me.*

Ath - So, when you said yes to him, did you give any conditions?

Alex – *Yes, marriage Orthodox, baptize the children.*

Ath - That was it. No 'dowry'?

Alex – *AND no 'dowry'.*

Ath - Did he know what you were talking about?

Alex – *No, we never talk about that because she knew nothing about that. I said to him but I don't mind to be poor; I don't mind about that, I can put up with it. But the day you lift your hand to hit me I never see you again.*

Ath - Why did you say that to him?

Alex – *Because I did not like hard to get a husband who will bit me up because your English is not good. Because I did not know what I was getting into.*

Ath - So, where did you get this idea from? Did you know people who their husband bit them?

Alex – *See people, yes.*

Ath - Who?

Alex – *Oh, well a Greek man, they control their wives. They do control their wives.*

Ath - In Greece and here or did you see it at the village?

Alex – *Yes.*

Ath - And what did you see?

Alex – *I didn't see beating up, I didn't see anybody. No, no. I didn't.*

Ath - Did you hear it?

Alex – *A lot of arguments.*

Ath - Yes, but I am just interested to know why you said to him not to hit you?

Alex – *I like to make sure because when you are in a country for a year or so and you marry to somebody when you don't know where he come from, never know what background he is from, never know he down and what he is up to, you make some conditions. You make sure that this is not going to happen.*

Ath - Yes, but I wouldn't think of saying this to somebody unless there was something in my experience.

Alex – *No. No. Not really.*

Ath - So, you didn't know any of the other girls who married?

Alex – *I was one of the first, was I the first one?*

Ath - Even though you haven't seen anybody hitting each other you just said to him not to...

Alex – *It was not reason, really not reason.*

Ath - Very, very [27:37]. That was good. What did he think? What did he say? Was he shocked when you said that?

Alex – *No. No. I think he know he marry me to love me.*

Ath - So, did he tell you that he loved you?

Alex – *He made no fuss of it.*

Ath - Right! So, did you know that he loved you?

Alex – *I know that.*

Ath - And did you tell him that you loved him? Did you love him?

Alex – *I did love him but I don't know if I really really tell him.*

Ath - Did you find that...? Was it something you had expected? That you are actually falling in love because this is not something you were supposed to do, was it?

Alex - *No, but when you are ready to get married to somebody you are in love, you love him and he loves you.*

Ath - Well, some of the match's some women didn't see the men

Alex - *That is why I said if something goes wrong, don't try.*

Ath - So, that was good. That was a love match. So, how long afterwards did you get married? So, you got engaged, did you have a traditional Greek engagement?

Alex - *Yes, after Christmas, about a year.*

Ath - So, did the priest come? How did you get engaged?

Alex - *So, he went down and he brought me a ring - nice big diamond ring. Big one.*

Ath - So because he was so glad he got you, just had a quite, did you celebrate with the other girls?

Alex - *Yeah.*

Ath - Right. And then you got married, how long after? 2 months?

Alex - *No. 2 months.*

Fr - About that.

Ath - 2 months later you got married.

Alex - *Yes.*

Ath - And what was that like?

Alex - *The girls was crying, crying, crying.*

Ath - The 7 girls?

Alex - *Yes, they crying, crying. And I asked them after why did you cry because we thought we never see you again. When you marry somebody you don't know.*

Ath - So, they were worried about you?

Alex - *They were worried about me.*

Ath - And what did they think of marrying a non-Greek? Because that was a big thing too, wasn't it?

Alex - *I don't think anybody worry about that.*

Ath - So, you didn't even think about I am not marrying a Greek

Alex – *No, no.*

Ath - And no one in your family thought that was strange? Your brothers?

Alex – *When I make the promise that I go back after 3 years I knew I was marry a Greek but after I met Frank I had no thoughts about why and that.*

Ath - So, were you the first one to marry a foreigner? Did you know anyone else?

Alex – *No. No. I am the first one.*

Fr - Foreigner

Alex – *Yes. The first one. I was the first one.*

Ath - You were the first one and nobody, the people who were looking after you did not warn you or you know.

Al –*No. no.*

Ath - So, you got married in the Russian Orthodox Church?

Alex – *And if I remember right...we brought a priest from Australia*

Fr - Yes

Ath - Was that the church in Dominion Road?

Alex – *Dominion Road.*

Ath - That little Russian church.

Alex – *Yes.*

Ath - And you said you brought a Greek priest from Australia. How did you do that?

Alex – *I think you (Frank) organized everything. And our best man was Greek.*

Fr – Stavrianos

Alex – *Her father*

Ath - Who was that?

Alex – *E, a Greek man over here, a Greek family. And I think they organize everything.*

Ath - So, they organized the priest and he was your best man.

Alex – *And the reception and everything. They organize.*

Ath - So, where did you spend your first night?

Alex – *What was that Frank?*

Fr – Waihi

Ath - Waihi. Did you drive?

Alex – *Yes. We hire a car. He hire a car and we took off and go to honeymoon.*

Ath - So, you got married in the morning?

Alex – *Yes. Lunchtime. Afternoon time.*

Ath - Lunch time and then you had a reception or party?

