

Harry Chepriss, Interviewed by Dr. Louis Silveri, assisted by John Porter. Second Interview, July 20, 1977.

Dr. Louis Silveri: Last time we ended up in. . . What were you doing in 1938-39? You finished the junkyard. You lost out on the furniture company. What was next?

Harry Chepriss: I went to the poolroom.

Silveri: Oh, the poolroom, okay.

Chepriss: The poolroom, yes.

Silveri: You had the poolroom. You told us quite a bit of stories about that.

Chepriss: Eighteen tables on College Street.

Silveri: Eighteen tables.

Chepriss: Yes.

Silveri: It was just a poolroom. You didn't sell any food?

Chepriss: No; nothing except cigars, cigarettes and cold drinks.

Silveri: And how long did you have that?

Chepriss: From '28 to 1935.

Silveri: Thirty-five?

Chepriss: Yes, sir.

Silveri: Oh, well that was. . .

Chepriss: . . . I had a partner with me.

Silveri: Yes.

Chepriss: And this boy is in Columbia. His name Dan Droutes; Droutes.

Silveri: A Greek fellow?

Chepriss: Yes, sir. He came from Cyprus. He was little, short fellow; black-headed. He's smart. He can speak Italian.

Silveri: Oh.

Chepriss: Oh, yes; he speak perfect Italian.

Silveri: When did you give that up?

Chepriss: Nineteen thirty-five.

Silveri: Why?

Chepriss: Well, . . . [inaudible]. . . . . drinking, and I had a clean place. You know, no trouble; never went to the courts, nothing like that. They opened up more poolrooms in Asheville, but I am the first one, since 1912, when they went out, in Asheville.

Silveri: You were the first one to start them up again?

Chepriss: Not by myself; the lawyers, you know, one lawyer, I can't tell you the name. Of course, he's dead and gone, he's the one helped me. You know, you [inaudible] politics around.

Silveri: Of course, by that time you made a lot of friends in the city.

Chepriss: I know 'em before. Oh, golly, they knows me. Of course, some, I don't know 'em. Take young generation now; they don't know me, and most of the older people I know; dead and gone.

Silveri: Of course, in the 1920's Asheville was a small city.

Chepriss: Asheville was nothing but one-horse town. But, it was healthy; a resort. You understand what I mean? Healthy, for people come here for his health.

Silveri: For tuberculosis. . .

Chepriss: Yes; had T.B.'s, lotta houses for T.B.'s, and you get well or die, one. Like St. Joseph Hospital. You know St. Joseph? It was a sanitarium, for T.B. people.

Silveri: Oh, that's the way it started?

Chepriss: Yes, sir. You see, they had rooms outside, and when you get cold, you go inside. The windows open, you understand what I mean?

Silveri: Yes.

Chepriss: To get air; snow blowing over. You see, when you're young you cover up yourself. Now that hospital, it's good and friendly to the people. Some are against the Catholic, like they were against Al Smith. And what is: one God, one Christ. All religions, same.

Silveri: Do you remember 1928. You said you voted for Al Smith. Do you remember anybody in Asheville speaking against him because he was a Catholic?

Chepriss: Whole town.

Silveri: The whole town?

Chepriss: Why, sure.

Silveri: What were they saying?

Chepriss: Just against him. Didn't you notice, the years back, you used to go to the movies, silent movies, the special the Ku Klux Klan they against. That's why they fight him.

Silveri: Did you ever see the Klan in Asheville?

Chepriss: Oh, golly, yes, sir. One time, the jail was on Eagle Street.

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) The old jail. That's the time when they hanged the people. It was Sheriff Lee, and after that came Sheriff . . . They hanged a lot of white and colored. This colored fellow, they claims he raped this white girl (it was 1919) but he didn't. This girl, she was crazy. I don't know what's the matter with her. Well, the people got mad in Asheville; they wants to lynch him. They got the colored boy; going to lynch him. They lynch the wrong man; that's not right. You see, they no go with the laws; nothing. That night, come the Ku Klux Klan. They told me, "Harry, better close up." Colored people sitting over there, says, "Come on." They called them. . . no say Negro. . . nigger. They rough.

Well, what am I going to do? I can't be against the law, or anything. I have fuss, I fight, anything. You can show you a hero. I can fight. Oh, golly, yes, I get mad quick. Oh, goodness, yes, but I don't want to get in trouble. I close up.

They went down to the jailhouse to get the Negro out, but Sheriff, he was Sheriff Mitchell then, he got the Negro out of there and put him in a T-model Ford and they took him down to the South Carolina line and let him loose. They went down there; they didn't find nobody.

Well next day, I'll tell you what happen: some of them Ku Klux, I know 'em, you know. You know, that's a Greek word?

Silveri: Um, hum.

Chepriss: The Ku Klux.

Silveri: Um, hum.

Chepriss: You know that?

Silveri: Yes.

Chepriss: [Here he used Greek words] That comes from the ancient Greeks. That's where we got it. Well, one of them fellows that knows me, he thought I didn't know him, but I recognized him from his shoes. Next day (he sells Chero Cola, the drink; his name Gardner, Dr. Gardner's brother) he came down to the café. He said: "How many drinks you need?" Well, I start to cuss, because one fellow, his name Bill Smith. . . he lives on Biltmore Avenue. . . he come over there in the mornings. . . I don't know what he's getting, and he saw me reading them books of the Ku Klux Klan, little, like advertisement. He grabbed it from my hands, I had about four, and tear it up. He was Catholic; strong Catholic. Well, I got mad because he grab it, but I don't want to say anything and I hated to make him mad. It's easy to make an enemy, but it's hard as the devil to make a good friend. I mean, friend when you need him, not when you don't need him.

Anyway, he left, and when he left the Chero Cola man said I don't need him. . . [Inaudible]. . . I began telling him. He said, "Don't worry, let him go; that's all right."

I started to cuss, but anyway, I bought some drinks.

Well, that night, it was about ten-thirty or eleven o'clock, I had eight crates. They did not drink the other drinks except the Chero-Cola, because he selling it [inaudible]. . . on Biltmore Avenue they stopped the street cars and they took a cross and lighted it right in the middle of Biltmore Avenue. The law can't bother them; they was

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) strong. And they started to burn the fire. The streetcar stopped way down where the (I don't know if you've been down Biltmore Avenue) is the old Coca-Cola plant, that's where the streetcar stop. And they burned the cross, well, them [inaudible] the Ku Klux, they come over there, drink the drinks, and go back over there and started up the steps to his apartment where he lived. Well, it's over. After they left; they had nothing but T-models and Overlands. Some, they had them Kissel. You remember them automobiles, Kissels? Oh, they beautiful, old-timer; they're expensive, Kissel. Different kind, them days. And some, they have Stutz. You know them Stutz.

When they left, next morning, here come this fellow, Goldsmith. He said, "What the devil the matter with them fellows?"

I said, "I don't know nothing about it." By golly, never say nothing against them guys, this Goldsmith, you know. Well, he left, and here come the Chero Cola man.

He says, "Here Mr. Chepriss, I fill 'em up; I was pretty busy last night."

I told him about it, but he knows all about it. I looked down, and I saw his shoes. . . . them shoes, the old-timers, they turn up, them old-timers. You ever saw them? Countrified.

I said, "Mr. Gardner, you mean you belong to that order?" I didn't say anything against them, that's all right, it's nothing to me. He done like this, his hand.

Silveri: Passed his hand over his face?

Chepriss: Yes. Do like that, and he went out. Then I know he's belong

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) to that. You see, it was secret. I'll tell you why. They finally turned against them. You see, they were against the Jewish, the Negroes, the foreigners, and the Catholics.

Silveri: They never bothered you?

Chepriss: Oh, no! Golly, no. They so friendly; I never had no trouble. They just as nice as they can be. One fellow tried to get me to belong to it, to join. His name Belk.

"Belk," I says, "you know I can't join to it."

He said, "Well, the devil you can't."

I said, "I can't do it."

He said, "Why?"

