Alexander George: Rosemary [Urbigkeit] asked me if I could review some of the history of the Greek immigrants to Missoula, Montana. I feel it would be appropriate to discuss perhaps some of the reasons why Greek immigrants became particularly interested in coming to the United States. The bulk of the Greek immigrants probably came here in the early 1900’s, probably in the period between 1900 and 1920. Greeks and the Byzantine Empire fell to the Turks in 1456. For the next several hundred years, the Greeks and Greece continued under a rather oppressive domination where there were even serious efforts to try to eliminate the Greek language. The Greeks started their War of Independence in 1821. After several years, they regained their national independence and freedom. It took many years after that period of time for the Greek nation to begin having opportunities. By the end of the century, Greece was still pretty much of a very poor country that was still trying to find its way. Accordingly, many of the young people decided to seek their opportunities in other countries.

Many will say that the best of Greece came to the United States during the early 1900 era. Most of the Greek immigrants came primarily to the large cities in the United States, especially New York and Chicago. Chicago often claimed it is the third largest Greek city in the world following Athens and Salonika. As the Greek immigrants looked to other areas, the jobs with the railroad were particularly available because of the tremendous expansion of the railroads at that time towards the west. The Greeks and Chinese were certainly some the immigrants that did much of the railroad building. From here I might continue into taking my father’s situation in coming to the United States. I feel this may be a relatively representative case.

My father, Andrew George, had four of years of school in Greece, which was probably the standard of that time. To go to school, he had to go to another village as a very young child and live with the other very young children. He, following his four years of school, he worked for short periods as an apprentice to a carpenter and also as a clerk in one of the village stores. His family had some land, but it wasn’t really sufficient to provide the dowry for the two sisters and also allow the two brothers to reasonably live. Accordingly, he had to look for other opportunities, which probably were better beyond the national boundaries of Greece.

He and a few other young children from his village decided to come to the United States in 1909, when he was 15 years old. He came with friends and he first wound up in Cincinnati where he worked for a very short period of time in a tobacco factory. In the next year, he came to Bonner, Montana where he had a cousin living. It was an older cousin that he had felt close with in Greece and it was a particular incentive to come to this area. In Bonner, he worked with the railroad section. In 1911, he moved to Missoula where he was able to go to the roundhouse which was generally considered a more desirable type work with the railroad. They were inside instead of being out in the cold weather and they probably also had better
conditions, better pay and maybe less of a problem.

As was typical with the young Greek immigrants in those days, he looked back to Greece and within a few years brought his younger brother here and he also sent sufficient money back to provide a cash dowry for one of the sisters. The other sister had the land so both of the sisters were able to marry. Unfortunately, the sister whom he sent the cash back for died in the flu epidemic of the roughly 1915-1920 era. Many arguments are made about dowry and I think it might be interesting to point out that where opportunities are virtually nonexistent, perhaps a dowry was the only way of getting started into a reasonable life. Accordingly the more confident young men were usually able to get it and some would say it was virtually necessary in the circumstances of Greece at that time and perhaps of many other far less developed countries.

My dad’s dream, like many others that came, possibly most of the others that came from Greece, was to work very hard in the new land of promise to live very modestly so that they could save money and eventually return to Greece with enough funds to start a reasonable life. In 1928, my father went back to Greece and married my mother and both returned to Missoula. During the 1930’s, they were able to build a house in Greece. Shortly after that, my sister was born and my mother and sister went to Greece to live. My father was to follow them in a few years. However, they apparently acknowledged the deteriorating conditions in Europe and felt that they should return to the United States. Obviously, war was beginning to be on the horizon. Dad went to Greece only for a few months in 1937. He helped his wife and daughter come back. On returning to Missoula, they bought a house. I was born in 1938. At that time, I feel, they were strongly committed to live here. Along with that commitment, they became citizens in the next few years. As with many other Missoula Greek immigrants, most of their life savings were sent to Greece and put in Greek banks, and were lost during WWII. Accordingly, many of the Missoula Greek immigrants virtually had to restart their financial planning during the war. After reviewing what I thought was a representative case, we might look at the Greek immigrants in Missoula generally.

Most of them came here, as in most parts of the United States, largely after the turn of the century. In the 1910’s, I have been told that Missoula had as many as 500-1000 Greek immigrants. They were primarily working on the railroad or railroad related jobs. We’ve been told that there were probably 5-10 coffee houses here. Following the Greek customary places, with a special place where the men could meet, socialize, and play cards, and just basically pass the time. This type of coffee houses was and continues to be very customary in Greece. Though now of course, it is probably more frequented by husband and wife both. It still contains the place to socialize and that way everybody can get out a little bit every day and see their friends over a cup of coffee.

