

A. SPELOIPOULOS: An oral history study on Bill A. Nicolow on Tuesday, I'm sorry.
July the 19th at Nicolow's Restaurant.

[OFF MIC CONVERSATION]

B. NICKLOW: My name is Bill A. Nicklow and I live at 5721 Deville Drive
[unintelligible - 00:00:30], Minnesota.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Okay, where were you born?

B. NICKLOW: Okay I was born in Thessaly, Greece February 15, 1938. My real
name is Nicklow. My uncle changed it to Nicholas. We've been writing
that ever since. My father's name was Antonios D. Nicklow. He was
born around 1910 and he was killed during World War II in 1943.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Bill you mind just telling how your dad was killed do you know?

B. NICKLOW: I think in 1943 the Germans, burn our little town Kingsley and my
father went over to my Nonno's place which is [Livadeia] and he was
trying to get us to move over there. And one Sunday morning, the
guerillas had killed a German officer and the German army went through
the town and picked up everybody that they could find, then they put them
all in one big room and they threw a bomb in and shut it. So my father
and my Nonno were killed were killed at the same time and the same
place. The [unintelligible - 00:01:51] of my father's and the boy Nicklow
name was [Rahumodo]. My mother's name was [Philea Torigi] and she
was born around 1930 in [unintelligible - 00:02:04] Greece. My father is
buried in Thessaly and my brothers are Jim A. Nicklow and Anthony A.
Nicklow. And I have a sister in Greece, in Athens and her name is
[Efdemia]. My brother's wives are Stella and Benjie, and my wife's
brother his name is Melety. My grandparents were [Demetrius Nicklow]
and [Efumie Nicklow] from Thessaly, Greece and my mother's, and my
grandparents from my mother's side are or were [Hararambus Nicklow
Torigis] from Vienna, Greece. And Maria Torigis from Novena. My
Nonno's name used to be [Sotiginus] and my Nonna since she has been
remarried but I have lost touch of her and I'm sure she has lost touch of

me. And I do not know if she is living or not. I was married in Novena, Greece in 8/31/1969.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Was your marriage arranged?

B. NICKLOW: Well, no, not really, uh no.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Okay.

B. NICKLOW: Okay my name again is Bill Nicklow from Thessaly. I was born February 15, 1938.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Okay let's just re-visit; this should be your wife's name. But that's okay. Just put it on the tape and we'll put it later.

B. NICKLOW: Okay my wife's name is Libby which means **[unintelligible - 00:04:06]** in Greek, and she was born in [Nusamos] August 11th, 1949. My Koumbaro was Mr. George [Kanavas] from Chicago and my Petero was [Stellus Catracazos] and he was born in [Samus]. I do not know the year, but he passed away about five years ago. My mother-in-law was Irene [Catracazos] and she died while my wife Libby was 11 years old. I have two children Lia Nicklow. She was born December **[00:05:00]** 2nd 1971 and my son Tony which was born October 10th, 1973.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Let me try that again without shutting.

B. NICKLOW: The – while they died now –

A. SPELOIPOULOS: That's okay.

B. NICKLOW: Okay my children's grandparents are my father and mother which is Antonios Nicklow and Phelia Nicklow, and my wife's parents were [Stellus Catracazos] and Irene [Catracazos].

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Now Mr. Maximus, name your children's godparents.

B. NICKLOW: Okay Lia's godparents are Mr. and Mrs. George [Canabos] from Chicago and Tony's godparents are Barbara and [Costos] Nicklow as from Minneapolis.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Okay and your name too the children who are baptized?

B. NICKLOW: I have baptized George [Achiragus] and [Vashiriki Nakamus in Detroit, Michigan, that's it.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Okay. Now name the date of arrival in United States. Remember when you came?

B. NICKLOW: Yeah. In August 16, 1952 I came to New York City. And I came on Nialas, the boat Nialas.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: And what name did you use when you came to the United States?

B. NICKLOW: I used Bill A. Nicklow, or William A. Nicklow.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Okay. And who did you travel with?

B. NICKLOW: From Greece to New York, one of my father's cousins came there to visit us and along with my uncle, my father's brother, but my father's brother Tom Nicklow, he had to fly from Greece to the States and that was the first time that he's been on a plane so he could fill the papers for me. I was, when I came here, I was 13 years of age and he had to adopt me in a sense for in order for me to come. So he left early and he sent the papers and then I came with my second, my father's second cousin.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Why did you come to the United States for?

B. NICKLOW: Number one, poverty and number two, when my father was killed. My mother was left with four young children and it was no choice and that's why I was able to come.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Okay turn the page here. Did you receive any education in Greece?

B. NICKLOW: Yes I went to grade school in Greece.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Did you have any kind of occupation are you able to tell before you came to the United States?

B. NICKLOW: No I was 13 years only.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Okay.

B. NICKLOW: What did you do then for work in Greece?

A. SPELOIPOULOS: I was too young to work.

B. NICKLOW: Okay. Once I went to work in a bigger town in Thessaly in my uncle's place washing dishes like a bus boy.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Okay. What special interests or skills or hobbies do you have?

B. NICKLOW: You know the last time, we really didn't have time for hobbies.
But I like to go swimming and that's --

A. SPELOIPOULOS: You fish a lot?

B. NICKLOW: Little bit, a little fishing and --

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Okay all right I know with being the best in business and because you're such a successful business person and you've had important awards that have been handed to you. You want to tell us what those are?

