

Harry Chepriss, interviewed by Dr. Louis Silveri, July 18, 1977.

Dr. Louis Silveri: I want you to tell me when you were born.

Harry Chepriss: Eighteen eighty-six.

Silveri: Eighteen eighty-six?

Chepriss: Yes.

Silveri: Where?

Chepriss: In Greece.

Silveri: Whereabouts in Greece?

Chepriss: Carpenish.

Silveri: How many children were in your family? How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Chepriss: Me and two sisters; and Daddy died when I was young.

Silveri: What year did you come to America?

Chepriss: Nineteen Hundred.

Silveri: Did you come alone?

Chepriss: Alone.

Silveri: Why did you come? Let's see: you were fourteen years old then. Right?

Chepriss: Yes.

Silveri: Why did you come?

Chepriss: . . . I had cousins here.

[At this point Mrs. Chepriss enters]

Mr. Chepriss: What year were we married?

Mrs. Chepriss: Nineteen and twenty-three.

Mr. Chepriss: Twenty-three? Nineteen twenty-three, you see.

Silveri: You were married.

Chepriss: We were married; yes.

Silveri: Let's go back to 1900.

Chepriss: I think I can tell you every President of the United States. The first one, he was McKinley, then Roosevelt. . .

Silveri: Since you've been here, you mean?

Chepriss: Yes. Then come Taft, Taft again, and then come Wilson, Wilson come Harding, and Harding come Coolidge, from Coolidge come Hoover, Hoover then come Roosevelt, and Roosevelt come Truman, from Truman then he come. . . What is the name? I can't call his name; the one that got killed. You know, they kill him.

Silveri: No.

Chepriss: John. . .

Silveri: Now you're skipping one.

Chepriss: Eisenhower.

Silveri: Right.

Chepriss: Eisenhower, and then the other one. . . Well, you forget when you get old. You know, you forget.

Silveri: Right; Kennedy.

Chepriss: Yes; Kennedy. And then come Johnson, and then Nixon, and now, I can't call his name.

Mrs. Chepriss: Carter.

Chepriss: Who?

Mrs. Chepriss: Carter.

Chepriss: Yes, Carter.

John Porter: And before Carter was Ford, between Nixon and Carter.

Chepriss: I remembered every one. You see, when you get your citizen papers you have to know every one. When I came here to Asheville nobody but one Greek fellow was here.

Silveri: What year did you come to Asheville?

Chepriss: In nineteen hundred.

Silveri: You came straight to Asheville from Greece?

Chepriss: No, I went plumb to California, and they put me to work over there in the coal mines. I was young.

Silveri: Coal mines in California?

Chepriss: Yes; soft coal.

Silveri: Whereabouts in California?

Chepriss: I can't call the name. Golly, how can you remember that many years? Well, anyway, I worked over there about a month and I got nothing. They slipped me off from there. They took that tag. You know, that tag they put in New York?

Silveri: Yes.

Chepriss: They scratch it off and they put, mistaken, Bowling Green, Kentucky. That's where my cousin was. Then I come to Bowling Green free. But I stayed down at the depot there nearly three days and three nights, in California, before they picked me up. Come looked at the tag, and I don't know, it just looked like there was a trunk. Well, when I came to Bowling Green, I worked for this fellow. I know him. He knows me. Of course, he was older than me. I worked over there for a month. I didn't get paid nothing, except the tips that I got, you

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) know; you work outside picking up dishes. Nickels and dimes, those days, but a nickel was a nickel. Well, I had enough money, and I came to Asheville to meet my cousin. My cousin never was here. He left and went to Greenville. I got down to the depot; they were talking to me and I couldn't speak English. This policeman says to me (McIntosh, the policeman), he began talking to me and got me and we walked all the way from down at the depot plumb to town.

We went to this Greek fellow, you know, Trakas. He had the wholesale house, bananas, the three brothers, over there. He gave me a job; three dollars a month and we sleep down in the basement. Those days were hard times. I sold bananas on the street: five cents a dozen. They didn't know what bananas were here, these people. These people said, "Hey!" Especially, they called me, "Hey, foreigner. How much are bananas?"

"Nickel, a dozen."

And they put it in the bosom.

John Porter: Who are you talking about now?

Chepriss: The people here, buy bananas on the street, in Asheville. Well, I worked with them about a year. Then I fix a little thing and sell hot dogs on the street. I began along to speak pretty well English, you know. I sell at five cents; mustard. They ate them right in the hand. Them days was different what is now; nickel. Great big roll, and then comes this fellow, by name D. Gross. He was Jewish. Good man, but he had a big family. He'd put two winnies. Well, they were six cents a pound, and he ordered his from Atlanta, four cents a pound, and that's

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) why he did it. Well, he put me out. After that I opened up a barbeque place on the corner of Biltmore Avenue and Eagle Street. Eagle Street was muddy. And barbeque; they didn't know what it was. Great big old rolls, big slice of ham, for a nickel, those days. You take Asheville from down at the depot, you come on Southside, there were beautiful homes. The railroad people were living over there, engineers and conductors, and Clingman Avenue. Then you come up Biltmore Avenue, they had cobblestones, street cars. They had the street cars here. But the people were fine. Asheville, it was wonderful, but the main place was for high people, you know, pretty wealthy. Charlotte Street, Merrimon Avenue, and then Montford, and then Broadway after that.

The road toward Biltmore was paved to the top of that hospital, St. Joseph's Hospital. Not paved, but cobblestones. The others were nothing but mud. On Pack Square they had a water trough for the horses. You walk on College Street then you can see the Courthouse, old Courthouse with a big bell. You would hear it every hour, ringing. The Fire Department had a bell you can hear plumb down; when it's kind of good weather you can hear it plumb down to Marshall, twenty-one miles. We got rid of that, you see.

And beautiful homes. Oh, my goodness. They never allowed factories. People didn't have factories, nothing but horses. This man that swept up the street with a broom, you know, where there was horse manure in the streets. Well, the toilets were outside; just a bucket. Here comes this man, his name was McKnapp, there are some of the family

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) living now. He had a big wagon with two mules and a great big old bell, round bell, you know. He would take the bucket and empty it and then the water. You could smell it all over. Flies! Oh, my goodness. But people were healthier than now.

Anyway, he would drive it and take it down to the river and empty it.

Silveri: Into the river.

Chepriss: Yes, sir. You go to the restaurant then: fifteen cents, you eat dinner. They had boarding houses; fine boarding houses, and you'd give twenty, twenty-five cents, you'd sit down and eat as much as you wanted.

In 1912 they started to build the Grove Park Inn. You know where Grove Park Inn is? The most Italian people; the Greeks, servants. Those blocks you see over there, they picked them up with manpower, not like they built this big auditorium on Haywood Street. They picked them up with a derrick, but over there they used manpower.

The Battery Park was over there on Haywood Street where the Catholic Church is; right this side, from the Catholic Church back the other way, there was nothing but dirt. The street, you know. Battery Park was one of the fine hotels.

On out Charlotte Street there was a place called a hotel where the First Baptist Church is: Cherokee Inn, a hotel, a pretty good size. I used to go over there, buy me a loaf of bread, French bread, nickel, five cents. You sit down and eat and people just looked at me, old timers with the moustache. Some of them had beards, whiskers, some

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) did not. But anyway, Asheville was different than what it is now: the water, it was nice and clean. If you spit on the street, chewing tobacco, or something, country people, and they put a law. They were pretty strict; the law here. The spitting, that chewing tobacco and snuff, that Climax chewing tobacco, spitting, five dollars and cost. The cost was ninety cents. Five, ninety. They wanted to keep everything nice, and didn't let factories [come in]. They didn't want factories here in Asheville at all, because they were wealthy people in those days.

Of course, the country people. . . but you can live. You can go over there and shop like this: twenty five cents. A tie, five cents. Cap, ten cents. You get a little cap, you know. Of course, they had the Stetson. Hats: they make some that come from Italy; they're pretty high. Now, shoes: you take these shoes, from two dollars to three dollars. They last you about a year, maybe a year and a half. Now we had a shoe store in Asheville, Clements and Chambers, sold shoes [that were] eight dollars, but they last you for nearly ten and fifteen years; shoes. Believe it or not, you didn't have to have soles or nothing. Now look how much [they are].

Silveri: Let me ask you some questions: When you were back in Greece you had some letters about America, right? Your cousin wrote to you about America?

Chepriss: Yes. My cousin wrote me letters. He came here.

Silveri: What did he say about it?

Chepriss: Well, I wanted to come for future life.

Silveri: Greater opportunities for young people?

Chepriss: This country is made up of foreign people, all foreigners: Italians, Frenchmen, Germans, all nationalities, they come here, and that's what makes the United States. . . if it never was for the foreigners. . . you see, they come in here, they put a. . . like café; well, another one come in and put a better café. They spend money, and money circulates around here. Right here in Asheville we have two or three people that are millionaires. They didn't spend any money in those days.

Silveri: You were only fourteen years old.

Chepriss: Fourteen years old.

Silveri: You had to have a lot of courage to come over here alone.

Chepriss: I can take it. I was crying when I came, but I toughed it out.

Silveri: Did your mother and father want you to go?

Chepriss: My father died when I was young.

Silveri: Your mother. What did your mother feel about it? Didn't she want you to stay home?

Chepriss: No; Mother wanted me to come here; to send her son. I was making three dollars a month, and I had to send her two dollars-and-a-half, and I kept fifty cents. I washed my clothes myself. People don't know anything about times like that.

Silveri: You came over here at fourteen. Do you remember the trip over here in the boat?

Chepriss: The boat was named Ostend-American.



Silveri: Astro-American?

Chepriss: Ostend; Ostend-American.

Silveri: Okay. How long did it take you to get over?

Chepriss: Thirty-six days.

Silveri: Thirty-six days.

Chepriss: Yes; and nights; nights and days; thirty-six days.

Silveri: Directly from Greece to the United States?

Chepriss: From Piraeus to New York.

Silveri: No stop on the way?

Chepriss: Except to stop in Palermo.

Silveri: To pick up some Italian immigrants there?

Chepriss: Yes; some Italian people.

Silveri: What do you remember about that trip? Did you get seasick?