Alex – *No*

Ath - Not much. And you just went in the car and took of to Waihi.

Alex – *And we had a party when come back.*

Eva - In the photo Mrs Alexia, there are also the 7 girls that you came with. Did Frank have any of his friends, did you have any New Zealanders? Other people, other Greek in your wedding?

Alex – *Yes, we had some of them but not in this one.*

Eva - Who were they? Who was there?

Alex – *I don't think. We had his boss, we had a few people.*

Ath - In the church.

Alex – *We had some but I am not sure.*

Fr – I was by myself.

Ath - So, you were by yourself no family. So, how many people would have been in the church?

Alex – *This one, that one, me, that one, that one and than one. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven.*

Ath - Seven and some of his, Frank's friends.

Alex – *Oh, it was a lot more people at the wedding like my best man's family and friends and other Greeks from here. Was a lot of people.*

Ath- And so the Greek priest was fine marrying you with a foreigner too?

Alex – *Yeah, yeah.*

Ath - Ok, so you get in the car and you drive off to Waihi

Alex – *Yeah.*

Ath - and where did you spend your first night? Was it in a motel or?

Al - In a hotel

Ath - Hotel

Fr - Camping site

Ath - Camping site?

Ath- They had a cabin. So, it was your first night alone with a man...

Alex - Yeah.

Ath - And was that like? For a Greek girl from a village.

Alex - I was shy. Very shy. Very shy.

Ath - I am sure you were. And so, did this manifest, did you, were you shy of taking your clothes off.

Ath - You can speak Greek if you want.

Alex - Yes, I was shy to take my clothes off. I was shy to instigate any move.

Ath - And at this stage have you tried to educate yourself about what might happen? Or you were still ignorant?

Alex - Ignorant.

Eva - Your girlfriends didn't talk about it?

Al - After it. I don't think they knew any better as they were young like me.

Ath - And was Frank more experienced than you?

Ath - What?

Alex - Maybe

Ath - You had no experience

Alex - No, no.

Ath - And so things went ok?

Alex - Those things come naturally you don't need teacher you don't need anybody to tell you what to do.

Ath - Ok, that was pretty good for you.

Alex - Yeah. Yes

Ath - Good.

Ath - And so was it a surprise to you?

Alex - *About what?*

Ath - Well, I find it interesting that people they don't hear anything about sex or what happened and suddenly they are in a very intimate relationship.

Alex - *Who said that? I already tell you that I heard the old ladies talking about themselves about everything.*

Ath - Ah!

Alex - *But they didn't know that my ears was big.*

Ath - Ah, I see, so nobody told you directly you used ears drops, so you were curious. I thought that.

Ath- So, you heard, what they old ladies used to say.

Alex - *It was a long time - I can't even remember anything. Anything for themselves.*

Ath - My mother used to say your father...your husband will teach you everything you need to know on your wedding night. You don't need to know anything.

Ath - She taught you everything, did she?

Alex - *Well, that happen also in a village I grow up. That the bride a week before, there were a half a dozen old ladies preparing the dowry, they stay through the biggest time of the night and the bride was there and then will tell her everything. At that point.*

Ath - Ah! Right.

Alex - *Not before.*

Ath - Right. Was it the expectation that as a woman you would enjoy sex? Or it was something meaning joy and you were not supposed to?

Alex - *Why?*

Ath - I don't know. I am just wondering. So, did you expect to enjoy sex?

Alex - *Yeah.*

Ath - Oh good! Oh that's good. Because you know you often hear that women often they don't back in those days.

Alex - *I don't know about back in those days but I know I guess get marry to enjoy life. I know all corners.*

Ath - Good.

Ath - So, you had a healthy sex life?

Alex - *Yes, we have*

Ath - You were happy.

Alex - *Yes*

Ath - And then you had your first child

Alex - *But 7 months after because she was premature.*

Ath - Ah.

Alex - *Yeah*

Ath - Was she ok when she was born?

Fr - In coma.

Alex - *She was in an 'Incubator'*

Ath - Incubator

Alex - *Incubator for a little while and then we took her home and she never look back.*

Ath - And when was the date of her birth and the name?

Alex - *What?*

Ath - I know we have written it.

Alex - *She was born 24 of November 1963.*

Ath - 1963. And how did you feel when you gave birth to a child?

Alex - *I was happy but when, I was very happy, but those days, you was not allowed to touch the premature baby, you was not allowed to go in the room and we had to see through the window looking to her and that was upsetting me.*

Ath - And when you were pregnant did you wish your mother to be here and help you?

Alex - *No.*

Ath - So, you had a good pregnancy?

Alex - *Yes.*

Al - Very good. All three of them.

Ath - And were you working? When you got married did you continue working?

Alex - *Yes.*

Ath - Ye. At Kingseat?

Alex - *No, no.*

This is file number 4 continuing the interview with Alexia Pendaraki

Ath - So, you had an easy child birth, I mean the pregnancy

Alex - *Very easy*

Ath - Did you continue to work?

Alex - *Yes.*

Ath - Until, when did you stop working?