B. NICKLOW: Well three or four awards when I was still in high school. I was chosen by the some kind of a club that I was one of the nicest young man that came from overseas because I used to go to school daytime and junior high school and then night time I took English lessons, and then if I wasn't going to school I used to work as a bus boy at the **[unintelligible - 00:09:25]**.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Okay. And who owned the **[unintelligible - 00:09:27]** cafe that was --?

B. NICKLOW: James [Pidimus].

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Pidimus, okay. All right and anything that you'd like to share up to this point before we go to your work experience here in the United States, and any special events in your life, you know?

B. NICKLOW: Okay like I said I came here because of poverty and when I was in Greece after World War II, after my father was killed, me and my aunt was still living in until this day she's still my favorite aunt. She and I we went from house to house

[00:10:00] begging for food and I thought I would never forget that and that has always stayed with me, and I look at that now as an asset more so than a burden at that time. I can thank the Almighty God for brining me into the States especially Minneapolis. I went to junior high school here and senior high school. It was the beginning and I was the first foreigner so to speak. When I went to junior high school in high school, and the kids, although I couldn't speak a word of English, they were vey very good to me and they helped me a lot with the games, and invited me to their

houses. I used to go out and play baseball and football with them and some of those friends are still my closest friends. I felt really grateful and thankful for coming here to the land of opportunity and Almighty God, and my fellow man has been good to me, and I can honestly say that I'm successful because I have a place to go to work, I have a home and I just count my blessings.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Okay, good.

B. NICKLOW: In 1958, I graduated here from Washington high school and then I went three years at St. Claus State College. I was studying to become a schoolteacher, I teach business education and administration at the same time. I used to live with six or seven other guys and while I was going to school, I was working in restaurant summers, weekends, holidays and my buddies were all American boys then and I used to do all the cooking for those guys. And working in the restaurant business in 1962, my uncle and a cousin of mine by the name of Bill [unintelligible - 0:12:31], we opened up a little restaurant at 14th Nicolette by the name of Bernard café. Well, the [unintelligible - 0:12:40] wasn't so hard and we were too young and dumb in a sense so we didn't make a lot of money but we got a lot of education. My uncle and my cousin, they sold that to two other Greek lads they were [unintelligible - 0:12:57]. The three of us we were all of us all of us were under 20 years old and like I said we were kind of young and dumb and we didn't make any money but we got a lot of education. In 1955 we decided to sell the place and each and every one of us went our own ways. In 1956 a fellow by the name of George [unintelligible - 0:13:29] came from Chicago and he opened up the best steak house and I was looking for a – in down town [unintelligible - 0:13:38] after we sold the restaurant I was looking for a job and I went to work for accounting firm for three months. Being in the restaurant business and on the go, I did not like to work in an office and I decided to go out and look for a restaurant job. When I ran in to George [unintelligible - 0:14:06] who happens to be my Koumbaro and my daughter's Nonno now, he said that

he was looking for young man to set to expand on the best steak houses so we opened up another best steak house on Oak and Washington. By the University of Minnesota we used to give [unintelligible - 0:14:33] for a good many years and we opened up place in 1966 and ever since, I have been on my own. I strongly believe in the thing that you have to be at the right time in the right place to succeed and I think I was at the right time in the right way when I met my Koumbaro and he helped me

[0:15:00]

open up the best steak house on Oak and Washington and I was there for about ten years. Then time my brother Jim and Tony came in with me, Tony was going to [unintelligible - 0:15:16] state college and my brother Jim he had a shop in Seattle, Washington. We all get together and after that we opened about five steak houses of our own and in 1969, my Koumbaro from Chicago came in and the city of Philly had two places for sale. Two little places and we went into the city of Philly and we put a bid one other place and we outbid the other fellows by \$1,000 and that is the so called [unintelligible - 0:16:11] now which we own and operate since 1971. After that, in 1976 we bought the old [unintelligible - 0:16:23] which is now Nicklow's and stands on highway 146 in crystal technically we've been here now for about 12 years and although we had our ups and downs at the beginning, it was kind of a rough going. We put a lot of money and business was rocky, up and down like the weather but in 1980 we managed and we made this more contemporary and thank God, that business is pretty good now. Then in 1979, we opened another lower restaurant, a family restaurant in Spring Lake Park. There we were with [unintelligible - 0:17:27]. About three years ago, he decided to go and buy Peter's Grill from his uncle and he brought Andy out now we own the so called [unintelligible - 0:17:40] the three of us brothers and – but two years ago we opened up a little place by the University of Minnesota, the [unintelligible - 0:17:56] café we sell hamburgers, French fries mostly you can say that we have some real estate which we rent out and all in all things are pretty good.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Good okay and you are now in the board of trustees on the church
you have been on the board for.

B. NICKLOW: For two years.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: For two years and **[unintelligible - 0:18:23]**.

B. NICKLOW: About ten years ago I was there for another term, yes.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: And I might add, a very active churchgoer and a great contributor
to anybody who really asks Bill for anything

B. NICKLOW: Yes one more thing, I belong to the **[unintelligible - 0:18:43]** club
we meet **[unintelligible - 0:18:50]** and some other community clubs

A. SPELOIPOULOS: Kindly **[unintelligible - 0:19:00]**.

B. NICKLOW: Thank you.

A. SPELOIPOULOS: This concludes the oral history study done on Bill A. Nicklow,
Angie **[unintelligible - 0:19:09]**.