Chepriss: Naturally, but I was young. You know how they fed you in those days? You had to have a water canteen. You go over there and they give you a spoon and a fork and a little can to go and get your coffee. That's all, coffee. No sugar; no cream. Black coffee, a loaf of bread, and they give you something to eat. You have to wash your own dish. We slept inside, like straight, no beds. Bedbugs and lice. . . Oh, my goodness!

Silveri: Thirty-six days, you had to go through that!

Chepriss: Yes, sir; I was. . .

Silveri: Were all of the people on the boat immigrants?

Chepriss: Oh, golly, I guess there were about two hundred and fifty people, inside, in the boat. Different nationalities: Jewish, all

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) nationalities, but no trouble; all just like brothers. They loved each other in those days. Now, the people knock you in the head. They loved each other; they treated you nice.

Silveri: What time of the year was this?

Chepriss: Nineteen hundred . . .

Silveri: When was it? During the winter, or the summer?

Chepriss: No; fall of the year.

Silveri: Fall.

Chepriss: Fall of the year.

Silveri: You landed in New York City.

Chepriss: Yes; you had to go through the customs courthouse. They examined you. They examined your toes, and then examined your ears; examined you inside your mouth; and then examined you in your privates; everything. You be naked as a jaybird. Then they asked you if you had any money. You're supposed to have twenty-five dollars, to show the United States Government you've got money; you won't be an obligation to the United States Government. I was young and I was scared to take the money out; I thought he was going to take it. This lady, you know. . . she spoke French, German, Italian, Greek, Turkish, all of those languages. She said, "Well, yes, you've got the money." He waited. She took a dollar out. When she took the dollar out and gave us a handbag with apples. They had some bananas, but they didn't have them down here in the South. Then they marched us to the train, with a tag, if you couldn't speak the language. Each one went in a different direction. But I sat down and ate that stuff in one night. Next day. . . I was

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) hungry for two days. The train stopped somewhere and I saw the conductor stop; he was eating biscuits. I had never seen biscuits before. We make the bread big across the water; pretty good size. I saw this conductor eating. Every time he took I bite, I watched him. This conductor asked me if I wanted one. I took it and swallowed it. I was hungry. For two days I didn't eat anything. You had water in the train. Water; they had toilets; nice.

Then I stopped in a place; this conductor came and got me by the hand and he took me across over there. There was a big fellow had a fruit stand. Had a mustache. He was sitting over there and spitting on apples and shining them. He began talking to him in my language.

Silveri: This was in California?

Chepriss: I don't know. It took nearly four days to California in those days.

Silveri: On the train.

Chepriss: On the train, yes, sir, four days. I don't know that place. It was small shacks. In those days there were no homes like this; it was just shacks. Anyway, this big fellow gave me a great big platter; rice stew with lamb. I sat down and I cleaned it and a great big loaf of bread. I mean, I ate the whole business. I could order some bread in the train, but there was a colored man. We didn't have any black people [inaudible]. . . . we didn't have it, and I had never seen a black man before, and I was scared to buy it from him. But this big fellow told me, he said: "It's all right. They don't make the bread."

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) He said, "They sell it." But after I got on the train, to come to Bowling Green, I bought a loaf of bread and I gave him a dollar and he gave me change. What he gave me, I never noticed, the money was different. I bought a loaf of bread. If he cheated me, I would never see him any more, any way.

Silveri: How did you get the money to come here?

Chepriss: I had a ticket. . . my cousin. . . the ticket didn't cost but a hundred and ten dollars, for the boat and the train here, too, everything; excepting twenty-five dollars. I remember my mother mortgaged the home. We had one oxen, one donkey, six goats and three sheep. [She] mortgaged everything for one year to get that twenty-five dollars.

Silveri: Expecting that you would send that money to them?

Chepriss: Well, I did send it back; I did send that money back as soon as I got to California. You know what I did? In the old country I was a young boy, but I worked in a shoe shop, and I had some shoe polish, shoe paste, and I shined the shoes for those fellows in the mine for three cents. I had nearly three dollars, three dollars and some in my pocket of that money. As soon as I got in California, you know what I did? This man over there was Swiss, from Switzerland; a fine man. You don't find people like that. He took up money and sent it across. Just two months after I came to this country, I sent that money back.

Silveri: Twenty-five dollars, or three dollars?

Chepriss: No; twenty-five, the whole business. The twenty-five

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) dollars; yes. This man never charged my mother interest. When I went across the water last time, '27, me and my wife, he was still living. He had plenty, and this time he didn't have anything. He came and shook hands with me. I was so tight, I should have given him something [but] I didn't give him anything. But when you're young, you don't have any sense. You know when we put some sense here? Anybody when he passes fifty, fifty-five, sixty. Under that, I don't care who he is, he doesn't have a lick of sense. They never think of anything but the money, money. Money, they think, is going to be here forever. We're not going to be here forever. We should love each other. You go to these people now, the young generation, you go to the cafés, and I'm the oldest one in Asheville, they never offer me a cigar. They used to come to my place: "Sit down, my friend; eat anything you want."

Silveri: You're talking about other Greeks?

Chepriss: Yes. You see, the young generation is different. I worked. . . you know, 1940, the banks when they closed I lost every penny I had. I had plenty of money to live from now on. She doesn't know anything about it; I never told her. I had in Central Bank, I lost everything.

Silveri: Let's go back to California: you arrived in California when you came here, and you had to go find a job. Or was there a job waiting for you? Somebody was waiting for you for a job?

Chepriss: In California?

Silveri: Yes.

Chepriss: Oh, no; I went to my cousin. I didn't know if he had a job or not.

Silveri: Did you find your cousin, in California?

Chepriss: No, he left.

Silveri: Okay. So how did you find a job working in the mines?

Chepriss: Well, that's the address I had, and this man, he was a Swiss, and. . . What do you call it? He was the foreman. He was the one that gave me the job.

Silveri: What were you doing in the mines?

Chepriss: I pushed that thing that comes from the ground. What do you call that train? Car, you know? Pushed it. You know how many hours? Sixteen hours.

Silveri: Sixteen hours a day.

Chepriss: Yes, sir; those days.

Silveri: What was the pay?

Chepriss: God knows. I don't know what he paid me. I never asked him. I didn't know enough. . . ignorant. . . when you're young, you're ignorant. Not like this young generation now. Right quick, they tell you: "How much are you paying me?" But I didn't know it.

John Porter: You didn't know the language either.

Chepriss: No, I didn't know the language, but still, they're good, but you have to sign. I signed it for three years, to work over there. Worked three years. In those days they didn't have unions; nothing like that. [Inaudible]. . . Not only over there then. You go to these cafès and you get a job. They don't give you. . . I went to Greenville

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) to work and they gave me eight dollars, and then I started to leave from there and they raised it to eighteen. I came to Asheville and I got thirty dollars. I was a cook; second cook. I left after that and I went and opened up a junkyard, automobiles. I turned around and gave it to my wife's uncle, and if I kept it, but I didn't want to keep it.

Then I went to the furniture business. . . and people didn't pay me. You understand what I mean. I lost everything over there. Then I opened up a café. Then I turned around and opened up a bigger place, a pool room, 1929. I made good money with that, but that didn't do me any good; I lost it in the bank.

Silveri: Let's go back a minute. You say you were in California for three years.

Chepriss: No!

Silveri: How long?

Chepriss: About three months.

Silveri: Three months.

Chepriss: Two or three months; something like that.

Silveri: Why did you leave? How did you happen to leave California?

Chepriss: I was looking for my cousin. I didn't have anybody.

Silveri: You said they put you on a train again to go to. . .

Chepriss: No; they didn't put me on the train, they slipped me off. The second foreman told me to catch a little donkey engine, and I rode it nearly, oh, I guess about twenty, twenty-five miles. Then I went to the real station where the trains were. I walked nearly three miles.

Silveri: That's when you were going to Bowling Green. . .?

Chepriss: Yes; and I went down there and stayed in the depot three days and three nights, sitting over there in a big chair, and sleeping. The conductor found me and looked at the tag, and he was talking. . . I don't know what. . . I couldn't speak English. . . and he said, "Why don't you take this boy?"

They were good people in those days. Then they came and got me and put me in the train.

Silveri: You didn't have to pay?

Chepriss: No; I didn't pay a penny. They brought me all the way from California plumb to Bowling Green. Free. Not free, but you know, I had the ticket, but that's the way they fixed it.

Silveri: When you got to Bowling Green, what happened there?

Chepriss: When I came out down at the depot, I didn't know where I was. Here came the man with the hack, you know, horses. Hack, they call it, don't they?

Silveri: Yes.

Chepriss: Well, he put me in it; he took me over there to this café. They called it "Dixie Café." This fellow met me out there. He was young, about your age, and he took me in. I didn't have but little short breeches, from right there; them great big old shoes with hobnails in the bottom. You know, those days, you didn't dress up like now.

And he gave me a job. Oh, pretty good. He bought me a suit of clothes; three collars. You know, those cellophane collars you can wash yourself? And two shirts. Not underwear. That's all he did.



Chepriss: (Cont'd.) He never paid me.

John Porter: Was he a Greek fellow?

Chepriss: Yes; those days they helped you. . . I'll tell you what: Now if somebody listened to me talk, if it was an old-timer. . . I don't care if he's Italian or Frenchman. . . that's the way they used to do the poor people that came from across the water. You know, they make money, and they have money, and then when they [inaudible] the immigrants, they treat them like a dog; like was done to colored people. We are paying now for what your ancestors here have done to the colored people. They used to kick them and holler at them. Like the foreman used to holler at me. He'd say, "Hey, foreigner." Well, he came to this country Sunday; I came here Wednesday. All of we foreigners.

But you can't tell them, in those days, especially down here in the South. Up North it was a little different, because there were so many foreigners. There used to be an Italian fellow in Asheville, Charlie Mascari. He was well known; he had a big family; fine man. We had another Italian fellow; he went out to Waynesville, and he made a big success. I went to Waynesville in 1908. I'll tell you what happened. Me and another fellow, we bought a café over there. This is the funniest thing. Well, we bought it for, I think it was, twelve hundred and fifty dollars. Waynesville didn't have any bakers, they didn't have a butcher shop; nothing. Everything we got from Asheville; the train brought it over there, twenty-five, fifty cents, every morning, fresh. We paid the bill every month; we came and paid it in Asheville. And Waynesville, right here; a nice, beautiful place. Well, so we

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) bought a café down at the depot. We made good. I remember, when you're young, like I told you a while ago, we don't have a lick of sense. Another fellow with me, my partner, we put in the window the letters: "For Ladies and Gentlemen." Those days, women didn't use to go to the cafés. No! Before 1925. After twenty-five, the women took everything. Well, anyway, we put in the window: "For Ladies and Gentlemen." Women never did come in, but some came, but stood up, you know. We did pretty well.

