

Transcription: BV023.16.21

Interview with Georgia Chronakis and Alex Chronakis

Audio Recording: 2023_0016_0021_002.mp3

Interviewer: James Binks (INTVWR)

Interviewee: Georgia Chronakis (GC); Alex Chronakis (AC)

Date of Interview: November 8, 2023

- 1 INTVWR: This is James Binks. I'm a researcher at the Burnaby Village Museum. Today is
2 November 8, 2023. I'm currently sitting in the archives of the Burnaby Village Museum and I'm
3 sitting across from?
- 4 GC: Georgia Chronakis.
- 5 AC: And Alex Chronakis, her son.
- 6 INTVWR: Okay. Well, thanks for joining me and sharing your stories today. I invited you
7 because your family opened a restaurant on Hastings in Burnaby called Minoas Taverna in 1986,
8 I believe, and just closed in September of 2023. I want to start the interview a little earlier than
9 that, such as what part of Greece your family is originally from?
- 10 GC: I'm from Sparta.
- 11 AC: Small little village, Selassia.
- 12 GC: My husband, he's from Crete.
- 13 INTVWR: Sorry, who's from Crete?
- 14 GC: My husband.
- 15 INTVWR: Oh, your husband is from Crete. But you're from?
- 16 GC: From Sparta, a small place called Selassia is the village name. Grew up. **00:01:00** He was
17 16 and I went to Athens for 7 years. I came to Canada.
- 18 AC: Came to Canada in 1963, Montreal. Stayed with their sister
- 19 GC: '64.
- 20 AC: '64, and then in 1966, she came to Vancouver and met my father in Vancouver, and
- 21 GC: Got married.
- 22 AC: Got married. Things moved pretty fast - married, child, bought the house where the
23 restaurant is located. It's actually on Kingsway, 3823 Kingsway near Boundary.
- 24 INTVWR: Sorry, did I say Hastings? I meant Kingsway.
- 25 GC: Yeah, I tried to correct. That's okay.
- 26 AC: And 1966. Then in 1986, we had lived in it and rented it out as well. In 1986, May 1st, one
27 day before Expo '86 grand opening, we opened Minoas Greek Taverna. We opened for 37 years,
28 what an amazing journey.
- 29 INTVWR: Yeah, so there was a restaurant already **00:02:00** at that house you said on Kingsway.
- 30 GC: Was there? No, that was a house before.
- 31 INTVWR: Oh, it was just a house.
- 32 AC: We converted it to a restaurant in 1986. The house goes back many, many years, it's um...

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33 GC: But we lived a few years there and we moved to White Rock and we rented out in 1986. We
34 converted the restaurant.

35 AC: So it's on Smith Avenue and they say there was a famous, well-known, Doctor Smith, which
36 was his house that belonged to him. It's very symbolic. It's a 2 or 3 level home.

37 GC: I have a lot of ladies coming up and say, "Oh, this is my doctor. Delivered my baby." That
38 was his practice, up in that house. I don't know how true. That's why Dr. Smith, and the street's
39 named Smith Avenue. That's the story I know.

40 INTVWR: Doctor Smith. He lived in the house that you lived?

41 GC: In the house in the street, they named it Smith Avenue. One Smith, Kingsway and Smith.

42 INTVWR: And you said the house was about 45 years old? **00:03:00**

43 GC: We bought it, I remember it was 45, 45 years old when we bought it.

44 AC: Yeah, no one nobody really knows the age of the house because at one point some of the
45 water connections weren't connected. So the city actually doesn't know the exact history of the
46 house.

47 GC: Well, he's a realtor. He might know how they go. When you sell a house, then you have to
48 know how old.

49 AC: They were promoting myself not to get in history. **[inaudible]**

50 INTVWR: Alex, you were born in?

51 AC: I was born in Canada.

52 INTVWR: You were born here?

53 AC: Yeah, in Westminster.

54 GC: All my kids.

55 INTVWR: Which year was that that you were born?

56 AC: 1972, but only my oldest sister grew up in this house where the restaurant is because then
57 we all moved to White Rock, grew up in White Rock, and then came back in 1986.

58 INTVWR: Ah, okay. You were living in White Rock actually until 1986, but you owned the
59 house in Burnaby?

60 AC: Yeah, and they lived in it for about 4 years.

61 GC: We have a restaurant in White Rock too. **00:04:00**

62 AC: Another Minoas place, what it was called in White Rock.

63 GC: Mr. Mikes Steakhouse for 4 years, 3 years. Yeah.

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64 AC: That's how we first got started, through Mr. Mike's. Started with the restaurant business.
65 Minoas Tavern has got an interesting name because that goes back to the ancient Greek
66 civilization, the days of the Minotaur, 2500 BC. In the restaurant, there's the pictures of the bull,
67 the themes, the pillars, and everything's related to that era.

