

Penn South Archive Project

Witness: Georgia Kechlian

Interviewers: Christiane Bird, Silvie Bird, John Harris

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Christiane: Well, good morning, Georgia. It's such a pleasure for us to be here. And thank you so much for inviting us into your house and giving us the opportunity to hear about your history here at Penn South. I thought we could start by you introducing yourself and telling us when you moved into Penn South.

Georgia: I'm Georgia Kechlian. I moved into Penn South the later part, I think of '62.

Christiane: Okay.

Georgia: I was one of the site tenants, and when I moved in, there were no pavements, no sidewalks.

Christiane: There was nothing here.

Georgia: Yeah. Yeah.

Christiane: Now, you told me earlier you had grown up in this neighborhood.

Georgia: Yes.

Christiane: And where exactly . . . what street did you live on? And what years would those have been?

Georgia: Well, when I was an infant, we were on 28th Street between 7th and 6th Avenue. From what I understand, those buildings didn't even have a toilet in the apartment. It was out in the hall. And you would go from one building, then go through that building, go to another building on the back. And then we were on 25th Street, and I have a vague memory of that, and that's between 7th and 8th. My whole history has disappeared. That building has been demolished. And they just put in a new building recently. It's close to the old yellow, I think, brick building, which is sort of a modern building. So it was very small there. And from there I think we went to I don't know . . . 26th Street between 8th and 9th, and from there we went to 27th Street. I can't think of any other place. So . . .

Christiane: And what . . . what . . . when would have . . . When . . . when would you have lived on 27th Street? What years approximately would that have been?

Georgia: I was in elementary school and . . . I think I was about seven or eight years old.

Christiane: And what was the block like then and what was your building like?

Georgia: My building was pretty modern. We had an elevator. We were the only body . . . only person on the block that . . . we were the only people that had an elevator. Well, on 27th Street, I was in 361, which is about the location which we're at now. And . . . going towards 9th Avenue, it was just a brick building, maybe about five-stories high or four-stories high. And on the corner was a grocery store. And then on the other side, going towards 8th Avenue, there were low buildings, like two and three stories, the adjacent building to our building was beautiful. It had like a New Orleans balcony and it had a little garden with a fountain in it and a gate around it. And then going towards 8th Avenue, there were like little private homes. And then there was the big warehouse, I think it was Conway's warehouse. And then there was some modern buildings on my block. Modern, I'm saying with a stoop, and they were nicer than the low rise ones. And then going towards 8th Avenue, on 8th Avenue, there was a little cigar store and on the other side it was the same thing on the other side, the south side of 27th Street.

Christiane: And a lot . . . And what was the neighborhood like then? There were a lot of Greek . . .

Georgia: There were a lot of Greeks, there were a lot of Irish, some French and Italians. There were a lot of Italians, too. It was a mixed neighborhood.

Christiane: Were the Greeks settled in one part of the neighborhood or went to certain blocks or were the . . .

Georgia: There were a lot of Greeks on my block. And down in the 20s, and 24th Street, 25th Street, 26th Street, a lot of Greeks.

Christiane: And you were telling me earlier, there were a lot of Greek businesses along 8th Avenue.

Georgia: Oh, 8th Avenue had about five or six grocery stores. There was a butcher, there was like three butchers between 28th and 29th Street was Meradis's Grocery Store. Millie lives on the other side of this building, her father owned the store and he had meats and he had produce and you named it, he had it in the store. On the other side, there was a butcher shop and there was a grocery store. People that

worked in the fur market, some of them had moved to Astoria. They would stop at these stores and they would buy all their groceries to go home to Astoria. Now we'd go to Astoria to buy all our groceries. [Georgia and Christiane chuckle]

Christiane: And were there restaurants? And I understand there were . . .

Georgia: There were several nightclubs and a few restaurants during the day. There was one that was in the fur market, but it was upstairs. And Midas, who was one of the presidents of our church owned that and that . . . the furriers used to go there to eat. But as far as really like dining out at night or during the day, no, there weren't too many. It was predominantly the nightclubs and they were concentrated from 27th Street to 29th Street.