Well, I thought we'd put some linoleum on the floor. That was when linoleum came out, you know, that you put on the floor. You didn't have linoleum here. When it came out, it was high! I went to Waynesville and talked to this fellow, Brown. He had a hardware store. I told him we needed linoleum. I couldn't speak English, but he understood what I said. He said, "We don't do that. You have to go to Asheville. . ."

[END OF TAPE I, SIDE I]

[TAPE I, SIDE II]

Chepriss: Well, I came to Asheville. They had a furniture store [run by] a fellow named Jarrett. We could do the linoleum. The linoleum cost nearly a hundred and fifty dollars in those days. We gave him fifteen or twenty dollars down. We put it. . . fixed beautiful. . . all around this café had looking glasses. We bought it, you know, from this man. Friday night it was snowing on the ground, nearly two feet. In those days, transportation was nothing but the train. The roads never were like this; they were little paths, like across the water. Like I told

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) you a while ago, the toilets and the water [were] outside. Well, anyway, it was about nine-thirty; we closed up at eleven. Here came two fellows from Sunburst, they called it that here, it was kind of a lumber, cutting timber, you know, in the mountains. They had whiskers that long, moustaches, great big old hobnail shoes. They walked, came in. Well, the lights, we didn't have electric lights in those days; they had one of those gas, they called benzene. We used to buy that from the drugstore, benzene, you know, gasoline. You had a pump; they gave a beautiful light. We had two of them, and under the coffeepot we had kerosene. A lamp, you know, to give. . . they had coffeepots like they have now.

Well anyway, those fellows came in; opened the door. Every time they walked they cut the linoleum, those hobnails, stuck onto the shoes. . . I can't speak real good English, you know, and I said, "Cap, cap, cap, floor, floor."

Well, those fellows were half drunk; they were mean, too. He got his gun out. . . gone nearly outside. . . "bang, bang!" Two shots, both lights gone. "Bang!" The third thing hit the coffeepot, and the water starts squishing out. I ain't done nothing. When you're young, and when you're young you get scared. Them days you get scared. Now, the young ones, they don't care.

The first thing I done: they had cash registers; fine. I went over to the cash register; got that money, put it in my pocket, had to go out the door. I went out the door. Across over there was the depot. This fellow engineer, his name [was] Lofton. He had one

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) leg, but he worked for railroad, engineer. He knows me. He lived down [at the] depot. A fine man, you know, he was wealthy, family. He said, "What's the matter, Harry?"

Well, I can't speak good English: "Shoot, shoot! Kill, kill!"

The man didn't have no time, you know, the engineer got to go. It was a freight train, anyway. Well, I got inside. In the meantime, my partner, this Greek fellow, Psychoghios, he jumped in the back. From the back of the café he jumped off and he went through the creek and took to the mountains. Well, I thought they had killed him.

Anyway, the engineer brought me to Asheville. I came to Asheville and was black as could be from the soot. You know, the trains in those days, the soot. I walked from down at the depot. My pocket, this pocket right here, was so heavy with the change, money, and the other one, I had in my shoes. I had nearly four hundred and some dollars. I walked from down at the depot plumb to town, Biltmore Avenue. I got me a room, ten cents. Room, ten cents, but no heat, nothing like that. Oh, golly, it was cold, too! My goodness! Well, I slept that night. I mean, Saturday. That's when I got over there, Saturday morning, you see. I slept all day Saturday, Saturday night, Sunday and Sunday night. Sleep! Except, this woman came and woke me up and told me, she said: "Another dime." She knocked on the door. I shall give her more. Those days! Well, Monday morning I got up; I went up to Pack Square. They had a great big old, like a super market is now,

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) grocery store; had everything. I believe he was some kin to this. . . his name was Jarrett. He was some kin to this Jarrett that had the furniture store, the one [where] I bought the linoleum. They put it in. Well, anyway, I bought me a bottle of milk, big quart. Ten cents a quart; a pure, real quart. You understand what I mean? Ten cents; I bought a nickle's worth of cheese; bought me two loaves of bread, five cents a loaf. I went down to my room, sat down. I cleaned it out. I sleep again, but Tuesday I went down to the show. Then they had silent pictures, and I went to the show, about one o'clock they opened up, and by golly, I went to sleep inside. The theatres closed up at one o'clock. Wednesday, the colored man come; the janitor. He says. . . he knows my name. . . I didn't know him, but he knows me. Nice fella. You know, they used to have good colored people, and white, they were good, you understand. He said: "What are you doing here?"

I told him, "I sleep all night inside, because the steam heat." You understand what I mean? I sleep. Well, I went down to the hotel again. I eat some. Thursday morning I got up, I started to walk up Biltmore avenue; then I walked down Broadway. Snow on the ground. I look; here comes this, my partner, this Greek fellow, you know, Psyhoghios. He coming, poor little fella, with short sleeves. Winter time. His face is cracked up like cornbread. You know how they crack up; the cold wind. He walked all the way from Canton, through, around at the foot of these big mountains. He came way around through Leicester; walked all the way, all that time. He

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) said to me: "I thought they killed you."

I said: "I thought they killed you, too."

And the first thing I remember he asked me if I had the money. I said: "Yeh, I've got the money."

You know, it's like the Jewish people, the first thing they're thinking about the money. Well, that's right, I don't blame them; they worked for it. I said, "Yeh."

Well, we went down to the hotel. This woman came in and wants ten cents each, because of this other man. Well, I gave her twenty cents. I counted the money: two hundred and some dollars. He took it, and I took the rest. I said, "Let's go buy some clothes now."

I didn't have a coat; we left everything over there. We didn't have much clothes anyway. I guess, about two or three shirts, and one coat and an old timey overcoat, and some shoes, of course. We went to the Racket Store, they called it, Blomberg. Harry Blomberg's daddy. You know Harry Blomberg? His daddy had the biggest store on Biltmore Avenue. We went inside. I bought a cap. I remember I gave him fifteen cents; good cap. And I bought a coat. I think I gave him fifty-five cents. New. No breeches. I had breeches.

This fella, he bought a coat, breeches. I think he paid a little bit more.

We dressed up. We went down; we put our clothes. . . we took the other clothes; we didn't take them with us, we threw them right under the bed, the old clothes. We left them there with that old lady,

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) there at the hotel. You know where Sterchi Brothers is?

Silveri: Yes.

Chepriss: Well, them new buildings above used to be wood buildings. All wood buildings. They fixed it in 1922, when they put. . . Latta fixed it, from Charlotte. Wealthy man. Before that it used to be the Salvation Army there, wood buildings, and this hotel with a hundred and twenty-eight rooms. But it got empty after that because three people got killed in it, on account of a woman, you know, and it was empty.

But anyway, we walked up Biltmore Avenue, me and this boy, we thought we'd go up to the Square. The sun shone. It was cold. And before I knew it, I walked up, somebody patted me on my back. Great big fat man; he'd weigh about, I'd say about two-fifty, two seventy-five; big man. He had on one of them western hats, you know.

He said: "Your name Harry Chepriss?"

I turned around, I said: "Me no speak English."

I know it, quick; it was the Sheriff of Haywood County, and he began to tell me they got them men. How they got them? Them days they didn't have no telephone, except them cranking. You saw them crank? But the Sheriff got the men.

He said: "Want you to come to Waynesville.". . . that was on Thursday morning. . . to prosecute them fellows.

"Me, me, me no speak English."

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) I knew what he said, but afraid. You understand what I mean? Them days, you scared; you're young, too, you know. The young ones now, they've got more sense than we had.

He said: "Come here."

In the meantime, there was another big fellow came to Asheville and opened up a café on Biltmore Avenue: New York Café; Sam Pappas, he was from Constantinople. Fine man; oh, he was well-educated.

He said: "Come here."

He wanted to be the interpreter. I went with him, and he told him that I was to go to Waynesville to prosecute those men Monday morning. I shook my head.

He said to him: "What happened? What happened?" He wants to find out, you know, what happened.

I didn't tell him nothing; I walked out. When I walked out, this fellow says to me: "Harry, what are you going to do?" In the Greek language: Aristotle. "Aristotle, what are you going to do?"

I said: "I'm going to Greenville."

He said: "Me, too. I'm going to Knoxville. I ain't going back to Waynesville."

You know, if you go back to Waynesville you get killed, maybe, them fellows.

Silveri: What about the store? You still owned the store there.

Chepriss: The business?

Silveri: Yes.



Chepriss: Let him go. What do you want with the business? Them days wild. What about if you go and prosecute them mens? After they come out, anybody use a gun and come in the business, that man kill you. What the use to me go over there and prosecute that man? We didn't go.

Silveri: What happened to your business out there?

Chepriss: Well, this man that had the café. . . we bought it from Brown. . . he went and got it back, and them peoples pay him everything. We all. . . Mr. Zimmerman, in Asheville. He was a German. Had winnies, meat. We bought from him on credit. And Zindel had the baker shop. We buy the bread on credit. Them days, they don't drink no Coca-Colas, no, like they drink now; milk. It was in bottles with a dipper.

Them mens, they had them in jail, they paid for everything: for the landlord and everything. I guess it cost them plenty. Well, anyway, how do we know it? I left and went to Greenville, and he went to Knoxville. I never heard from him. I don't know what happened: he's dead, got killed, nobody knows it but God. I don't know.

I went to Greenville and I stayed about five months. I sent every nickel I had, I had to send to my mother, and I didn't have no money.

Silveri: This is 1908?

Chepriss: Nineteen - eight. This fellow I worked for in Greenville had a café, Busy Bee Cafe. He don't know, because I sleep too late. I get up in the morning, seven o'clock. I was working second cook. He didn't pay me but eighteen dollars a month, plus they give us a room. It was clean room, you know. They were different. Well, he run me off, because

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) I didn't go to work. When he ran me off, I don't know what to do. I can't get no job in no other place except fruit stands. I want to come back to Asheville. Well, I didn't have no money, and I started to walk through the train tracks, where the train goes. It didn't have no. . . yeah, they have roads, for the horses and mules, from here to Greenville, to go through Saluda. Saluda Mountain, you know. Well, I walked to Hanes, South Carolina. Right outside Spartanburg, I saw the train change. I walk; give out. I sleep outside that night. Next morning I got up. Sleep right outside the tracks. It was cold, too; fall of year. When I got up the mountain the trains came in. I can catch freight train, but I was scared.