68 INTVWR: And that's linked to your father being from Crete originally?

69 GC: Yeah, that's right.

70 INTVWR: Which part of Crete is he from?

71 GC: Heraklion.

72 INTVWR: From Heraklion., so very close to Knossos.

73 AC: That's correct, yeah.

74 GC: And then I have a daughter who lives there now, got married and...

75 AC: He mentioned that. Because right now, Knossos is quite a tourist area and lots of tour buses.
76 When he was a kid, there was not fenced off and there was no tourists. It **00:05:00** was actually a
77 playground. They were playing in that area, the Knossos.

78 INTVWR: When was your father born?

79 AC: 1934?

80 GC: 1934.

81 AC: '34, okay.

82 GC: Get in there.

83 INTVWR: It was more recently excavated then, yeah, but back then.

84 AC: So he, when he emigrated, I think it was in 1965.

85 GC: '65

86 AC: '66, but he's quite entrepreneurial. Just to go back, he was in Greece. He was a high-rank
87 officer and was also a mechanic with the Army working on their planes. So then when he came
88 to Canada he was a certified mechanic. So he started working in garages and he had quite an
89 opportunity right where the Telus building is right now, 377 Kingsway, Kingsway and Boundary
90 used to be an Esso gas station. He worked there for about eight months as a mechanic.

91 GC: He bought the place.

92 AC: Well, he didn't actually buy the place. **00:06:00**

93 GC: They offered him.

94 AC: They offered it to him with no money down because he was quite an entrepreneur as a
95 corporate run office. It wasn't being run as efficiently. He brought it from 8,000 gallons to
96 36,000 gallons within a year. It was quite all the big changes, he made the service, and they saw

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97 him. He was quite a performer. He had no money, so they said, he had no tires, and no gas as
98 well. So they supplied it to him kind on loan and for him to pay it off within 3 years. He paid it
99 off in a year and a half, he's proud about these moments because he actually had, they had a
100 convention for the gas station owners. When he's sitting there with his friend, Vaggelis, and
101 they're giving out awards he's like, "Well, I wish I was born in Canada so that I could win an
102 award." They called him up, so he was amazed, the most. I'm not sure if it was like top **00:07:00**
103 top performer in Canada.

104 GC: Top sales.

105 AC: For Esso gas stations. From 8,000 gallons to 36,000 gallons in a year, so it was quite a
106 significant achievement. He likes to bring it up because it's like a certain milestones he had.

107 INTVWR: So he had just got the first place he worked at when he came to Canada.

108 AC: Well, he might have worked in a few places, car wash. But within a year, he was at the gas
109 station. He started off sleeping in the car.

110 GC: The same year, we bought the house. We got married in April and we got the house in
111 November.

112 INTVWR: Did he come on his own or did he come with his family?

113 AC: We had an uncle here, so he came to see him.

114 INTVWR: Okay, so his uncle said, "Oh, you should come to Canada." And what about for you,
115 Georgia? Did you come with your family or how did you arrive?

116 GC: No I had a sister who first came to Montreal and **00:08:00** she sponsored me. I went there
117 for 1964-1966. So my uncle from Vancouver, he called me up, he says "Come to Vancouver. We
118 miss you and we have a guy if you want to get married." My sister was upset. "I bring you to
119 Canada and you're going to leave me here. So what happened, yeah I decided to come in
120 Vancouver and that's it. Met him, got engaged, and married. That's all.

121 INTVWR: Right.

122 AC: But at the restaurants, Greek Taverna, there's one room. I'm not sure if you had a chance to
123 come in the last time. On the main floor was our main living room and it was just countless
124 parties, like family parties. A lot of the Greeks, definitely. It was a much tighter community.

125 GC: That was a really warm house, warm...

126 AC: Lots **00:09:00** of big parties.

127 GC: Stories, but you know families we met, there was all the kids were young. We have friend
128 families from Greece and everything. Just parties and parties and still a lot of people that come or
129 whatever we moved. They say that, "That's not the same." They want the house, they want the
130 first house. I remember the parties, remember the entertainment. It was still, yeah the restaurant
131 was kind. Yeah. What I miss the best, I miss the customers because they met my family. They're

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132 young and I met their families, their kids. They have their parties, [inaudible], and Christian
133 birthdays.

134 AC: Yeah, over 37 years we have gone through a generation.

135 GC: Now, I see them grow up. Grow up and marry, they have their staff all in our restaurant.
136 They know our kids and they feel like a family. To me, doesn't feel like, I never feel like I'm
137 going to work. It's just I'm going...

138 AC: So it was... **00:10:00**

139 GC: My second house because we lived one block from the house from the restaurant.

140 INTVWR: Originally, or you lived in that house when the restaurant was opened?

141 GC: We lived about 4 years, 4 years and we rented out over the years. And when the time comes
142 to convert over to a restaurant, we moved back from White Rock to Burnaby.

