

Joanna Gusta

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Interviewer: Emily Hilliard

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Joanna Gusta (November 13, 1931-March 9, 2020) was a Wheeling, WV native and elder in Wheeling's Greek community. She was an alumni of Bethany College a member of St. John, The Divine Greek Orthodox Church. In this interview, she speaks about her memories of the Greek community in Wheeling, and the Wheeling immigrant community in general. Her obituary is pasted below.

Joanna Gusta, 88, resident of Wheeling, WV, passed away Monday, March 9, 2020 at Good Shepherd Nursing Home.

She was born in Wheeling on November 13, 1931, daughter of the late Gero and Helen Papazoglou Gusta George. After her father's passing, Joanna and her mother resided with the John Anast family in Wheeling until Mrs. Gusta's marriage to Mike George.

Joanna was a graduate of Bethany College and a member of Zeta Tau Alpha, Theta Chapter. She retired in 1988 with 30 years of service with the WV Department of Occupation working in the Employment Security and Unemployment Compensation Department. Prior to her employment with the State of WV, Joanna was employed at Bloch Brothers Tobacco Company in the Export Department. She was a member of St. John, The Divine Greek Orthodox Church where she was a longtime member and former director of the church choir and was a volunteer for church activities. She was a member of the Wheeling Civic Garden Center and a volunteer for the tax preparation group at the Ohio County Library. Most of all, Joanna was a beloved neighbor and friend.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her stepfather, Mike George. Surviving are two cousins, Rev. and Mrs. Stephan Knight of Santee, CA and Desi Gallmeister of Los Gatos, CA.

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JG: Joanna Gusta

EH: Emily Hilliard

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JG: And it wasn't, and they didn't have hockey (laughs) and they didn't have all these extra things.

EH: Sports, yeah.

JG: You know and now children go to dancing school and they go to hockey, yeah whatever you want.

EH: Okay. Well could you just introduce yourself and tell me where you're from and when you were born?

JG: Okay, I'm here, I was born here in Wheeling, WV, November the 13th, 1931. My parents came from Antalya in Turkey and they came because at that time the Turkish government put out all the Greeks. They told them you have to go to Greece. They had that--the countries--the people there got along, it was the governments that didn't get along. So they went to Greece, well Greece is a poor country. They didn't want any more refugees coming in like today and but my mother did say that the Red Cross was very helpful. If it wasn't for the Red Cross they probably all would have starved. And the Japanese, the interesting thing too was, the British went, when the Greeks had to leave Turkey there were British ships in the area but they didn't help the refugees. There was a Japanese warship and they're the ones that helped take all these Greek immigrants to Greece, which is little known. You know, whatever they told me, I'm repeating. Whether it's authentic or not, I don't know.

So when they got to Greece, how they got to Wheeling, West Virginia, I have no idea. But thank God they got here. They came through Ellis Island, they came to Wheeling, there was work here. Even on the railroads, they were recruiting people to complete the railroad. The intercontinental railroad out in North Dakota. Many of the Greeks didn't have any crafts or anything, so what did they do? They worked in the mines--coal mines, or steel mills, or opened up little food places--a hot dog stand. I mean how much culinary preparation do you need to cook a hot dog? You know. So anyway, but they did work. That was the interesting thing. And the interesting thing was they knew that they were here and they made the best of it. They were not here to overthrow the country, and they did keep their customs and traditions. The first thing they looked for was their church. Because they knew that when they went to church that they would see other people there who were Greek or Croatian or Polish or whatever. And they would get together and help each other. And that's the way it was. Now, they lived usually in neighborhoods of the same kind. When I grew up, we lived next to a Lebanese family, across the street was like a Spanish family, Jewish family--I mean it was like United Nations! We all played together. We never went off our block! We never were allowed to go up the street to the other place. And the mothers stayed home. They watched the kids and if your mother saw me misbehave, she would tell my mother. And she wouldn't say, "Oh no, my child wouldn't do that." No, no, no. She would get--I mean, we would get it, you know. And they were protected themselves that way. They very willingly helped each other with the language, they went to school to get their citizenship--to the doctor. I would say that some of the babies were born at home. Only because they didn't get a chance to go to the hospital. And in those days, you didn't go to a

doctor--only if you had a broken leg or an arm or something like that. But it was very different, very protective.

EH: Was the house you grew up in in central Wheeling?

JG: I'm sorry what?

EH: Was the house you grew up in in central Wheeling?

04:28

JG: Yeah, in center Wheeling, yes. And in fact, I'll show you where the Greek church is. You have time?

EH: I've seen that, yeah.

JG: I'll show you the neighborhood.

EH: Great!