Christiane: Along 8th Avenue.

Georgia: Yeah. And on 29th and 8th Avenue there was the Egyptian Gardens, which was one flight up. That building was owned, I think, by the Cretan Association. They have now sold it and there's a poor liquor store down there that went out of business and he keeps cleaning it up and graffiti is all over the place. Yeah. So that's about the short and long of the neighborhood.

Christiane: And it was known as Greektown at that point.

Georgia: Yes. Yes. Yeah.

Christiane: Was that 8th Avenue or the whole area?

Georgia: That area. It was a concentration.

Christiane: And what about the Greek church? I understand that was a focal point of your community.

Georgia: Oh, God. It was packed. It was packed. Easter, Christmas-time, people were out in the hall. They were out in the street. We had a very good congregation because everyone from 14th Street to 34th Street would go to that church. It was the closest for them. Although we do have several Greek churches on the West Side and on the East Side, but that was more convenient for them. And we had an after-school Greek school that I went to. We had to go every day, which I hated. And then afterwards, they had an all-day school, Greek-American school, and that had about 60 pupils, 54/60 pupils. I don't quite understand because I . . . I didn't send my children there when I came back to New York, when I got married . . . In '58,

I moved to New Jersey. Then they knocked down the buildings. And when we came back to New York, it was in '62. So . . . my one son was three years old and the other one wasn't . . . well two and a half, and the other one wasn't born yet. The youngest son was born here in . . . in . . . when I was living in Penn South and my children went to P.S. 33, across the street.

Christiane: And you had gone to P.S. 33

Georgia: I went to the old P.S. 33, which was on 28th Street between 9th and 10th Avenue.

Christiane: And you were telling me earlier, it was a gated school at that point.

Georgia: They had this steel gate. I don't know why they had it. I mean, there was no crime. It wasn't because of crime or anything. It was just . . . and it had a place . . . yard that we all used to go to. And sometimes we would go to Chelsea Park, but on the whole, we stayed in the yard. And it was an old building. I mean, it had a fire escape. It had several entrances. It had secret staircases. [Georgia and Christiane laugh] And as you walked in, there was the basketball court. They had the poles. I mean, it had a lot of space in it.

Christiane: Wow. Wow, that's interesting.

Georgia: Yeah.

Christiane: And how did your family first hear about Penn South? Were they . . . were your parents—

Georgia: We were site tenants.

Christiane: Okay.

Georgia: My mother. And we put in both of us. And what we did is she was called and I moved in with my mother in Penn South. But it got to the point that after the others, you know, my other son was born and she was still working because she worked in the fur market, it was very difficult for her. So she put in to get a smaller apartment, which she did, and she moved to 24th Street near the church. And then in later years she moved right next door to me. She transferred to the same apartment, which, by the way, she didn't want because it didn't have a window in the kitchen. I begged her to take it. So, yeah, so that was very, very convenient.

Christiane: So when you heard about Penn . . . first heard about Penn South, and your . . . your mother and your family, what was your reaction? Do you . . . did you . . . did your family think it was a positive thing or you were upset?

Georgia: We . . . my mother couldn't understand how you could buy an apartment and still pay rent. You know, her idea of buying something was you bought it and that was it. Because we didn't know anything about co-ops or condos or anything like that. And we finally talked her into it. I put in an application. She put in an application. Hers came up first so we moved in together.

Christiane: I see.

Georgia: I moved to Weehawken and I thought I went to, God, another country. [Georgia laughs] I couldn't wait to come back to the city. So . . . So that was it.

Christiane: And what were the terms that people that were living on the site were offered? I think you said—

Georgia: If I'm not mistaken, it was \$500 for an apartment. I'm not certain. They must have a record of it in the office.

Christiane: Yes, I've heard \$500. Was that a lot of money for people living here at that time?

Georgia: No, they didn't think it was a lot of money. They felt they were being uprooted. And they were. I mean, my girlfriend's father, who owned the grocery store on 8th Avenue and he owned a furnished room, a furnished room apartment on 29th Street . . . No, 28th Street. His business was demolished and his income from the . . . from the building was demolished. Now, I don't know how much they paid, Mr. Maradis, but he was very upset about it.