Alex - *I was working like I said, my husband, the night before I had my daughter, because I had to go to Kingseat, while I was working before. Because when we get married we shift to Auckland. And I had to go back to Kingseat for some paper.*

Ath - So you were living outside the town.

Alex - *And I went on the bus, on the way back I felt that I wasn't very happy on the bus. And that night the water broke and I had my daughter.*

Ath - So you were working when you were 7 months. And where were you living at that time?

Alex - *Here in Auckland*

Ath - What address was that?

Alex - *Grafton Bridge.*

Ath - Grafton bridge, ah, ok. And then you were commuting, going to Kingseat every day?

Alex - *No. No. No. I finished at Kingseat when we got married and I was working in Machinest.*

Ath - Machinest. Where about?

Alex - *In Grafton road, near Grafton, was a place called Action Uniforms.*

Ath - Oh, I see. Is this because of your sewing experience?

Alex - *Yes.*

Ath - Did you try to find a work as a dressmaker here?

Alex - *No, I didn't think it was enough money.*

Ath - Why did you leave Kingseat?

Alex - *Because we got married.*

Ath - So, you couldn't work there while you were married?

Fr - No house.

Ath - No house but you couldn't, if you were working here did you have to live in the premises?

Alex - *No. once you married there was house available. They could give you a house to live. As a couple and work there. But because there was no house available and we got married we had to leave Kingseat.*

Ath - OK. Did you break your bond at all? Because when you came here you did you have to work.

Alex - *Yes, for two years.*

Ath - And so.

Alex - *Yes, I did break the bond.*

Ath - And what happened about that?

Alex - *No problem.*

Ath - No problem?

Alex - *No problem, e, Frank? No.*

Ath - So, you got a job working at the Machinest where they made clothes. Yes. And how long were you there?

Alex - *For 5-6 months*

Ath - Ok.

Ath - Once you had your baby did you stop working?

Alex - *Yes. Yes.*

Ath - For how long?

Alex - *Then we bought a section and we build a house*

Ath - And where was that?

Fr - In Avondale.

Alex - *In, not far from here. In Avondale.*

Ath - Avondale. Ok.

Alex - *And then my husband got sick.*

Ath - Ah, what was wrong?

Alex – *He had a lung problem. And he was off for quite sometimes, and when he was off I went to Oakley hospital to see the boss over there. No, he came out and I said to him that we can't build the house and it was quite difficult and I said to him somebody has to find a job and the other will look after the baby and I found a job.*

Ath - So, your husband stayed home and looked after the first born?

Alex – *Yes and I went to Oakley hospital and I see the boss over there, the head chef and I told him what I was looking for and he says to me 'where you have been working before?' and I told him in Kingseat and he said 'you go home, I will get in touch with your boss over there and ask him questions and I will come back to you'. And he got in touch and he got good words and things and he rang me back and he say you come to see me and I went back and he say 'I will give you a job as a cook in the kitchen – can you cook?' and I say 'I cook for my family' and he say 'if you cook for your family you can cook for me, but you have to remember one thing – the food you cook have to be good enough for you to eat it. And if it is good enough for you to eat it, it is good enough for you to serve it to the people you work for'. And I say 'fine'. And I start and I work there for about 24 years plus 2 years in Kingseat was something like that. All up was 26 years.*

Ath - And what happened when you got pregnant each time? Did you go on maternity leave?

Alex – *Yeah.*

Ath - For how long?

Alex – *Oh, not very long. About 4-5 months.*

Ath - And what happened to the children with their childcare? Did you have somebody to look after them?

Alex – *No. Then I said to my boss that my husband got better and he got a job and I need to stay home and I finish. And he said no you can't finish, I don't want you to finish but I got a night shift cook and would you like to do that? I said to him but Mr Hendirson but night shift is Mrs Price and I don't want to get in trouble with her. I just don't like to get to see people who have hard feelings when I walk on a street. And he said 'don't worry, leave it to me'. And he asked Mrs Price if I can have the night shift and she say yes and I worked 11 years night shift start at 10:00 at night and finish 7:00 in the morning. And he look the kids at night and I look after them in the morning.*

Ath - And when did you sleep?

Alex – *Yeah, well you tell me. You work it out.*

Fr - When they were at school.

Ath - And then when they went to school you were able to sleep.

Alex – *But before they went to school it was not very easy.*

Ath - So, what was like living with someone he was Dutch? You were Greek. Did you have, did it create any issues for you? Because that would be kind different.

Alex – *Never. Never. Never by me never by him and we had his mother staying for – is it one and a half year?*

Fr - A year

Alex – *A year staying with us and I never had a problem and honestly*

Frank: Father and mother

Alex - *Father and mother – your parents. Frank and I can answer that they love me as good or better than their children and they told me so.*

Ath - Why you think you get on so well with Frank?

Alex – *I don't know.*

Ath - Was he the sort of man you thought you will end up with?

Alex – *Eh, we have our upside downs, no problem, no doubt about that, but we very quickly sort it out.*

Ath - What sort of things do you argue about?

Alex – *Eh, garden. The garden.*

Ath - You can say it if you like it.