JG: And we had a restaurant down there, operated by a Greek, and the man had a large nose. And we all spoke Greek. The kids went to Greek school. And we went to American school too, so anyway. This man's name was George, but they called him "Nosey." And in Greek it's mitirah (sp?) "myti" is nose. And so anyway, he would make yogurt in these thick glasses, you know those thick-bottom glasses? And they sent me up there to get yeast. Well, not yeast, starter for yogurt. You need a starter. Okay, so I went there and I was polite and I said, "Gidia (mister) mytirah (sp?),"-- Mister Nosey, in Greek! Not a good thing, but the man didn't say anything. He gave me a glass of yogurt and I took it home. And I found out that was not a very complimentary thing to say. But it wasn't--it was done oh, in excusably. That's the only word I can say. But the kids all played together. We had kids of every nationality, our mothers were good to each other. They gave us food and that's where we learned food from everybody else. Like Lebanese, you know, like kibbeh and oh, other foods. And we had black people in the neighborhood. You know? I mean everybody tied to help each other. That doesn't mean we were all perfect. But there was a sense of community helping each other because we were all immigrants. Our parents were immigrants. You know, and every neighborhood, it was interesting. Mister Sean Duffy [librarian] does neighborhoods here. And looking back at those neighborhoods, if you go to center Wheeling, south Wheeling, north Wheeling, Norwood, every neighborhood had a pharmacy, every neighborhood had a grocery store. Every neighborhood had an ice cream shop or something. And you lived in your neighborhood. You didn't have transportation if you wanted to go to town, you walked to town! You didn't get in your car. Now you don't even know your neighbor! You don't know your neighbor, 'cause everybody gets in their car, they go to work, they come back and they sit in their air conditioned house. Why should they go out? But in those days, people would walk. And it's funny. Did you talk to any Lebanese people?

EH: Yeah, I spoke with Carol Dougherty.

JG: Yes, okay. She's good. Carol's good. She knows.

EH: And Nick Gha--

JG: Ghaphery? Good! Okay. You're talking to good people. Yeah. I know them real well and Carol's grandmother in those days, there were 3 ladies that lived in the same neighborhood and they would walk uptown, you know, from 26th street up to wherever they were going. And I'll show you the neighborhood. It's all gone now. But anyway, in those days, they didn't smoke, but Carol's grandmother would walk--they'd walk up the street you know, these ladies, and she'd walk with her cigarette behind (laughs)

EH: (laughs)

JG: I mean everybody knew she smoked! You know, but she was respectful! (laughs) But yeah, Carol is a good person. She knows, and in fact, I was talking to Carol last week and we were talking about their Lebanese picnic, August the 15th. If you're up in this area, you have to come to the Mahrajan.

EH: I'm hoping to.

08:39

JG: August, yeah. Anyway, and they had, Mr. Simon was a barber, but Mr. Simon was a butcher--meat cutter, I guess they call 'em in these days. But anyway, they're up in Site 1 [in Oglebay Park where the Mahrajan event is held]. Site 1 didn't have any bathroom facilities and they didn't have any stove facilities or refrigeration. Now you're talking back in the 40s. Okay, so what they would do--they had lamb, and they'd hang 'em up (laughs) and he would cut the meat and make shish kabob, over a fire.

EH: She told me!

JG: Over a fire! No gas, over these wooden fires, you know? And the flies--there was no Health Department, nobody got sick in those days, you know? And if you wanted to go to the restroom, the restroom was over the hill. So it was a lot of fun.

EH: And that was at Oglebay.

JG: Oglebay, yeah. Site 1. Yeah, have you been to Oglebay?

EH: Not yet.

JG: You should! I'll be glad to show you around! It is great up there. It has a lot of memories. But you know, that's the way things were. And then of course after the war, people were in better shape, they had more money in their pocket, better jobs. And then of course they started to move away from the neighborhoods. Everybody wanted--they didn't want to live in the city anymore, so they went outside. And that's when the neighborhoods I think kind of changed for the better or for the worse. Because now you go to work, you have children, you leave them there. There's nobody there. If your child gets sick, she can't go to the neighbor--the neighbor's working! Mom's working, dad's working. You know, and it's that type of thing. We have lost that. Same way with church. I bet you every mother would take her little darlings forcefully to church or to Sunday school and like it or not, they

had to be there on Sunday. 'Course they didn't have everything open at that time. They had liquor laws and stuff like that. But it wasn't a perfect world, but when you're a kid, everything's fun.

EH: (laughs) So what did your parents do?

JG: My parents, well my father passed away when I was young and so my mother and I lived with people that were my father was a godparent to these children, so we lived together and then my mother remarried 8 years later. But we grew up like sisters, you know? And he had a restaurant and it wasn't a fancy place. It was called Mike's Spaghetti House. Everybody had a spaghetti house, you know? (laughs)

EH: Was he Italian?

JG: No, Greek.

EH: Okay.

