

Maria Brousalis

	Interviewee: Maria Brousalis, Kingston, November 2nd 2017, Duration: 44:43		
	Interviewed by: George Katinas; Translation: Athina Peidou		
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Interview Time	Chronology	Place	Description
1:18		Kingston	Maria Karis Brousalis was born in the Kingston General Hospital on June 17 th , 1947.
1:38			Maria's father was born in Xylokaastro and had 6 siblings. Maria's uncle, Peter, immigrated to Canada when he was 13. While he was on the water, first world war broke out. Maria's mother was born in Canada of Greek parents coming from Diakopion, Roumeli (her father) and from Sparti (her mother). She was raised very Greek, never heard a word of English until she started school. Came from a family of 3.
2:28			Her mother's name was Anastasia Kontogiorgios (Kontos). Her father's name was Spiros but people struggled to pronounce it and they called him Frank.
3:10			At the beginning, the Greek community was very small... Karis, Zakos, Sakells... The members saw each other on name days, etc. Considered themselves cousins with each other. The community was not organized and there was no church. They attended Saint George Cathedral which was very close to the Orthodox church. They had communion there.
4:19			Her family was active in Saint George Cathedral community. Her brother participated in the choir. Her father was a Rotarian. Mother on women's aid there, kept those friends for the rest of her life, even after had a Greek community. She went to meetings in both communities
4:32			So they assimilated to the Canadian life while being respectful to their Greek past. They had a house, where her mother lived for 70 years, in the big red brick house with six bedrooms (316 Queen street), across from bakery. Opened their doors to newly arrived Greek people, giving them a place to stay, helping them find jobs, "my mom would look after them". Some other members in community helped too. Would take them to doctors, if they didn't understand English. "A lot of people passed through our house".
5:46			"We were allowed to use the chapel for Baptisms". Her sister was married in Saint George Cathedral by a Greek priest; was allowed to bring Greek priest there. The community didn't have a priest at that time. Started teaching around the time when they were trying to start a community – was 19.

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6:30			Archbishop Athenagoras came to Kingston and tried to set up a community in Kingston. Maria and her sister were in charge of the piano and the choir, archbishop gave her a book of choir music and said “here, you’re in charge of the choir”, because she could play piano. Had the choir at the Anglican Church.
7:21			For a long time there was a priest from Ottawa coming for services. 2 factions. Those who didn’t like him, and wanted a priest to come from Toronto. And those who did.
7:50			In 1950s and 1960s there were enough Greek families to make a Greek community. They didn’t like the Ottawa priest. They wanted a more modern priest. “I don’t know. I was too young to really be involved in the politics, but there were definitely always politics in the Greek community”.
8:20			Maria taught at Robert Mix-School, now Boys and Girls Club. She worked there for 8 years and 1 year at Polson Park. Her husband ran his own business. She made 3600 dollars a year as teacher. She started doing her husband’s book keeping, because her salary was so low .She intended to go back to school once her children had grown up.
9:17			<i>How did you meet your husband?</i> Her husband (Ted) was a friend of Karkoulis family in Greece. He was born in Greece and he was working in Montreal. He was invited to Karkoulis Christmas holidays. Maria was friends with Karkoulis family.
9:58			Maria was 13 years old and he was 24 years old, so nothing happened. “He was like a Greek God. I never got him out of my mind”.
10:32			Then Ted moved to Kingston, working for Karkoulis family. Things changed when Kingston became “wet” – a wet city – which meant it was changing from having no bars and liquor to sending 6 people to be trained on how to serve it. He went to Toronto for bar manager training. He worked at Lassalle hotel as bar manager. When we got married he was still there. Then moved to be bar manager at Holiday Inn. Then went on to open his own restaurant – a take-out place. Worked at the Cavalier room, The firehall restaurant (where Lonestar is now) and Poor George’s.
11:20			There was an expectation that Maria should marry a Greek man. Maria's father did not approve of Maria's husband, even though he was Greek. He didn’t think Ted would be a good husband. She and her father had no contact for 17 years. They spoke again before her father passed away. Ted encouraged her, said she would never forgive herself if she didn’t, which was true. She was stubborn and said at first, “no, he didn’t accept you, so that’s it”. When they spoke again, it was like nothing had ever happened, no time had passed. Those 17 years were hard years.
12:40			Maria's maternal grandfather immigrated to Canada in 1910 and went straight to Vancouver to work for the railway lines.