Christiane: Yes, I can imagine. There must have been a lot of discussion and protest. Were there protests that you remember?

Georgia: They weren't that organized. They weren't that organized. Had it been now, there would have been more resistance. I just hope there's enough resistance for what they're going to do with this Penn South baloney that they're feeding us. And I don't . . . I think it's a done deal between you and I. I'm very pessimistic about it.

Christiane: What are you talking about, the substation or the . . .

Georgia: No, I'm talking about the Penn South renewal. What they're doing.

Christiane: Oh, yes. Yeah . . . yeah.

Georgia: It's not Penn South. I'm sorry. It's Penn Station.

Christiane: Penn Station.

Georgia: Which has nothing to do with what they're doing. The station is going to remain the same. Instead of upgrading the station, they're throwing people out of their apartments.

Christiane: Right, yeah. Yeah. Um . . . going back to to when Penn South was first built, did people have a lot of time to make up their minds whether they were going to move in or leave the neighborhood? Do you remember? Was it a . . .

Georgia: They had to put in a deposit. And I don't remember what . . . I think . . . I don't remember what that deposit was. I might have the papers someplace inside, but I really don't remember. I don't remember the details. I mean it's so long ago.

Christiane: Yeah, it's a while ago, Did many people in the Greek community choose to move into Penn South? I think you told me earlier.

Georgia: No. No. No. If you notice, there's not that many Greeks in Penn South. A lot of them dispersed. They went to New Jersey. They went to Astoria. They went to Long Island. Mr. Meratis and his family went to Staten Island. He had a summer place there. So they lived there until Louie moved in with her father and her family and then they came back.

Christiane: So were there . . . there were very few that moved into Penn South.

Georgia: From what I understand, yes. There were very few families that moved in.

Christiane: And why do you think that was?

Georgia: Because again, they couldn't understand the concept of buying something and having to pay every month. That's the only rational that I could think of. And that's a lot what came up in the in the topic. And my girlfriend's husband George _____ really talked my mother into putting her name down.

Christiane: And how did your life change when you moved into Penn South? Your life and your mother's life?

Georgia: For her, it was very convenient because she was living in Brooklyn. I was living in New Jersey. For me it was great. I had the school across the street. I had some of my friends that . . . very close friends that I grew up with that moved in also and I made some other friends. So it was . . . you know, I had a good time, I really did. And I liked the idea of a modern apartment. And then when I moved into this . . . I was in the B apartment first. When I moved into the F apartment, the six rooms with two toilets, I mean, that was the cat's meow. Whoever thought of having two toilets. So no, I have no regrets moving in. I really don't. I like the apartment. I love this apartment. I don't like what's happening to the neighborhood, but I like the apartment. And the only way I think I'm going to leave is feet first.

Christiane: Did you miss not being surrounded by others from the Greek community?

Georgia: Well I was still active in the church. And there were parishioners in the church that I had known, so that was a good. But no, no, I didn't because I had acquired new friends. And I'm the type of person that still has my friends from from first grade.

Christiane: That's wonderful.

Georgia: Sophie Chrisafis is one of them. And we went to Greek school together. We went to first grade throughout elementary school together. Then she went to Washington Irving High School. I went to Textile, which was Straubenmuller Technical High School. And now, I don't know what they call it, down on 18th Street.

Christiane: You mentioned earlier that your mother was working in the Fur District.

Georgia: There were a lot of Greeks in the furs.

Christiane: Okay. Where was that located?

Georgia: Between 25th and 29th Street on 7th Avenue.

Christiane: Were they involved in the Ladies Garment District Union at all or was that—

Georgia: No. They had their own: The Furriers Union

Christiane: They had . . . okay.

Georgia: That . . . that was very shady, [Georgia chuckles] to say the least.

Christiane: Can you give us some details?

Georgia: I don't know any details, but they were not happy about it. Yeah, she had to be a union member, but that was later in years. I mean, in the beginning it wasn't. I mean, her first job, I think she got \$5 for working two weeks.

Christiane: Wow.