Fr - I was very keen on radio and I had to buy a good radio to dxio [?:10] – to listen to all radio stations all over the world. That was my hobby. And then later on the computer game and that was my hobby. Not really.

Alex – *Yes, but after this is the garden. Because I am keen gardener like I tell you I have been grown up in a gardens and outside and I love my fresh veggies and my fresh fruit and everything.*

Ath - And what does he not want you to plant vegetables?

Alex – *No . He goes and pull them out. He doesn't know the difference between the plants or the wigs.*

Ath - And did you argue how to bring up the children?

Alex – *Not really. No. No. We never never have any differences. In the beginning the first 5 years of my kids life when before they went to primary school we had to go upstairs every day an hour to learn Greek. The best I could. But when they went to school, my oldest daughter came home one day and say 'mum, I don't want to learn that dumb language any more because the kids laughing at me'.*

Ath - Ah, why the kids laugh at them?

Alex – *Different language.*

Ath - Were they hearing them speaking Greek?

Alex – *Yes.*

Ath - Did they speak to each other Greek?

Alex – *No. They mainly knew Greek.*

Ath - So, they didn't speak English when they went to school?

Alex – *Yes. They speak English too but they speak a lot Greek too. So, from that time there was no Greek, they refused to learn anything, no talk.*

Fr - You got two languages in this house.

Ath - Dutch. Did they learn Dutch as well?

Fr - No. They speak better Dutch than Greek. They went to school to Holland for 6 months.

Ath - Ah, when did you go to Holland?

Fr - At '45

Alex – *Yes.*

Ath - And so, they learnt Dutch in Holland?

Alex – *Yes.*

Ath - So, they didn't know Dutch beforehand?

Alex – *No.*

Ath - A little bit?

Alex – *No.*

Ath - But they knew some Greek

Alex – *A lot of Greek.*

Ath - A lot of Greek. And they were teased and decided to stop.

Alex – *They were teased.*

Ath - Were they teased about the food they ate? Anything like that?

Alex – *I don't know. I don't really know. They say I don't want to talk this dumb language any more because the kids at school are laughing at me.*

Ath - And so, did they stop from then on?

Alex – *Yes.*

Ath - Now they don't speak Greek?

Alex – *Ah, they say I am sorry we did.*

Ath - And did you go to the Greek Church here? At all? When did the Greek Church start up in Auckland?

Alex – *After we came in 1962 a couple of years later suppose was no church, no hall no community was a Greek here and a Greek there. But nobody really get together or anything. But as girls we need to be together from time to time we need our church, we need to baptize our kids and everything. And slowly we start with the old people who help us a lot but the instigation was from us because we want a church, we want a priest, we want some place to get together and we bought the church, very old church, hardly anything...*

Ath - The seven of you?

Alex – *No. All the Greeks.*

Ath - And how did it come about? Did you call a meeting or how was defined it?

Alex – *About half a dozen of old people who was over here they saw the church for sale, this one we got here and they decided that we have to do it all for us and they started it and we all helped.*

Ath - When would that been?

Alex – *Never got a clue.*

Ath - So, when did they start bringing Greek food into the country? When could you start buying olives, feta?

Alex – *The last 10 years*

Fr - More

Alex – *20?*

Fr - 20 plus

Alex – *Was long time after.*

Ath - So, in this house being you brought up the children in a Greek way do you think or was it a mixture? I mean did they fast?

Fr - Mixture.

Alex – *When you come forward you are talking about food and celebrations and stuff like that. I think it is a Greek way – they highlight them.*

Ath - So, have you celebrated Easter and they were fasting and all that stuff?

Alex – *Yes, and Christmas and all that.*

Fr - We have got Easter too.

Ath - You have got Easter too. Was it also fasting for you? And have Holly Communion?

Fr - No fasting

Ath - No, but your children did that?

Alex - *Not really.*

Ath - Not really.

Alex - *Not really, no.*

Ath - No. Ok. But you just celebrated. Name days.

Alex - *Yeah. Oh yeah.*

Ath - Christmas. And how would you celebrate?

Alex - *How do you mean?*

Ath - Would you have a big party? Would you invite all these 7 women from Kingseat?

Alex - *In the beginning we did. Yes, in the beginning. Because it was difficult to get them together because you know Auckland is very big and everybody went everywhere but yes, the ones we could we could get them together. Yes.*

Ath - So, you still continue to see them afterwards?

Alex - *Only at the church.*

Ath - Only at the church.

Alex - *Yes. Yes.*

Ath - So, you stopped seeing them as your family grew

Alex - *No that's not really. Because Vasso was over here the other day, half day, no we get in touch quite a lot whether we see it personally we go out for a cup of coffee quite often. We use the phone a lot.*

Ath - So, would you say they are your best friends?

Alex - *Yes.*

Ath - And did you make any friends who are not those women? Any New Zealanders?

Alex - *Yes.*

Ath - Who did you make friends with?

Alex - *The people I work for, my bosses very much, my neighbors.*

Ath - Does that mean you would go to have a coffee with them or see them out of work? Or is it just at work that were friendly with them?

Alex - *I go out to see them sometimes.*

Ath - At their homes?

Alex - *Yeah. Sometimes.*

Ath - Yeah.