I said, "Because I ain't born in this country. I born across the water. If you born in this country, like if I had boys, he can join to it."

Oh, they got that thing tied. But a lot belong to it and we don't know nothing about it. And that's why they tied it up. I don't know. You see, we don't do things like that. Of course, it's all right with me. But you talk about them other things, too. You going out Charlotte Street, there was the Manor Hotel. That's the oldest one, too. You notice? The Manor. Back down Biltmore Avenue they had a restaurant hotel, and you eat; you know, eating joint like [inaudible] but that's the best one; they feed you. The charge, I think, is fifty cents, them days, but for nice, highfaluting people.

Silveri: I wanted to ask you. You certainly must remember the flood of 1916.

Chepriss: Oh, the flood of 1916? Yes, sir. I'll tell you what happened. First we had hot weather like we got now. The weather bad. The rain start. After that we had a hard winter, too, after the flood. Anyway, that water came from way up Swannanoa. The water was . . . You know, I tell you down depot; it was sunk right inside. You see horses, cows, rat, rabbits, everything flooded, plumb down to Marshall.

They had the Riverside Park, the one I telling you yesterday. That was swept out; the houses and everything. The business down at depot flood inside. Biltmore you can't see.

That's why George Vanderbilt they never allowed, I don't know, they tell me about it, I can't tell you for sure. He don't want no three-floor houses in Biltmore. You ever notice in Biltmore?

Silveri: Yes.

Chepriss: No build with three floors. That's why most of them old-timey houses you can see from, you know, they call it St. Dunstan's. . . that hospital, you know, the Catholic, top of the hill, from a little further down you have to catch the boat, a rowboat, to go across to Hendersonville Road. Same thing, West Asheville. You can't come to West Asheville. People close up. Railroads, they sweep up. Except it took long time. The only road that goes to Murphy, Waynesville, the only one they ever fix, they never bothered. But still, they can't go plumb down to depot. That's the one that had transportation from one place to the other. And then they can't keep the coal here, nothing, that winter. And you talk about cold; the hardest winter. Worse than it

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) was last winter. I tell people; they say, I never remember that. You know what I used to do: I had a place, and I gave them colored boys a nickel, five cents, to go out and get me toe sack of old shoes. You know, people threw them away, old shoes. They make the best fire. Of course, they smell bad outside, but inside, everybody said to me: "How in the world you get fire? Where you get that coal?" And I had fifteen, twenty bags old shoes. Tires, you can't burn the tires; they had the tires, but, you see they send the tires back. Automobile tires, you know, bicycles. They sent them back, them days; they was not sanitary, they was pure rubber then.

Silveri: Where were you living in 1916?

Chepriss: I had this place on Washington Road, that little house I told you about. It was three room. . . four room, I believe. I put up paper inside; five dollars a month. But when you're young, you see, you don't feel the cold weather; you don't feel it.

Silveri: You had a wood-burning stove?

Chepriss: I didn't have no stove in the house, just a little chimney, and I put newspaper. I take the covers and get warm and crawl to the bed. When you're young, you don't feel the cold.

John Porter: But the winter of 1916 was worse than. . .

Chepriss: Yes; 1917, yes, sir. We can't get no coal, neither, and the coal was two dollars and two and a half, ton. A ton; two and a half a ton, coal. But still you can't get that two dollars and a half easy, like you get it now. You take them poor colored people, and some white, work for the city and put the water lines and the sewer lines

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) in Asheville. They making eight dollars a week. You can see the ditches, wet plumb up to waist; working down in the ditch. It's pitiful.

Silveri: Did you ever see any of the prisoners working along the road; the chaingang?

Chepriss: Chaingang? Well, golly, they work right here on front of me. One time; I want to tell you what happened: he wants me to pay the poll tax, and people, we can pay it, but if you can't pay it you got to go and work two days on the road. They had a man tell you what to do. Manpower. Well, I didn't pay mine, and this fellow working for the county; his name Boyd. I don't know his other name; had a big mustache, and he come here, he's ask my wife my name. The sidewalk over here had it with the pines, low. That's the worst thing in the world. You broke your neck if you come down. Right here; that's right. Well, he came here, was in summer time, and by gosh, he says you have to pay your. . . that's the way he said: "By gosh, you have to pay for your poll tax."

I said: "I ain't gonna pay a durn thing." Hot head; young. I paying taxes, but, you see, them days they didn't have it inside your taxes, you have to special.

Silveri: How much was it?

Chepriss: A dollar. One dollar, but, of course, a dollar is a dollar. But I tell you, they tell me they have a law, if you leave your coat, that man can come and take your coat to pay. Well, anyway, he says: "I'm gonna see about that."

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) The next day, here he come, he had a deputy sheriff with him. I know him. He's a pretty rough fellow. When I saw he was coming. . . that's the road way ahead over there. When I saw him come over here, my wife didn't see him, I went out from the back door. Run from the back door, went down, started my T-model Ford, went to town and paid that dollar. By golly, the third day he come back, but never was the sheriff with him. Well, I began cussing and said, "Hey, see this; I paid."

"Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, why didn't you tell me that before?"

You know, you're young, I don't know what I said to him.

Porter: What were they going to do to you if you didn't pay your poll tax?

Chepriss: Oh, they take you, if you can't pay that poll tax, they take you and make you work out the road, two days.

Porter: I thought that if you didn't pay the poll tax that only meant that you couldn't vote.

Chepriss: No. They make you pay, them days.

Porter: They made you pay. . .

Chepriss: Yes, sir. If you can. Of course, they no want put you in no jail. But if they take you and try you. They do what they please. You can't take the law in your hands. You've got to obey the law, I don't care what it is. If the officer stop you, like the speed cops, officer in the city, policeman. . . if he's officer, if he's black or white, stop and tell him, "Yes, sir; no, sir." Do what he tells you. If you don't, that's your hard luck. That's why some of the people

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) get killed and get hurt. Smart alecks. Officer, when he tells you: obey. I don't care what it is. Obey and you never lose. I don't care how mean is you are, how rough is you are, if I talk to you nice you going to behave yourself and try to treat me right. But you know what's the matter? This young generation, they get mad and talk to the officer worse than a dog. That officer, whether he's a deputy, a policeman, or anything, he look out for us beneficial. If we didn't have no law, you know we'd be in a heck of a shape.

I tell you what keep things here now pretty quiet: the churches and the law. If it never been for them, why you see them young girls eight years old, and young boys eight years old, and you can do nothing. Go to the courts; they turn the boy loose. Nowadays, if you bother a girl, you know what they do, they hang you from the tongue.

Silveri: Hang you from the tongue?

Chepriss: I said [inaudible] . . . they hang you.

Porter: Here in Asheville?

Chepriss: Anywhere. Anywhere in United States, you bother a young girl. Now, it's different. Now it's. . .the law, we still got law, but we're not strict. The officer, they arrest man, and you know, the officer he catch more hell, hell, as anybody else. I tell you why. He risk his life. You know, he risk his life and still do not get nothing and when they arrest a man and take him up to court, some of the judges, some of the lawyers go over there and talk to the judge [inaudible] and they let him go. That's what's the matter. They're not strict,

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) the law. If you go with the law, we living a little better. It's different.

Porter: Getting back to the poll tax. Did you ever have any trouble voting when you went to vote?

Chepriss: No, no, no.

Porter: No one ever tried to stop you?

Chepriss: No; no, sir, you bet. Long as you pay your taxes, and, of course, now you move, like you move here in the precinct, you've got to register. And still, some good people running, and some of the roughnecks getting it, like they done in Asheville, fighting the politics from Republican to Democrat, or what it is. I register Democrat, but I vote the ticket different now. Don't make no difference; all we human beings, but some, they are not fit to be over there. They don't know nothing about it.

It was 1928 or '29, I remember a fellow, he's running for surveyor, and he don't know much as I do. His name Roy. I forgot the other name. Of course, now, he helped the surveyor; the real surveyor we had here. He worked for the county, and he'd teach in that school, the other fellows, to be a surveyor. He was good; Mr. Neal. He lived on Beaverdam Road. Beautiful home, built out of pure cement.