The railroad used liaison people basically who were Greek immigrants, who could at least minimally communicate with the railroad official. These liaison people would then hire the Greek immigrants primarily for the section work and the track building. This way they could...
coordinate the work of the railroad with the immigrants and they would also assist the immigrants in other matters. For their services, they would receive part of the worker's pay. Although I haven’t heard of much abuse in this area of the country, often these liaison people would abuse the immigrant workers and virtually maintain them in a servitude. Since the roundhouse or the shop work was inside and did not require the famous liaison people, it was considered the preferred work. It is interesting to note that virtually all of the Greek immigrants who stayed in Missoula were working in the roundhouse. During those years, virtually all of the Greek immigrants here were bachelors and as I have mentioned before, virtually all of them worked for the railroad. They roomed together and would work very long hours of course 7 days a week. Because of their limited finances and their desires to save money to be able to make their progress, it was interesting to hear the stories about how they would room together. They had found that they could even sleep in shifts. The railroads were working 24 hours a day and accordingly the day crew could sleep at night and the night crew could sleep in the day time and that way they could get by with half as many beds. They worked very hard and they lived very modestly, but were also very thankful for the opportunities which they now had.

Interestingly, I discussed this with Rosemary, I started thinking back and it seems like a goodly number of those who had batch with my father wound up staying in Missoula. Those included his brother Jim George, Peter Pappas, Gust Datsopoulos, George Dameskos. And George Dameskos also had a brother who died long before I was born, whose name I don't remember. They all lived together in the 200 block of what used to be east Railroad Street and is now called east Alder Street. With WWI, many of the Greek immigrants returned to Greece so they could fight for the military there. Most of the other Greek immigrants in Missoula left during a major railroad strike which I believe occurred in the early 1920’s. By the late 1920’s and the 1930’s, the Greek immigrants that remained here had achieved some savings and have started looking for marriages and families. Of the group that stayed in Missoula, probably about 30 people in total, approximately third went to Greece and married the ladies from Greece, another third married here to ladies of non-Greek descent and probably another third remained bachelors. It is interesting to note, there were probably very few changes in the Missoula Greek community between 1920’s and the 1950’s. Maybe at this time I can progress to another area and discuss a little bit about the Greeks and their independent feelings and how they met the new life in the United States.

People of Greek descent tend to be very independent and want to own their own businesses. The joke is still made in Greece that the way people start, they buy a little kiosk that is probably about five or six feet in each direction and it's a little store on the sidewalk in Athens or elsewhere. They consider that much better that working for somebody else because it is their own business. I think that feeling certainly stretches with Greeks everywhere.

In Missoula, it’s interesting to note too that many preferred the stability and the opportunity of the secure job. I think this probably happened because they came here when they were extremely young and they left an area where they had no opportunities so they appreciated
the opportunities and wanted to make the best of it. Even those that stayed working with the railroad found that they started digressing into real estate and other investments and wanted to build up their independence. Real estate was certainly one of the principal interests of the Greek immigrants and especially in Missoula.

It is interesting to note that of the group that stayed in Missoula, only Peter Lambros had not started with the railroad. My understanding is that an uncle of his had brought him to Butte and he immediately started working in a candy shop there. Of the, what we might call the permanent Greek community, the ones that stayed here after the 1920's, the Caras brothers, Sam and Jim, were probably the first ones in Missoula. My father, Andrew George, and George Bravos came here at about the same time apparently about 1910. Most of the others followed in the next decade. Might be worth noting about Peter Lambros specifically, my understanding is that he might have been the first of this Missoula group in Montana. He originally went to Butte with an uncle, I believe before the turn of the century when he was extremely young, my understanding is something about five or ten years old. He lived in Butte until about 1920 when he moved to Missoula.