143 INTVWR: And so were you living in the restaurant while the restaurant was operating?

144 GC: No, no, no, we bought a house down the street. Convenience and just one minute down.

145 INTVWR: But you kept a kind of living room space in the bottom of the restaurant.

146 GC: Yeah, we used to have the parties on the main room. That was my suite and we rent the
147 upstairs. So that was the [inaudible]. So I don't know what they're going to do now, they're
148 going to keep it as a family room or they're going to convert something else. I don't know.

149 AC: It's a nice Mexican family restaurant that's continuing. They also own a business in
150 Burnaby, Rocky's Meats on Hastings.

151 INTVWR: Oh okay.

152 AC: So maybe **00:11:00** that's where the connection was, the new owners were from Hastings.

153 GC: What I feel we had a good name there, so I don't know.

154 AC: No, it's going to be great.

155 GC: Who knows..

156 AC: We're happy to finish a legacy and close Minoas with our name.

157 INTVWR: Yeah. Well, 37 years.

158 AC: Now, it's a new venture for the new family so we're excited for them. It was a tough
159 transition for my mom and my sister especially.

160 GC: My older daughter works from day one with me.

161 AC: There's one picture we have. There's a picture of my mother with a baby. This is my sister
162 Anna, which is the baby.

163 GC: That's the first one.

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164 AC: She was born at the house here.

165 INTVWR: Oh, right.

166 AC: That's, there's even a deeper connection.

167 GC: That's the baby there, that's the one lives in Greece, and this is Alex here and that's my
168 youngest.

169 INTVWR: So Anna is the oldest?

170 GC: Anna is the oldest.

171 INTVWR: Who's here and then...?

172 GC: Virginia **00:12:00** is in Greece, Alex, and I have Ellie. She's the one here. Did I say where
173 she works, she works for [inaudible] restaurants.

174 AC: As of today, as of this current date, who knows, who knows in 10 years?

175 GC: Interior designer, the young one.

176 INTVWR: Okay. So Anna worked with you at the restaurant the whole time?

177 GC: Yeah, that's why it was hard for her and for me. We try to keep busy every day to go by and
178 see the place from blue to white now is yellow and orange.

179 AC: Very, very lively. And it's going to be...

180 GC: Yeah, it's really attractive now but still it's not a Greek, Greek.

181 AC: The Greek is the blue and white, of course, as we know it's like white skies and blue ocean.
182 It's the most Greek restaurants are blue and white.

183 INTVWR: Yeah, like the flag.

184 GC: Right.

185 INTVWR: So do you know why the, back in the 60s, I guess, when the house was first bought,
186 why did you choose to move to that **00:13:00** area? Your husband?

187 GC: Well, because my husband, he has a business there, right. He has the service there so we
188 bought a house next.

189 AC: Service station is literally one block away, but then he liked the house because there's
190 multiple revenue multifamily.

191 GC: The Telus building is they call the boot, that was a small apartment and we lived and my
192 service station was next to me, and the house half a block down. So we bought the house,
193 walking to work, and most of our friends, they live in area of Simon Fraser [inaudible]. So was,
194 and I always liked, I don't know when I moved to White Rock and they want to move, I was
195 upset. I like Vancouver, Burnaby and when I moved to White Rock, I didn't want to move back.

196 INTVWR: Yeah.

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197 AC: It wasn't as common for a lot of Greeks grew up in the Kitsilano area, but we moved to
198 South Burnaby, then to **00:14:00** White Rock on a two-acre farm, which is even further away.
199 But my dad, he just, he liked to do his own thing. Very entrepreneurial and had a lot of different
200 entrepreneurial businesses.

201 INTVWR: Yeah, wherever there was an opportunity I guess he would go there.

202 AC: Well, he loved mechanics. That was like his passion.

203 GC: He's a mechanic.

204 AC: He had a dump truck for some years, then worked for CP air, which is Canadian Airlines.
205 It's no longer around CP Air.

206 GC: And BC Ferries.

207 AC: We were going to Greece every year on very cheap airline passes.

208 GC: He worked for B.C. Ferries too, B.C. Ferries, Airlines. The same time, he applied for both
209 and **[inaudible]** called for both. So he works double shifts for about 2 or 3 months. Once shift to
210 the other.

211 AC: He like a lot of hard-working immigrants working very hard, it like it was

212 GC: Two jobs.

213 AC: The priority was like working, family. It's a little different nowadays.

214 INTVWR: Yeah, so I mean he was kind of **00:15:00** a mechanic. And so how did he and your
215 family get into the restaurant industry?

216 GC: He met the fellow that was in and he says, "Hey Louis, you want to go to the restaurant
217 business?" And that was Mr. Mike's. What's his last name again?