Well anyway, this fellow, Mr. Neal don't run it no more, and this fellow run it and he win, and he don't know a thing about surveyor. He come down to the poolroom and he sitting over there. I said, "Roy, what the devil don't you go over there to the office?"

He says, "I got a man to look after."

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) I said, "What do you know anything about surveyor?"

"I got a man to do the work," he said.

How in the world the county official let him learn such things like that? That's what I said: politics.

Silveri: Let's get back to that chaingang we were talking about before.

We used to have a lot of chaingangs on the road from prison, prisoners.

Chepriss: They still are here. First before they built. . . You ever been down to Craggy?

Silveri: Yes.

Chepriss: Well, before that they had it out almost West Buncombe, just shacks; little shacks, you understand what I mean?

Silveri: Um, hum.

Chepriss: Well, they take you, they give you so much, and they put a chain around your leg; big chain with a big ball, and a man watching with a gun; rifle. If you start to move, they kill you. And they whip him; oh, they whip you them days. No mean maybe. They still. . . they have it in the jails now. They call it, they tell me, I don't know nothing about it, "Kangaroo Court." You ever heard of that? You know, when they go to the jail, if you've got money, they take the money away from you and say they use it to buy paper and buy sugar. You know, when they give you the coffee, no put no sugar, no cream in it. And that's what they use it for. [inaudible] . . . just run out 19. . . about thirty, thirty-one. I mean, you know, they put easier to the, you know, them fellers is in chaingang, they put easier.

Silveri: What about 1918 and 1919? There was a big flu epidemic. Do you remember that?

Chepriss: Oh; yes, sir. Right here in Asheville, I was. I had that place down on Eagle Street; corner of Eagle and Biltmore Avenue. . . .[inaudible]. . . people were dying, just looked like flies.

Silveri: You never got it?

Chepriss: No, no; God is with me, that's all. Some people says, "Oh, I never did." But it is just, God's willing. You know one thing: We get sick and think everything is God's willing. Of course, the doctor help you, but God come first.

Silveri: Did you have your café then?

Chepriss: Oh, yes.

Silveri: Did you close it?

Chepriss: No, sir; no. We wide open. . . [inaudible]. . . like to watch out. Of course, the people was a little respect. I tell you, if you spit on the street, it was five dollars and cost. That's a good law they put it, right here in Asheville.

Porter: Do they still have that law?

Chepriss: I don't know if they still got that law or not, they change so much. Like they throw banana peeling. You know, that broke your neck. The only thing you see on the streets, lot of them peanut hulls, you know. People used to eat a lot of peanuts. Like this fellow I telling you about. . . Tony something. He went to Waynesville. He was Italian. Went to Waynesville. He make big money over there. He had a place right on Pack Square. You know where the drink to the

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) fountain is?

Silveri: Yes.

Chepriss: He had a wagon. That's expensive. Cost him about thirty-five hundred dollars. Them days. And the city let him go. Beautiful lights went with the machine; popcorn and peanuts. Oh, he make money, and he let it go. I don't know, somebody bought it from him in Knoxville, and then he went to Waynesville, and he make a big success over there.

That's what I telling you now. You take the foreigners. Now people talk about the foreigners, but still, they improve the United States. You see, one put up a business, you know he had to spend the money: electrician, carpenter, plumber. Whatta you call it? All them men working. You understand what I mean? Carpenter, and everything. You have to go buy this, buy the other, buy the other, and then another man put up place.

Same thing, now, some people's against the Jewish. Well, they know their business and they sell the stuff more cheaper because they get by, they know how to buy.

Silveri: Do you remember when Teddy Roosevelt came to Asheville?

Chepriss: Teddy Roosevelt came to Asheville and he spoke down to the railroad.

Silveri: Were you there in that crowd?

Chepriss: Well, not too much crowd them days. You see, he stay right in the back of the train. And some of the country people just down there. He come here and stayed at the Battery Park Hotel. Oh,

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) a lot of them. . . I believe Coolidge came to Asheville, too. I'm not sure; I didn't see him, but they tell me about it, you know.

Silveri: Do you remember when they built the Grove Park Inn?

Chepriss: Why, sure.

Silveri: What year was that? Do you recall?

Chepriss: It was started 1912.

Silveri: Nineteen-twelve.

Chepriss: I used to go out there and sleep at night in the pines.

Silveri: On Sunset Mountain?

Chepriss: Yes, sir, in them pines. I didn't have no job and I take a newspaper, and I take toothpicks and make like a pillow, and I get right between them pine needles, sleep wintertime.

Silveri: In the wintertime?

Chepriss: Just as warm as can be.

Silveri: Oh.

Chepriss: I didn't have no job; I can't get no work. I used to go down depot and start to sleep. I didn't have no job. And when you sleep, them days they had a law, you've got to move your foot. Or, you got to move your hand; you put your hand over here, go do this. That's right. I know it, because I went down there to sleep. I was young boy, you know, and this policeman, I believe he's Bradley. No; Shoemaker, Shoemaker; he come and hit me with a billy, right over my head. You can hear everything, "Gong!" And I woke up, and he told me to get out. Well, I have to get out; cold outside. Where can you

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) go? And then I came to town. Right there where Wachovia bank is an old building. I used to go behind the door for steam heat, and sleep. I had a hard time. Well, I couldn't get no job.

Porter: Was this after you worked at the wholesale house selling bananas?

Chepriss: Sure; after that, yeah, yeah, after that.

Silveri: You couldn't get a job because you were a Greek, a foreigner?

Chepriss: No. It didn't have no work. What can you do? They didn't have no business then. The people had the cafés, they worked their own people.

Silveri: Why did you stay in Asheville? Why didn't you go somewhere else?

Chepriss: Just, you know, when the devil put you in one place, the devil put you in one place, you stay there. I can left and went somewhere: Greenville, Georgia. . .

Silveri: Or New York City.

Chepriss: Why, yes. Listen: when you're young. . . not looking now, Mr. Louis, because you're educated, and I never was educated. Not only me, but plenty people. The people used to scared to go to town. Did you know that? Young boys, they used to didn't go to town. Girls, you think they used to work at the stores? No; nothing but men. Very few was secretaries. Very, very few. And typewriters; they no buying it, they used the pen.

Porter: Did you ever think about going to New York City or Chicago?

Chepriss: I didn't go to New York. . .let's see; that's when I come, that's one. Nineteen-twelve, two, and 1927.

Porter: But I mean, to live, get a job and work.

Chepriss: Oh, no, I can't live over there. I'll tell you why: hard way to live, them people, just from their apartment, outside, and you can't open your door, somebody knock you in your head. I'd rather be out in the air, to have your own home. Of course, you're a little bit. . .[inaudible]. . . but still, you're better off. No.

Silveri: Did you say you went to New York in 1911, 1912?

Chepriss: Nineteen-twelve, when I went across the water. You've got to go there.

Silveri: Yes; when you went back home.

Chepriss: That's right.

Silveri: Oh, that was the year you didn't have a job.

Chepriss: Yes. After I come back I find some work. You see, some more Greek people come to Asheville then, to open up. Before that, there was none, except this wholesale house.

Silveri: I see.

Chepriss: And then they come in, the first café they open up at the Square, it was the Central Café. Fellow by name Psychoghios. It was colored man had it, and this man had undertaker too, on Eagle Street. But, this colored man, he open it, he had money. I forgot his name, and he bought him out. For white people; fine restaurant. Then he had colored people, waitresses. I mean, dress up nice, clean. They stand up, not sit down, neither. . . [inaudible]. . .