Looking at those who we might call the permanent Missoula Greek immigrants, I think it is appropriate to describe them in three general categories: the first category would be the Greek immigrant families where both of the parents were Greek immigrants. They were an extremely closely knit group and I think we all grew up with virtually one big family. The families were bound by their mutual religion and their language and maybe we should say, the normal immigrant difficulties with the new language and also by families of relatively similar ages. The second group is possibly the families where the Greek immigrant man married a lady of non-Greek descent. There was a separation of the two groups to some extent that was never very strong, but the separation definitely existed. I think the groups always felt very close and over a period of years as the new ladies from Greece learned a little more English and could communicate better, the groups probably got quite a bit closer. Perhaps another separation between the two that would logically follow, of the group were both were Greek immigrants, both husband and wife were Greek immigrants, they all continued belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church. Of the male immigrants who married the ladies of non-Greek descent here, virtually none of them belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church. So again there was one additional element where the two groups would not regularly get together as would happen with the duel Greek immigrant families. The third group that we can consider are probably those who remained single. Those that were brothers or cousins or other relatives of the families, tend to be very close to the Greek community. Those who did not have relatives seemed to have extremely varying levels of contact with the Greek community. One or two being very close and some being in a virtually non-existent relationship with the rest of the Greek community. Another area that I think deserves some attention here is the standards that our parents established for us. I feel the immigrant parents were tremendously appreciative of the United States and the opportunities they found here. We, their children, were constantly taught and reminded, most strongly to appreciate and respect our country and all that was available to us. We were taught and encouraged most strongly that we were Americans first.
The United States was our new land, it was the one that gave us the opportunities and it should be our very first in thought. However, we were also taught that Greece was our second land and we should respect Greece for the heritage that came from there. We were told and we were encouraged to become a part of the melting pot and I think that melting pot was something that was very strong with our parents. We should be patriotic, we should be civic minded, we should be charitably orientated, we should be good citizens. We owe the United States a lot. Our parents came here for better opportunities, we should accept those opportunities, we should accept the American ways and yet when we can contribute something Greek that maybe could be helpful that should certainly be considered to help make the melting pot better.

Education was an ultimate. Our parents came to the United States for the opportunity. They sacrifice much of their lives to build steps for us, their children, to be able to do better. I don’t think any of us children, of the Greek immigrants, knew that there was any alternative to going to college. It is interesting to note that virtually all the children of these original Greek immigrants here in Missoula graduated from college and almost all of the fellas have at least some advance degree.

Another area that I think is kind of interesting to consider here, again maybe this is my prejudiced philosophy, but as I mentioned earlier, I feel that the best of Greece came to the United States. I feel that many of these immigrants probably worked at positions that would be far below their normal abilities because they had the language barriers, they had the other immigrant problems. However, this situation probably also allowed them to excel in the work that they did. They were overqualified to be shoe shiners, or shoe repairers, or waiters in restaurants, or cooks, but on the other hand they respected the work and the opportunity and they worked very hard at it. I think because of that they were all really very successful in the work that they did.

Another area that probably played an important part was religion. In the country of Greece virtually everyone belongs to the Eastern Orthodox Church or Greek Orthodox Church as it is often referred to. In Montana a church was first started in Great Falls probably in the 1930's. Great Falls had a substantially larger Greek Orthodox community than Missoula in those years. During the 1940's and the 1950's, the priest from Great Falls would visit Missoula two or three times a year and he would provide services and we could take communion and go through the normal religious requirement and, of course, the priest was also available for baptism and funerals. I guess at that time there weren't marriages, but he would have been available. As the children grew, I think we became much more interested and the parents wanted a lot more for us in religion. The children pushed a lot, but the parents were there backing us and certainly it was with the parents helped to come through. But in 1956, we incorporated and we bought an existing church building. Interestingly, the parents were able to come up with pledges in one night to purchase the church and do some remodeling that we felt was necessary. Following that time, the priest started coming to Missoula on a more regular schedule, eventually getting up to once a month. However it was not until December 23 of

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1984, the First Greek Orthodox priest to live in Missoula arrived here. He is our current priest, Father Meletios, whose non-religious name is Peter Weber.

In discussing the type of information that was desirable here with Rosemary, we thought it might be of interest to review what I have been referring to as the permanent Greek community. We thought we could maybe review these on a family by family and individual by individual basis so that at least some information could be recorded. I’ll proceed in reviewing the names of these families that were probably here pretty much from the 1920 era though either the rest of their lives or at least for many years until about the 1950’s or more.

