

Interview with Georgia Pappas
By Vicki Alexandrou
October 6, 2002

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Georgia Pappas (she has a very thick Greek accent) is 74 years old and has been teaching the Greek School of Annunciation Church for 51 years.

VA: When did you come to the United States?

GP: I came in June of 1951. I was then 23 years old. I traveled by ship. I was the only one in my family except my sister who was already here. The boat was full of other Greek immigrants. After 15 days on the boat we arrived in New York. From there we took the train and came to Cleveland.

VA: How did you end up in Cleveland?

GP: I came to Cleveland because my sister was here and with her husband they owned a restaurant in downtown of Cleveland.

VA: Tell me about Cleveland when you first arrived?

GP: When I was not helping with the restaurant, I like to go to the West Side Market which was close to my house. I remember I was buying coconut square (pause) and I remember the Market smelled like fresh fish. Also I was going through the Old Arcade on East 6th which had different boutiques and from there I was going to the department stores. I liked so much the dresses and the coats, which in real we didn't have in Greece at the time.

VA: Have you ever visited the Cleveland Cultural Gardens?

GP: In 1996 I remember I visited the Garden because I was in charge of the Greek School of Annunciation. Our dancing group, which were the students of our school, they were asked to perform in the parade. (pause) And I remember there were many other nationalities and a lot of other people. And I think it was very good for the children to see and understand the other cultures.

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VA: How did you first hear about the Gardens?

GP: To tell you the truth, I did not hear about the Gardens until my students were asked to dance. When I was younger I had visited the Art of Museum and I took classes in the Western Reserve College but I didn't know about the Gardens.

VA: Do you feel more Greek or more American? Why?

GP: I feel both. Greek and American. I was born in Greece and I have family there. And I love the Greek history, the Greek language and the Greek civilization. That is why I teach the Greek school for 51 years. I am proud of being Greek but I love America. I live here for half of the century. My children were born here and educated and they have many, many opportunities here than in Greece.