Alex - *Sometimes.*

Ath - And would they come here?

Alex - *Not very many, one or two I go*

Ath - Who would you say is your closest friend who is not Greek? Apart from your husband? That goes without saying.

Alex - *I think, one girl I work, if I say my bosses they are my best friend all of it, anyone, everyone. Everyone. And if you read over here we will see the letters I got from my work.*

Ath - So, you are happy in your work?

Alex - *Yes.*

Ath - Yes. And your bosses treat you well.

Alex - *And this is another one lately. Yes, my bosses was my friends all way.*

So this is file number 5 interview with Alexia Pendaraki continuing

Ath - So Alexia what we were talking about before? We were talking about having babies. How did you find brining up your babies? Did you know about bringing up children?

Alex - *Yes. I knew because like I say I had a lot of cousins and a family, they had babies and we all help each other. There was no problem.*

Ath - So, all the other girls, the 7 girls who came here, did they all get married and have children and they are happily here?

Alex - *Except that one Despoina Tratsianaki who died.*

Ath - Ah, right. How old was she when she died?

Alex - *I don't know. I would think between 25 and 30.*

Ath - So, when your sister Argyroula came here, did she stay in Auckland?

Alex - *Yes.*

Ath - And how was that? Where you happy to have a family member here?

Alex – *Oh very very happy.*

Ath - And so is she still here?

Alex – *Yes. She live not very far away from here.*

Ath - Ah, ok. So, do you see a lot of her?

Alex – *Yes. Every time she makes something nice she brings to me, I make something I bring to her. I never make anything Greek without she has a part of it or some of it. And the same for her.*

Ath - So, when are the times when you are feel most home sick?

Alex – *He played Cretan music mainly Greek music but mainly Cretan music or straight from Crete. And that is the time I start cry. And I feel home sick.*

Ath - So, did you see your mother again, all your brothers and sisters?

Alex – *No. My mother never see her again.*

Ath - So, when did she die?

Alex – *In 1967 or 1968.*

Ath - And how did you find out about her death?

Alex – *By telegram, letter, yeah. Telegram those days.*

Ath - Yeah. And can you talk about that?

Alex – *It was sad. It was shock. And extra shock because I really really wanted to go but I had 3 kids at the time. My dad was still alive and the money was not possible for me to go and not possible for me to leave the 3 little babies in my husband and I had to accept the fact that that was that. We sent her nice, we thought they were nice, bouquet of flowers, funeral wreath. We sent a funeral wreath.*

Ath - What did she die of? Do you know?

Alex – *Stroke.*

Ath - She had a stroke?

Alex – *Yes. She had a stroke. She, I think, broken heart.*

Ath - What was the broken heart? Because...did you feel responsible from not being there?

Alex – *Not really because I said our house was like this and our garden below, the house was a lot higher, and she had to come out a lot of time and she said to us 'Come on lunch is ready', she called out hard so we went inside time after time, have lunch but after we I came over here she wrote a letter to me one day she said to me 'Remember when I just call you to come for lunch, now I have nobody so I call a dog'.*

Ath - So, did all your brothers and sisters leave the village?

Alex – *Only one brother left. 3 of us came to New Zealand and two girls and one brother married and move away. And when she wrote this to me, that was very hard.*

Ath - Did this make you question the decision to leave Crete?

Alex – *Not really. No. No. No. But it made me after much later in years later made me think that I should have left everything and go to see her that day.*

Ath - So it was hard not being at her funeral?

Alex – *Yes. No, no, I never look back.*

Ath - So, when did you go back to the village for the first time?

Alex – *1975*

Ath - And what was that like?

Alex – *Lonely, very lonely. Like I say 32 of us all with the name Pendaraki, cousins, first, second generation cousins, and when I went there, there was my brother, his wife, two of their children, and old ladies and an old couple. Nobody. Nobody, all gone.*

Ath - So, when you left it was full of the people that you knew and then you come back and...

Alex – *There was nobody*

Ath - It has changed a lot for you?

Alex – *Yes. All the little little paths I used to go from one house to the other, my cousins, my, you know, my uncles, was nothing but house height, brambles and shravsen [?6:38], yeah. Was very moving, very sad.*

Ath - And was it particularly hard going home and expecting to see your mother?

Alex – *No, but I knew my mother was dead.*

Ath - I know. But is one thing knowing the other thing walking into the house

Alex – *No. No. No.*

Ath - No.

Alex – *I am a person I always accept what happen and then trying to get on with their life.*

Ath - That's very much Greek stoicism, isn't it?

Alex – *Yes. I don't think you have a better choice. If you really know what is tomorrow bring for you personally that's the best choice that you can do. For whatever. Because you can't change anything.*

Ath - So, on that first trip back, what did you do? You went to your village, did you visit other people who leaved?

Alex – *Yeah and we stayed at my father's house for a few nights, actually for a couple of weeks I think. And we went to my mother's village and I met all my uncles and aunties and cousins, what was left there also.*

Ath - So, you had your husband with you?

Alex – *Yeah and the kids.*

Ath - And the children?