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) And he bought him out. When he bought him out, I think it was for a week, the money they take in, give it to the Salvation Army, this Greek fellow, Psychoghios. He give it to Salvation Army and the Red Cross, and they done good business. Then he sold it to another fellow, and this to another one; he went up five, six cents. And then another man come in open up New York Cafe, and another one come here and open up Baltimore Cafe, down depot. Then another one on Biltmore Avenue, California Lunchroom; and another one, Dixie Cafe; another one is Crystal Cafe. They flock in a lot after; from 1920. Used to been. . .you take the Greek people, it was fine from 1920 back; the oldtimers. Welcome to God's world, you are. Sit down, if you ain't have no money; you sit down to eat.

Silveri: When you went back to Greece in 1912, did you go back with the idea to stay there?

Chepriss: No; I want to see my mother.

Silveri: You knew you were going to come back home.

Chepriss: Yes; and the war started, and they want to take me to the army.

Silveri: You told us about that.

Chepriss: And I got away. Of course, you know this fellow is a cousin of mine. I didn't know he was cousin; he was the one helped me to get the ticket. And that's the time they started the passport. Now, 1900 they didn't have nothing, well they had it, but not like it is 1912. It was a little strict.

Silveri: Do you remember that when you came over here as a boy of 14

Silveri: (Cont'd.) in 1900, did you remember whether you intended to stay here in America, or just stay until you earned enough money and go back home?

Chepriss: No; I thought I just come here, I thought I get rich, and go back over there. Like John, he's talking about go over there, get a Preka . . . . . that's what we think, and the other poor people paying for. . . I don't believe do that, you notice? But people wants it; well, if you got it, get it. You know what a Preka is?

Porter: No.

Chepriss: It's a dowry; like I work for my two sisters eight years; we give dowry. You no do that.

Porter: Some of the money that you were sending back to your mother was for your sister's dowry?

Chepriss: Yes; sent it over there to pay the dowry for them to marry. I had a brother, but he ain't give nothing. Of course, he went to the army, and the Greek government they don't give you one cents a day. You know that government. . . and you take here, the boys [inaudible] you take the United States, they pay them boys well, feed 'em well; give 'em fine clothes and everything. Over there, your shoes, if you tear up, that's your hard luck. Across the water, you know. You know what they give you? A big round bread. I guess you saw it. They call it [inaudible] to last you two days. Not only the Greek government; oh, same thing the Italians, the French, same thing. Now they sit down in the table, they have to have biscuits, they have to have meat, they have to have sweetstuff, they have to have something to drink. By

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) golly, you be glad to have the bread. And you know one thing: God promise us nothing but bread. Well, we say: "Our Father give us our daily bread." You see, people no thinking.

These people ask me: "Oh, you must be fanatic Christian."

I'm not Christian; I try to live Christian life. I try to. Christian life is treat your fellow man right, I no care who he is, try help him. Well, he may kick you, like a mule, but that's all right, God see for that. We paying for right here in this world. If I mistreat you, I'm gonna pay for it. You mistreat your brother; you gonna pay for it. Right here, we pay.

Porter: You told me a story about coming into the immigration office in New York City.

Chepriss: Yes; you got to go. The last time, 1912, I didn't go through immigration; I just went through, was lucky. The new boat, it was brand new boat, the Greeks had it. They called it Macedonia; beautiful boat.

Silveri: What was that story you wanted. . .

Porter: Tell us that story about the man that came into the immigration office with you in 1900. . .

Chepriss: Yes; this fellow, he make, I think, four trips in this country, and they turn him back. There's something wrong with him; I don't know, he may have had T.B., but people across the water that come from the place where I come from, they no T.B.'s. They have some, but over there, if you drink that water you die or get well. Like the places you went; you be dead or you'd get well. It's that kind of water. It is real water. This fellow, he tried, I believe, four times, he tell me. He was pretty

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) old. He was about fifty, fifty-five. You see, when you go through the hall, you're in the line. Not only Greeks, the French, German, Italians. . .

[END OF TAPE I, SIDE I - Second Interview]

[TAPE I, SIDE II]

Chepriss: . . . Russians, every nationality, you going through the hall. Well, somebody already examined you. I guess they know him; they put two marks on your back. You're naked; you naked as a jaybird. They put two marks. . . I don't know what it was, like chalk. You know, that white chalk. Well, if you put two, you have to go this side; you've got to go back. One; you go through. This fellow told me, he says, "Now I want you to watch behind me." (I was behind him.) "If they put two," he says, "pull it off."

I had my hand, all it was sweat, anyway, and I took one mark off, but I didn't take it right off, but he went by that. He went through; they didn't send him back. Of course, he didn't lose no money the ticket; the ticket then cost about eighty dollars, from New York to Greece. You see, they insuring it, you get your money back, them days. But that fellow, he come out, but I never see him no more.

Like right here, some people ask me, says if I know so-and-so in Boston. How do I know him? Like you, now, you go back over there and you ask about me; they don't know me. Maybe accidentally, somebody knows me.

Porter: When you went back to Greece in 1912, did you know then that

Porter: (Cont'd.) there was a chance that you might not get back into the United States?

Chepriss: To come back?

Porter: Um, hum.

Chepriss: Oh, yeah, I'm come back, but I want to stay more longer over there.

Porter: You wanted to stay longer in Greece?

Chepriss: Oh, yeah, boy I would like to eat that good old sheep milk, you know, and all that. . . of course, now, they had good eats here, too, but the main thing. . . you know, when you're a boy, you love your friends, your mother, naturally. . . No make no difference where you're from.

Porter: But you didn't have a card, or anything, to allow you to come back into the United States in 1912? You had to come back through the immigration. . .

Chepriss: No, no, no, no, but you're supposed to have it. Like my papers, you see, you got to show 'em when you get your citizen papers. You tell 'em when I came here, you see? When I came, first. You got to tell 'em the truth. If you tell. . . You can't tell the United States government lie. They catch you. I don't give a doggone. Some people think: "Well, I'll get by."

If you go honestly and straight, you'll win. Tell 'em the truth, what happen, and you come out easy. Did you ever notice that, Louis?

Silveri: Yes; very definitely.

Chepriss: Mr. Louis, I'll tell you: The thing is, you have to tell the truth. I don't give a doggone who it is. You get caught. I don't care, for very little thing.

Silveri: Um, hum. Let's get back to 1912. You were going to tell us what you remember about the Grove Park Inn being built.

Chepriss: Yes, sir.

Silveri: Do you remember the mountain, what it looked like before they . . .? How did they change Sunset Mountain in order to build Grove Park Inn there? Do you remember that?

Chepriss: It was same thing; they never change it a bit.

Silveri: No?

Chepriss: No, except they had mules, horses, and manpower. That's all they had over there. They didn't use machinery like they got it now. Of course, they had steam shovel. You know, they have steam shovel and things like that, but most. . . they move a lot of dirt, like they cut the Battery Park Hill. You know, Battery Park Hill, over there.

Silveri: They just leveled that off.

Chepriss: It was a great big, pretty high, and they cut that thing down and fill up Coxe Street.

Silveri: Now, they started building Grove Park Inn in 1912. Did you ever think of getting a job working there?

Chepriss: Where do you mean?

Silveri: You said in 1912 you didn't have a job. Right? They started building the Grove Park Inn in 1912. Did you work on building it?

Chepriss: Over there? No, I never worked for. . . No! I'm not a

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) rock mason! Of course, I'm pretty good jack leg, you know, I build them.

Porter: You built that?

Chepriss: Yes. She hold it up. She hold them rocks. You ask me yesterday, about them rocks, that rock, by golly, she drag it. . . she more stronger than I was. That's what's the matter with us, now. We're ragged as can be.

Silveri: Would you tell us the story that you were telling me before we got the machine on and John wasn't here, about that Italian that wanted some good Italian food to eat?

Chepriss: You mean, the macaroni?

Silveri: Yes; he was working at the Grove Park Inn.

Chepriss: Oh, all them fellows.

Silveri: Were there Italians working at the Grove Park Inn?

Chepriss: Yes; that's the ones that built it, the most. That's the more experienced. Of course, the other nationalities, too, was Frenchmen, Greeks. . .

Silveri: These people were brought in to do it? They didn't live here in Asheville, did they?