218 AC: But Mr. Mike's was a franchise. He became a franchisee, so they trained him.

219 GC: Remember them? Mr. Mike's steakhouse?

220 AC: Well, this is Mr. Mike's now that's been revitalized. But at one point, there's quite a few
221 franchisees.

222 GC: Well that time was about 16 B.C. Now, there's two left or three. Anyway, we went with him
223 partners.

224 AC: You got all the training.

225 GC: And after a little opportunity came, bought a little cafe with a motel. Remember, we opened
226 the Greek restaurant. Again, was the breakfast place and we turn to the Greek restaurant.

227 INTVWR: In White Rock.

228 GC: In White Rock, again. I mean, that's White Rock **00:16:00**.

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229 INTVWR: And so Louis was working, like he was till working for CP Air, and BC ferries, and
230 all those companies but the restaurant was also operated at the same time?

231 AC: No, it kind of...

232 GC: That was different time.

233 AC: It was a different time. You could try to do both, but it was tough. So he had to transition,
234 focus more on the business. He's definitely made for independent business rather than a
235 franchise. Just strong-minded, likes to do it his own way, so it worked better to be not part of our
236 franchise.

237 GC: Well, he'd better work in the [grease], he can fixing cars, or ride this. That's his passion. He
238 opened the restaurant for us. That was the best thing we did for our kids because we kept them
239 together.

240 AC: We were all teenagers.

241 GC: At school, they're working and we know where they are. You know, how it is going.

242 AC: We're actually all teenagers at the time.

243 GC: [inaudible] at the restaurant and work hours. That was, that **00:17:00** was good. But when
244 they get older they say, "Mom, we've got enough."

245 INTVWR: So you, so you and your siblings were working at your parents' restaurant? After
246 school and..

247 GC: Yeah, they all working, they what do you call bussing, bussing food, clean table.

248 AC: Yeah so then there's the four of us. The two of us continued, me and Anna.

249 INTVWR: And Anna, right.

250 GC: Yeah so.

251 INTVWR: Sorry about the noise of doing a bit of work upstairs painting. So then-

252 GC: Hard work.

253 INTVWR: You decided to move back to Burnaby and open Minoas Taverna?

254 GC: Yeah. Took about a year to renovate and everything, and we opened the restaurant. That
255 was really good. Yeah, 1986, the best year, a lot of tourists, a lot of -

256 INTVWR: Yeah, they just built the Sky train right which goes right next to the restaurant.

257 GC: The same day, the Sky train, I think...

258 AC: It was 1985, one year before **00:18:00** it was built.

259 GC: We have little complaints that the sky train make noise. But now, nobody complain. What is
260 the same noise? And we have, Bill Vander Zalm, the ex-premier, he did a grand opening for us.

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261 AC: He's a good friend of the family.

262 GC: Bill Vander Zalm was a friend of ours.

263 AC: So when I mentioned, like our grand opening was May 1st, 1986. Expo opened May 2nd.
264 That was a big year because Vancouver was just, was alive. It was a busy, full of tourists. We
265 were the newest and hottest building in Burnaby. So it was extremely busy. They had live
266 entertainment and Greek dancing.

267 GC: Telus building was about 3,000 people working at the time. And now, not too long ago, I
268 walk and I ask a customer, I says "How many people?" He says, "20 people working now."
269 Some working from their house, some they took the package, some they moved **00:19:00** to
270 Vancouver. So the place is rented to different companies. So it was not the same.

271 AC: Those were different times.

272 GC: So we closed **[inaudible]** after the **[inaudible]**. But it still was good, yes. 37 years.

273 INTVWR: What was the menu like when it first opened in 1986? Was it like only Greek food?
274 Was there a mix? Was there not much Greek food? What was kind of on the menu?

275 GC: No mostly Greek food. We have steaks and seafood. We have **[inaudible]**, we have a chef
276 from Greece.

277 AC: 90% Greek. For sure.

278 INTVWR: What kind of Greek dishes were served?

279 GC: What's really popular is the souvlakis. Like, lamb kleftiko. There's calamari, moussaka and
280 Dolmades, bifteki. So it, was good and simple menu, but a lot of work. Like, Greek cuisine is
281 **[inaudible]**.

282 INTVWR: Did people know **00:20:00** what Minoas was referring to? Or were people like,
283 "What is this Minoa thing? Do they kind of have questions or do people come in knowing about
284 that history?"

285 GC: I would like little stories about, the menu has a story about the, beside menu

286 AC: I would usually be the person, the historian, that they bring out. And I started giving people
287 history lessons. That was fun.

288 GC: **[inaudible]**

289 INTVWR: What are some stories you'd like to tell to the customers?

290 AC: Well basically, just how we derived the theme of the restaurant. My father grew up there, he
291 was from the palace of Knossos, and he went into so much detail. The pillars which were wider
292 at the top and then more narrow at the base even. We even had the restaurant like that. Like, he
293 tried to get as much detail as possible. It's all the same colors and that's it, but most people are
294 more familiar with Socrates, Alexander the Great, which is around 300 BC. I **00:21:00** mean,

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295 Minoan is more of an unknown civilization, 2500 BC and so. It was a nice lesson to most. Like,
296 they were interested.