Georgia: And the only reason she got that was because the woman that brought her into the shop told the owner, if you would please give her something, she's working here for two weeks. So a lot of the people from the northern part of Greece were furriers and they had established the fur shops, so they worked where they could speak to . . . to the people in their own language. And then there were a lot of Jews that became involved or what nationality they were, I don't know, but there were a lot of Jews, I don't know from what area they were. So predominantly, it was the Greeks and the Jews, and there are still quite a few Greeks in the fur market. Although everything's dwindling now, there's not that much. And a lot of the furs are going to China. So . . . [Georgia coughs] Excuse me.

Christiane: Would you like some water? Yeah.

Georgia: Matter of fact, my first job was with my mother's furrier. Weiner and Weiner. and I was in the office, so . . . and I got paid I think was \$25 for the week.

[Georgia and Christiane chuckle]

They were lovely people. They were very nice. They were very good to me. They were very good to my mother. And that's about it.

Christiane: Was she newly arrived from Greece at that point? Was she a new immigrant?

Georgia: She came, I think in '32 and my aunt was here before her, which was very interesting. She came as a domestic and she was working in Coney Island for this family and she was the housekeeper. And in those days, they didn't have any washing machines. And the three men in the house worked the stands in Coney Island and they had

to wear white shirts. Three of them would come in and change their white shirts three times a day because of the heat. And she used to wash those shirts by hand and iron them until finally the woman told her *fontini*, which means fanny in Greek, This is no place for a young woman. Try to get a job . . . we'll try and get you a job at a factory. And possibly you could move with someone in New York City so you could be with more people your own age. And that's what she did for her. And when my . . . my aunt came these people had to fill out, I have the documents inside, they would take care of all of her needs her hospital bills, her shelter, whatever her needs were, they were responsible for. And she was not to be a burden to the state.

Christiane: This was where she was working at . . . the . . .

Georgia: The . . . as the housekeeper.

Christiane: I see.

Georgia: They had to write down that they would take care of her. Which is a far cry what's happening now.

Christiane: Yeah, it's a little different these days.

Georgia: Yeah.

Christiane: So tell me more about what Penn South was like when you first moved in. You said it wasn't finished yet, so were . . .

Georgia: No, it wasn't. We had . . . I don't . . . I don't even remember. We had the co-op supermarket. Yes, we had the co-op supermarket. And there was a bunch of us young woman at the time, and we had a food co-op. So that's how we did a lot of our shopping. And we'd have one of the women, Marilyn, who was a gorgeous blond . . . We used to send her to Hunts Point and we used to send her to the meat market and she used to buy all our stuff

[Georgia and Christiane laugh]

and she did very well. They loved her. And it was a nice group. It really was. Some of us are still here.

Christiane: So your friends were from all different parts of the . . . different groups. They . . . There weren't just . . . It wasn't just your Greek friends.

Georgia: Oh, no, no, no, no. We were a very nice . . . nice group.

Christiane: Was it easy to make friends once you moved into Penn South?

Georgia: I never had a problem doing that. As far as I can say.

[Georgia and Christiane laugh]

No. Matter of fact, in the building, Diane Benson is downstairs on the seventh floor. There's Paulette Esrig. I don't remember who else is in here, but matter of fact, I saw a Paulette the other day, it was her birthday a few months ago and I knocked on her door. So I still see these people periodically. We don't socialize as much as we did socializing, I mean, with the children. And it was wonderful to have the playgrounds. It really was. I never had to worry about anybody being hit by a car because they they played in the ball field and they were in the little park, too. So that was wonderful. It was very convenient. And at night, what we would do we'd get pizza, myself and a few other ladies, and we would stay outside until 9:00 o'clock, 9:30 in the summertime, and they would be playing in the ball field. Matter of fact, both of my children learned how to ride a bike in that ball field, which was very good.

Christiane: And your children still live in Penn South? Do-

Georgia: Yes. Yes. One of my sons is living with me and the other one has his own apartment over in Building 6.

Christiane: You mentioned earlier your mother lived next door to you for a while. Was that difficult to arrange in those days, to get an apartment for a family member next door?