I got inside this fellow's house; some lady, good. I said: "I speak English, but not too much. Me, me want eat."

That old man come over there, you know what he said?

He said: "Get the devil out of here. Why the heck don't you go to your people and get something to eat?"

You know, house, out in the country, 'way up the mountain. I got scared. I thought he was going to hurt me. Well, I left. When I got over there the freight train come in. There was one fellow jump off from the freight train. He was a hobo. Well I don't know what a hobo means, them days. When he come out, he say: "Hey, you!" He had a knife; one of them with a spring, that long. He say, "Come here."

I thought he was going to chop me up. I went to him. He was smaller than I was.

He says, "I want you to do something." He said, "I want

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) "you to go to that house."

The train go so slow up the mountain them days. You see, it was steep. He said: "I want you to go over there and smack that girl."

The little girl swing, you know, had a swing, and the lady was in the house, but the old man already left, and he went 'way up. You can see the field. He was plowing.

He said: "I want you to go over there and smack that girl."

"No, no."

He said, "You do; I'll cut your head off."

Well I went over there. . . the spring was there and the swing was right here. I went over there and I put that swing down like that: shaking her. This girl started to cry. Her mother came out. When her mother came out I ran. I want to show you how crazy. Got to the train and I went across from another side of the train. I started walking. I didn't see this fellow no more. I walked a little further up; here comes this fellow with a fry pan. He had cornbread nearly half cooked, and a pot with stew meat. You see, when I shake that girl, he went in the back, in the kitchen, and he stole that woman's bread, the cornbread, and the stew meat with the pot. That's why he needed the lady to get out from the house. I never know he was going to do that.

Well, anyway, we sat down; we grabbed that meat with us hand. Oh, golly, I nearly bust open.

He said to me: "We got to. . ."

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) I don't want to go hobo. . .first time I ever grab a train.

He began telling me: "Oh, yes, you are. You're going to Cincinnati with me."

I said: "No, no, no."

"Yes you are," he says. "You no gonna get away from me."

Well, we got to Hendersonville. When we got to Hendersonville, I said to him, "I have to go to drink some water."

"All right," he says. "I'm going to bathroom."

By golly, you know what I done. I was crazy. I went under the train and I went to another side of the track, to get away from this man. I went over there. . . this fellow Genakis. . . he had a candy store, a café, down at the depot. As soon as I went in he began hollering at me and told me (he knows me; he likes me; old fellow) he says: (in Greek language, I'm going to tell you) [the next words are in Greek]. . .you know, make fun; and I told him what happened. . . I want to get away from here.

He said: "You go upstairs."

I went upstairs and sat down until the train was gone, and that fellow, Genakis, he let me stay over there that night. Next morning (you know, he had beds and everything nice upstairs). . . next day I caught the train to Asheville. Thirty-five cents, it was, from Hendersonville to Asheville.

Then I started working in Asheville, and I never left, except when I went across the water, 1927. I'm telling you: them days. . .

Silveri: You never attended school in this country. You never went to school here.

Chepriss: That's why. . . I can read some English, but I can't write much. I can't write any, except my name. Now she can, because she born and raised here.

Silveri: You can read the newspaper.

Chepriss: Oh, yes, some, but some words I can't understand like you can, like he can. Of course, I didn't go to school.

Silveri: What year did you become a citizen?

Chepriss: Nineteen twenty-four, I believe.

Silveri: Nineteen twenty-four.

Chepriss: Nineteen twenty-four. I never had no trouble. Like I'm telling you a while ago about the Presidents. . . they never did ask me. I tell you why. I had the Sheriff. . . Lyda; he killed himself, Lyda. I had him for a witness, and I had Captain Miller and Chief Lominac, of the police. They gave me a good name. They came over there and they asked them, they said: "He make a good citizen?"

George, you know, George Webb; he's dead now. He said, "Oh, he's a fine boy."

They never asked me no questions. If they did ask me some questions, I didn't know to answer. I never know to answer them questions. It's different. Them days, a dollar, and which a dollar to me right now look like a hundred dollar bill. You know how much they want to cut this grass right here. . . all around here? Ten dollars. . . and it used[to be] ten cents. I worked for ten cents an hour in 1940, for Mayor Bryson. He

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) was the mayor in Asheville. I worked for ten cents an hour. My wife worked for ten cents an hour, across the road, over there, picking up tomato plants, and cabbage. You know, plants. And people, now, they tell you they go to this café, they spend ninety cents for a hamburger. I used to sell great big hamburgers, I mean, good hamburger them days, too, pure meat. This meat you eat now: too old. Five cents. Bowl of soup is five cents. Egg sandwich: five cents. Ham and eggs was fifteen, twenty cents. Ham and eggs! And drink as much coffee you want to drink. But did not drink much coffee them days: milk. No cold drinks. Golly, no. They don't want cold drinks if you give it to them.

Silveri: When you came back from Greenville; came into Asheville, what did you do?

Chepriss: I believe that time I opened up that barbeque place, corner of Eagle and Biltmore Avenue. That's why they call it "Greasy Corner." You know why? The white and colored came over there. The white put it off; them hack drivers, you know. Horses; didn't have no automobiles. The first automobile here in Asheville: they had it, Dr. Hilliard. Then Sawyer, he opened up Sawyer Motor Company. That's why they call it Hilliard Street. You know where Hilliard Street is?

Silveri: Yes.

Chepriss: That's on account of Dr. Hilliard.

Silveri: Did you say blacks came into your café then? Did you serve blacks in your café when you opened it?

Chepriss: Blacks?

Silveri: Yes; the black people.

Chepriss: Oh, yes. I opened up a place this side, then, after the barbecue, half for colored and half for white. Different door, but it had a partition. But you can see the others. But it was different. Of course, they get into argument sometimes, but not like now: killing each other. No! They come over there and eat; they be glad to eat. We didn't. . . the business, we take in eight, maybe ten, maybe fifteen dollars a day. Big business, you take in that much money. Of course, the dollar go a long ways. Now, they're making more money. What are they doing any good? They have to spend it. Look how much you're paying for a pair of shoes.

John Porter: When you came back from Greenville and opened that barbecue place. How did you get the money to open that place?

Chepriss: That place? This fella, I tell you, my cousin came back from Greenville. He was in Greenville. I meet my cousin in Greenville. He come here, and he open up a little place, and he bought it. I don't know what he. . . I mean, he told me how to fix it. I'm not that smart to know myself. I tell you what I done. You see, they had a chimney inside the building, and this one is steps from outside, going upstairs is a hotel. They called it "City Hotel." Under the steps, I rented. . . them people, them days, rented to you, five dollars a month, and I closed up. . . not wide, from here to that rock. . . the steps, and I put the chimney from outside and fix it like that, for the fire, and I put up pipes, of course, and used coke coal, you know, coke. Not soft coal, but coke. And you buy ham a dollar, dollar and a half

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) a ham. Little pies, little, small, five cents.

I used to sell nearly eight and ten dozen a day. Them pies; five cents. They cost me thirty; I make sixty. I make thirty cents profit. A pint of milk cost me two cents and a half. I sell it for a nickel. I make two cents and a half.

John Porter: Did you ever go to a bank to get a loan?

Chepriss: Them days? Boy! Them days banks no give you no money without you have. . . they different now. That's what's the matter. We didn't have but four banks in Asheville. There was Battery Park Bank, American National Bank, Citizen Bank. . . and I forgot. . . Central Bank, they're the one that busted everything; busted the other banks. That's all they had. Look how many banks they've got now; just had four banks. Wonder what's the matter with it. . . because the people's paying for it. They go over there and borrow the money, and everything go. The old Jew; he never pay you. Them days, you pay.

Silveri: Where did you live when you had the barbecue café?

Chepriss: In town; I had a. . . I rent a little house, but over there I sleep right up top . . . [Inaudible]. . . and then I got me a little house. It was a small house out Washington Road, they call it. Five dollars a month. I rent that house, five dollars a month.

Silveri: How long did you work at that barbecue café?

Chepriss: Oh, oh, golly, I guess 'till nineteen, almost nineteen twenty-one.

Silveri: Oh, that many years. About twelve or thirteen years.

Chepriss: Oh, yeah.



Silveri: Then what did you do in twenty-one?

Chepriss: I opened up that junkyard.

Silveri: The junkyard?

Chepriss: With Harold, my wife's uncle. I put the money, thirty-five hundred dollars. I had a little money.

Silveri: You saved all that money.

Chepriss: Oh, yeah, naturally, sure. And then, 1930, I made most money on real estate.

Silveri: But before we get into that, what about World War I?

Did they try to draft you in the army in World War I?

Chepriss: My name was the first one in the newspaper here in Asheville. And they didn't draft me, I guess, because I never was a citizen.

But, here in Asheville they rang the fire bell; Fire Department bell, you can hear it for people to jump to it; 1916, when Villa made a raid in Texas he took nearly half of Texas. You remember?

Silveri: Um, hum.

Chepriss: They rang the bell for people to jump to the army, and nobody had the guts, except one Greek fellow here in Asheville. He's dead now. His name was Ernest Kooley, of the Chakales family. I don't know if you've heard of the Chakales, the well-to-do family; they're Greeks, you know. He was the first one that went and jumped to, and the fire truck, not the fire truck, but the horses, took him down to the depot, ringing that bell, and him sitting. . . [inaudible]. . . that's natural, when you're young. You try to show off. The next day: three, four of them; and they sent them from Texas to France. And they never

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) did call me. Why? I don't know. I was lucky; God's willing. I don't know. They never did call me to the army.

Silveri: Then, you say in 1921 you opened a secondhand, used car lot, was it? Or did you say, junkyard?

Chepriss: Yes.

Silveri: Where was that located?

Chepriss: Corner of Valley and College; it belonged to the Miller estate; Miller estate.

Silveri: You joined in with your wife's uncle?