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13:14			In 1911 he moved to Ontario and met Maria (grandmother) in Branford and they stayed for 18 years in Goderich. In 1930 he moved to Ingersoll. Had a pool hall and news stand there. Yiayia lived there, even after Pappou passed away.
13:47			Maria's mother met Maria's father in Toronto. Greeks gathered there to celebrate big holidays, a lot of Greeks went to Church there. The Kingstonian Mrs. Janos's first husband (George Sakell) was Maria's father first cousin. The husband of Mrs Janos's sister matched Maria's father and mother four or five years before they got married, danced at a wedding, but nothing happened.
14:40			Four to five years later her parents met again at another wedding in Toronto, and they decided to date. He had Sundays off, so her father went to Ingersoll to see her mother every week. Took him all day to get there, then would spend a couple hours. The first time he went to take her for a drive, her Theia hopped in the car to chaperone and her mother said "get out, he's here to see me!". Happened for many weeks. October, said they should get married.
15:44			Her parents got married in Toronto on November 5th 1939. Best man was the one who matched them. Maria's sister was born on November 5th 1940.
16:20			Maria's father was a deer hunter, gave it up for two years in a row for family. Used to go for a couple weeks, no electricity, a bare camp.
17:00			He used to hunt with the Springers and Branski. They ate what he caught growing up.
18:33			Maria's mother was 16 years younger than her father. She was a very strong woman. Father's education was grade 6 in Greece. Her father taught himself English. He loved music. He used to play music and he loved reading; she doesn't remember him without a book. There is a photo of him with a mandolin. He was passionate about education.
19:17			Maria's mother wanted to be a teacher but her father (Maria's grandfather) did not want her to go to London and study, to be away from the family. When her children grew up she went to Queen's taking Early Childhood Education. She worked as a nursery school teacher only for 2 years. She just had to prove she could do it. All three kids became teachers too.
20:15			Maria's father and his brother opened the Superior restaurant by the time her father was 19 (where Megalos is now). Uncle Pete Karis had the Mayfair restaurant, which was a couple doors down. In those days, and until the 50s, restaurants served only candies and desserts. They did not serve full meals until the 50s because people ate at home.
20:55			Maria's father had an ice-cream shop at the beginning called "Superior Ice Cream", which supplied ice cream to restaurant. He and his brother Bill decided to separate businesses. Maria's father kept the ice cream shop, his brother kept the restaurant.
21:45			He sold the business to a local dairy called Hemlock park dairy and Hemlock sold all the recipes to Nelson's dairy. Maria's father's "velvet vanilla" recipe is now Nelson's "Venetian vanilla"!
22:20			Afterwards he spent time in Florida. He was semi-retired.