Chepriss: No, no; they brought them here; they brought them here. May have been immigrants, I don't know. You know what they paid them? A dollar a day.

Silveri: Even the experienced stonemasons? A dollar a day?

Chepriss: Yes, sir; yes, sir, them days. And that rock you see over there. You know, they pulled mules. They're the one, you know,

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) they're there with the wagon.

Porter: Even those rocks they made the fireplaces with, as big as this porch?

Chepriss: Everything you see over there, it's a manpower, and all that rocks come from over there at that mountain. They've got a place on the other side from Grove Park Inn where they dug in there. Of course, they used dynamite.

Silveri: And that Italian fellow you were talking about couldn't find. . .

Chepriss: Not only one Italian. . . about thirty, thirty-five. You see, we took. . . I work for this man, this fellow. His name Demas, Uncle Demas Psychoghios; he had the cafe, and he put the tables together, you know, the tables where you eat. It was from here nearly to. . . I tell you the place. You know where Finkelstein's, up the Square?

Silveri: Yes.

Chepriss: Well, next door there, that's where the cafe was. He put the tables all together. No cloth over it like they puttin'. . . they put the dishes. . . great big old dishes, platters, and they sat down, just eat. Put that. . . What do you call that cheese?

Silveri: Parmesan cheese? Romano?

Chepriss: Yes, Parmesan. Boy, that thing, I'm telling you, we eat, too; yes, sir. They paid for everything. They making a dollar a day, eight hours, eight dollars. But it was money, Louis.

Silveri: What's that story about that fellow who came in with the long beard and asked them what they were eating?

Chepriss: Rankin, the banker; the banker of the American National Bank. He come over there; he buys every morning a little package of Climax chewing tobacco. You remember that Climax?

Silveri: No, I don't.

Chepriss: Climax, it is, and he called it picnic twist. It was five cents, great big one, and he buy it every morning. He come by over there. He had a walking stick, big old hat, scissor-tail coat, and he hit me in the head with the stick, like that, you know, and just. . .

He said, "Harry."

I said, "Yes, sir, Mr. Rankin." I can't speak good English neither, give him tobacco. . .

And he look 'round, he says: "What them fellows eating." He speaks pretty heavy. "Worms?"

One of them Italians was pretty rough. He had the biggest mustache, not whiskers, the mustache, oh, golly, twist around. He got mad. He got up from the table; he grabbed him. . . I think he was gonna choke him.

I said: "What are you doing? What are you doing?"

And he start to cuss in Italian. I know the words, some what they mean.

I say, "Mr. Rankin, that's macaroni. It come from across the water. The Italians. . ." The Italians invented macaroni. Did you know that? So many people, they don't know that. . . But the macaroni come from Italy. The Italians invent it. I remember the old country, when I came in this country, we had it. We thought we rich. It was

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) macaroni.

Silveri: What happened when that fellow asked if they were worms?

Chepriss: Mr. Rankin; I told him, I said, 'Mr. Rankin, I will bring you some after a while.'

"Y-a-i-h, I don't want that!"

That was a Y-y-y-y! I don't want that! I said, "I will bring you." Well, after he left, and everything, I went to the kitchen; I told this cook. I can't get it myself; no. And this cook, I told him the man got the bank. Well, that's where we put a little money if we have it. They treat you nice, them days. They not like now, they. . . they know we didn't speak the language. The educated people, oh, they good; except the roughnecks.

Well, anyway, he fix a big platter; not a plate, but a platter. You know what a platter is? You fill it up and you put a towel over. Not paper towel neither; we didn't have that. I took it down there. Mr. Rankin was setting in the office. I put it in the office, opened it.

"Good gracious! Good gracious!" That's what he say. And he put his feet right under the table and start to eating them, [slurp] inside. Some country fella stop by. They used to have a lot of spittoons, you know, where you spit in it. You go there [spitting noise]. He says, "What you eat, Rankin?"

He says, "I eat some stuff come from across the water."

"Don't look like eating to me." But he didn't told him he didn't know what it was.

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) After the bank. . . the banks close, you know, about two o'clock. . . here he brought the plate and the towel back to the place. He says, "I want some more of that stuff when you fix it." But I didn't carry it any more.

Silveri: What did that Italian fellow say, in the cafe, when he heard him say, "Is that worms he's eating?"

Chepriss: No, he say, [inaudible]. . . he mean, like a pig, American. You know, old country we get mad quick.

Silveri: Did Mr. Rankin hear him say that?

Chepriss: Yeh, but he don't know what he says. He said, "What's the matter with him? He's crazy?" Well, he was educated man, and you see, I guess this Italian fellow, [inaudible]. . . too, mad, get mad, maybe come from Sicily [inaudible] . . . they pretty mean, you know, in Sicily. I mean, what they tell you, they tell you. . . I'm not telling a lie; they kill you. And didn't have no trouble.

Porter: When Greek people came to Asheville and opened a cafe, why didn't they ever name the cafes after the old country? You said that one guy opened a cafe and named it the New York, and another guy named his the Baltimore, and another guy named his the California.

Chepriss: Well, John, them days, the people here, they can't pronounce the words.

Porter: The Greek words?

Chepriss: Yes. Now, you take like my name, now: Aristotle Andonea Chapuris. Well, when I got my citizen papers, before I got my citizen papers, another Greek fellow told me how to put it. I put it: Harry

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) A. Chepriss. But I don't use the "A". . . Harry. I should have left it "Aristotle," but they can't pronounce it. The people here, they can't pronounce it. You see, you're educated, you're a teacher. Them days you say. . . I say, "What is your name?"

I say: "Aristotle."

"What the heck is that?" they say, "Irish potatoes?"

That's right.

Porter: But the Greek man that opened the cafe could have called the cafe the Athens Cafe, Americans could pronounce that.

Chepriss: That started. . . you know when they started that? After 1920. Before that the people was. . . you can do nothing here, especially down South.

Silveri: Oh!

Porter: They were afraid to call that. . .

Chepriss: Sure; sure. They used to. . . they hate. . . the people they hate the foreigners. I don't know why. Not only Asheville. You used to go down Marion, North Carolina, down right here. Why, you never see no Jews; have no store. You know: Racket Store, or any kind nationality. One Greek fellow went over there and opened up a place under the hotel, year 1917, and I told him, I say: "You're not going to stay down there."

He say, "What are you talking about?" He speak perfect English. He'd been in school, you know. And he went over there and he ordered big newspaper in New York, Atlantis. And he sitting at the table, [inaudible] the table behind the counter, and he reading it.

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) And them country fellows got outside and they looking inside; chewing the tobacco outside [he makes a spitting sound] spitting, each one shaking the other, they saw the newspaper he reading it, and they know he is a foreigner. They went inside and tore his place all up.

Silveri: Where was this?

Chepriss: Down Marion.

Silveri: Marion?

Chepriss: Marion. You talk about people was. . . golly. Them days, what are you going to do about it? And if you go to the courts, he says, "Well, that farmer, let him go." If they like you; now some good educated people they like you, but some they didn't like you.

You take Mascari, he's an old. . . I forgot about what year he came to Asheville. . . and still the people likes him because he's the only one bought the fruit; different kind fruit. He didn't know anything about it, the fruit. He had his business. . . you know where S & W Cafeteria is. Right there was an old wood building. Now that building this side, you know, used to been the Wachovia Bank. He used to have Clements and Chambers shoe store, selling shoes, the best shoes was in Asheville. And then [inaudible]. . . and then come in The Man Store, Zageir, R.B. Zageir. He's Jewish, but he's good. You take the Jewish, years back, oh, golly, they're good. You take Harry Finkelstein. You ask other day where I get that money to buy that, when I sell winnies on the street. Finkelstein give it to me, and I bought that. . . you know what tinnners use to put up gutters. . .

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) you know that iron, to make the iron hot, with the solder. You ever saw them fireplace things?

Silveri: Yes.