Georgia: I was very lucky she put her name in and I had a unique situation. My mother was alone and my father, they were divorced. He lived in a furnished room on 46th Street. She lived on 24th Street. So between the two of them, I was running back and forth and she was on the list and the manager was very kind. I said to him, Please. I said, The woman next door to me passed away. I said, It's the exact same apartment. I would give up her apartment for this apartment. Can you do something for me? Now, whether it was legal or not, I don't know. And I don't really care because a lot of things happened here that weren't so legal. And he was very . . . first of all, he told me, why don't you buy a house and move out of the city with your kids? [Georgia and Christiane laugh] And I said, I don't want to move out of the city. I was in Weehawken. So he got this apartment for her. So that was . . . was wonderful.

Christiane: Yeah, that's great . . . great

Georgia: I'd go to work in the morning, she'd open up the door, she'd say to me, Do you want to have a cup of coffee before you go? She'd have the coffee all ready. I could smell it in the hall.

Christiane: That's lovely.

Georgia: Yeah. So that was wonderful. My children grew up with her. She . . . she was great. And then my father was in a furnished room. And then when he got very sick, I don't know how I did it, but I got him into the Elliott house . . . not the Elliott Houses. The Fulton Houses. I got him an apartment down there.

Christiane: That's great.

Georgia: So . . . I don't know. I'm telling you, I don't know how I did it. I think somebody was looking over my shoulder because he was living in this furnished room So he moved in there. So that was good. So I was sort of set between the two of them. One down on 17th Street or 18th Street. I don't remember where it was, and her next door. And then the children . . . and working.

Christiane: So your whole family was within the city. I'm curious, you mentioned that there were a lot of illegal things going on here. Can you tell us something about that.

Georgia: Well, there's people I don't know where they come from, but they all of a sudden get apartments. And I know damn well they haven't been on the list, so I don't know what's going on. There's skeletons in the closet.

Christiane: Okay.

Georgia: And let that be said. And I'm certain there's a lot of people that feel the same way as I do.

Christiane: Going back to . . . changing the subject, going back to the Greek church, I know it burned down at some point.

Georgia: '72.

Christiane: Can you . . . do you have any memories of that time and what . . . what happened then?

Georgia: I think I got a call and when I went there, I was just, like shocked. I couldn't believe it was happening. I don't know if somebody set up . . . I still don't know what the story was whether

fire was set or a candle was lit. I really don't know. But this Mr. Mallios, who had the restaurant on 28th Street or 29th Street, I don't remember. He was the president of the church. And by hooked crook, they raised enough money. And I don't think the insurance was that much because I don't think they had the foresight to heavily insure something and they rebuilt the church. So we're very thankful to him and the women in the Philoptochos, which means the friend of the poor gathered money. These women would go to the furriers door to door begging for them to give money towards the church. And they were very generous, so they rebuilt the church.

Christiane: And were you always active in the church? And are you active today or . . .

Georgia: Yeah, I am. I'm involved with the women's organization, the Philoptochos, which is friends of the poor, it's the charitable arm of the church since 1935. They helped the immigrants when they came. And we still have a whole list of charities that we give to. We give to UNICEF. We give to the Orthodox Christian Charities. Now, with the Ukrainian situation, the autism, you name it, we have a lot of . . . we have the Greek charities, but we also have other charities that we deal with and not here in Manhattan Well, not here in Manhattan so much. But in the suburbs and . . . 'cause it's nationwide, they periodically have fundraising for certain organizations. And they raise a lot of money. I also know that in Chicago, they have a Greek-American museum. And in Oregon . . . Portland, Oregon, they have . . . they have a huge population of Greeks there. They own blocks and blocks in Seattle . . . Oregon.

Christiane: Do . . . the Greek community that moved out of this neighborhood, do a lot of them still come back to the church?

Georgia: Oh, they still support us. They really do. Any time we send out anything, they're very, very generous. The only thing is a lot of them are dying off. [Georgia chuckles] And I don't know why. And it's not only with our church, but it's with a lot of churches. The younger people do not get involved at least in the . . . here in Manhattan.