297 INTVWR: Yeah, that's good. There at the front, I think there were some columns I remember. Is
298 that what you're referring to at the front of the building?

299 GC: They're still there and we still have columns inside the dining room upstairs. The same.

300 INTVWR: Like, that red color? Because that's... Yeah, Knossos has those red columns.

301 GC: Have you been to Crete?

302 INTVWR: I have, I have been to Knossos as well.

303 GC: Yeah, my daughter lives about 10 minutes from Knossos.

304 INTVWR: Right.

305 AC: I love what they did with Knossos because it's, they founded as rock rubble. I think it's Sir
306 Arthur Evans that excavated it and rebuilt it to how he imagined it would be. It's nice to go there
307 as a tourist and just kind of envision people walking around, like just envisioning how it was
308 back then. He did a great job because there's other archaeological 00:22:00 sites that are just
309 pebbles and rocks. It's hard to have that same feeling.

310 INTVWR: Yeah. Knossos, like Arthur Evans sort of led a bit of a reconstruction of the site.
311 When you visited there or before when the restaurant was operating, did you take some other
312 influences? You have the columns, you said the bull was on the...

313 GC: On the bar, we have on the bar.

314 AC: On our sign as well, outside.

315 GC: On our sign.

316 INTVWR: And the sign in the bar, there was the bull - where, somebody's like leaping over the
317 bull.

318 AC: We would, every trip to Greece, we'd pick up heirlooms or ornaments but it was more from
319 day one, we haven't done a lot of changes. It was a very traditional. Like, some restaurants like to
320 change it up and modernize it but we kept it as traditional as possible for 37 years and just
321 repainting. And that's what people loved. They love to hear the Zorba, the Greek.

322 INTVWR: Right. What kind of music did you have in the?

323 AC: Well, it was

324 GC: Most Greek music.

325 AC: There's Sirtaki, Zorba 00:23:00 the Greek. Some modern singers, Greek singers, actually.
326 Actually it's funny, even my father, when I was going back when he was in the gas station
327 service, when he took it over, they all called him Zorbas because he was Greek. So he was like,
328 that's how he was referred to.

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329 INTVWR: Right, right. And the clientele at the restaurant or the customers, you had have a lot of
330 Greek folks coming - not just for the parties, but just for the food?

331 GC: No not a lot of Greeks. You know how the Greeks, they don't want to go out for, when they
332 can cook at home. We go for pizza, we go for it. When the kids are young, we don't go for
333 Greek. I cook Greek at home. We get Greeks, but not too often. Most of our customers are.

334 AC: Well, it's the demographics of the area. There's a lot of Greeks do live in Kits as well. But
335 whenever there's a baptism or wedding, we did have a lot of Greek parties because there's a
336 Greek church down the street, Boundary and 29th 00:24:00 Saint Nicholas. We definitely get
337 people that would come after church. But on a, as a regular basis, it's more of whoever lived in
338 the area.

339 INTVWR: Does anyone...

340 AC: Anyone who enjoyed the food.

341 INTVWR: Yeah.

342 GC: Yeah, but we handle lots of little parties like Christians. Birthdays, Christmas, [inaudible],
343 proposal and weddings. It was lots of little parties. We can all about 80 people all together in the
344 restaurant, so that was a good sight. That's the day we left for Sunday. We left. That was our last
345 day, Sunday, with all our customers a few couple months ago. They come two to three times a
346 week. They come, "We can't get enough of you. We're leaving and crying. Oh, my God." And
347 the days, Sunday, we left. They fill up the place with flowers, cards, they tell stories, 00:25:00
348 and they remember their parents cards." We remember we did all our parties here and our kids
349 parties. We watched our kids, we watched your kids and it's really emotional. Oh, my God. Me
350 And my daughter. Alex tried to hold back on the bed, but me and my daughter was [inaudible]
351 we had fight and I was crying because her customers, 37 years, you still have customers the
352 same. But a lot of people, they get older. How are we going to come up to your place? Can't
353 walk. Sorry, I can't put an elevator now. It's too late. So that was -

354 AC: We had the one gentleman, I think his name was Brian that used to live there.

355 GC: Yeah. Brian, he got married downstairs. He lives downstairs and his wedding downstairs in
356 the living room.

357 AC: He brought us some pictures. And for him, he came really emotional because he heard about
358 it and because he had lived here for...

359 GC: He lives for 8 years. He's waiting downstairs in the little corner of the living room there. He
360 00:26:00 comes every anniversary, he comes. A few years ago he lost his wife and he came, he
361 remember all these stories.