Chepriss: That's what I make: one of them and put the pot up top and put the winnies in it; boil 'em. Ten cents worth of charcoal last me all day, and I holding it. This side had the basket with the rolls, and mustard, gallon mustard, eighteen cents a gallon. Mustard, eighteen cents a gallon! The bread was ten cents a dozen of the rolls. And I can't believe it all the rolls I remember I leave in the places. I thought I goin' be highfalut, too, and I had a towel over the mustard and the rolls. The rolls, them days, they was round. Big round. You know which year that winnie rolls come out, yeh, hot dogs? You know what year come out? Nineteen twenty-one. They invented, you know, them long ones.

Porter: The ones we have today.

Chepriss: And I tell you another, the funniest thing, one time what happened. We went to Spartanburg. Well, you know, been years back. By golly, it was 1933, 34, after I left the poolroom. Me and this fellow we thought we were looking for business. Well I had this home here and he stayed with me. That's this fellow, Dan Drutes, he's in Columbia now. He's married; he's got grown kids. He married when he was old, nearly forty-five, fifty years old. Well, anyway, we got inside my T-model Ford and we went down to Spartanburg. We went down there and we didn't find anything. We left about two o'clock in the morning. When we got back to Hendersonville, here was about

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) seven-thirty, eight o'clock; fall of year. It get dark, you know, about six o'clock. Well, we got hungry. We had money, but otherwise, I was tight, stingy; I was, and he was, too. We had a little money, and we didn't go no place to eat. We can go into some cafes over there and eat some, but I'm not much of a cafe man to eat. I know where you eat, you don't know where you eat. You have to watch out.

Well, anyway, we come by Hendersonville and I stopped right on the main street; I saw a little light that said "Baker." Well, I look inside, and this fellow he had a ten-watt light. You know, the ten-watt. They don't make 'em now. Do they make it now?

Silveri: I don't think so.

Chepriss: Number ten; I think I got one downstairs, ten-watt, way back. Well, I stopped, and when I stopped I opened the door and it had a bell right up top. When I open the door the doggoned fellow said, "Hello, Harry." By golly, he knows me from Asheville.

I says, "Who are you, anyway?"

Well, he told me but I forgot his name.

I say, "Well, doggone that, how many pies you got over there?"

Well, it's seven pies; about that big. Not like it is now; like that.

He says, "That's all I got, Harry, left." Didn't have no bread. He doing pretty well over there.

I said: "How long you been here?"

He told me, I think he's been over there three years, something

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) like that.

I said: "How much you want for them?" (That seven, well, six, a dozen, you know, is thirty cents, you see, because you have to double your money.)

He said to me: "Thirty-five cents."

I said: "What you trying to do, sell it to me retail?"

He says: "Well, how much to you?"

I think I give him eighteen cents; seven, eighteen cents, and I got it in my hand. I got it in my hand; I went outside. Well, you can see it, but, you know, not real. . . ten-watt, what can you see? Ten-watt. Well, I got inside the T-model Ford. This boy, Dan, setting over there.

"Boy," he said, "you got some pies, didn't you?"

I said, "Yeh."

Well, he start to eat. Well, I eat the most. I eat four; he eat three. I had nothing to drink. We didn't want nothing to drink. I had my own teeth, then; I got false teeth now.

I said to him, I said: "You know one doggone thing?"

He said, "What?"

I said, "These doggone pies too tough."

He says, "Well, you be tough with them." He stooped down and got a match out of his pocket to light his cigarette. When he struck that match I looked, and I left about a fourth of that pie, because I eat four; he eat three. You know what we been eating? That's the time when that paper come out. You know the paper put under the

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) plate, and it was heavy? We eating the paper and everything. Well, you can't see it. You see, it's so dark, and we. . . you know what he said to me?

He said, "You eat that paper, too?"

I said, "No, I'm no eat it." And I remember, I throw it out the window.

Porter: Did you laugh at yourselves?

Chepriss: Well, sure, we laughing. After you eat it, what can you go and do?

The same thing like we. . . there used to be an excursion, you call it: you go from Asheville to Knoxville. [inaudible] About five or six Greek fellows, you know, on one, and it cost a dollar to go down there. Get up in the morning, six o'clock. Call it excursion. The railroad didn't charge much. We got down Knoxville; it was in summertime. That's the time, not wintertime. We got to this cafe; this Greek fellow over there had fine restaurant. We got inside to eat. Well I told him if he got anything old country eating, like stew meat, or lamb. . . lamb, you know, with the rice, or macaroni, you know, eat when you gonna eat. I don't want no dinner [inaudible]. . . but we fellows, we eat too much. . . [inaudible]. . . He told me, "Yes."

Well, we had it, every one, some of that thing. Well, he took the water, he boiled the water over there, to drink. And here he brought that. . . I don't know what year was this. He brought a bowl, white bowl, they used to call it a finger bowl. You know, what a finger bowl is? What?

Silveri: To wash your fingers after you eat.

Chepriss: Before you eat, too. They didn't have no lavatories, in the cafes. That's what they give you, finger bowls. Well, I saw that water so good and pretty and white, I take that bowl, just glick, glick, glick, drinking it. One of them young boys, one of them Greek boys, working behind the counter, he said, "Look that country boy [inaudible] he's drinking that water from the bowl."

He talking in Greek language, he thought we not Greeks.

I said to him, "This is old country style." And he got shamed and he run.

Let me tell you this, then. He had another one, then. . . . After a few minutes, when that boy left, here they come another one, young boy, and he put a whole loaf bread, each one, because the Greeks and all them fellows from across the water, they eat a lot of bread. This fellow, he says (that young boy), "Why you put all that bread over there; waste that bread."

I turned around, I said to him: "Sonny, we'll eat much as we want to eat and the rest, we leave it."

And heard it when I speak in Greek language, he go. All it was, them days, twenty cents, I think, or fifteen. . . . twenty cents for a good size of a plate. Meat; and the meat was fresh. Is not like this meat you get now. You eat it and it tastes like dry in your mouth; no taste juicy. Not like old country; boy, you eat stuff over there that's good. Yes, sir: bread, meat, everything, it tastes good, Louis. I wish for you, you take a trip. I believe he's gonna get

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) married. Which one of those girls? You never told me who she is.

Porter: I don't know; I don't know where she is.

Chepriss: Is across the water?

Porter: Yes.

Chepriss: Well, if is a good girl; you marry her, yes, sir. You gonna get some picka, too, don't you?

Porter: That'd be nice, sure; marry a rich girl.

Chepriss: Then you write letter and let Mr. Louis to come.

Porter: He can come and be my cumbara.

Chepriss: Cumbara, that's right. What do you call cumbaras here?

Porter: Best man.

Chepriss: Best man?

Silveri: You were talking about Mr. Finkelstein. He gave you five dollars to buy some equipment so you could. . .

Chepriss: Not equipment, just that. . . that thing.

Silveri: When was this? When did you do that?

Chepriss: That's the time. . . left Trakas.

Silveri: Oh, so it's just. . .

Chepriss: It's 1901 or '02, something like that.

Silveri: Nineteen-one, or two. Well, how did you get to know Mr. Finkelstein?

Chepriss: Well, he was Jewish.

Silveri: Yeh. You were just a young kid about fourteen?

Chepriss: He owned a store over there and he liked me, and he come

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) and talk to me. He was immigrant, too. He understand, he was immigrant, except Harry. Harry is little younger than I am. Do you know Harry?

Silveri: No.

Chepriss: That's his boy. Now he's retired, too. Yeh, I tell you, them days they was a good Jewish people, just good. Now you take Harry Blomberg. You know, that got the Cadillac place. Now his daddy was a worker. Them Jews didn't make the money, but they make it, they work hard. Now Harry's daddy, he's the only one, he put up that Emporium store at the Square.

Silveri: One day you told them you needed a job, you wanted to sell some hot dogs?

Chepriss: No, no; he knows that I'm. . . you see, he gimme the advice, too.

Silveri: Oh.

Chepriss: Yeh, he gimme the advice, most.

Silveri: He told you to do that.