In reviewing them alphabetically, I might start with George and Mary Bravos. They lived in Missoula and moved from here in the late 1950’s to California. The Bravos’s has two daughters Elaine and Sappho, who have remained unmarried. They were the owners of the Grill Cafe which was located on the 100 block of west Main Street. I think for many years was one of the major restaurants in town. I remember Mr. Bravos was always particularly proud of relating the story that one of the United States presidents ate at his restaurant. The next family were Chris and Artemis Callas. Mr. Callas owned a Missoula shoe shop and a hat cleaning shop which was at 129 North Higgins. Mr. Callas predictably worked at the hat cleaning area and I think most people considered him possibly the expert in the whole region for doing perfect hat cleaning jobs. They had four children, Gus, Katherine, who is now married to Nathan Hadas, Helen, who has married Tom Cackabus, and Bill. The Gust Datsopoulos parents were Gust and Kiki Datsopoulos. He worked for the railroad and as time went on they became very involved in real estate. Their children are John and Milton. They have a daughter Demetra who is married and living in Chicago. She is married to George Abgaret. Their youngest daughter is Diamond who is now living in Boise. My parents were Andrew and Elini George. My father worked on the railroad for most of his life and also got substantially involved in real estate. There were two children in our family, my sister Georgia, who is now married to Art Hightower, and myself, Alex. John and Kiki Gogas used to have the Palace Candy Company here in Missoula along with some of their relatives. John Gogas was one of the first of the older men to die. He died so long ago that I can hardly remember him probably about 1941 or 1942. They had one child, a son, George. Peter and Demetra Lambros had three children, Helen who has married Angelo Bourlakas, Danny and George. The Lambros’s had the Park Hotel and other substantial real estate investments and I believe Mr. Lambros for virtually all his life was working very strongly in investments and businesses. Peter Lourbis had married Amelia Lourbis. They had three children, Leo, Despina, who is married to Bill Margeris, and George. Peter Lourbis was a custodian for the Wilma Theater. Peter and Athena Pappas had one daughter Katherine. He worked for the railroad and I might add is the last of the men surviving and is in his mid 90s. Sam Poulos had married Mary Poulos. They have one child, Peter. They owned the Grill Cafe with the Bravoses. I might note here that Mary Poulos and Peter Lourbis were brother and sister. They were the only ones out of these families that were related. Tom and Katherine Stamatis came to Missoula a little later than some of these other families although I do not have a precise time I would guess either the late 30’s or early 40’s. They owned the Johnson Auto Court which was on the north side of the 1300 block on west Broadway.

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Perhaps an interesting story can be related here if I can digress a little. Katherine Stamatis was of Polish descent and had married one of the Greek immigrants somewhere in the eastern part of the state apparently when she was very, very young. She was left a widow when she still a teenager. Her husband’s uncles, who were Greek immigrants, took care of her for quite some time and were very concerned in finding someone else of Greek descent for her even though she was of Polish decent herself. And yet, she was one that I think was generally thought to have been fully involved and the closest to the Greek community. Mrs. Stamatis had a son from her first marriage. His name is Peter, but I cannot remember a last name, but he was grown up before they ever came to Missoula.

A few others are probably worth looking at with this initial group of 10 families that I have mentioned. Jim Koris emigrated from Greece approximately 1950. I guess I remember his situation well because when I was in the 7th or 8th grade, he would come to class even though he was somewhat older and sit by me so that I could help translate for him, get him accustomed to some of the American language and the American schools. He married somewhat thereafter and has a family here now. Anthony Karis, who is a brother of Demetra Lambros, married Agnes Claduokas of Great Falls probably about 1950. And again, Agnes was born here in the Unites States. Tony having been born in Greece. But again, they were a little older and their children kinda follow rather closely with the other children of the immigrants here. Another family that married and moved here in the 1950's was Pete Kolokotroni who was born in the United States of Greek immigrant parents and grew up in Three Forks. He married Helen Lambros, who is not related to the Missoula Lambros family. Helen was born of Greek immigrant parents and grew up in Bozeman. Anyway, Pete and Helen were married, I would guess in the mid '50's and have lived in Missoula. Their children kinda follow more closely to some of ours and, they are probably in the age range of some of several of the immigrant children here. Later I might add that, Helen Kololotrone's parents George Lambros and Bella Lambros moved to Missoula. Another family that came here from Great Falls was Elain Karabis, who was the widow of Jim Karabis, from Great Falls. She had three children. The eldest daughter was Katherine. Katherine was married long before they came to Missoula so Katherine never lived here, but the sons Tom and Bob lived here. In fact, Mrs. Karabis probably moved here so her sons could go to the university.