Alex – *And the kids.*

Ath - Did you notice anything has changed in you? When you saw the way the people left there? Did you feel you were a different person?

Alex – *No. No. No. I am one of them straight way.*

Ath - Right. So, you felt like you were home.

Alex – *Yeah.*

Ath - And did you feel you might want to stay?

Alex – *No.*

Ath - Why was that?

Alex – *I feel now I said to myself I wish I could go and stay. Now I do say that very often. I wish I could be there.*

Ath - Why?

Alex – *Because I think when you get older you, you go back to your childhood and you can see things different and you can, I don't know. Yeah. Now I do.*

Ath - So, when you came back from Greece that first time, did you feel like this is more like home now?

Alex – *Over here?*

Ath - Yeah.

Alex – *I always do. I always do, yeah. I come home.*

Ath - As a Greek woman, what do you think is different for you here than would have been in Crete?

Alex – *Got more freedom, I am a person, I don't know. It is different, totally different. I have got a house that I would never ever ones told me you come from or your family or school or you would never ones give me the thought of feeling like that. And the first few years, he*

used to sit down and have a piece of paper trying to explain to me what he want me to do and if I don't understand he make a draw for me to do it. To learn it. No, I am happy.

Ath - And you were talking before about Dari system? Can you tell me what you think about it?

Alex – I feel angry about that. I feel angry, very angry. Because it is not right. Why the women need to bring handful of money? And the men doesn't matter he's got something or he got nothing no questions ask. It doesn't matter for me, it doesn't matter for my kids. I see no future to go back to Greece or to Crete or for me. But it is unfair and it's just...

Ath - So, do you think your daughters have a better life being brought up here than they would've in Greece?

Alex – *Yes. Yeah.*

Ath - And what did you teach them when growing up about expectations?

Alex – *Exactly what my mother told me. Don't steal, don't lie, don't be dirty.*

Ath - And how about the Community that's in Auckland? Have you felt that you have been part of it?

Alex – Yes, very much. I might not do a lot but if anything going on I am there. If I prepare something, if I wash the dishes, if I clean the hall, if anything to be done and I am there. Yeah, no problem.

Ath - So, you are very active in the Greek Community?

Alex – *I wouldn't say very active but I 'd like to think that I do what I can.*

Ath - So, where you involved in the 40 years celebration?

Alex – I was the one who started it. For a couple of years before, I was telling everybody that in 40 years that when the 40 years coming up we are going to celebrate it. And about 6 months before the celebration, I called Nikos Petousis and I come right there and I told him and then I say to him I need 4 ladies to be with me and I say to him I need you because you have better knowledge of paperwork and other things we need somebody like you to help us and he agree and 4 of us to form the Committee, was myself, Tasula, Panayiota and Eleni Vitali.

Ath - And this was to celebrate the Battle of Crete?

Alex – *No, no. 40 years of being in New Zealand.*

Ath - A, the 40 years that – who? The girls from '62?

Alex – *Yeah.*

Ath - A, right. And what was the celebration?

Alex – For the 40 years the girls who came in 1962. That was the 40 years. That was 1962. I say to them it doesn't matter what year you come. We celebrate together but we do it on a year of 40s – 40 years – for the girls who came in 1962.

Ath - So, that was in 2002 you had the celebration? And what did the celebration consist of?

Alex – *It was a lot of people, a lot of food, a lot of dancing, a lot of singing, a lot of crying and yeah, it was lovely.*

Ath - And where it was held?

Alex – *At ..over here in Auckland. It was girls come from everywhere. From Australia, from I don't know where, Wellington, all over New Zealand, all the girls was there. Partners and girls, the kids, it was big, it was really big.*

Ath - So, how many people do you think turned up for that?

Alex – *I would not have, I could not tell you.*

Ath - And did you catch up with all the women?

Al –*Yes.*

Ath - And what was their stories? Where they main happy that they came?

Alex – *I think they were all happy unless they didn't say because everybody know I am happy and I don't want to talk about that.*

Ath - So, in the terms of your life, you and your husband Frank, have travelled I understand 15 times overseas not only Greece

Alex – *All over Europe*

Ath - What does this feel like a young girl from a little village in Crete, did you ever imagine you would do that?

Alex – *No. No, I never did. I never did and I thought I was lucky. I still think I am very lucky. Yeah very lucky.*

Ath - So, you lived very different life to your mother?

Alex – *Yes. And I only wish she was alive to come and have a look.*

Ath - And what about Argyroula?

Alex – *What about Argyroula?*

Ath - Has she had a similar life to you?

Alex – *I would think so. Unless she told otherwise but I think I better leave her to tell you herself. I think that is the best.*

Ath - Yeah. So, just the two of you here.

Alex – *Yes.*

Eva - And the sister that came here and went to Australia?

Ath - Ah, yes she had a sister that came. Which was that sister? She has died, hasn't she. Evdokia?

Alex - *Somewhere here. Katina.*

Ath - Katina. Katina came here, when she would have come here?

Alex - *'65. Maybe.*

Ath - And how long did she stay here? We find a photo after...

Alex - *A few years. Few years.*

Ath - Few years and did she do the same work?