JG: Greek, yeah. But anyway, and on that street, across the street was another spaghetti house--Pete's Spaghetti House. And you know, people would--and then we had Webster's School which is no longer there. It's on 26th street, and the teachers would come down, lunch time, and he would treat them well, and they'd get away from the kids and everything. And in fact, when urban renewal took over our property, they bought him a watch as a farewell gift, which was real sweet of them to do that, yeah. But I mean people were kind to each other. That doesn't mean that they're not kind now. You just don't have that opportunity. Everybody's in their own little sphere.

EH: And so urban renewal-- was that for the highway or was that for...

JG: No, that was to--the properties...I think it was, let's see, 19...I think 1963. It was properties that people let deteriorate and the city got money from the government and they were gonna build, bring in new business. So what did they do? They displaced all these people and what did they do? Very little. I'll take you down there to center Wheeling. I'll tell you what was nice. The Market House. Have you been to Center Market?

EH: Yeah, mmhm.

JG: Very nice. When I was a kid all the farmers would come in Saturday and they would sell their produce and then they had these large jars. They weren't jars. They were big things that had lemonade in 'em?

EH: Like a crock?

JG: You probably don't see 'em anymore. Huh?

EH: Like a crock of lemonade?

JG: Yeah, yeah. Clear. I mean, real, like a 5-gallon thing. And then you would go there and they would ladle out a cup for you. And it was real nice. And then at the end of the night, the farmers didn't want to take their stuff home, so they would reduce the price. Jebbia's down on 26th street--

their grandfather had a stand in the Market House. Center Market and in those days, there was a restaurant there where Pappas Beef House is now, and people would exchange things. You know, like the restaurant man would go to Mr. Jebbia and say, I need a basket of tomatoes. Well they didn't sign any bills, you know. They said okay, how much are you gonna sell it for? 5 dollars. They didn't have any bills. They just did it verbally, you know. Everybody, well they were honest people there. I mean of course they wanted to make money, but that's the way things were. Oh, you had a few bad experiences, but there's always bad people! (laughs)

EH: Yeah. (laughs)

JG: Crooks! But you know, even at that, even at that, there were--I don't remember any robberies or anything like that. The only problem might have been liquor. You know, they weren't allowed to sell liquor. And a few places, social clubs, you know. They sold liquor and beer. But people usually went out at night and bought an ice cream cone. Did you ever hear or Sarris' candy up in Canonsburg?

EH: No.

15:16

JG: Okay. If you're up in that area, going up to Pittsburgh, Sarris' candy. They make wonderful candy.

EH: It's still there?

JG: Yeah, it's still there and they make wonderful Easter candy. Their chocolate is really, really good. You know chocolate, the cheap stuff, they put a lot of wax in it. But the good stuff is all chocolate. Well when we were up there to Canonsburg Greek Festival--see, everybody likes to go to Greek festivals to see what the other guy is doing. So anyway, when we went there, we always stopped at Sarris' candy and we got ice cream. I don't buy ice cream. We used to have Isley's (sp?) Ice Cream, we had a big skyscraper for a quarter or something. Well anyway, these people were charging 3 dollars for a cone. Is that normal these days? I don't know.

EH: That's a little pricey.

JG: Dairy Queen, I don't know what Dairy Queen charges.

EH: Probably about \$2.

JG: Well Dairy Queen is all air anyway. I mean (laughs) they puff it with air and then in two minutes it goes flat. But there's a lot of stuff that isn't around anymore. It's artificial, it's artificial. Cars, nobody had a car. Very few people had cars. And in fact and I don't know how they got their licenses because they couldn't read! I don't know (laughs) how--I don't know they got their licenses! And very few--and cars were very expensive too. But they used bus transportation or--telephones. Many people did not have telephones, so if you had a telephone you either had a party line and there were other people on the party line, or if you had a telephone they would call you and you would be asked to give to a message to a lady 2 houses down.

EH: Ah yeah.

JG: So who did they send? The kids. "Go tell, go tell Aunt So and So to call." You know. But life was very, I mean life is more comfortable now but it doesn't have that I want to call it kindness because I don't know what else to call it. Or relationship. A kind relationship. It doesn't mean people are not kind but they're just too busy going to work, coming home, taking care of the kids, taking 'em to hockey, taking 'em to ballet school. You know, all that. All that extracurricular activity. Baseball, these traveling baseball teams and everything you know. But they were more family oriented in those days because they didn't have any money. It's as simple as that. And they didn't have any transportation either. Yeah.

18:18

EH: So what did you do after you graduated from high school?

JG: Well, I went to Bethany College and then when I worked out I worked for Bloch Brothers Tobacco Company in the export department. That was really interesting. And then after that I worked for the West Virginia Dept. of Employment Security, commonly known as the unemployment office. And I worked with the public and when you work with the public you really learn a lot. It was very interesting. It was very interesting, yeah. So that's my story.

EH: And so you've always been a part of the Greek community here.