Christiane: Yeah.

Georgia: I know I had gone to Milwaukee at one time and I couldn't believe it when I saw all the young people in the church when they got up for Holy Communion, there were two priests and there were two long lines. I said, Where have all these people come from? But very active. I think in the suburbs, the . . . the churches are more active than they are here in the city.

Christiane: Are there any Greek businesses in the community now aside from the . . . I mean, the church is not exactly a business.

Georgia: The furriers.

Christiane: They're still here?

Georgia: Yeah. I'm trying to think of what other store . . . I can't think of anything.

Christiane: So there's not much of a Greek community here anymore, would you say?

Georgia: There . . . I wouldn't say there's a lot, but we have a handful, like when we get together. I mean, we even had a hardware store on 25th Street. There was a shoemaker on 25th Street on 8th Avenue, opposite each other. One was on the south corner and the other one was on the north corner. We used to get our heels to play Patsy with

Christiane: Patsy?

Georgia: Yeah. Did you ever play Patsy?

Christiane: No.

Georgia: Okay.

Christiane: What is that?

Georgia: You put squares down: one, two, three, four, and then you're supposed to hop to get the heel. If you're on the line, you're out. You have to get it in the box. So that was our big . . . we used to make the charts with chalk.

Christiane: Yes. That was when you were a teenager, I take it.

Georgia: No. It was when I was little.

Christiane: Yes, younger. [Georgia and Christiane chuckle] And were there . . . as a Greek community here in Penn South, did you ever organize social events or . . .?

Georgia: We have social events around the church.

Christiane: Okay.

Georgia: Matter of fact, I'm thinking the priest is going to do a . . . I don't know how we're going to get it off the ground. I mean, Christmas is almost around the corner. We're supposed to have a Christmas concert. And then I'm thinking perhaps maybe we can have like a wine tasting party with Greek cheeses, Greek wines and Greek pastries. And we want to open it up to the community because we desperately need money.

Christiane: That sounds lovely. Yeah, that would be nice.

Georgia: So we're . . . I'm trying to work on that. I thought maybe Valentine's Day would be nice. I think my nose is so clogged up.

Christiane: You sound great. I can't hear it.

[Christiane chuckles]

Georgia: Anyways, So that's . . . that's the activities. And until COVID came, my organization, we used to have a luncheon every year to raise money for the charities, but we haven't had anything since '20.

Christiane: Yeah, yeah.

Georgia: We have to start doing something because the funds are low in the church and my organization, the funds are low, too.

Christiane: Were you ever involved in any of the committees or the board or anything here at the co-op?

Georgia: No. No.

Christiane: You were busy with the church, it sounds like.

Georgia: I was busy with that. I was working, so . . . I still was working up until two years ago. Matter of fact, my boss is still telling me to go back to work.

Christiane: What kind of work were you doing?

Georgia: The last was the head usher at Circle in the Square. Sorry.

Christiane: No, sure. Take your time. Have you been active politically in the years you've been living here?

Georgia: No, no.

Christiane: 'Cause . . . uh . . . I know you went to the demonstration for the substation. Were you . . .

Georgia: Well, I'll . . . I'll do something like that. That's the extent of my politics.

Christiane: Okay. And if . . . are you . . . if you're comfortable telling us, did . . . were you in favor of the co-op going private in the 1980s?

Georgia: Yes.

Christiane: You were in favor of it.

Georgia: I'm in favor of doing it now, too.

Christiane: And why is that?

Georgia: Because I think it would be run better, although I think there's been an improvement. But I like the idea of private

Christiane: And how has the co-op changed since you moved in?

Georgia: I don't know. I haven't been that involved in it, to be truthful with you. I love the grounds, but that's always been beautiful. So I don't mind spending for that. But . . . uh . . . It's a big place and I know there's a lot of maintenance that has to go, you know, with it. And I'm very grateful to the fact that I called up this morning and I told them, I woke up and my door is off the hinges. I said, Could you send someone? And they said, Well, it's not . . . and I said, I know it's not an emergency. If there's someone around with a hammer and they have the time, let them come. If not, have somebody come Monday. And they did come and they repaired the door. They've been very good like that. There's other instances with something with my tub. I had six people in the bathroom trying to figure out why the water wasn't going down the drain and why I was having a leak until this big Irishman came and broke the wall down and there was Niagara Falls behind the wall that I kept calling them every year, and they kept patching it up. This was for about four years. I mean, you know, things like that, that annoy me.