Chepriss: Yeh; he said, "You ought to do something, yourself; you're a good hustler."

Silveri: Did you have to get a license from the City?

Chepriss: Oh, no. . .license! No such animals them days; nothing. We never paid nothing.

Silveri: So you just got out the equipment and you began to sell hot dogs?

Chepriss: What kind equipment? Just basket, you go buy the rolls

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) the bakery shop. Do you know where the bakery shop was them days? Zindel Bakery. And then you come the Asheville Steam Bakers; and then you come Blue Ridge. I can call you. I tell you, one fellow still living used to have a bakery shop up at the Square: Quality Bakery. Wilde; he's a German. Used to cook any kind cakes, bread, and everything. Five cents a loaf, French bread. Right there, you know where. . . I tell you where. You know Peterson's Lunch, at the Square? Well, it was right this side. Had the baker shop upstairs and downstairs, too.

Silveri: How long did you do that work, selling hot dogs out in the street? Pack Square, right?

Chepriss: Almost. . . all over town. Town, where was town? Town, it was Patton Avenue right there almost to Coxe Street. You know where Coxe Street is? Used to been a hollow there. That's how far was the business. And from there to. . . You know where the auditorium is? The Catholic church on Haywood Street? That's how far, to there, the business. You know, the business. . . Well, College Street. . . College Street, there was nothing. You know where College Street is. . . nothing. And then, Biltmore Avenue, pretty well, and Broadway, you go down to this side from Masonic Temple. You know Masonic Temple? On the right side over there, it used to be nothing but cornfields, and vines, and honeysuckle.

Porter: So you sold hot dogs all over that part of town.

Chepriss: Yes, and down Lexington Avenue, and things like that. Lexington Avenue, it was colored people living, and downstairs they

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) had little markets; not the colored, but white.

Porter: What people usually bought your hot dogs when you sold them?

Chepriss: Any kind; I don't know. . .

Porter: Business men bought them?

Chepriss: Yes, some; yes, sure. Why not? There's nothing wrong with. . .

Porter: No; I was just wondering if only poor people bought them because they couldn't go into a cafe and get . . .

Chepriss: No, no; just anybody. You know, they see winnies like that, and they're with a great, big roll, and the winnie that big round, not them little bittie, now. You get your money's worth.

Porter: Did you go into the black area of town?

Chepriss: Black area? No; well, it was black area, except some colored people living down Lexington Avenue.

Porter: That's what I mean. Did you go down there?

Chepriss: Well, I have to; that's where the market was, the people bringing the stuff.

Porter: Did Black people treat you any differently than white people did?

Chepriss: Well, some; you know, they not educated. Some, they not educated, naturally. But I never had no trouble. Now some people, they have trouble. They ways you treat anybody. Like some people, you see a Black person and they start to cuss them. They can't help it to be a Black. You know one thing: that's what the matter with us.

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) Of course, now, you take some people says, "Why don't we send 'em back to Africa?" Well, they ought to send us back across the water, too. Me and anybody else. We brought 'em here. They went over there [inaudible]. . . you know how they brought 'em in this country? They went to Africa, them black [inaudible]. . . get nearly fifteen and twenty, and they chain 'em and brought 'em here. Same thing brought with Japanese. . . the Chinese, I mean. They mistreat the Chinese. They had lot of Chinese up the Western parts. Of course, we had over here Chinese laundry, on Biltmore Avenue, next to Sterchi Brothers. They done a good business, too. He's Chinaman.

Silveri: How long did you do that? Selling those hot dogs?

Chepriss: Couple of years.

Silveri: Couple of years? Even during the wintertime you sold them?

Chepriss: Oh, yes; make no difference if it's cold. Well, I make dollar and a half, two dollars, a day. Not profit.

Silveri: Gross?

Chepriss: Yes; not profit, but make pretty good, make it better than. . . And then come a feller by name D. Gross; he put two winnies in his. You see? He was Jewish, and when he put two winnies, put me out of business, and I got mad and cussed him and Finkelstein told me: "No, no, Harry, don't pay." He was Jewish, too, you know. I didn't know it. And I quit. I forgot about what I done after that. You know the years passing by, except I remember the times I had

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) can't get no job, and I can't get nothing to eat. That's what make it hard.

Silveri: There were times when you couldn't get anything to eat. Is that right?

Chepriss: Well, yes. I didn't have no to eat, but except one fellow, had the Asheville Steam Bakery, every day he give me one mince pie, great big one, and a loaf bread. I tell you how come he give it to me: sometime I get up soon in the morning, I used to didn't have no job, and go to sleep down depot, or here and there, and get up soon, about three, three-thirty. This fellow deliver bread with his horses and wagon. You know, that closed wagon? And the policemen, at night. . . of course, didn't have but six policemen in Asheville. . . and they open the back door and steal his pies and his cakes. . . the policemen, they taking it.

Porter: Oh, really.

Chepriss: He told me. . . he called me: "Come here, devil." He called me devil. I don't know why. He want me to watch his wagon. And policeman come, say: "No, no, no bother it." And I tell him. John McAbee, his name. That's why he give me that bread. I take that bread, then, no wrap up nothing; take it in your hands, and go out there where the Grove Park Inn. I remember I hide that bread in pine trees and I thought I can find him, and the doggone squirrels getting it, or the crows, and I thought somebody been stealing it. But he didn't, you see, the crows getting it, or squirrels.

Silveri: What did you do? Did you walk out to Sunset Mountain?

Chepriss: Sure, walk over there. Yeh, golly, yeh.

Silveri: That's quite a distance; that was a few miles.

Chepriss: Yeh, walk them days. Now I can't walk from here to there. When you get old you can't walk.

Silveri: Those were really tough times there when you came to Asheville here.

Chepriss: Tough times? Golly. Well you take that many years I've been here. You take a piece of iron and drag it, you know, drag it on the street, it wear out. Same thing with me. Now, if I go, I'm pretty good, like an old gentleman come here Sunday, and he asked me about it. He says, "How you keep this place up? You mean you keep it up?" He was younger than I was.

I say, "Yeh, me and her." There's a lot of work around here, Mr. Louis. You know, to keep the shrubs up. They thinking, people look and it all looks so pretty. You be here and you sweat; I work just as black as can be. You've got to keep it up to look nice. If you don't, it grow up before you know it.

Silveri: Okay. What job did you have after you closed the poolroom?

Chepriss: After the poolroom, I think we went into the junk business.

Silveri: Okay. Then after that, what did you do?

Chepriss: I think, sold some real estate.

Silveri: After you went out of the junk business you went to work for a real estate agent?

Chepriss: No; me and this. . .this fellow was blind. His name was H.O. Williams. He's dead now.

Silveri: H.O. Williams?

Chepriss: Yeh. I worked under him, with his license.

Silveri: With his license. While you still had the junkyard?

Chepriss: Oh, no, no. I didn't have the junkyard.

Silveri: When did you start doing that?

Chepriss: I believe it was about '46.

Silveri: What did you do between that. . .

Chepriss: Oh, I worked plumbing.

Silveri: You were a plumber?

Chepriss: Yeh, plumber. Pretty well, not real plumber.

Silveri: Plumber's helper.

Chepriss: Yeh. No; I've done myself. I've got so much stuff down-stairs, plumbing, oh, my goodness.

Silveri: You did it privately?

Chepriss: Yeh, and you didn't charge people but dollar, dollar and a half, two dollars. You know what they charge an hour now? Fourteen fifty. And they used to charge two dollars and a half; and you worked, too.

Silveri: You worked by yourself?

Chepriss: Oh, yes, just people, you know I know 'em.

Silveri: Okay; you did that for a number of years?

Chepriss: Oh, yeah; from before I went selling property. I sold property and worked with that too.

Silveri: Oh, both of those things.

Chepriss: Yes.

Silveri: You were doing that when the Second World War began?