362 AC: Yeah, we're in his front room here that's facing Kingsway.

363 GC: You got there, somewhere there.

364 AC: That was like the main living room.

Transcription: BV023.16.21

Interview with Georgia Chronakis and Alex Chronakis

Audio Recording: 2023_0016_0021_002.mp3

Interviewer: James Binks (INTVWR)

Interviewee: Georgia Chronakis (GC); Alex Chronakis (AC)

Date of Interview: November 8, 2023

365 GC: Yeah, there was lots of memories. Like I say, I miss the customers most.

366 INTVWR: Why did you decide to close?

367 AC: After 37 years, it was, it was a good journey. It just, it felt right.

368 GC: Well, a couple of years, I broke my shoulder. And they see me a little bit try to work and
369 stuff and says "Mom, we've got, its enough, Mom it's enough. We keep the restaurant for you." I
370 say okay.

371 AC: That's how hard-working some of the Greeks are, just as my mom was busy keeping busy
372 with the customers working. She just turned 82 yesterday, but she didn't want to retire. This is
373 our way of saying,

374 INTVWR: Right.

375 AC: "Take a day off."

376 INTVWR: Yeah.

377 AC: Let's sell the restaurant.

378 INTVWR: You got to sell it to take a day off. **00:27:00** Yeah, I mean, you must have been
379 exhausted because you're working there, Anna is working there, Louis, I suppose.

380 GC: My daughter says, "Mom, we keep the restaurant for you". Okay, now, she feels bad we
381 sold it. But again says, "Mom it's okay. We'll deal with it."

382 AC: Well, actually. Okay, it was hard work but there was a lot of - when you're with the family
383 and the people you like to be with and we have a little retreat room, so it all kind of worked out.
384 It all kind of blended.

385 GC: Like, whoever comes to visit us.

386 AC: Many hours slaving away. It was, of course, we worked hard but it was just personal and
387 business life got melded together. We had a little, the retreat room, which was our own little
388 family room. So a second home.

389 GC: Whoever wants to come to visit or be there because I'm not in the house. So every visitors
390 come from Greece, from California, or whatever places or customer friends, they come sit there
391 in the living room. So I didn't have to work all the time.

392 AC: That's where all the memories are. All the get-togethers, the dinners, the **00:28:00** family.
393 Every time there's a family celebration, it would be, most of the time would be there.

394 INTVWR: So the retreat room had like a couch and table? Like a house?

395 GC: Cable TV and computers. Yeah, got everything there, and just yeah.

396 AC: I spent more time there than at home.

397 GC: I get up in the morning was 8:30, 9, I get a shower, get ready, and go to the restaurant with a
398 coffee or tea, or whatever. I open TV or a little iPod and play around till the staff coming. So that

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399 was my... I get up in the morning I say what I'm doing, I stay home, have a coffee myself. How
400 we do it, so used to, anyway.

401 INTVWR: So what was the last day? You said it was a Sunday.

402 GC: It was a Sunday.

403 AC: September 10th, 2023.

404 GC: Yeah because Monday and Tuesday, we were closed and thought we need a couple or three
405 days to clean up.

406 AC: Lots to clean up.

407 GC: They took up **00:29:00** on the 15, right.

408 AC: Lots of cleanup that they've done. They've had professional cleaners come in, they've taken
409 all the floors, and walls. Were like, "We didn't have to clean up" again because they've taken out
410 they're replacing equipment. They're doing a great job.

411 GC: Oh, it's going to be like a new place now.

412 AC: Cosmetically, they're fixing it inside but we probably could have just...

413 GC: It looks really good actually.

414 AC: They could have just handed the keys, it would have been. But it was 4 days of cleaning,
415 organizing.

416 GC: Like before, we have a problem. They say, "Oh, we live in this area and never see your
417 place. We live in Champlain Heights." And now, you can see the building from block down
418 really bright, really, right. I like the colors for a Mexican food.

419 AC: Yeah, definitely looks like it's going to be lively and we're excited for them. We're excited
420 to pass the torch onto a good family.

421 GC: I'm sure they're going to do good, they look like a nice family. Mexican food is popular too,
422 right so. **00:30:00**

423 AC: Greek food is popular but I think Mexican food is very popular. That's what Burnaby needs
424 now.

425 INTVWR: Do you remember if there were any changes to the menu over the decades too? Like,
426 as people's tastes changed?

427 AC: Yeah, about 90% of the menu stayed the same but items that have come and gone have been
428 like quails, grilled quails.

429 GC: Rabbit Stifado.

430 AC: Rabbit Stifado, Like, a rabbit stew. Delicious.

431 GC: Or beef, yeah.

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432 AC: These are some customers perceived it differently, they felt bad for them. It wasn't as well
433 received as just eating beef or chicken.

434 GC: No. Once, we tried to change the menu a little bit more Canadian food with our chef. I was
435 working for Sheraton Landmark Hotel and we tried to, she tried to put some dishes for her there.
436 We change and people know, they want the Greek food. They come **00:31:00 [inaudible]**.