JG: Oh, yeah! Oh yeah. They're getting ready now for their festival if you're up here July 27, stop in.

EH: I'm hoping to!

JG: You will?

EH: I hope so!

JG: Yeah! Bark again! Or if you're up in Weirton, Weirton has their festival July the 7th. And then if you're here July--the week before the Greek Festival is the Italian Festival.

EH: Wow.

JG: And these are all really nice if you like food. You know, you walk down the street... (laughs) I mean, it's real and people go to that because they like to go out and see people that they don't see all year. And in fact they had a really nice festival this past weekend. They call it Heritage Arts and Arts and Crafts down at the river. And it was for children! You know, they let 'em draw and do all kinds and then they had family crests--they had something set up, a computer set up and if you tell them your last name they would find a coat of arms for you. But they're all made up! (laughs) They didn't have coat of arms in those days, you know. They just refigured them a little bit you know.

EH: Well, what do you remember of people in the community, the Greek community for musicians or dancers?

JG: Famous people?

EH: No, no, just in the Greek community here in Wheeling. Were there traditional Greek dancers and musicians?

JG: Oh, okay, yeah they used to have, they used to have coffee houses and it was like a bar. You know, like the men go to bars now--they don't go to drink. They go for conversation. They used to have coffee houses and they would serve, we call it Turkish coffee.

EH: That's what Carol told me her grandfather had.

JG: Now some people get mad because the Greeks and the Turks are enemies, but I call it Turkish. My parents came from Turkey! But anyway, they were in little demi tasse cups and the interesting part, yeah, that's another thing too. The ladies were home, they washed on Monday, they hung their clothes out, they ironed, they cleaned house, but at 4 o'clock or 5 o'clock in the afternoon they'd clean up their kids, you know the kids would go out and play, and then they would sit outside of their place. Usually they had a bench or something or chairs or under a tree in the city, and they would make Turkish coffee. And then they would turn 'em over. Now, and they would tell fortunes, "Oh you're gonna get a letter." Well everybody gets a letter! "Oh, you're gonna meet, oh I see a stranger coming to your house." Sure you see a stranger coming to my house! You know! They would make up stuff. I mean, you don't believe that stuff. And that's the way they entertained themselves. Or those people who could read would get the funny papers and they would tell all the story of Tarzan. They loved Tarzan and they loved those kind of comic strip characters. But that was fun. We had--okay, you want to go off the record?

EH: Do you want me to stop this?

JG: Huh? Stop the...

EH: Do you want me to stop this?

JG: Yeah.

EH: Okay.

JG: Okay.

22:39

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EH: Okay, so what's the Greek community like now?

JG: The Greek community, I've seen a big change. The new guard is on. The old guard is gone. These are professional people, have young children, most are--we have a renewal. We have a process (?) for girls. And those children are bringing, you know, girls like to get together. And they like to be part of a group. So this is what we have now. So you have couples that have younger children now that with the new priest and his daughter who is very good, very talented at singing, she's 12 years old. I think we're seeing a renaissance of the community spirit and so forth and it's nice to know as the old ones fade away that there are new people coming in to take over the charge. Of course, they're not very good with money! (laughs) Of course, the church is always asking for money which is true of any church, give, give, give. But I think it's okay. They will survive. Most of the people that we have now are professional people. You don't see many coal miners, 'cause there aren't any coal mines or anything like that. A lot of, we have a lot of teachers, a lot of educational people. Not many restaurants any more, just a few. And the whole face has changed.

Now where it's gonna end up, 'course I don't know. But at least we're in the race. We had, we celebrated our 100th year. And that's the book that they put out. We're one of the oldest congregations in the country. And it was really nice. Do you know Bill? Well you don't know Bill Patropolis (sp?), but his grandfather, Bill is an attorney here in town and his grandfather was one of the leading people setting up the church in 1913. But you know, we have a lot of good people. And a lot of 'em work hard. Although, our priest is a new priest. When I say new, the older priest we had had come from Greece, knew very little English, very little about American culture and they were through a transition period. So now we're getting to the second generation of priests and they, believe it or not, they're going back to the old time. They wear their robes and they grow beards! Well the old timers had beards and they wore their robes, then they got away from that. They didn't want to be known as different people. And now the new generation of priests are going back to the old style. And so I think it's good. Anything new is old, that old saying, you know. So they go through a transition. I think it's good because they had done the liturgies in Greek very few people today know Greek, understand it, so they had to go with English. Now the Antiochian branch of Orthodoxy I think in my opinion has been very good in translating the liturgy into English and so now our, the Greek Orthodox is now very, very good at having services in English.

EH: Okay.

JG: Because the people can follow. Naturally if you go to a church and you don't know what they're saying, it doesn't have very much meaning but they do now and it's very good. And they're very meaningful. They have and I think they're going back to the old way of doing things which is okay. You know, the funny part is we have a lot of what do you call people who are in one religion and come into another?

