

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Aspasia Sonia Anyfantaki Lang

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Immigrant Stories Oral History project

Interview # IM-A-L-2010-049

Aspasia Sonia Anyfantaki, a Greek immigrant to the United States from Crete, Greece was interviewed on the dates listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Immigrant Stories* Oral History Project

Interview dates & location:

Date: October 25, 2010	Location: Sonia Lang's home in Springfield, Illinois
November 17, 2010	Location: Sonia Lang's home
December 11, 2010	Location: Sonia Lang's home

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Carol Esarey, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: Janet Frederick, ALPL volunteer

Edited by: Roberta Volkmann and Jan Culp, ALPL volunteers

Total Pages: 75 pgs Total Time: 1:27 + 0:53 + 1:12 / 1.45 + 0.88 + 1.2 = 3.53 hrs

Session 1: Early life, emigration to the U.S. through Sonia's marriage in 1961

Session 2: Early years in America through a move to Springfield, Illinois

Session 3: Life in Springfield and Sonia's art and sculpture

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on January 5, 2012.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Aspasia Sonia Anyfantaki Lang, *Immigrant Stories*, IM-A-L-2010-030

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Aspasia Anyfantaki was born on May 15, 1942 in Heraklion, Crete to parents, Ioannis Anyfantakis and Ekaterin Lambranki, lifelong citizens of Crete since the early 1900's. She has one sibling, Giorgos (George), born, 1940. As a young child during WWII, Sonia and her family fled to the countryside to live during the German invasion of Crete and subsequent German occupation of the country. She relates the family stories of life for her family and extended family from 1940 to 1945 under this occupation.

After the war, Sonia remembers and describes daily life as a child and young woman growing up in the late 1940's and 1950's, which she described as a rural and simple life style, filled with family traditions. Community and religious gatherings filled her life with a sense of family unity, safety and celebration.

As a seventeen year old Greek female, she began to break tradition by asking for and receiving permission to go to the United States as an exchange student. Several years after returning to Crete, Sonia met and married a U.S. Air Force airman. Her descriptions of the courtship, Greek wedding and early life as the wife of a U.S. soldier are told with wit and remarkable recall.

George and Sonia lived in Montgomery, Alabama from 1962 to 1967 during a time of great racial unrest in the U.S. Sonia's art and paintings reflect the strong effect the experience had on her life and in her paintings and sculpture in later years. In 1968, Sonia returned to Greece with two young children while her husband was in Vietnam. The return to Greece coincided with the time of Junta and dictatorship (1969-1974). Sonia was active in bringing the arts to Heraklion during the dictatorship and repression of the arts.

The family was reunited in the U.S. in 1971, and after several more moves the Langs eventually settled in Springfield, Illinois with their children, where Sonia completed a B.A. in Sculpture at the University of Illinois and George was a pharmacist and obtained a degree in horticulture. Sonia maintains a studio for painting and sculpture work in her home.

Subject Headings/Key Words: WWII German Invasion of Crete; occupation of Crete by German Army; day to day life in Crete in the 1940's-1950's; Greek cultural norms for women; Greek traditions and wedding rituals in 1960's; life as a wife of a Vietnam soldier; racial unrest in Alabama in the mid-1960's; Greek cultural customs integrated into American culture; life as a citizen of the U.S.

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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