The next group I'll proceed with were the families where the man was the Greek immigrant and the wives were not from Greece. It might be interesting to note here that there were no lady immigrants from Greece so we only have the Greek immigrant men in this catagory. The first ones I might mention alphabetically would be Jim and Bergim Caras. They had four children, Jim, Janet, who has married and interestingly her last name is still Cares, spelled somewhat differently from her maiden name, Irene Restat, and George. Jim's brother, Sam, and his wife had two daughters; Ethel, who is married Jerry Diettert and Grace, who is married to Ken Thomas. The Caras brothers were involved in the Garden City Floral Company and along with that they got involved quite heavily in real estate. And of course that company, as it was taken over by the children, is now Garden City Floral--Jim Caras Floral, though that has been
sold from the Caras family, and the Jim Caras Nursery. George and Treva Damaskos had three children, Deno, Georgia Riddel, now married her name is Riddel, and Frank. George Damaskos had been the manager of the Florence Laundry and Dry Cleaning. Jocko and Henrietta Lambros had no children. Jocko was the brother of Pete Lambros and he worked with Pete and was involved with Pete in some businesses. Jocko was also interested in other businesses and I often hear the story of Jocko's Gym in Missoula. He was apparently quite a popular person, especially with the college crowd. The George Patantony family had one daughter. They were often involved in restaurants and I remember one that was across from what is now Hellgate High School. It was across the street from the annex portion of the high school at that time. They subsequently also had what was called the State Cafe on north Higgins Avenue. John and Maude Pappas had no children, but they reared a nephew from Greece by the name of Mitcho. John's brother Mike married Mildred. Mike and Mildred Pappas and John and Maude Pappas had the Sunshine Candy Company here in Missoula for many, many years. It was on the east side of the 200 block of north Higgins Avenue. Peter and Eva Robbins had three children, Anna, John, and Tom. He was involved with the railroad. Bill and Ruth Syrros had two children, Bill and Carlene. Bill Syrros worked with his Uncle in the Palace Candy store and he was always thought of for his Coney islands. He apparently had the original Coney Island recipe and when he came here and started up with his uncle, John Gogas, and the relative George Clores and the Palace Candy. It became particularly popular because of the coney islands. Tom Theros had married and I do not remember his wife's name. They did not have children. He was involved in restaurants. The Jim Zakos family had many, many children and they operated Jim's Cafe which was originally in the 100 block of east Main Street and later on Alder Street.

The third group I'll progress to are the bachelors. Harry Bates worked in restaurants and invested in the stock market and really became very, very successful with his investments. John Bravos was a brother of George Bravos and he worked at the Grill Cafe. Peter Datsopoulos was a brother of Gust Datsopoulos and he had a farm on Mullan Road. Peter Drogitis had a farm near Stevensville. Jim George, my uncle, was the brother of Andrew and he owned the Missoula Shoe Shop with Chris Callas. I think he was one that had developed quite a reputation as a shoemaker. Theros Gulios lived here and yet was one of those that was not close to the community and I know very little about him. Another one, I remember the last name as Kahrimonis. He had a farm and was often called Prases which is the Greek word for leek because I understand the city he came from in Greece was noted for the leek crop. Another one that I remember by last name only was Kotchilieris. He was the uncle of Athena Pappas and I believe he worked in restaurants. George Kouris was a cousin of John Gogas and owned the Palace Candy Company with him. Gus Papanasum was related to the Callas family and he worked for the railroad during his lifetime. Nick Papantony was a brother of George Papantony and was in the restaurants with his brother. Bill Poulos was a brother of Sam Poulos and he worked at the Grill Cafe. Bill Stamatis and John Stamatis were brothers of Tom Stamatis and they had worked at restaurants and they also worked at their brother's motel.

It might be interesting to look at some of the Greek names and how they were translated into English. Although I cannot remember all of them, I will try to cover a few of them. Bravos was
Bravos in Greek so there was virtually no change there. Callas was Callugerupulos (?). Datsopoulos is substantially the same. It would have been pronounced Dat-sopoulo. My name, my last name George, was Geheal (?) which would directly translate into George. The Gogas name, I believe was Goulrus (?). The Lambros name was Lambrotholos. The Lurbis name was Lurba. The Pappases were Pappadimetrouflos (?). It is interesting to note that Pappas used as a prefix in any of the Greek names probably refers back to someone who was a priest. Pappa is the Greek word for priest. The Poulos name was shortened from Anagoupolos (?). Poulos was used as a suffix in Greek names and it basically refers to the son so it would be similar to Anderson or Johnson in adding son to the end of the Christian name. Stamatis was Sta-mat-tis in Greek. The Anthony Karis name was Canacaries. The Jim and Sam Kouris name was Caraceytuious. Some of the names were completely changed. For example, Gust Datsopoulos worked at the railroad and apparently they found that it difficult to pronounce the name Datsopoulos. Apparently most people at the railroad knew him as Gust Brown. Peter Robbin’s Greek name was Sorrobeious (?) and I have not heard how the changes occured and his optaining the name that he was using here. It is interesting to note that Scorobeious (?) generally refers to garlic. Another one that had a complete change of name was Harry Bates. His name was Greek was Attackis (?). One other one that I just thought of and had not been previously included here was Sam Johnson. His Greek name was again completely different when he came here. I know I have heard the story that nobody could pronounce his Greek name so somebody just said you are Sam Johnson and that was the name stuck with him.