Chepriss: Yes.

Silveri: And you put in thirty-five hundred dollars?

Chepriss: He didn't put any; I'm the one put the money; I'm the one lost it, too.

Silveri: What happened? How long were you in that business?

Chepriss: Oh, I stayed in that two years; and he drew wages. I never did draw none. I let him draw it. I want for him. . . Of course, I had money to live, and he didn't have much. He didn't have any, him. But always, when you go in business, you put the money, you lose it. Best thing: no go no partnership; go yourself. I'm telling you because I'm older than you. I'll be ninety-one next month; ninety-one. And I know what it is. When you've got a partnership, is worse than wife. You can lose your back, yes sir.

Silveri: [inaudible] . . . for a couple of years and the business failed?

Chepriss: Yes, and then went to the furniture store. Lost it.

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) Lost money

Silveri: Then you bought a furniture store?

Chepriss: Yes. No; I opened it, myself.

Silveri: Where?

Chepriss: On Aston Avenue, right across from Swannanoa Hotel; they tore it down.

[END OF TAPE I, SIDE II]

[TAPE II, SIDE I]

Chepriss: Right there, where Sterchi Brothers.

Silveri: Yes.

Chepriss: You know where Sterchi Brothers is; right at that little street.

Silveri: How did you do with that store? How was that business?

Chepriss: Lost everything; gave 'em credit. If people give 'em credit, they never pay you. Go over there and take it; I can't do that. I just let 'em go. And then I open up the poolroom.

Silveri: Where was that?

Chepriss: On College Street, eighteen tables. Paid two hundred and fifty dollars a month rent. Then they came down, the banks, when they closed in 1930, they cut me down to twenty-five dollars a month. Hampton, Mr. Hampton, he was the one had it. And still I can't pay.

Silveri: You couldn't; it was so you couldn't.

Chepriss: No; you can't pay it. What do you take in? You used to take in eighty, ninety dollars, sixty dollars, hundred and twenty on

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) Saturday. Come down, take in dollar, dollar and a half, maybe two dollars a day. How can you pay your lights? And the taxes were, I think they were seventy-five dollars for the state, and I forgot how much it was for the city. And they had county, but the county, they cut it off. And poolroom, that's no good business. It's like a wine place. You take wine: you sell wine and beer and liquor, and you take a poolroom, you take money out of, like these men's got women hustling for them. That kind of money no do you no good; you lose it. Did you ever notice that?

Silveri: Um, hum.

Chepriss: Liquor money no do you no good, or poolroom money. Because, you see, you're taking it out of some poor family that got kids home, to eat. They come over there and gamble their money and they do without to eat. But some of the young generation, now; they don't care, if you starve to death, you know, but they never look for somebody else, young kids, you know, if you're hungry. When you're young, you don't care what you do, but when you get a little older you begin to realize what the world means. Would it do you any good if right now somebody tell you, "I give you whole Asheville?" What do you want [with] it? You going crazy. You ask me why you going crazy. Well you take, you have telephone, somebody going to call you, you need to fix your bathroom, need to fix the window, you need to fix the floor. Worry you to death. These people got property, they have a lot of worries. Show me these people got money, they have a lot of worries, lot of sickness. Of course, we get sick too, you know. Some people sick and they say,

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) "Oh, we're all right." But everything is God's willing. God is for you to be here talking to me. You know the old Greeks, they used to say: [Here he reverts to the Greek language] You understand what I mean: "Everything that happens, happens for the best." Right now, you start to go somewhere, and something happens you can't go. Well, it's for the best. Maybe you go there and get killed, or something, you understand?

You know the old-timers. You take the old-timers, like you say now: "What your left-hand knows, right-hand knows." That's the old ancient Greek.

Silveri: In the meantime, did any of your family come over from Greece?

Chepriss: No, no.

Silveri: You were the only one.

Chepriss: My brother got killed 1940, when they had that trouble over there; Germany got over there. They took everything from there: took church bells, clocks, and everything.

John Porter: What about your mother?

Chepriss: My mother got. . . same thing.

John Porter: She was killed in 1940?

Chepriss: Yes. You see they take the hinges off the door. They want to use it in the army. The Italian people, they done a lot of damage, too. The Greek people, they helped the Italians, you know that? You know the time when they turned against the Germans? Well, they tried to kill the Italians all over Greece, but the Greek people's good. I saw this

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) Italian, his name was Cardona. I don't know how many thousands they had, and they hid him under the basements, but Nazi Germans found him, and when the Germans left, they let him go. But you see, now, the Italian people, they can't help themselves for what they'd done. The head man always tell them. If you're in the army they tell you what to do, you've got to do it. Like the Jewish fellow here in Asheville. He came here. He's got this building on Haywood Street. I don't know his name. He's got a beer place, now. Well, he didn't have no money, but when he came in this country, 1946, he was in the German army.

I said to him: "Why Hitler never kill you; you're Jewish."

He said: "I passed for German."

He went to Greece. A Greek fellow said: [This was spoken in the Greek language]. . . one of the Greek fellows, he said: "You're the one that burned up my house." Talking to him in Greek language, you know. And this Jewish fellow, he knows the Greek language, he learned it over there.

He said: "I can't help it. They told me to do that."

Like what I say: What the head man tell you, you've got to do it.

Silveri: When did you get married?

Chepriss: 'Twenty-three.

Silveri: Nineteen twenty-three.

Chepriss: 'Twenty-three; I had one boy.

Silveri: Your wife was from Asheville?

Chepriss: Yes. Her daddy, he was Irish.

Silveri: Irish?

Chepriss: Irish; her mother people were German. We went to old country in 1927; yes, me and her, and that's all that went. Before that, I went in 1912.

Silveri: In 1912 you went back home?

Chepriss: Yes, I went home, but I want to tell you: when I went home in 1912, I didn't have my passport, them days, but when I went over there they got in a war and they tried to give me, but I had a cousin sell tickets, and they slip me, and my boat was named Macedonia, the first boat that got sunk in the war. The first World War. The English sunk 'em. The English, they done wrong, something, in Greece. They never doing them right, and they sunk it. Anyway, that's the boat I come. I went one month and come back in same month.

Silveri: You saw your family when you went back?

Chepriss: Oh, yes; saw my mother. In '27, then me and my wife went over there.

Silveri: In 1912, did any of your family want to come back here with you?

Chepriss: Here in this country?

Silveri: Yes.

Chepriss: No. Well, takes money, too. Where in the world you gonna get the money? Money them days no be like it is now. A dollar is a dollar. Today, a dollar bill to you look like a penny, but to me, you know what it look like, a dollar bill? A hundred dollar bill. I know

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) what hard times it is. We, right here, me and my wife, we sit down many times we had nothing but cornbread and onion, and what's now, beans. And them beans, them days, you buy it for nothing. I used to get in the café the sugar, a dollar eighty-five cents a hundred. A hundred pounds. Sugar. Beans, dollar ninety-five cents, hundred pounds; yellow eye, white beans, October beans. I want to show you how cheap was the things them days: a big tub lard, sixty-three pounds, I believe, it was three dollars and some. Lard, you know, them big tubs, they used to put cold drinks. You ever see one of them?

Silveri: Um, hum.

Chepriss: Sawed in two?

Silveri: Um, hum.

Chepriss: That was for us, we take bath here. We didn't have no bath, you know. That's where we take a bath. And some, they take a spit bath, with a rag, but we used to get inside, right here in this house. I didn't have this thing. This house was logs. I spend more money in this house, Oh, my goodness! And we worked. All that rock work; I done it. And she pick up that rock. Look here: hard. She picked that rock and bring it over there and I put it on. She pick it up. That's what the matter me and her, now. We broke down. And what it do you any good? Die and leave it.

John Porter: This house was already here? Did you build this house?

Chepriss: Oh, yes; oh, yes.

John Porter: You built the house?



Chepriss: Oh, yes. That's how I started; you build it and then you have to saw the logs. It was nothing but pine, over here, and two by sixes, and I have to go under there and put some cement blocks. Them good cement blocks they used to make long time ago. Things have changed. Now like her, now, picking up . . . you know, pick up that rock over there. You know, that's the thing. . . she pick it up. The men bring it and brought it out there in the front. You see, this is the main road, used to be, go to Canton, Waynesville, and then they come right here and cut me in two in the back. I had four lots over here and they cut me in two. You know how much the State give me? Fifty dollars.

John Porter: Fifty dollars!

Chepriss: And he charged me, that contractor, three hundred and eighty dollars to put that dirt down there. What are you going to do, go to the courts? I don't want to go to the courts.

Silveri: What year was that, that they put the road through?

Chepriss: Nineteen-thirty; thirty or thirty-one.

John Porter: When did you build this house?

Chepriss: Nineteen. . . I started before we married.

Porter: Before you married?

Chepriss: Yes; it was almost 1920.

Silveri: You came out and bought the land?

Chepriss: No; this fellow had it; I came and bought it. The property was high them days. I pay sixty-five hundred dollars for that land.

Silveri: How many acres was this? An acre or two?

Chepriss: Two lots

Silveri: Two lots?

Chepriss: Two lots; fifty by a hundred and ninety-eight. That property got high 1918. It stayed that high until 1926 or '27. Then they flopped down; you buy property in town, beautiful homes out here, I can buy it for twelve hundred dollars, and you can't build it. . . You know where is Groce Funeral Home? I think. . . I used to work with real estate men. I'm not much educated. I sold real estate, too. That's where I make my money. This fellow was blind. His name, H.O. Williams. I worked under his license. I take people out. He showed me a whole lot, too. He showed me how to speak some words, English. My wife, sometimes. . . You know I can't speak plain, like you can.

Well, anyway, you know how much that property sold over there where the Groce's is? Twelve thousand dollars. And you know how much it cost Dr. Anderson to build it? It was a home. Seventy-five thousand dollars; when the times were hard, nineteen thirty-some. I want to show you, you see, how they dropped down. They will drop again. You will live to see it; maybe I'm not, but you will see it. There is going to be a day here in this country, they are going to come back to the same old things. You are going to be glad to get a job. Milk. . . you take milk. They used to bring it right here: fifteen cents a gallon. Good country milk. . . fifteen cents a gallon, and now it is a dollar eighty-four, with the tax. I used to have a T-model Ford. I had a motorcycle before that. But T-model Fords. . . we get up in the mornings, have to make fire, and it was so cold if you stop to spit on it, the

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) spit would freeze before it hit the floor; so cold. But she get up and make the fire and we take the kettle and put it over there to get the water hot and go downstairs. Downstairs I didn't have that big door, so it was wide open. The wind just whipped through. You take that kettle with the hot water and put it in the main hose. You know what the main hose on the T-models?