EH: Converts.

JG: Converts! I can't believe it, I don't know why! I don't understand it. I said, well why did you convert? "Well, I studied it and did that," well we didn't study it, our parents grabbed us and took us to church. We didn't study! But they study!

EH: Are they Greek?

JG: No, they're not Greek! They're not Greek--that's the interesting part. And these are people who are well-educated. And in fact, we have, we've had a lot of converts recently, and none of 'em are Greeks! None of 'em are Greeks. So that says something for the religion.

EH: It seems that other ethnic communities are struggling with dwindling population and an aging population...

JG: Yes, yes.

EH: ...why do you think the Greeks have had this renaissance?

JG: Well, I don't know, but you're right. I know the Polish people, they had St. Ladislaus and they had to give it up. Well the Roman Catholics are shrinking. They don't have enough priests. And the Polish population is shrinking. They don't have any new people coming in. They are no jobs for them to come in, why should they come in?

EH: Right.

JG: And the older generation is ill and passing away and eventually, and the Catholics are going through that too. They're closing their churches and I don't know about the Catholics, maybe they're going to... Oh! I'll tell you what. That people I think in my estimation are going to churches that don't have any ah--they're sort of like free stuff, like oh, that Three C's Community Church--do you know them?

EH: No.

JG: They don't have all of this stuff (laughs). It's not structured. It's more like a hootenanny stuff, you know what I mean.

EH: So it's not cultural?

07:03

JG: Everybody...huh?

EH: You mean it's not cultural?

JG: It's...well, it's just--they get up and read the Bible and they give a sermon and they sing but they don't have any Bishops and they don't have any structure that way. Hierarchy.

EH: Okay.

JG: They do what they want to do. 5 people get together, we're gonna have a church. And they do what they want to do. They don't have to follow what the Bishop says or the Pope says or anything like that. The only church that's in good shape now is St. Michael's, the Catholic church. They still maintain their membership. Lutherans, Lutherans are combining. They're in bad shape. I'm saying. Methodists.

EH: Is the Lutheran church still tied up with the German community here?

JG: There isn't any German community, really. They were at one time.

EH: Yeah, I saw the In Wheeling article, where that was the largest population.

JG: Right, right! And in fact, Memorial Day they had a group the German singers that were in Pittsburgh. I don't know if you got one of those books or not, but they had a convention in Pittsburgh, the German Singing Society from Akron and Canton and they stopped here. And what they do is they sing like folk songs and they dress up in their costumes. You know, very very good. But see they had a strong German population here in 1916 but see then the first World War kinda made people not like the Germans. And my, we had a bakery it's called Feaster's (sp?) Bakery. Germans do good pastries and I always get my birthday cake from Mrs. Feaster and she'd always spell my name J-O-H-A-N-N-A, and my name doesn't have an H. But that's the way she was. You know. But Germans are not, and Italian, we have a large Italian community here. very large and with the Italian Festival, everybody's proud. Now you have a resurgence of everybody wants to be Greek. You know. That type of thing.

EH: And Feaster's is no longer?

JG: What's that?

EH: Feaster's Bakery is not around?

JG: No, no, oh no. And during the war, you know people got mad. Well you know, it's like you're not responsible--what nationality are you?

EH: Mixed--Belgian, French, English, Scottish, Irish.

JG: Oh, okay.

EH: But my mom's side is Belgian, French, and some German.

JG: Okay.

EH: It's all over. There's Jewish.

JG: Well you don't have any...

EH: But Belgian is what I feel most tied to because...

JG: Is that right?

EH: My grandmother grew up--her parents both spoke Flemish.

JG: Oh, I'll tell you who I think. I think Belgians--I don't know any Belgians, you're the first one I know. But I think they're sort of classy. (laughs)

EH: (laughs)

JG: I do! I'm not saying it for you!

EH: Well they're clean! They are extremely clean.

JG: Yeah. Yeah!

EH: And when I went over there I understood my grandmother so much better because when it rains, the women out there scrub the streets. (laughs) It is an incredibly clean country.

JG: Well, yeah. Belgians, and I think Austrians. I love Austria. They're sort of the high type. I like Germans because I think they're organized. Greeks are not organized.

EH: (laughs)

JG: Always late. You have Greek time. If you say 6 o'clock, they don't get there 'til 6:30, you know, Greek time, and then Germany, I like Germans because they're organized, they're smart, and they make good stuff. When you buy German--scissors and stuff like that.

EH: Cars. Except for the Volkswagen....

JG: Cars, yeah, I like...Yeah

EH: ...lie. (laughs)

JG: Oh I love that, the BMW and the oh, that's great. But I don't have any experiences with any Belgians. What do they make? They don't make much.