The next area that I will try to cover here is to go back to these families and trace the development of the children. As I mentioned previously, I think the parents were most concerned in trying to establish a few stepping stones for my generation to be able to start a bit further up the ladder and to have the educational and other advantages that they did not have in their lifetime. I guess I can say with a lot of pride that I think the children of my generation followed the concerns and the directions of their parents’ quite adequately. It is interesting to note that virtually every one of my generation has had rather interesting positions and has typically been a state president of the association that he has worked with. Maybe I can just review some of those rather quickly.

Jim Caras and Sam Caras were two of those who started the Montana Florist Association. They were presidents of it and their sons Jim and George were presidents of it and I might note that their granddaughter Laurie, I believe is incoming president of it. Danny and George Lambros have both been state presidents of the Realtors Group. I have been president of the Montana Bar.

[End of Side A]
Progressing from there, it was interesting to note that three of the presidents of the Chamber of Commerce were George Caras, Danny Lambros, George Lambros in fact they served in a relatively short period of time. A whole series had been presidents of the Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs and symphonies and many of the other civic organizations.

Let's go back and kind of review the children and what they have done in their lifetime. Elaine Bravos, because of their family circumstances, has basically remained with her family and has worked on family investments. Sappho Bravos, and I might add both Elaine and Sappho are living in Beverly Hills, California, Sapho is involved with an insurance company apparently is a manager of sorts in their California office. Gus Callas is one of those that is substantially older than most of our group. Gus has been involved in restaurants and has also worked with the Northern Pacific Railroad. His sister, Katherine, is married and living in New Jersey. Her husband Nathan Hadis (?) has been quite heavily involved in restaurants. Helen, formerly Callas now Captavous (?), is married to Tom Captavous who was originally from Butte. He was a career man with the FBI and has retired in the last few years and is teaching at a college in New York City. Bill Callas is teaching at the high school in Havre.

Proceeding to the Datsopoulos family, John Datsopoulos has had varies jobs in international trade. He worked with Firestone at Hong Kong and in several places in Europe. He was vice-president for Black and Decker in charge of their far-east operation working out of the Philippines. He is now involved in Missoula primarily in his own company concerning importing and exporting. His sister, Demetra, is married to George Halfgaris (?), who is a lawyer in Chicago. Her younger sister Diamond was originally married to Paul Semistris (?) who was the manager of the TV station in Butte. Theirs is one of the rare marriages that did not work out and she is currently married to, I understand, a contractor in Boise. My sister, Georgia, formerly George now Hightower is married to Arthur Hightower who is the principal at Frenchtown high school. George is also rather heavily involved in real estate management. I, Alexander George, am a lawyer primarily working in the tax corporate area. George Gogas taught at the high schools here and very recently he had been the art teacher at Big Sky High School. The Lambros family Helen has married Angelo Bourlakas for quite some time they had the store here in Missoula that was called Angelo’s which originally started in a 3 way partnership between Angelo, Danny, and George Lambros. However, Danny and George left the store and started up a real estate office probably in the early 1960’s. Of course they have proceeded in, what I believe is the largest real estate office in Missoula. They are also substantially involved in real estate ownership and development.

On Danny and George it might be interesting to point out a little bit of a sidelight which I think involves not only Danny and George but myself and perhaps some of the others. Most of us went through high school and college not having normal summer jobs, but instead of that we would work for our parents in taking care of apartments. I believe that Danny and George, and possibly I, wound up with more painting experience than most of these professional painters in
As a follow up to Helen and Angelo Bourlakas, Angelo has always been involved in retailing businesses. He was originally from Indiana and had come to Montana where he was the manager of the Burr department store in Butte. He then married Helen. They had the store here for some time. As I understand it now, Angelo is a manager for the Western United States Thornby(?), a major men's suit company. The Lurbis family wound up with possibly some extra problems because Mrs. Lurbis had heart problems virtually through all of her lifetime and accordingly that put special strains on the family and the family finances especially before medical insurance was available. Accordingly both Mr. Lurbis and the younger children, Despina and George, really were working quite hard even while the children were quite young. While the father was the custodian at the Wilma, young George, who was still in his high school days, was the assistant manager of it. But George- or I should say the whole Lurbis family had a special problem when their mother died and following the death. George, again still in his high school years, took off for Great Falls to see his sister and got in a rather bad car accident. I think he found very little left here. George then proceeded, as he has related the story, with borrowed money, went to San Francisco and started in a couple of jobs and gradually developed his own company that he called Explorama that would make travel logs. He is now involved in an extremely substantial business that prepares moving travel logs and provides exclusive showings throughout the California area. His sister Despina married Bill Margeris, who is originally from Great Falls. Despina is teaching high school in Havre. Their older brother Leo, who is substantially older than the other two and possibly enough older that he -as I mentioned with Gus Callas- those two were probably enough older that they weren't fully involved in the activities that started in the group closer to my age area. Leo has had a series of varying jobs from being a country club manager to working in restaurants to working in bars and managing restaurants and bars. He is currently living in Great Falls. Peter and Athena Pappas had one daughter Katherine. She has varied in jobs from teaching to currently she is working with a young children's nursery. Peter Poulos has had various jobs, spent some time in Seattle involved in various selling positions, and currently works in Missoula. He is done quite a bit of work in connection with recording and selling some of the classic old Greek songs.