Chepriss: Yes. And that's the time the property start up. The property was so cheap you can buy. You take that land across over there. This fellow offered it to me for twenty-five dollars an acre. You don't want it; you're paying taxes for nothing. Never buy no property without it bring you something. If you buy empty property you pay taxes for nothing. Like I had four lots over here on Haywood Road. No; three lots. And I paid twelve thousand dollars when I bought it, 1919; and 1946, you know how much they sell it for, whole business? Twenty six hundred dollars. But I need the money. After that the property start up. I tell you. You know where Malvern Hills Drug Store is? It is right across over there where is that eating joint. All them lots was mine. But after that, you see, that's your luck. It started to go up again. But before that, you buy beautiful homes in Asheville, two thousand, maybe three thousand. . . beautiful homes.

Silveri: That was during the 1930's, when times were bad. Right?

Chepriss: Yes. Almost to '45, after the war is over. Used to live a German fellow over here. His name Greisheimer. He says, "You wait, after this war over, everything go up." I never believe him. Boy, he's dead now. He told me the truth.

Silveri: The 1930's were very bad years all over the country; the Depression years.

Chepriss: Yes, it was bad, but not real bad the people figuring. And anyone want to work; he make living.

Silveri: So you didn't feel it very badly?

Chepriss: No; no; I had the poolroom still. Of course, I'd been taking eighty dollars, ninety dollars, sometime a hundred. . . come down taking dollar and a half; two dollars. But still, we're living. We had something to eat. Now some people holler. I tell you what's the matter with 'em. We want everything for nothing, and no work, neither. We used to work twelve to sixteen and eighteen hours a day. If you've got your business, or you work for somebody. You know what's the matter now? You take the hospitals, the nurses. You know what they do? They look at the clock. That's what's the matter with everything.

[END OF TAPE I, SIDE II]

[TAPE II, SIDE I]

John Porter: You know, from what you've told us about your businesses and things, and from what I know about the Greek community, it seems that most Greeks, when they come to the United States, try to open a place of their own instead of working for someone else.

Chepriss: Well, you have to work yourself; you can't open up right quick without you've got money.

Porter: Okay; but you work for someone else for a short period of time. . .

Chepriss: Yes.

Porter: . . . and make some money and then try to open a place of

Porter: (Cont'd.) your own.

Chepriss: Yes; but sometimes them fellows open up business, somebody put 'em in business.

Porter: Another Greek?

Chepriss: Yes, sir; well, anyone. Like this fellow, this doctor across the mountain. He liked this Greek fellow and he bought him a place, like hotel, what do you call it?

Silveri: Motel?

Chepriss: Motel. I don't know how many thousand dollars he paid for it. He look after, and he open up a little place over there, too. You got to have somebody behind. You can't do it yourself. It takes money to make money.

Porter: Right; but you wanted to have a place of your own. Right?

Chepriss: Naturally, naturally, like to have it, but you've got to know your business, too. If you don't know your business; you can't anybody go in business. You've got to know, to treat everybody right.

Silveri: Did you remember Sheriff Jesse James Bailey?

Chepriss: Well, Lord, yes. He was Republican, but he's good man. I don't know. He's still living?

Silveri: Yes; he's eighty-nine years old.

Chepriss: Bless his heart. I tell you, he lived right here in Riverview, had beautiful home. You know where's Riverview Drive? You know, you going out to West Asheville, you going out right straight on Haywood Road, and you come to Beecham's Curve. You know where

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) Beecham's Curve is? You go right straight. When you go straight, then you turn to your right when you get to the end of the road, and on the right hand side is a rock house. That's where he used to live. I know him well. Now, you know, he win because he told the people: "Now it don't make no difference you Democrat or Republican, vote for me." And they did. But some hotheads, they never tell it, and the people work and got him. He was a good man.

Silveri: You liked him. He had a reputation of being against the moonshiners.

Chepriss: Oh, has anyone been against moonshiners? Now you take Sheriff Brown, he's the oldest one. He's been thirty-six years Sheriff, and I remember when he got in. I can run over there and get some liquor; they had it.

Silveri: In the Sheriff's office?

Chepriss: Yes, sure. If you sick man.

Silveri: Did you ever get any?

Chepriss: Oh, yes.

Silveri: From whom? Did you ever get any from them?

Chepriss: Yes, went over there and got it, but they had to put that camphor in it.

Silveri: Camphor in it?

Chepriss: Camphor. You know, you see, to you can sell it. You see, that's good for your cold.

Silveri: Oh, did you have to get a doctor's prescription?

Chepriss: No, no, no doctor's prescription; you've got to know them.

Silveri: Oh, you went in there and they would give you a little pint?

Chepriss: Sure, all the time. A little pint? No, big one.

I mean, a half gallon. What is half pint going to do?

Silveri: Would Jesse James give you some? You knew him.

Chepriss: No, no, no. I never went to him.

Porter: Sheriff Brown, right?

Chepriss: Sheriff Brown, yes. He was good man; him and his brother, too: T.K. Brown. That's why he been over there. Now, before him was Sheriff Lyerly. He killed himself. And Sheriff Penland. And before them was Sheriff Mitchell. Before Mitchell was Sheriff Hunter. I can go back; I can remember good every one. I remember every one. Knew 'em well.

Silveri: What did you do with the moonshine? You just kept it for a drink once in a while?

Chepriss: Yes, sick, you know. I used to suffer with arthritis, terrible. I got rheumatism, you know. They bother me. My hands, I can't use it. I wish I had it now, but I can't afford to buy it.

Silveri: It really was good stuff?

Chepriss: Oh, yes. You see, you put that stuff inside. They call it pokeberries.

Silveri: Pokeberries?

Chepriss: Pokeberries, you know, you put 'em inside. You see, very little help, not too much, they help you. You can't help it. When you get old, every durn thing bother you. You can't sleep; you be nervous; you get excitement, and you don't know what to do. It's natural. You be grouchy. You not goin' be like you are now, Mr. Louis. When you get a little older. . . you got some kids?

Silveri: Yes.

Chepriss: Well, you're goin' be grouchy as can be.

Silveri: I'm already grouchy.

Chepriss: You wait. No, not yet. And special, these days, to raise kids, it's heck. Now you helping to raise kids, boys or girls, is a job.

Silveri: During the Second World War, you sold real estate and you did plumbing.

Chepriss: Both; same time.

Silveri: During the war.

Chepriss: Yes.

Silveri: How was it here in Asheville? Were things hard to get?

Chepriss: Well, we get job, but not people hire like is now, everything. Everything, they skin you now. . . you show to Mr. Louis.

Porter: I haven't had a chance to show it to him, but I will. . . Right there on. . .

Chepriss: Mr. Hearn.

Porter: Yes; Mr. Hearn's. . . What's the name of that street?

[At this point the men appear to be looking at photographs and making comments on their subjects.]

Chepriss: Broadway.

Porter: Is that Broadway? Right on Broadway.

Chepriss: North Main, used to call it. North Main Street, used to call it. Yes.

Porter: But now they call it Broadway.

Chepriss: That's right. I show him the other day the [inaudible] they drill a hole and they put a ring with iron. That's where you tie your horses, them days, and let 'em stay all day, cold, hot as it is now. Put a horse, stay right on the street. You know that's hard. They was mean to the animals.

Silveri: Did you make more money selling real estate or from plumbing?

Chepriss: Oh, real estate, naturally. Plumbing, you ain't gonna make nothing, just a living. Them people no make no money, they working.

Silveri: What percentage did you get if you sold a house?

Chepriss: Five percent.

Silveri: You got five percent.

Chepriss: Five percent; yes. But, you see, you have to turn it in, in the office; I get half.

Silveri: Oh, I see. The business got half and you got half.

Chepriss: Why, yes. And him, he had the expenses. Of course, I had expenses. I take it out with my car. You have to show 'em and everything. Well, sometimes you sell and sometimes you not.

Silveri: Did you sell just in the city or did you go out all around

Silveri: (Cont'd.) Buncombe County?

Chepriss: Oh, out the country too. You have to show 'em the line. You see, when you sell real estate you got to show 'em the line; you got to show 'em everything.

[END OF INTERVIEW]