EH: Well, apparently in Charleston they worked in the glass factory. But my great-grandfather worked for Studebaker. So basically he--they were either gonna go the Congo, The Belgian Congo and my great-grandmother said, "If you go, I'm not going with you." (laughs) so they came to the U.S. instead. So I guess there was glass workers, you know there's lace makers, but...

JG: Yeah, well you don't hear too much about...

EH: Just a small, it's such a small country.

JG: Well, you don't hear too much about Belgium. They didn't come here!

EH: No, not really.

JG: I mean they had no reason to come here, I mean.

EH: A few.

JG: They were fairly stable, but you take. I mean I don't know, but from what you...

EH: I think after WWI was difficult.

JG: Was it?

EH: Yeah. Well WWII they were invaded by the Germans.

JG: Now they have a king and queen?

EH: Yeah.

JG: Yeah, okay. They and the Netherlands. You don't hear much about them. The Swiss, you don't hear much about them. Whose Garrison Keillor?

EH: He's Lutheran...

JG: He's Norwegian.

EH: Oh yeah, he's Scandinavian.

JG: Scandinavian! Oh, yeah. He talks about his people. But see those countries that you mentioned, they didn't, well I'm saying I don't know. They didn't have difficult times, they didn't have revolutions, they didn't have people coming in like Alsace-Lorraine, one day France comes in their French, the next day the Germans come in, their German, and they're in the same spot! You know, who are they! You know, and but the Belgians, I've never met any Belgians.

EH: But yeah, they are divided with the Flemish and the French.

JG: Yeah, now what is Flemish? The old, old...

EH: So Flemish is sort of a Dutch dialect but and I, apparently my Grandmother's Flemish is very antiquated so when she goes back, you know, it's kind of a language caught in time because she learned from her parents who came over in the 20s. So she has all this antiquated slang, and so you know. So people laugh at her and I heard lately they're moving more towards Dutch, so they're losing the Flemish dialect. But it's a Dutch derivative. She can understand some Dutch and also some German. But then there's the French side of Belgium too which you hear a little bit more of because I think there's maybe a class hierarchy there. So anyway...

JG: Well you know, I love history and I love languages and I love names. And during tax time, we're down here in that big room and we help people do their income tax. I'm the Walmart greeter. I'm not computer literate, my friends have all deserted me. I say, well you know, I wanna go buy a computer. I don't have a computer--I have to rely on my friend. But anyway when people come in, I say, you don't have to answer if you don't want to, but what nationality are you? And they're very willing to tell me. And I just love it. "-ski" is usually Polish.

EH: Right.

15:06

JG: Polinski. Now if you see an Armenian name, it's -ian.

EH: Okay.

JG: The Kardashians

EH: Yep, mmhm.

JG: Armenian. Yeah. Italian, usually the vowels- a, e, i, o, u. Bertelli, e (laughs) But I don't know any Belgium names. What are Belgian names?

EH: Well, they were Van Goey's, so there's a lot of Van and it's Van Goey is G-O-E-Y.

JG: Oh. Van or... okay.

EH: Van, so it's very similar to Dutch. There's a lot of Van--German Vans or Dutch Vans.

JG: Okay, my friend is Van Beneden.

EH: Okay, yeah. Mmhm.

JG: Okay now if you were German, it would be Von, wouldn't it?

EH: Mmhm.

JG: Yeah, okay, she did tell me that.

EH: And they'll be a lot of vowels together like Boer, B-O-E-R or B-O-O-R--that kind of a Dutch spelling. But they were also Felixes but that was a Latin name they had some Spanish heritage, but they were Belgian Felix [actually French].

JG: What religion would they be?

EH: They were Catholic.

JG: Catholic.

EH: My family was Catholic.

16:24

JG: Okay. We never had any here!

EH: There was a Belgian Club in Mishawaka and South Bend where I'm from.

JG: You know there's somebody else here from South Bend, Indiana.

EH: Really?

JG: Yeah!

EH: Huh!

JG: And she belongs to our church!

EH: Whoa!

JG: Her name is Lawrence. Paula Lawrence.

EH: Is she Greek?

JG: Yeah! Yeah. Lawrence is her married name. She had a Greek name. Markus I think Markus, Makris (sp?) you know, those are usually--you can usually tell. A lot of people if they had a long name, people couldn't pronounce it and they couldn't spell it, so if you had a long name like Pappadopolous, you know "How do you spell it?" And then they would cut it to Pappas.

EH: Yeah.

17:24

JG: And I'm sure a lot of other things. That's what I like about names, you know. German names, I don't know much of Schmitt. My cousin married a Galmeister. I know Galmeister could be either Jewish or German. Yeah, he was German I think. Yeah. Jewish names is usually Goldstein, Silverstein (laughs). Hey, I don't mean to take over your conversation.

EH: Well maybe... one other thing...