Progressing to families were there where the Greek husband and the non-Greek wife. The young Carases, Jim and George, got very substantially involved in flower businesses and they eventually each took off with their own companies as spinoffs from the old Garden City Floral that their father and uncle had established. Of course they had developed very substantial businesses of their own and had been some of the outstanding community leaders in Missoula. I do not have complete information as to their sisters. I know that Irene is now Irene Restadt (?). She is living in Billings. Janet is now Janet Karis with the new spelling and lives in Stevensville. The Sam Carases have two daughters, Ethel, who is married to Jerry Diettert, who is a cardiologist here in Missoula and Grace, who is married to Ken Thomas. Ken used to be one of the vice-principals here in Missoula and left here many years ago. He was a principal in California and I understand he has recently retired. The Damascus's eldest son, Deno, has been working with the phone company. Georgia is married and living in Billings and I understand her
husband is in investments and sales. Frank has been with one of the governmental agencies here in Missoula. The Papantony’s had a daughter who unfortunately died not too long after she was married. Mitcho Pappas who was reared by his aunt and uncle, John and Maude, here in Missoula has proceeded to obtain a doctorate degree and is teaching in Toledo, Ohio. It is interesting to note that he had three boys who are all in various stages now of becoming medical doctors. The Robbins’ children, John has been working I believe with the railroad. Tom is an insurance adjustor, and Anne is married and living in Philipsberg. The Bill Syrros children, Bill, young Bill, had been involved in restaurant work and Carleen is living in Canada. I believe that summarizes the information that I have on the children and what they are doing now and why.

The third generation is now coming along as many of the children of my generation are getting through college or recently graduating through college. After WWII, there was potentiality for another group of immigrants. As I mentioned before, George Kouris had brought his nephew, Jim, here shortly after the war and Jim eventually married Helen. They had two children and Jim has been involved in various jobs and has also gone rather heavily involved into real estate. Quite a few years later, Jim’s brother, George Kouris, same name as his uncle, came here. And George has gotten involved in restaurants and has the Zorba’s restaurant here in town.

A rather interesting case involves the Scenario of Mr. Barbouris, who had a farm in Hamilton. He had been a bachelor for many years, living in Hamilton. After WWII, went back to Greece and married his wife, Elizabeth, whose maiden name was Heftrue (?). They came and lived in Hamilton. Shortly after that, they brought Elizabeth’s brother, Jim Heftrue (?), to Hamilton. He lived there for a short period of time and then moved to Missoula where he could get better work opportunity. Jim promptly, as soon as he met the residency requirements, brought his wife and two of his daughters over and shortly after that, they had two more children. Jim Heftrue (?) then proceeded to bring virtually all of his wife’s brothers and sisters and I believe this becomes a rather substantial part of the Greek community and how it has grown. I am not sure of the exact order that they came over. I cannot remember precisely, but a brother, Nick Demonakas, Jim Heftrue’s (?) brother in law, was possibly the first one to come. He was single at the time and came here, worked hard, got married, and has a family. They lived here in Missoula for some time though they are now living in Seattle. Another brother and his whole family was brought over from Greece, Elia Demonakas. They came to Missoula and Elia was the one that started up the gyro business in Missoula. He originally started with the Greek pastry shop on, I believe it is the 500 block of west 5th street, right across from the Supersave grocery store. After that got started, when the mall was commenced he set up a second gyro business in the Southgate mall. Elia and his family have also moved from Missoula though. A sister Petru (?), sister Eva, and her husband John Koutiluis were brought over the United States and they have since had a family. They are—John has been working with the lumber mills and has also started up in the restaurant business, now has one of those as a distributer for much of the gyros meats and they currently have the Acropolis restaurant. The Petru (?) daughter as she got older married Steve Sakaresto. Steve and his brother have both worked in various jobs. Steve maintaining a job at the lumber company and getting involved in restaurant ownership.
and Deno has worked for Eddie’s bakery and also been involved in restaurant ownership. The
two brothers now currently have the Aylsois (?) restaruant on east Main Street. There have
been a few others that have also come here. I might mention for example, Effie Koehn, whose
former husband taught at the university here and met her, I believe in Ethiopia, where she was
living. She is of Greek descent. Effie moved here to Missoula. She is apparently now working
with the foreign students at the university and has certainly been an asset to the Greek
community here. Another newer family here in Missoula are Chris and Herb King. Herb King has
been a physician here in Missoula for quite some time and following the death of his first wife,
he went for a residency in anesthesiology in Salt Lake. At that time he apparently got his first
strong exposure to Greeks and eventually married the former Chris, Christine Marcos who is of
Greek descent and was originally from Cleveland. Chris and Herb are another couple that have
added much to the current Greek Community. An area that I did not discuss as we were going
through the names of people, I believe I covered the husbands of the girls, but I did not cover
the wives of the boys in our community. Maybe I can try to review some of those.