Alex - *Yes, she was cooking.*

Ath - ...Not to worry, that is fine, we will find it afterwards.

Ath - And she came here for two years and did she get married here?

Alex - *No. No, she married in Australia.*

Ath - So, what made her leave here?

Alex - *You know when you are born your life is clung on you and maybe it was for her to be there. I don't know.*

Ath - What did she say to you? Her two sisters are here and she said I think I go to Australia.

Alex - *Yeah. She felt she will make a better life in Australia because there were a lot of Greeks and a lot of things. She met her husband over here, she went over there, and then we thought that that was over. And next thing we know he went. And they got married.*

Ath - Oh, so, she met somebody here and then she left first.

Alex - *Yeah.*

Ath - And then he went over

Eva - He was Greek?

Alex - *No. English. English man.*

Ath - So, what did she say to you when she said I am leaving?

Alex - *To make it, to go to Australia because there are a lot of Greeks over there and she feels better over there.*

Ath - So, did she miss not having the big Greek Community?

Alex – Yes.

Ath - You don't look you were very happy about that.

Alex – *No. I told her that she make a mistake but I wasn't sad about it because she thinks she make a better life she must do what she thinks better. I tell her what I thought but sooner or later I couldn't ...*

Ath - And what do you think?

Alex – *I think she make a mistake. I still think she make a mistake.*

Ath - Why is that?

Alex – *Because he left not a long after*

Ath - But she was going to Australia not to be with him. She was going to Australia for better life. Do you think that was just an excuse?

Alex – *That was that or what. I don't know. I don't really know.*

Ath - She could have stayed here and married him.

Alex – *She could stay here and married and she had a very good offer from a very nice man, which was my sister's husband Eygenia because she was [?19:25] and he was his partner. And he went madly in love with her.*

Ath - What you think she was looking for?

Ath - So, you were sad to see your sister go to Australia and she stayed there when her marriage broke up?

Alex – *I wasn't sad because to me if she says she goes for better life this is what she has to do. You just have to go along you have to accept that. But looking back I thought not I know that she made a mistake. But too late now to cry over spilt milk.*

Ath - It is interesting that all your sisters and you married non Greeks.

Alex – *Yeah. Yeah.*

Ath - Do you have any thoughts about that?

Alex – *No. Never crossed my mind. But it is true.*

Ath - So, where she went to Sydney or Melbourne?

Alex – *Melbourne.*

Ath - Melbourne and the marriage broke up. Did she marry him or did she leave with him?

Alex – *No, they married properly in a Greek church and they have two kids, beautiful young ladies. Young girls. And he ran away with an Indian woman.*

Ath - Ah, and how long after did he leave her?

Alex - *About maybe 6 years. Because the kids was only little babies.*

Ath - So, she was a single mother over there with the kids?

Alex - *Yes.*

Ath - And she didn't think to come back here that her sisters might be able to help?

Alex - *No.*

Eva - She didn't remarry?

Alex - *No. But she had an old house but quite a big piece of land. Nice big piece of land.*

Ath - So, did she find it easier to make a living in Australia?

Alex - *Yeah.*

Eva - Have you visited her?

Alex - *Yeah. Few times.*

Ath - And what she was working over there - what she was doing?

Alex - *Just looking after the kids. The social welfare I would think.*

Ath - Ah, right. Right.

Alex - *I would think.*

Ath - So, she stayed home and looked after the children.

Ath - Yeah. And then she died how long ago? How long ago did she die?

Alex - *About 5 years ago.*

Ath - And what did she die of?

Alex - *Cancer.*

Ath - She was younger than you?

Alex - *Yes.*

Ath - Yeah. So, in terms of - is there anything else you would like to tell us about your life in New Zealand?

Alex - *No. Not really. Except I am happy. Yeah. Not really.*

Ath - What stops you from going to Greece now to live?

Alex – *My kids, my little granddaughter. She is a darling little thing. They say “the child of my child is two times my own child”.*

Evaγ – My mother says that too.

Alex – *Do you have grandchildren?*

Ath – Not yet.

Alex – *Wait.*

Ath – I have to wait. I want, I know that.

Alex – *But when they will come.*

Ath – Don't worry. I know that.

Alex – *You will then realize what is a grandchild and what is you child.*

Ath – Yes, yes.

Alex – *And what does “you child” mean...*

Ath – Yes, I know that. My daughter is in Melbourne, for that I don't want her to come here before she has a babe.

Alex – *Do you want her to come here?*

Ath – Yes.

Alex – *For ever?*

Ath – If she has babies.

Alex – *Yes, but do you want her to live here?*

Ath – Yes, I want her but she doesn't want.

Alex – *Does she have a good job there?*

Ath – Yes. How do you say she is an artist?

Evang – Alex – *Painter.*

Alex – Painter. Yes.

Ath – Yes, she has been there for 11 years now.

Eva - Just because we are doing this project comparing the Greek girls who came here and some of them went to Australia like your sister and you went to visit sometimes your sister. You have been to Australia?

Alex – *Many times*

Eva - Could you – perhaps some thoughts about the life here in New Zealand and how different it is in Australia for the Greeks there? Would you have a different life if you were in Australia as a Greek?