Silveri: Um, hum.

Chepriss: Well, she started cranking it, and I pulled the wheel to start it. You can start it. Well, that handle kicked her one day and I thought it was going to hit her in the head, and I told her next time tend the wheel. That's why I bought it here closer to town. I thought I'm a long ways to town. Around here never was no houses; none. Water, we used to get it right down here at a spring, right on the corner of my lot. That's where we get the water. They cover it up now. It was good water, them days.

Silveri: When you went out of business in the junkyard. . .

Chepriss: Yes. . . I let him have it.

Silveri: . . . then you went into the furniture store.

Chepriss: Yes.

Silveri: Then you went out of business there.

Chepriss: Yes.

Silveri: Then you went where, from there?

Chepriss: I opened up a poolroom.

Silveri: The poolroom. Now, how long did you keep that?

Chepriss: Poolroom? Let's see, to nineteen. . . from twenty-nine to

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) thirty-four, almost.

Silveri: You made your living with that?

Chepriss: Yes.

Silveri: In the Depression?

Chepriss: Well, I make good money to '30. Big money; making big money to '30. After the banks closed, and then the banks. . . I had a little money in the American National Bank. . .they paid ten percent, and I went and bought me that Chevrolet that I had, the thirty-four, and I had it for forty-two years, that Chevrolet. Have I showed you the picture? The Citizen came out here and took a picture. I show it to you in a minute. . . Let him see that picture of mine of that old car. You see. And I keep that car and I sold it two years ago.

What happened. . . I don't want to sell it, but this fellow from New York, he come right here. He wants it bad. I sold it to him for six thousand dollars, but I needed the money. You see, I have to pay for her the doctor bill. She had operation her leg. It was twelve hundred dollars. And I owe taxes, about six years. Then I put a new roof on my house. Cost me twelve hundred dollars, and they used to put it for two hundred dollars. That's why I sold it.

Silveri: This is the car you sold for six thousand dollars?

Chepriss: I wish I had that today. That thing.

Silveri: You kept it for forty years?

Chepriss: Forty-two.

Silveri: Forty-two years.

Chepriss: Thirty-four to. . . What is that?

Mrs. Chepriss: You sold it a year in December.

Silveri: Why did you sell it, Harry?

Chepriss: Needed the money. Had to fix the roof, pay taxes, pay the doctor bills.

John Porter: You didn't want it that way?

Chepriss: No, I not want to sell it. No. Golly, no. And I bought that car downstairs. I gave them thirty-five hundred dollars. Burns gas, same thing as the old car. And that old car, it didn't have a bend nowhere, no scratch, nowhere. No rust, nowhere, neither. Forty-two years.

Silveri: You said you lost the money in the Central Bank?

Chepriss: Oh, golly, I lost plenty.

Silveri: How much?

Chepriss: You'd be surprised.

Silveri: You didn't get any of that back?

Chepriss: Central Bank never pay nothing, except the American National Bank paid, fifty-five percent. That's when I bought that car, down there. Everybody say, "Oh, he's got plenty of money." Because I had a new car. There were three cars in Asheville, thirty-four, 1934. Times were tough. Of course, now, they claim Hoover's time. Hoover's time we made just as good living. Some people don't want to work. They blame the President. The President ain't got not a thing to do with it. You know who it is? The Congress. They're the one; the Congress. People say: "Oh, that President, so-and-so." Well, the President, he got his hands tied; the Congress is the main thing. That's what's the matter in

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) Asheville, here. You take this fellow. He's a Republican, Ratcliffe, of the County. They fighting him. What are you fighting him? He's a human being, and what is different? Republican or Democrat? All we human beings; all we try make living; all we believe same God.

Silveri: Did you always vote the Democrat or Republican, when you voted?

Chepriss: I registered Democrat, but since 19. . . I believe it was 1940, after Roosevelt died, you know, I mix it; I look for the right man.

Silveri: Who did you vote for in 1928, Al Smith and Herbert Hoover?

Chepriss: I believe I vote for Al Smith. Al Smith, yes; because I tell you why: I had a tag and I had it in my [inaudible]. Al Smith came here to Asheville, and I met him, like I meet you. He talk to me; yes. A big, tall fellow, friendly as can be. I meet him up the Fire Department, and he talk to me. He says: "Oh, some day I like to go to Greece. I want to see the Acropolis, and Rome, too." All them.

You know, you take Rome, in Italy. Did you know it, in the front has got Roman letters, but behind is marble. I want you to know this: Behind is Greek letters. You know why? You see, the Romans, they took the Greek slaves. They're the ones built them things. Why the Greeks like that? I tell you. The Greek people never stick together; the Italians neither. They're like that, and that's why the Romans got them down, and then they come in, you see, the Turks. The Greeks they just had a place, one state here, the other over there, the other

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) over there, and each one fight theyselves. Sicily, you know, they speak Greek, about ten years ago, a lot of Greeks was there. All gone. Of course, the Italians. . . now you take the Bible. You believe in the Bible, don't you? Them days they was nothing but the Greeks (they speak about it), Jewish, Ethiopian, and the Italians, too. Four nationalities. Now look how many nationalities. You know, the Bible, you look, you can see.

Silveri: Who did you vote for in 1932, when Hoover and Roosevelt. . .?

Chepriss: I'll tell you another thing, too, now what happened to that 1932. This fellow, he's a preacher now, his name Bartlett, Ernest Bartlett. He's a Baptist preacher. That's who's my baby bury. Well, he came down; I had the poolroom. He said: "Harry, I bet you Hoover's gonna beat Roosevelt."

I said: "Heck, no, he ain't gonna beat him. I'll tell you what I'll do. . ."

He said: "I'll bet you."

I said: "All right, what you wanna do?"

He said: "I'll take you a ride with a wheelbarrow from Pack Square down Patton Avenue, Haywood Street, and around Battery Park." (Because the Battery Park was rough, they didn't have the dirt moved out.) He says: "College Street, and I'll bring you back up to the Square, or you gonna ride me."

And we bet. Well, I win, and he took me a ride. Well, we come back to Pack Square and they took our picture, The Citizen. You see all them fellows and I sat in the wheelbarrow. Frank Hill,

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) his brother was Postmaster here in Asheville, a Republican. Well, he said to me: "Harry, you took a ride, didn't you?"

I said: "You're doggone tootin'." Like that. Young; when you're young nobody home. Gotta show off, you know.

He said: "Well, Harry, you wait, about three or four years from now how much you're going to pay for the flour, the sugar, and everything, the groceries."

"What are you talking about?"

And you know, God bless him, that man he told me the truth. God bless where he lays. He's dead. He told me the truth. How much you pay for the price. Now look the flour. You bought bucket lard. . . thirty cents. Look how much you pay now. Coffee, ten cents a pound. You smell that coffee? Slayden, Fakes and Company had a wholesale and they cook it at the building on Lexington Avenue. South Lexington, big building; they tore it down now. They had to scorch, you know, they scorched that coffee. You smell it all over Asheville. Ten cents a pound. You come to the café. . . much coffee you want to drink, five cents. You know what happen in the café? I'm gonna tell you the truth, when I had this café too, these people come in, you used to give them a pitcher, to put cream in your coffee. Well after they drink the coffee, he take the pitcher and drink the cream.

I say: "What the devil are you doing, there?"

He says: "I paid for it."

Well, I went out. . . you know, you young, too, didn't



Chepriss: (Cont'd.) know no better. I went outside, got officer, and the police say, can't do nothing. By golly, I went to see the Chief, Chief Messer. He's dead now. The Chief said to me: "Harry, it's the law, anything you put on the table is yours, you paid for it." I didn't know that.

You know, a lot of law you've got to learn. I tell you what happened to me when I had the poolroom: no business, you know, was pretty. . . in the mornings. This fellow came every morning and used my bathroom. He live out Weaverville; he's carpenter. Well, I locked that door. I say, "Something wrong with the toilet; you can't use it." I should have let him. That's ignorance. You understand what I mean? When you're young, your mind no work right.

This poor old fellow said, "All right." He went out.

Well I make a big fire. I had a two-belly stove. You ever see them two-belly stoves?

Silveri: Um.

Chepriss: He come back, this fellow. All was on the front, over there, I had a showcase, and the chairs where they sat down. There was four people: a fellow by name McIntyre, Brinkley, . . . Gudger, and the other, Fitzgerald, Chief Fitzgerald's daddy. Old men, you know. They're reading the paper, my paper, newspaper. The paper costs me ten cents a week, and I bring it home, let my wife look at it, that paper, and let some people look at it down right here, Williams, and Williams then give it to Normans, have that land over there, and Normans give it to. . .I can't call those people's name.

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) How many hands now? Ten cents; a newspaper, them days. But anyway, them mens looking the paper. Few minutes, one of them fellows, Brinkley, he was funny old man. He was about eighty-five, ninety. He turned around and said to this magistrate. He was a magistrate, old man, with the glasses put down right here, big old doggy head and scissors tail, sitting over there. He turned around and said: "Well, darn you"(I can't say what, you know)"you done something to yourself."

"Who are you, you so-and-so S.B., you're the one."

Well each one start arguing, the old men. In a few minutes. . . I was sitting over there laughing, you know, because them old men arguing. It's funny to see old people arguing.

I smell it, myself; the fire got so hot.

I said: "What's going on?" I went in the back. When I went in the back, this fellow, when he come back I thought he going back over there to get warm at the stove, but he went over there and mess in the floor, between the pool table and the wall. He make a mess right on the floor. I thought it was stinking. Well, I took shovel, put it over there, and I started to cuss.

I said: "I'm going to have him arrested."

Old Gudger, you know, the squirrel, he says: "Num, num, num, num." He don't say nothing, just making fun. "You can't do a darn thing," he says.

Well, I went to see Chief, Chief Messer. Chief Messer said: "Harry, if you have a bathroom, you should have it open."

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) I said, "Well, the toilet is not working."

He said: "It don't make no difference. [inaudible]. . . he can mess on the floor."