JG: But I enjoy--I love, I could talk all day. And I hope I didn't bend your ear.

EH: Oh no, I love it, I love it.

JG: But you did say something on your message. You used the word on there and I can't remember...

EH: "tradition bearer"?

JG: No.

EH: "elder"?

JG: No, it wasn't elder, it was a word that I didn't think was complimentary! (laughs)

EH: Oh no!

JG: And I thought, dear, stay away from that word. But I don't know what it was. But anyway, I'm thrilled...

EH: Well I hope--I'm sorry...

JG: I'm just thrilled and I hope I didn't bend your ear.

EH: Oh no, I love this. But before...

JG: Who are you with? Who are you with now?

EH: So I'm with the West Virginia Humanities Council and I am...

JG: What do you do?

EH: I am a folklorist, so...

JG: Oh, ok, okay.

EH: So` I'll give you my card. But maybe you could also tell me if there are--who else I should talk to in the area, so it could be a traditional artist or musician or, but it could also be...

JG: Ellen Culler. She's an artist.

EH: Okay, and what does she do?

JG: She lives, yeah, okay wait a minute. (laughs) She's very good. Oh here's my glasses. Okay. Yeah, she's very interesting. Yeah, she's good. She knows more about f...How'd you get into the business?

EH: Well I went to school for it in North Carolina.

JG: Really?

EH: Yeah. I like your glasses.

JG: GUSTA.

EH: Well I know your name, but her name is Ellen...

JG: Culler, C-U-L-L-E-R. Where's the telephone book?

EH: C-U-L-L-E-R. And what kind of art?

JG: She teaches art in the schools...

EH: Oh, okay.

JG: ...but she is an artist herself. Oh! I know, do you know, too bad you weren't here over the weekend, they had an arts festival down at the river. Lambros Tsuhlures. He does pottery.

EH: Okay. So, yeah.

JG: T-S-U-H-L-A-R-E-S. Yeah, he's very good. He teaches out at Bethany I think and then he has a lot of art work.

EH: Okay, I might have been given his name. Yeah, I'm mostly interested in someone who practices a traditional--so a potter might apply, but...

JG: Yeah, pottery, he's...

EH: ...especially if it is of a certain tradition or place or an ethnic community or culture.

JG: He's very good. Let's see who else. Who does what. Yeah, Ellen, I can't think of anybody artistic!

EH: Well it could also be you know, someone of an ethnic community contact. So you know I spoke with Carol and I'm going to speak with Nick about the Lebanese community. I was thinking of Ukrainian.

JG: But you mentioned somebody and--there was a brother and a sister.

EH: Is that Olga and John Perkovich (sp?)?

JG: Yes. That's who. They were wonderful.

EH: Yeah, that's what they were saying.

JG: They were so good. He passed away. Did she pass away?

EH: That's what they didn't know at the club. I wonder if she moved away.

JG: Well he was out of...yeah, I knew that.

EH: How old was she? She would be about how old now?

JG: He was an accordion player!

EH: Yeah!

JG: I know an accordion player. He's Polish! His name is, and in fact, he was at the Polish American club last Sunday. Let's see...

EH: Is his name Tom?

JG: Oh, it's terrible not to remember. Oh God, his dad was a neighbor and he just passed away. Oh, it's terrible! But they had a band!

EH: Ah okay.

JG: They played the accordion and they were really, really good.

EH: Okay, we'll I'll put my cell phone if you remember.

JG: Yeah. He's over in Belair, the accordion player. See you don't get accordion players anymore. Well, I guess there are.

22:56

EH: There was, so I was in Weirton yesterday and I spoke with a Polish woman who has--there's an accordion player in their church there. Tom someone.

JG: But these people, they didn't have television in those days. It reminds me when the priest comes out and reads the Bible and he says, "In those days Christ was on the road to so and so and so." But that's the way it was in those days. The world is completely different now. We don't have, well, Bebop people, musical people like that but that's the way people entertained themselves. They had the accordion and the neighborhood together and they'd have a little beer and a little dancing and that was their entertainment or they'd have a picnic like--they still up in Weirton and I can't tell you who--they have like a lamb roast and they have this type of entertainment and everybody gets together and has a wonderful time.

EH: Well at the Croatian Club, they were saying there used to be a Croatian Picnic at Wheeling Park with, they would have a lot of lamb and...

JG: Yeah, oh yeah. Lamb!

EH: They weren't sure if it happened anymore.

JG: People pass away and the kids don't want to--they don't have time. Kids have kids that have hockey and travel teams and all that stuff. Oh darn. Now... see that's what happens when your brain.

EH: (laughs) Well you can call me if you remember.