Christiane: Right.

Georgia: But, you know, it's . . . it's fine. I mean . . . if the crime rate wasn't so bad, I would be very comfortable.

Christiane: So you feel the crime rate has increased a lot.

Georgia: A woman was shot or killed, don't know what happened, on 23rd Street at the subway, 8:00 o'clock in the morning.

Christiane: Wow.

Georgia: I feel I'm very vulnerable. First of all, I can't turn my neck. Second of all, I walk like a snail. So I'm a prime target.

Christiane: Did you ever worry about safety . . . earlier?

Georgia: Never. Before Giuliani became Mayor of New York City from here to 50th Street, well, actually, 30 . . . 39th to maybe 33rd Street was horrible. You had all the hookers there, you had drugs, you had everything. He got in, He cleaned up that neighborhood. I still used to walk to 50th Street to go to work, and I used to walk home. Now, I was a subway gal. I would never take a cab. I would take the subway throughout Manhattan and the five boroughs, if I could. I won't get in subway. I mean, it's crazy.

Christiane: Yeah.

Georgia: It has gotten so out of control. I don't know what's going to happen to the city.

Christiane: So you never felt a danger when you were growing up here or any know any of those periods?

Georgia: Never. I used to walk, I'm telling you, 11:00 o'clock at night from the theater at 15th Street. Well, I like to walk anyways.

Christiane: Yeah, yeah.

Georgia: Now I can't walk.

[Georgina and Christiane laugh]

Christiane: Is there . . . is there anything you would like new cooperators to know about the co-op when they moved in? What . . . what do you think you'd like them to know about it's history or it's . . . this community when they move in here?

Georgia: I don't know. I don't know. That's up to you. You do what you want with that.

Christiane: Um . . . I think I've . . . I've pretty much come to the end of my questions. Is there anything else you'd like to add about . . . ?

Georgia: No, I think it's great that you're doing this. I really mean it.

Christiane: Oh, well, thank you. We . . . we're . . . we're so happy that you've agreed to do it. It's been great.

Georgia: No, no. I'm grateful.

Christiane: Yeah,

Georgia: I really am.

Christiane: Yeah.

Georgia: And . . . and it's something nice. We wanted, at one point, one of the fellas at church wanted to publish a book about this area, about the Greeks, primarily. It never came to fruition. But I do have some notes inside, like of all the stores that were there and who owned them. And, you know, from like the 23rd up. Matter of fact, the bowling . . . the bowling alley that was on 23rd Street and 8th Avenue was owned by a Greek woman.

Christiane: Oh, I didn't even know . . . when was—

Georgia: It was on top of CVS. There was a huge bowling alley there.

Christiane: Where the new building is going up, now?

Georgia: Yeah.

Christiane: Oh, wow.

Georgia: And when I was a kid, there was originally a Woolworth's. Then it became a Lamson's on 23rd Street, and then it became The Gap.

Christiane: Oh, okay. That's right. I remember The Gap, yeah.

Georgia: But now, even Rite Aid is going out. I mean, from 23rd up, it's going to be a ghost town. There are no stores that are . . . the stores are closing because of COVID. 9th Avenue . . . when I come

home, if I come home from church when it's dark, never mind during the day but when it's dark I don't know which way to get to my apartment. 26th Street is desolate. To cut through the back, I'm sort of nervous with the bushes. So what I do now, is I cut through the parking lot and go to my back door.

Christiane: Oh, wow.

Georgia: 20 . . . 28th Street is deadsville. So I'd say from 24th Street up, this whole area is desolated.

Christiane: That's true. All the businesses are moving out. Yeah. Yeah.

Georgia: So what they're building now is beyond me. These buildings are empty. What are they doing?