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23:04			<p>They had no expenses on the house. He bought their house (on Queen's street) before getting married for 4000 CAD. He paid 1000 CAD before getting married. After getting married Maria's grandfather from her mother's side (Loui) paid off the rest (3000 CAD) with the stipulation that the house was on Maria's mother name. He wanted to make sure that her mother was protected – that if anything happened, at least they had the house.</p>
24:05			<p>Maria's grandfather from her father's side (Constantinos) lived in Kingston. He was a bit remote, lived by himself. He didn't get along with his little son George. He left Greece to work in Canada and sent money to his family; he intended that they would all move to Canada but his wife did not want to come. He went back and visited once, but otherwise was always living alone. Uncle George immigrated to Canada when he was 24.</p>
25:22			<p>His family stayed in Greece. His sons and wife lived in Greece. His children grew up in Greece and later they also moved to Canada.</p>
25:50			<p>Maria's uncle, Timoleon, and two aunts stayed in Greece. The other brother Athanasios immigrated to Canada, stayed in Bellville, and then moved to Chicago.</p>
26:20			<p>On her mother's side, the grandparents were named Ilias (grandfather) and Nicoletta (grandmother) Kontogiorgos. Maria knew them well. They always wanted to go back to Greece, and had the intention to go back after he'd made money. It never happened.</p>
26:35			<p>They worked and sent money back to Greece. They made their life here. Her grandmother didn't speak any English at all – knew how to say a few things when going to the grocery store. Grandfather always teased that he married for money and was still waiting for it.</p>
28:00			<p>Hardworking people. They lost a lot of money in the Depression. They had a store and they bought apartments and rented them out. Pappou died at 67 years old but Yiayia lived until 88.</p>
28:50			<p>Greeks didn't confront any ethnic conflict, although they had to change their names taking English names (e.g. Constantinos-Dennis). But Maria kept her name and didn't change it to Mary.</p>
30:05			<p>Maria had a tutor (Chris Caracostas was a Queen's student coming from Greece) in their house to teach her Greek as there was not any Greek school at this time.</p>
30:40			<p>Maria was not allowed to go to school dances and sleepovers unless it was someone her parents knew, as opposed to her brother who was allowed to go everywhere. "He got away with a lot of stuff". Resented this a little bit.</p>
31:15			<p>Maria considers herself Canadian-Greek not Greek-Canadian (more Canadian than Greek). She loved Greek music. Her daughter is more Greek than Maria. Maria's husband spoke only Greek to her daughter.</p>
32:00			<p>Maria's daughter (Christina) was expelled from Greek School as she argued with Professor Malakopidis over an essay they had to write, because she wrote about the Greek-Turkish war from both sides.</p>

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32:54			Christina is a lawyer and lives in Toronto, and Maria's son Vasilis is a mechanic, and for the last 17 years he moved to BC and then moved back to Kingston when his father was not very well. He wanted to be here. He loves gardening and runs a hydroponic shop.
33:54			Ted spoke Greek to Christina. Christina spoke English with her brother Vasili. Christina speaks Greek fluently. Vasilis understands Greek and is proud to be Greek.
35:20			Feels that the situation of being ethnically different in Canada has changed for the better. When Maria was young she couldn't speak Greek when she was out of the home. Nowadays there are many ethnic groups and everyone feels proud.
36:10			Things got even better when the community got organized. Beforehand, was not necessarily proud nor <i>not</i> proud to be Greek. "It was just there". Now, she finds that people embrace it more.
36:42			<i>How do you see the future of Hellenism in Canada?</i> Some people struggle to keep the ethnic identity. Greeks are not a visible minority, so it's different for us. Easier to assimilate ourselves – also because we came earlier. Even some of my generation was getting away from being Greek. In my generation, if you married someone who wasn't Greek it meant you were getting away from the Church and community.
37:35			Nowadays people try to embrace and maintain their identity. But Maria doesn't know if this can happen after couple generations. People trying to assimilate their identities with Canadian culture – Greeks not as close knit as other ethnic minorities might be because of their ability to easily assimilate.
38:45			<i>How do you see the next ten-twenty years?</i> Greek community lacks youth. The Greek community is not part of the new generation's everyday life. They spread themselves out among other things. We are not getting many immigrants now. It's all generations of children of immigrants. So it is different.
39:52			Greeks that immigrate now speak English fluently and they can afford their cost-expenses. So they don't feel the need to get close to the Greek community – they don't rely on it. Newer immigrants have different circumstances too – such as reasons for immigrating, and financial situations. People used to come with absolutely nothing and would rely heavily on being part of the Greek community.
41:12			<i>Church used to be the center of community life...</i> Community is an asset to get the young people out. When it comes to the community and the church, everything depends on the priest. Our past priest, Drakos, is now in Mississauga and it is teeming with people, because he "makes it accessible".
41:30			If the priest is modern and close to the youth, then teens and youth follow the Greek church.

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42:30			<p><i>What skills should a priest serving the Greek community possess?</i></p> <p>He should let you know, above all, that he is a person like you are. A priest of a Greek orthodox church should represent the religious life and talk to people. They should be accessible and not judgmental. Example of her son speaking to Drakos: they could speak “man to man”, but her son recognized that there was something else that Drakos was offering beyond what his friends could. Represent a religious life, but also be a person <i>first</i>.</p> <p>Most people get away from church. All the children are baptized but they don't go every week to church.</p>
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