Well, you know, I don't believe him, and I went to see a lawyer, Mark Brown, one of the best lawyers. Oh, golly! He's dead now, but he knows the law, and when he come. . . I went over there and said, "Mr. Brown is here?"

Said: "No, he's coming up now, up the steps."

When he come up the steps, he come over there: "What is Harry?"

I went inside and told him about it. When I told him, he reached over there and got the book; he looked.

"If you run a business, if your toilet gets bust, that man he can't use your toilet, you should have it open. That's the law. State of North Carolina; that's the law. You should have it open."

I said, "Mess up the floor."

He said: "No make no difference. You the business and you got to keep it clean."

You know, I got my head down. I said, "How much I owe you, Mr. Brown?"

"Five dollars."

He charged me five dollars. Well, he's lawyer, you got to pay him. You can't go over there free. No.

[END OF TAPE II, SIDE I]

[TAPE II, SIDE II]

Chepriss: No drink; no, golly no! She wants put no drink in the house. No! But you go to these Greek places, they offer you a drink. The old Greeks, you understand what I mean? I ain't speaking about these cheap Greek fellows. They're peculiar; the young generation. Same thing with Italians. Her aunt, she married Italian, Tony Regens. He come from Trieste. I tease him. He quote them letters, I want you to see it, on the front over there. He quote it in Greek. Yes. He fix it. Well, anyway, I said: "Uncle Tony, you gonna die some day."

"Me dead, you gonna be dead to Hell, you gonna be black as the dirt," he said. "Tony gonna live."

But he drinks a lot. Yes.

Silveri: Earlier on the tape, you did talk about how the people here in the mountains looked upon you. Quite a few of them called you a foreigner and looked down upon you. What do you think of the people here that live in the mountains?

Chepriss: Well, they're good. They're good. Them days they used to have a lot of Jewish people, Syrians, they sell cloth. You know, to make a dress. They put it on their back with a stick and they walk through the mountains; they live in the houses. A lot of them got killed, I guess. They kill 'em and bury 'em. They had money. Of course, some, they good.

Because one time, nineteen thirty-some, I forgot about it. Anyway, I had sixty acres of land in Murphy; call it Unaka. Well I swap with this Dr. T.C. Smith in Asheville. I had three lots. The

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) lots, they cost me nearly twelve thousand dollars, them lots. Well, I don't know how many years taxes had been paid. Well they told me, they said they'd give me sixty acres of land for that. Well, when I heard sixty acres of land I said, "Golly!" And I swapped with him; he give me a deed in Murphy. Well, me and her we got up, we took our T-model. We went over there. We left here two o'clock; we got over there about eleven. The roads was bad; not like it is now, nothing but gravel and holes, and everything. When we look at that thing, is nothing but mountains, but he joined to the Government land. I asked this fellow, his name Dockery, I said, "Mr. Dockery". . .and this land, this fellow had it, Mr. Smith, I don't know how he had it. He had a rail fence around it; them old fence, you saw them: rail with the chestnuts. We looked, and it had a house, but the house not much, and the stable was better than the house. It had all kind of fruit trees. Oh, my goodness, sixty acres, joined to the government land.

I asked this fellow Dockery, I said, "How much?"

He said, "Well, I guess you get about three fifty, four hundred dollars."

I said, "What?" We have to walk nearly from here to West Asheville where the Fire Department is, 'way up the mountain. He was right, but he had the right of way from his land; he was the bottom one.

"Oh, golly," I said. Well, I been paying taxes to 1946. Two fellows come in the morning about three o'clock; knock on the door. They come with a taxi. They went to the City Hall and asked about my name. They know me. They come over here. They say they want to buy

Chepriss: that land. I told somebody out there I'd take eight hundred dollars. I want to get rid of it. What it do me any good? By golly, they want to give me cash.

I said, "No. Wait I want to fix you a deed." I fix him deed from here, but he paid for the deed and everything, and I sold it. But they got timber inside. It had over eight, ten thousand dollars worth of timber. You see, I didn't know it. Listen: God works things mystery ways, and when you need the money, you do anything. I don't owe nobody nothing. I never beat nobody, nothing. If I can help anybody I take my shirt off and give it to him. And it nothing to go honestly. Go honestly and straight, you never lose it. You gonna ask me now why I lost my money in the bank. Well, I sold real estate crooked. A real estate man is crooked like man sell automobiles. You know second-hand automobiles?

Silveri: Um, hum.

Chepriss: You gotta watch them, too. Very few to find honest. Because this woman, she wants to buy this house, down on Broadway, and it was eighteen hundred dollars. Her husband die; live out the country. She wants to move here. Well, Mr. Williams says to me: "You take 'em down there and show to her." When I went down there and show 'em, doggone house, I no give him two hundred dollars.

That poor old woman, she said to me: "Mister," (she don't know my name) "this house worth that much?"

I look at her, so pitiful, I said, "Lady; no."

She said, "Why?"

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) Well I took my knife off and dig the two by sixes downstairs, and flour coming out, you know. I said, "This house eat up with termites already."

She didn't buy it. That doggone woman, she turn around and told my boss I'm the one told her no buy it, and you know, he let me go. She should not tell it. Sometime, you don't know what to do. And that's what I say. Go honestly, and straight, God be with you.

John Porter: Did you ever feel that the people in the mountains around here mistreated you at any time because you were Greek?

Chepriss: No. Well, they thought they better, but not after the first World War. But the first World War, why, my wife's people, they says, "He's not us people; he's some kind of a foreigner." My wife's people; the old lady.

Porter: Why did things change after the first World War?

Chepriss: Well, you see. . . well, they went across the water, and they see how they living, and they know where they come from. They used to being here, chew tobacco, like that, spitting on you. [makes spitting sound]. They don't know no different. You ask me why? Well, not the educated people. The educated people: No, golly no! They didn't know. Specially, I went to. . . used to been a fellow, and I told him. He said, "What nationality are you, you Jewish, or German?" Because I was light-headed. My hair was light, like his. Now, I am white-headed.

I said, "I'm Greek."

"Greek! Come in, come in sit down. I want to talk to you."

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) He want to find out about old country things. And everybody, they told me, "How the devil can you talk to him?" His name. . . he worked with Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. He lived out Beaver Lake. I forgot his name. But, anyway, he wants to find out, you know, old country, you see. He's educated person. You find some, they not educated. You see, like you go to the restaurant. Well, you be polite; you take some of them fellows, "Thank you and come back." But you go to some places now and they tell you nothing; grab your money, and let you go.

Porter: You know, the time you went to Waynesville and opened that café. . .

Chepriss: I didn't open it; I bought it. They had it already open.

Porter: When you bought that café. . .

Chepriss: . . . they drunk; them men's, they was drunk.

Porter: So, other people were scared of those. . .

Chepriss: . . . Oh, golly, yes; they kill you. They come from Sunburst, a log. . .

Silveri: Lumber camp.

Chepriss: Lumber camp; cut lumber for Canton. You see, the Canton, it was nothing but poor houses. Old man Robertson, he live right down here, right at top of the hill. You know, Robertson, [inaudible]. . . . Well, he tried to put that place down the river, you know where is that Main junkyard, Main, Main's; you know where it is, don't you?

Silveri: On Riverside.

Chepriss: Not Riverside, right down at the bridge, between the new



Chepriss: (Cont'd.) bridge and the other bridge. Down there. That's where he wants to put that thing. The old fathers here in Asheville; the old timers, wealthy people, they don't want nothing. Well it used to stink; stink like rotten egg, and that's why they don't want it. They want Asheville to be clean. That's why they keep it clean. They had sanitoriums here; T.B., you understand what I mean? Like you going out five points. You know where it is?

Silveri: Yes.

Chepriss: Down Broadway; way down. Well, Mrs. Lang, had a big sanatorium. You walk nearly, I guess, quarter of a mile, is got a thing you walk around. Right up top is like a porch, and you look down, you see snakes, rabbits, and everything. But up top they had honeysuckles. Now, they've got rid of that [inaudible] and built homes out there. You know where the five points is. You go up Mount Clare; when you get way up, on your left hand side.

Silveri: Yes; I've been there.

Chepriss: That's all that property. Asheville, it was nothing, but you take them people that had the money, that's what keep it down.

Porter: Back in those days did wealthy people live on Broadway and Montford Avenue?

Chepriss: Yeah; Montford and, I forgot that street, you go to the cemetery, Riverside Cemetery. We used to have a park, Riverside Park. You know where you go to the Bingham Heights? You know where Bingham Heights is?

Silveri: Um, hum.

Chepriss: Right this side used to be a park; belonged to the power and light company, and he had it; the power and light, because the people wanted to go on the street car, to make money. They had a boat, I mean, a small canoe. You rent it for ten cents, one hour. They had moving pictures, a nickel. That moving pictures goes all the time, at night. It cost you five cents to go with the street car and five cents to come back to Asheville; nearly six miles. The street car used to go from Pack Square, down Biltmore, past that hospital, the Catholic hospital; go down and you turn to the right and it come plumb down here to Sulphur Springs. They called it Sulphur Springs, and you drink that water. It's sulphur water; five cents a glass. Them days, you have to pay nickel, glass like that. Now they left it.

Them days, you know, you didn't have no places like we got now. Of course, you enjoy it more better. You know what's the matter with us now? What ruin us? Radios, television, telephones, and plenty something good to eat, and clothes. Them days, we didn't have nothing to eat, specially me.

Porter: Were those days better than these days?

Chepriss: Well, they better people, but you didn't have the stuff like you got it now. And the people was more little friendly. They loved each the others. You used to go to the church, no make no difference if you go with coveralls. You know what they used. . .why, it's been about fifteen, twenty years, they have a tent and the people preach, sometimes some preachers good and some they not. It's like anything else.

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) And you know what the people giving them? A jar something to eat, you know, them canned stuff. That's all. Now, like the church she goes, that Methodist: eight thousand dollars a year they have to pay the preacher. The big church over there in town: twelve thousand. There you are. That's what I think it is, I don't know. You see, the money proposition.

Silveri: When you first came to Asheville, how many Greeks were in Asheville?

Chepriss: Nobody but the Trakas.

Silveri: Just those?