Christiane: It's crazy. I agree. I agree with you. Yeah. I don't know . . . Do John or Silvie, do you have any questions you have for Georgia?

John: No, I think I'm okay. Everything's okay.

Christiane: Yeah.

Georgia: I'm still trying to think, John. What was between 24th and 26th Street on 9th Avenue on the east side of the . . .

John: On the east side? Well, you had the donut shop on 24th Street. That used to be there. Um . . . Of course, the bakery you mentioned.

Georgia: The . . . there was a drugstore when I was little, right on the corner.

John: Drugstore . . . yeah. It used to be a bank before that.

Georgia: And then there was the bank.

Christiane: Yeah. Well, we'd be interested to see your notes on what the businesses were here like. That could add to our story.

Georgia: Well, there were a lot. I could tell you right now. On . . . between 25th and 26th Street, there was the right on 25th going north, and . . . there was the the shoe repairman. There was also . . . these Germans had this ice cream parlor, that they had the most delicious frappes that you could get in there. And he also had the

candy counter with all these little . . . from years ago, they had these little like vanities with mirrors and candies inside.

Christiane: Oh, that sounds lovely.

Georgia: Different types of . . . I mean, really nice. And in the back, they had booths and they had the counter. And . . . uh . . . there was a fish store on 9th Avenue, a big fish store that you could buy your fish. There was the meat market. The meat market was owned by Greeks. The shoemaker was Greek. And then on the corner of 27th Street was a grocery store. And I remember, as a kid, they had the eggs in a basket on the wall and you would buy like one or two eggs, whatever you wanted. That was the Halpern family. They lived in my building and then there was the . . . uh . . . cigar store on 27th Street. They were Greeks. Then between 27th and 28th Street, they were just like . . . little buildings, like four stories. And we also had a Greek theater at the . . . in those days.

Christiane: Oh, okay. And one of the . . . two of the actors lived in one of the buildings between 27th and 28th Street and years ago, they had the Palm Gardens on 48th Street. And a lot of the plays were . . . they were all in Greek. And afterwards, they would have like a big dance after the plays. And that was across the street from the old Madison Square Garden, I think, if I'm remembering correctly, because it's so long ago. Matter of fact, their son's still is alive. And he lives up in the Catskills. And we had the 100th Anniversary for the church a few years ago. And he came down from the Catskills. It was wonderful to see him. Sophocles was his name . . . is his name. And then on 28th to 29th Street, there was the Greek grocery store that Meradis owned. And then on the opposite side, between 28th and 29th Street, there was a grocery store that Maria Haralabatos' in-laws owned. It was a butcher shop, I'm sorry. And then further down, was a grocery store also.

Christiane: These were all along Eighth Avenue?

Georgia: All along 8th Avenue.

Christiane: Wow. Wow.

Georgia: And of course, on the east side of 8th Avenue, there was a drugstore on the corner and that was owned by Greeks. Then in between the drugstore and then this big shopping . . . this grocery store, which was called Manhattan and it looked like a barn was a laundromat, that Greeks owned. And then Greeks owned that building. And then Manhattan was owned by Greeks.

Christiane: Wow. That's a lot.

Georgia: It was a lot. I'm telling you, it was wonderful just going out. You could do all your shopping here.

Christiane: Yeah. Yeah. And where . . . the Greek theater was right in this area?

Georgia: It was . . . They went all over, like usually they performed . . . I remember going to Palm Gardens. Now, I don't remember exactly what street, but it was near the old Madison Square Garden. And in those days, you'd see the play and they would have a dance afterwards. And we had a lot of Greek dances, Manhattan Center there were Greek dances. All the Greek organizations would get together and they would have Greek dances. I mean, they would have American music also, but it was primarily Greek.

Christiane: And did all those businesses disappear when . . . as soon as Penn South went up?

Georgia: Sure.

Christiane: Or did it take a while?

Georgia: No, they left.

Christiane: They all left.

Georgia: And the nightclubs left. Time marches on.

Christiane: Yeah. Change constant change, right?

Georgia: Time will tell.

[Georgia and Christiane laugh]

It goes. It really changes.

Christiane: Yes, constant change.