437 AC: Just different dishes.

438 GC: Different, nobody ordered all this stuff. They come for the Greek food and say, "My God,
439 what are we going to do?" We left for a month or two, the menu, and we took it out because it
440 was so, Greek food was more...

441 AC: Everyone that came, it's because they wanted to feel like they're in Greece, not like a
442 mainstream restaurant. So you kind of find your niche or you just stay on track. We do it, we did
443 it well so, that's why people came. If we were a generalist like night and day or a different
444 restaurant, who knows, it might not have been as popular.

445 GC: They liked the most because it was a family restaurant, they see you guys working all the
446 time. The little kids, they grew up and they loved family restaurants, right.

447 INTVWR: Right.

448 GC: I don't know how you like to go see family restaurant, so yeah.

449 AC: But my mom was definitely the main person that everyone loved to see. They called her
450 like, Mom and Georgia.

451 GC: Oh, my God **00:32:00**. If I'm not there...

452 AC: If she took a day off, like they specifically came from far away just to see her.

453 GC: I used to get biscotti compliments. If I don't have it, or if I don't serve or something. The
454 waitress, "Can we have some Georgia's cookies, please?"

455 AC: Yeah, Georgia's cookies.

456 GC: Oh, my God. Now, that's all the lady left alone. Maybe my customers are going to ask for
457 cookies.

458 AC: I was like, "We could start a business. Georgia's cookies." She's like, "No. Now, I want to
459 retire."

460 GC: Like, every other week, I have to make big baskets and I love to do that.

461 INTVWR: What kind of cookies?

462 GC: The biscotti, what we call it.

463 AC: They're not like the Italian biscotti.

464 GC: Like Italian biscotti, but it's different. They're really **[inaudible]**.

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465 AC: They're not as hard. Like, they're more soft on the teeth.

466 GC: It was easy in the restaurant to do it. Now in the house, it's hard on me, sorry...

467 AC: We can't give the exact **00:33:00** ingredients because that's her secret that she's keeping.

468 GC: My son likes sweets.

469 AC: I don't think any of us know her cooking ingredients.

470 GC: You have a Greek coffee, couple cookies, I say one, [inaudible] "Alex, enough". Has to

471 have two.

472 AC: The general ingredients you might say is like orange zest, some cinnamon, touch of brandy,

473 and the regular, regular items.

474 GC: It was good.

475 AC: This is her secret, but those are like the main key ingredients that make it stand out.

476 INTVWR: Yeah.

477 GC: When I go to Greece for a month or a month and a half, I run out of cookies and after my

478 daughter. "Can we have some cookies?" "My mom's not here." "When she's coming?" "She

479 didn't teach you yet how to do cookies?" Oh, my God. She's, "Mom, I can't take it anymore. I

480 have to make some cookies. Everybody asks us for those cookies."

481 AC: I think it's one thing. Well if you have your secret ingredient, then everyone's, you're in

482 demand. Something **00:34:00** about - there's a reason why you keep it a secret.

483 INTVWR: Yeah. What was your favorite food there, Alex?

484 AC: I always loved the roast lamb.

485 INTVWR: Roast lamb.

486 AC: We got a lamb from New Zealand, which is a more milder taste. There was, the lamb has

487 three different cuts. There's usually the middle cut with the bone in the middle, it's the most

488 popular. Everyone from all over would say we have the best lamb in Vancouver.

489 GC: Cooking for about 4 hours.

490 AC: Yeah, for about 4 hours.

491 GC: It was the best sales.

492 AC: Cooking for about 4 hours, put it in the convection oven so we would get crispy on the

493 outside. It's buying good product, but it's also the way we cooked and prepared it.

494 GC: There was original recipes bringing from Greece and then we started the same mousaka.

495 AC: That's great. Well, I guess it doesn't matter if she scratches. We got the instruction.

496 GC: Mousakas, dolmades, and all **00:35:00** the family recipes, right. So we kept it.

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497 AC: Kleftiko, that doesn't really mean lamb in Greek. Like, ani means lamb but kleftiko is
498 because the warriors used to get the lamb buried in the ground and cook it. It's because it was
499 lamb that they had stolen, which is a klepto. That's where the connection is. If you go to a
500 restaurant called Kleftiko.

501 GC: That means stolen lamb.

502 AC: Wow, it tastes better like this. It's got a novelty to it.

503 GC: We used to have a nice story about that in their menus.

504 AC: The story I mentioned, we had that story. And the moussaka, in our restaurant, our
505 moussaka was made differently than others because our béchamel cream, it's a layered casserole
506 similar to shepherd's pie - eggplants, zucchini, ground beef, potatoes, béchamel cream, egg, and
507 milk cream. And other restaurants had...