24:33

JG: Yeah, that guy is good! He's an accordion--yeah! And (laughs) in fact they used to live catty corner from my cousin and the people next door were Lutherans, that doesn't mean--their father was a Lutheran minister and they were raised in Pennsylvania, and when they would play the Polish music, they said, "Oh they're gypsies." Well they weren't gypsies! You know. Because they were not exposed. We were exposed to different ethnic groups and that makes a difference. And these people who live--there's nothing wrong with them. They live in their own neighborhood, they don't have any contact with other nationalities. They don't know. That's the same way with black people, African American. They're afraid, when I say afraid, they've not had any contact with them and they don't know how to take them.

EH: You mean white people here?

JG: Yes, yes.

EH: Mmhm.

JG: And when you work with people and you live in the neighborhood, it's just like everybody else, you know.

EH: Right, yeah. There's sort of a fear of the other.

JG: That's the same way with Asians. I'm not familiar with Asians and I'm a little it weary, leary of them. I never had any contact. The only, we had a China--in our neighborhood, we had Mr. Yee, he was a Chinese laundry. He did shirts and he would buy big bags of rice. 25 pounds! Nice man.

EH: So there wasn't much of a Chinese population here? I haven't heard much.

JG: Not much. There was one family, the Yee family and one of 'em worked for Family Services.

EH: Okay.

JG: And I don't know what happened to him, but there wasn't a large... well we have Chinese restaurants, we have Silver Chopsticks and Golden Chopsticks (laughs) and I know there's a lady Shelly--Shelly used to work at Silver Chopsticks and she works out at Wheeling Jesuit now for the food service. I don't know who the food service is. I forget now. I said to her, you're Chinese, how'd you get a name like Shelly? Shelly is not a Chinese name.

EH: Well oh that's one question I was gonna ask, are there Greek restaurants here still?

JG: Greek restaurants. Used to be in Wheeling and Moundsville but I would say--up in Weirton there is Yianni's.

EH: I've heard that's good.

JG: There's a good one in Steubenville. Yorgo's.

EH: Okay.

JG: G-O-R-G-I-O.

EH: Okay.

JG: Yeah, those are good restaurants.

EH: Okay.

27:45

JG: I haven't been to Yianni's, I have been to Yorgo's. And that is very good. Yeah, that's authentic. But you know, here's something else too. They print all these recipes in the newspaper. It's like spaghetti sauce. You have a hundred people and I bet you there are no 2 people that make spaghetti sauce the same way. They do it to please their family.

EH: Yeah, mmhm.

JG: And they have a lot of stuff. Oh, Greek Lemon Soup, did you ever eat Greek Lemon Soup?

EH: Yeah. Lemon Rice Soup?

JG: Okay yeah, now they say separate the egg whites from the yolks. I don't and my soup, I'll match my soup against anybody.

EH: (laughs)

JG: The whole secret of that is when you make your mixture, okay, I'm gonna give you the recipe. This is good. We used to get a chicken every week and boil it to get the broth. You don't have to do that. But we would have chicken every Sunday. Anyway, then you can get collagen broth, soup broth, anything, chicken broth. And then boil that either with rice or orzo. Now orzo cooks faster than rice. So anyway, you cook that. Then you get your lemons. You say how many. Well, depends on how much broth you have, maybe 1, 1 and a half. You get your eggs--I don't separate the eggs. Maybe 4 eggs, mix 'em all up, mix the lemon. And the secret is take a ladle of cold water and put it in your lemon egg mixture and then of course take your broth off the stove, off the burner and put it aside and put a ladle of cold water in that so you don't get egg drop soup like the Chinese do. See it'll curdle, it's hot. So you know, mix it all up. So that when the 2 mix, you're not gonna get egg drop soup. Now some people will say "Oh no, I separate," okay, it works for you? Fine. I can't tell the difference. I don't know. A lot of people when they had a restaurant, restaurant people like to stretch their food--more money. I think they would put cornstarch in there to make it stretch and to make it more solid. I don't think it would do anything. Yeah.

I thought of that guy's name! Matyja M-A-T-Y-J-A.

EH: Okay.

JG: Oh God, thank you Lord, thank you Lord.

EH: M-A-T-I-J-A? That's his first or last name?

JG: That's his last name.

EH: Okay.

JG: I don't know his first name.

EH: Okay. M-A-T-I-J-A.

JG: M-A-T-Y-J-A. I think he lives in Bellaire. Or did. Now his father passed away. There are a lot of good people all over the place and you meet the same ones. (laughs)

EH: (laughs)

JG: Cause they all go to the festivals!

EH: Right, yeah.

JG: They all go to the festivals, and they're friends. You know. Okay, you're...

EH: Yeah, I better get going.

JG: My time is up. Your time is up.

EH: I mean if you want to...

JG: I hope I didn't bore you!

EH: Oh never, no. But if you want to show me some of the neighborhood, I would be open. I don't have to be anywhere until 5.

JG: Yeah, okay, come in...

31:18

END OF TAPE
END OF INTERVIEW