Chepriss: Was three brothers. They had a wholesale house, banana house: one in Asheville, one in Gastonia, the other one in Greenville. Three brothers. Them days they wore coats, you know, with the vest, great big fob here with twenty dollar gold piece here; lot of pencils over here. Old timers. Mustache, but they was good people, but they no tell you nothing; they no making nothing, neither. Of course, they making more than we did. Oh, way up.

Silveri: How many Greeks are in Asheville today?

Chepriss: Oh, golly, them days, nobody but him. That's what I say, I'm the first one left. . . Trakas, when. . . I'll tell you that place where he is. You ever go down Biltmore Avenue?

Silveri: Um, hum.

Chepriss: Well, you know, when you get way down there, these buildings are no cut down yet. You go down the basement they got a little houses

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) from here to here, built with cement. The doors are that thick. They got gas. Bananas come green, and when you put it inside there, in twenty-four hours they get ripe. And you better watch out; sometime great big old spiders (they say, come from South America, I don't know). If that spider bite you, "Goodbye blackbird." They used to give us a leather apron, and put it, sixteen, eighteen hours a day, work. And you know what he cooked to eat, for us? He give us some to eat. He get one onion. Onions, you buy it, I guess, twenty-five cents a bushel. Onion, great big. He take them great big old onion; he chop it up. He buy about nickel worth lard. They put it in paper. You know, lard. They put it in the pan. A dozen eggs; first they put the onions, salt and pepper, and then but a dozen eggs, and each one would eat from the pan and get it. Six of us working. That's how they feed you them days.

But, you talk about beggars. During the time you take. . . You know beggars, they never have nothing.

You know when they put the water lines in Asheville. I mean, they had water before, good water. . . 1918, 1919, after the war stopped. Old man. . . he was an Irishman, O'Kelly, he's the one put the water lines, right on the front where's College Street. . .that line, I believe, is thirty-six inch. The water line, you know, we're drinking. But, you see, the water got now is like a lake. Them days it was pure water, springs. Bee Tree, they used to call it. They still call it Bee Tree, but is different.

Silveri: It's up in that area: North Fork Reservoir.

Chepriss: Yes, North Fork; it used to be Bee Tree, it was good water. Now, North Fork, they moved the cemetery over there. The cemetery, people dead, they said they moved their bones, but still, that water, we're drinking it.

Silveri: Did you ever know the Wolfe family?

Chepriss: Let me tell you about him. His daddy used to have a place on Carolina Lane, down in the basement, and he left from there and he went over there where the Jackson Building. You know where Jackson Building is? It was a wood building. His daddy was a tombstone man. Good old man. He speak good English; I like him. You know, he likes foreign people, that's why I go over there and talk to him.

Well, his boy knows me well, but not real friendly. Why, he come by my place and eat that barbecue. From Biltmore Avenue, go down Eagle Street, they used to have sidewalk with two by sixes, and the people have to walk around to Asheville Foundry. You know where Asheville Foundry is? Well, behind Asheville Foundry was the red district lights. Red district, you know what I mean? They had one over there, and one up the Mountain Street. They had few [inaudible] on Broadway. Anyway, behind over there, Carolina Lane, you go, they didn't have no toilets and the toilets upstairs and you can see that little bitty thing go down and you can hear that stuff drop down, blip, blip, and all over the walls, mess, you know? But when it rain, it wash it off. Flies. . . Oh, golly. But people was more healthy.

But they talk about Wolfe now. . . What his name?

Silveri: Thomas.

Chepriss: Thomas, yes. Nice looking boy, but he don't say much. He don't talk much.

Porter: He was a big, tall boy, wasn't he?

Chepriss: Not very tall. No; not very tall. I don't believe he was six foot; no.

Porter: When he was young. . . he grew up to be real. . .

Chepriss: I remember he stand up and eat sandwich. Him, and old man Hildebrand, had the Asheville Foundry, and old man Donnan, and Britt, them three partners: Hildebrand, Donnan and Britt. Them good people. They stop every morning when I had that barbecue. I sell cigarettes and cigars, and Britt smoked Camels. The other one, he smoke Sovereign, Sovereign, they called it. Hildebrand, I think he buy chewing tobacco, that picnic twist, five cents. The cigarettes was ten cents, twenty cigarettes in it. Sometimes old man Britt, Mr. Britt, he was a Congress-man, way, years back. . . he buy chewing gum. Fine, big, fat fellow. Oh, there was some nice people. I know the old-timers, every one. Take the old-timer real estates. Oh, golly, if I had money, them days, I can bought property on Patton Avenue right there where S&W is now, he had fruit stand over there, Charlie Mascari, that's where he had it. Wood building. And S&W come and bought him out and he move way down there to Coxe Street. Coxe Street, it was nothing but hollow. He bought that building. His wife die; he had lot of kids, and he married another woman; big, stout looking. Oh, I know every one in Asheville; them old-timers. But the young generation; I don't know them.

Silveri: Did you say you went to Mr. Wolfe's place to talk with him because he always liked to talk with people like you?

Chepriss: I go to his place almost every day; I walk, you know, from my place, talk to him under the Jackson Building. And old man Jackson, he come from Georgia, and he bought the Chero Cola Company. He invented that light you put the bottles over to look in it, if is any rat or fly inside, you know, in the cold drinks.

He had a little spring, take, pick up the bottles, and you look it, because years back you used to get cold drink, you find mouse inside, flies, cockroaches. We didn't have the things like we got now. And he invented it and he got a lot of money and he bought that property and he put up that building. Why, he used to come talk like me and you, but after when he got rich and live out, I think, is Biltmore Forest: "Hello Harry," and keep going. You see he got rich. He's dead and gone, too.

That's what I say. I don't care what you got, what I got, all we gonna be five foot under ground. No six foot no more. They used to put a six foot. I didn't know that, but Uncle Tony, you know, her uncle, he was a tombstone man. He said to me: "Hell, no, Harry, they no put you 'cept to five foot now."

I say, "Why, Uncle Tony?"

"Vell," he say. . . he no say "Well," he say, "Vell." He say, "That's the law." There you are.

Porter: You know where Thomas Wolfe's house is now?

Chepriss: Oh, golly, yes!

Porter: Were there houses all around there?

Chepriss: Oh, yes. It was a street, all the way down. My wife, she's raised right below there. And right this side, Mark Brown, the lawyer, had that property.

Silveri: Did you ever meet Mrs. Wolfe, the mother? Did you ever meet the mother?

Chepriss: Well, I just saw 'em, you know, I didn't. . .they plain, they just plain folks like we are. No like, you know, high falutin'. They was just like old man Wolfe. He was good, like Mr. Hearn. You know old man Hearn, bicycle shop? I remember him. He had a place . . . not this one, now, his daddy. He died about three years ago. You talk about a good Christian man, and this one is, too. This one now is named Fred. You know. Did you ever meet him?

Silveri: Yes. Um, hum.

Chepriss: And his wife. . . I never meet his wife. I remember when he had the key place. He was an old key man in Asheville, his daddy, him, and then a fellow named Mosseller. He was a German. That's all the places. These are the only ones can open up safes, you know. But I like Mr. Hearn. I tell you why. I had this horse, nearly half-starved to death, they no feed him. We had our belly full, but poor animals, we never feed them. That's still right today. You know, I feel sorry for animals. They no feed 'em.

Well, I stop over there going down Patton Avenue. It was slick, too, that time. This fellow holler, you know, he had a big voice, "Hey, foreigner, I want you get them bananas."

Mr. Hearn, he says: "Why you call that boy a foreigner?"

"Well, that's what he is. Why?"

He said: "Well, you foreigner, too."

"Ho, what are you talking about?" He didn't say anything.



Chepriss: (Cont'd.) And Hearn, he went inside. He didn't want to fuss with him. And you know I think a lot of that man; he took up for me. Well, how many people you find like that? That's what I tell you: you find some good people; they give you a hand to help you. Of course, now you've got to be. . . if you come to this country, a man, if he is especially a foreigner, you ought to respect the flag of the United States, the people of the United States, and the laws. Of course, you are in this country, now. You make a living here, you live here. You can't take up "Oh, my country, so-and-so". . . you can't do that. Like the time when the Germans got in Greece. We thought the Greeks, they heroes. You can't fight them, because they had nearly whole Europe. They ought to be over there. Keep 'em fighting and raising hell. They kill one German; they kill fifty of them Greeks. You know one thing: you can't tell them nothing, sometimes.

Porter: Do you remember when the Biltmore House was built in Asheville?

Chepriss: No; no, they built it. . .

Porter: Before you came. . .

Chepriss: Yes. That man, he come from England.

Porter: Vanderbilt.

Chepriss: Yes. Biltmore, the old man had the house, they give it to the colored people for park, the Biltmore. They give it for park, and when you go across to Biltmore, that bridge was wood; wood bridge. Wagon can go through, that's all, horse and wagon. The colored people, them days, they take their knife, they give 'em seats, and they cut

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) the trees and put the initials. Mrs. Vanderbilt, after he die, took it away and give 'em that place on the corner of Eagle Street and Market.

Porter: Did black people work on the house? Did they help build the house?

Chepriss: No, no, no; I'm talking about they give 'em the park for them to have park, like Recreation Park.

Porter: For recreation; yes.

Chepriss: But, you see, they take their knife and. . .

Porter: Oh, I see.

Chepriss: That's old colored man told me. I don't know; I never see 'em. You know something you no see with your eyes; no use to say. And your eyes, sometime they fool you. You know, you got to be honest and straight.

Right up to Pack Square, right at the Square, where you go down, East side, that's where used to be the Fire Department. The City Hall here, the Police Court. Upstairs there was the Mayor. Fine, beautiful building. Downstairs, go plumb to Market Street, was the market, where you buy meat and stuff. Oh, golly. And over there the Police Station now, and the Fire Department, there was a dray-yard. You know what a dray yard is?

Silveri: Yes; for wagons.

Chepriss: Yes; and people come over there and give you quarter to take his trunk down depot; twenty-five cents. Or you ride the hack, twenty-five cents from depot to Square, with a horse. Or you come

Chepriss: (Cont'd.) with a street car; nickel. Things is changed. I'm telling you the truth, Asheville. . . Oh, golly! Now the Logan . . . What is the name? Logan Building? He been there. That's an old, old building.

Silveri: Well, Harry, we've got to go. Can we come back?

Chepriss: Oh, come any. . .

[END OF TAPE II, SIDE II]