Alex – *I would not like to go to live in Australia.*

Eva - Why is that?

Alex – *Because I learnt to be alone. I learnt to be a little bit outside and I am quite happy with that. If you know the meaning.*

Eva - So, it is good to have the Greek Community but in the same time it is good to

Alex – *To be by yourself*

Eva - To be by yourself. Is it also because you are married to a non Greek?

Alex – *No.*

Eva - No.

Alex -No. No.

Eva - Did you ever feel because you are married to a non Greek that you were not as well combined with the Greek Community?

Alex – *Never here, no.*

Alex – *Sometimes, this is at the beginning, not now, they was exclude. Husbands and wives and children of mixed marriage. And I told them many times, many times over and over and I still say now 'Look I am the one who has a foreigner husband and I have been very happy. If we can keep the Greek Community nice and strong just the Greeks. But we all know sooner or later it is not possible'. It is not possible. And as soon we realize that is my husband, he pay my annual fee or whatever and it is a good enough for him but it is not good enough for him to take a part on any other thing and it is rome and we don't like it. Now, a lot of us died, a lot of us left, a lot of the young are married to mixed marriages and I said oh well that should have been made a long time ago.*

Eva - You think that they would have attracted a lot more people in the Greek Community?

Alex – *Absolutely. And I love as long I live and beyond to have a Greek church and a Greek Community but it is not possible in Auckland. It is just not.*

Eva - Do you think the Community is dying out?

Alex – *Absolutely is dying out.*

Eva - Just on another note as you compared the life in Australia and here and how different would be, you know some of these girls who went back to Crete, have you ever had a chance to talk to them and your visits back to Crete?

Alex – *Yes.*

Eva - What did they say? About their choice to go back?

Alex – *Well, they all say they make the right choice. And I think they have because they are Greeks to Greek husbands, they managed like all of us to have a quite a number lump of money and they took it home the right time and they bought what they wanted and made life the way they wanted. The dollar at the time was very strong against the drachma. Now it is very difficult. For them it was good choice, good timing and I think, yes, they made the right.*

Eva - Have you had any chances, did anyone say I wish I had stayed in New Zealand?

Alex – *No. But they often say 'You remember' I used to work with a couple of them – 'You remember' or 'I never forget those days', 'We had a good time', 'I never forget'. Yes, they talk about it. But they made their choice I make mine and that's it. Yeah. I am happy.*

Ath - Did they take back their husbands?

Alex – *Some of them they did.*

Ath - Greek?

Alex – *Yeah.*

Eva - I did hear that there was an association of Cretan people, those Cretan who came back from New Zealand in Chania. Do you know anything about that?

Alex – *No. No. No, I don't know anything about that. No. But it makes me very sad actually to hear people say oh the Cretans they always talking for themselves. We are not talking for ourselves, it is just that because the world wants to make a history. And everywhere I go and I say I come from Crete 'Oh, but my grandfather blah blah blah', 'oh my uncle...'. Just history is made those days. It is not us.*

Eva - So, you think that history was made it easier for you as a woman from Crete to be in New Zealand because they had a positive

Alex – *Absolutely.*

Eva - Did you ever experience any discrimination?

Alex – *No.*

Eva - Because you were foreigner?

Alex – *No. No. Only once. Once. Because one of the ladies says to me 'I don't understand how you foreigners come over here with nothing and you buy a house and you make money and...And I said 'Doreen, you know what, we don't put our money in a beer bottle'.*

Eva - So, it was the work ethic?

Alex – *Yes. Only once. Only once. Never, never never again.*

Eva - You mentioned earlier on that there was a celebration of the Battle of Crete – very nice celebration.

Alex – *Beautiful celebration*

Eva - How do you feel being in New Zealand after all these years?

Alex - I cry all night I cry because I wrote half a dozen traditional folk songs and I read them.

Eva – Do you remember to tell us one?

Alex – Here they are, I wrote them down.

Evay – ‘ Do you remember any by heart?

Alex – In 1941 Germans painted Crete in blood. Then I continue, then I continue saying: “Crete was covered in blood between 1941 and 1945 but also suffered in 1960-1962 and later , when her children, us, we left. We left, I say, we left, we left but where did we go? We went to the distant New Zealand and to America, to Canada, to Australia – how many don’t cry there? Oh dear Crete, how did you cope, how did you stand letting your children going away? We all left when we were young and now we got wrinkles and now with or without your consent we have two fatherlands. “

Ath – The war had a big affect on your life.

Alex – *Yeah.*

Ath - Do you think part of your sadness is because of the war you lost your country you had to leave?

Alex – Yeah. And the emotional feelings are because every time I talk about something it is something simultaneously throws back to these days. That has a lot to do. Yeah.

Ath - Yes. I suppose the big thing about the post war migration was that so many families were split up. And families are so important to Greeks.

Alex – *Yeah. Yeah.*

Ath - Oh...thank you very much.

Alex – I want to thank you too, and as we said, when you will start the project make a dilute...

Ath - This project will be for ever, for your grandchildren and their grandchildren, for ever.

Ath – Thank you very much.