Gus Callas is married to June who is from this area. I do not know much about her background.
Bill Callas is married to Carol Hauck from the Missoula area. They have been living in Havre.
John Datsopoulos is one of those that remains a bachelor. Milt Datsopoulos has married Joan. I
cannot come up with her father’s--with her maiden name. She was originally from Havre and I
believe her father was the editor-publisher of the newspaper there. My wife is the former
Penelope Mitchell from Knoxville, Tennessee. She is one of those that is of Greek descent, both
of her parents had been Greek immigrants. George Gogas is married to Lynne, who is formerly
Herb. Her family is from the eastern part of the state. Dan Lambros is married to former Sophie
Decadious (?), who is from West Virginia. George Lambros married former Dorthea Dryngus,
who was from Spokane. Both Sophie and Dorthea are of Greek descent. Dorthea's parents
were actually second generation, Dorthea's grandparents were from Greece. Both of her
parents grew up in the United States. Leo Lurbis has been through a marriage but is divorced.
His brother George along with John Datsopoulos remain steadfast bachelors. Peter Poulos is
another one that remains a bachelor.

The methods and training and philosophies that were encouraged and built up in my
generation by our parents, I think have pretty much carried through and probably our parents
dreams have been at least to some extent reasonably fulfilled. I believe the successes in
business and in the professions among our generation have been extremely high. Divorces
have been virtually nonexistent. The civic activity and the civic responsibility, I think, have been
exceptionally high. Most of the men have served as officers in the armed services and I believe
I had previously mentioned that most have served as state officers in their professions, in their
professional organizations and also have had a high level of civic responsibility. Maybe a couple
of other areas I might point out is that, for example, in the Rotary club here in Missoula George
Caras and Dan Lambros and myself have all served as presidents. In the symphony, Sophie
Lambros and I have been president of the organization and in the women’s committee of the
symphony, Sophie Lambros, Dorthea Lambros, my wife, Peny George, and my sister, Georgia
Hightower, have all been presidents.

Alexander A. George Interview, OH 156-001, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library,
University of Montana – Missoula.
For the relatively small community that we have and the original ten closely knit families plus the ten additional families that eventually became very much a part of us and for the current, roughly seventeen families that we have, and about another twelve widows and single people, I think there has been extremely high level of civic mindedness and community responsibility. Perhaps there has been indirect encouragement and most friendly competition in much that has happened; I think that we all grew up with that friendly competition. Perhaps each of us was able to do a little more and achieve a little more, get a little more involved because of that and I think that has continued. I think at this particular point in time, getting our church fully operating and having a priest in Missoula has been virtually another revival for us and certainly in much more than just the religious sense. I think there has been an additional impetus for us to look and do and act and I think we are in a way coming back doing a little more within the Missoula Greek community. We had each gotten very busy in our professions and in our work and we had found ourselves possibly pulling somewhat apart. I think we always felt exceptionally close to each other and that has always continued, but again with the emphasis coming from our church much of the old spirit has been revived. I think it is not lessening what we are doing in the community, it is probably making it stronger in the community and it is certainly making us stronger within ourselves. Accordingly, I guess if could finish here, I tend to think that the Greek community in Missoula shall probably continue in its same way. I feel that there has been a rather effective and complete blending with the Missoula community and yet we have been able to retain our identity and our heritage and do our best to put that into the melting pot in Missoula.

[End of Interview]