508 GC: There's the **00:36:00** ground beef and the cream. Yeah. We have the best moussaka.

509 AC: Our béchamel cream was lighter and we added eggplant to it or some a little bit of
510 cinnamon.

511 INTVWR: Right.

512 AC: So it was definitely more unique. We did things a little differently.

513 GC: Every restaurant has the different recipes, right...

514 AC: And it all depends on the regions of Greece as well or how they've been brought up.

515 GC: And the chef we have at the time was from Crete, so he brings a lot.

516 INTVWR: You had a chef from Crete?

517 AC: At the time, over the years, it was different ethnic backgrounds.

518 GC: He moved back to Greece.

519 AC: Yeah, over 37 years, we had some key employees. But you do, people grow up or they
520 move out of the area, so employees change.

521 INTVWR: Right. Is there anything else you'd like to share about the restaurant or anything about
522 your career, life, family, community, or anything that we haven't covered?

523 AC: No, **00:37:00** we're just keeping busy. Like, I'm a realtor. So I've been keeping busy with
524 this.

525 GC: Just get involved with the church some more.

526 AC: It's a new chapter. There's a lot of exciting things to do. More traveling for mom and getting
527 involved with the church.

528 INTVWR: Yeah, did you guys participate in the Greek Fest on Boundary there in the summer?

529 GC: No, Alex was advertising.

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530 AC: Usually advertising, but.

531 GC: He signed up but you never know. Last year, we didn't have time to volunteer or anything.

532 AC: I will say on Greek Day on West Broadway, I usually volunteer. Actually, that's what they
533 block off about 10 blocks. There was food cooking demonstration, so I was one of the co-hosts.

534 GC: You did a couple times.

535 AC: Yeah, I did it about four times. Every year, I help out with the raffle draw, I'm quite
536 involved on that part. Now, we're gonna have a lot more time, I'll definitely get more **00:38:00**
537 involved.

538 INTVWR: Right. Yeah. How do you think the Greek community in Vancouver and Burnaby in
539 this area is changing over the? There's been a lot of changes, obviously. How do you see the
540 future of the Greek community in Vancouver or Burnaby? What would you like to see maybe is
541 a better question. Like, is there anything?

542 GC: We're doing good so far, the Greek communities their together.

543 AC: Well, it's definitely, definitely need more youth to get more involved to keep it going.
544 There's one group, I think it's Dora Papoutsakis. She has a **[inaudible]** radio. Like, they have a
545 radio show. They've been promoting more of the music. She just got on to a podcast just this past
546 week. And they also have an international Greek film festival. There's definitely some movers
547 and shakers. I **00:39:00** would probably get more involved with the film fest because I have an
548 interest in film. Definitely need more people like this to keep it going because it was a lot
549 stronger, of course, back in the '60s and '70s. It's up to the youth to keep it going for.

550 GC: A lot of older people now, they're getting older people that are volunteers. They can't do it
551 anymore. They have the new generation. They have to get involved to get going in other ways.

552 INTVWR: Yeah, all right.

553 GC: Say too much?

554 INTVWR: Well, if there's any last thing?

555 AC: No worries, just excited for the new beginning. Yeah, next chapter. It was a good run, 37
556 years. The end of a Greek legacy. Many good memories.

557 GC: Well, the way I feel, I think we have a good name there over the years. You know us and we
558 **00:40:00** never have a lot of complaints. We never have, yeah so, I feel proud.

559 AC: We left on a high note.

560 GC: Yeah, I feel proud about that. Just say, at least we're there and everybody. I have many
561 invitations to go out for lunch. They go to this, to go that and they, and don't want to lose me.
562 Oh, my God. Just see how I'm going to past time every day.

563 AC: I think every Friday or Saturday night we're busy. That can go to certain events. And now,
564 it's definitely a lot more other social events or Greek social events.

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565 GC: When they come there, they see me every day. 37 years. The kids are in and out, right, but it
566 was me, I was there when they come and there when they leave. You get to know everybody,
567 you have to.

568 AC: So that

569 GC: Recognize you –

570 AC: We're excited for, what the future brings. We're still in the neighborhood, so we're seeing a
571 lot of all the customers and reaching out social media. Like, there's a ways to keep in contact so.

572 INTVWR: People **00:41:00** need their cookies still.

573 AC: Yeah, that's right. So we still have that idea about - I never know, there might be a Greek
574 Georgia's cookie business coming up.

575 GC: I did on the last day. Sunday, I have a little package of cookies or a little bag of cookies and
576 [inaudible] candies, and I give it. "Here you go, a couple weeks, some cookies. You remember
577 me."

578 AC: Right, the farewell gift. That's it.

579 INTVWR: All right. Well, thanks for sharing all the stories here. It's been awesome to talk with
580 you and have the photo reference, and hear all about the restaurant, and your family's life.
581 Thanks for sharing everything and good luck with the next stage then. Happy that you guys were
582 able to have 37 successful years -

583 AC: Yeah, Thank you very much.

584 INTVWR: With the restaurant. All right.

585 (End of recording) **00:41:52**