

Kostas and Emily Rantzos

Side 1:

Emily is a native, active in the Greek church and started playing the organ when she was 12. She went to college, came back, married and in 1955 started playing again.

[17] Kostas (called Gus) was born in Greece. He had relatives in New Jersey and came to America in 1973. Emily helped him learn English. He started working in The Man Store which was well known all over the area. He was a tailor. There were 7 or 8 salesmen when he joined. [Alf L. Diamond, Hugh Stephens, Frank J. Wilcox]

[31] They started married life in Oteen. After work he made clothes at home.

[40] Emily was a medical technician for 13 years, helping her husband in the evening. Two sons were born in 1976 and 1977 and her mother-in-law stayed with the children while she worked at the hospital. Later she stayed home and did computer work while the boys were in school. [Nicholas Rantzos, Paul Rantzos, Antigoni Rantzos]

[51] They both worked 8 hours a day - she at the hospital and he at The Man Store and, following dinner, would work until midnight. They did this every day from 1974-1976.

[62] They opened the shop on Charlotte Street (see enclosure) and he continued to work part-time at The Man Store (good newspaper write-up enclosed).

[79] The shop - 100 Charlotte - was purchased from Mrs. Arakas (see photo). He worked 8-10 hours at The Man Store and they wanted him to work longer but he had to divide his time. [Mary Arakas]

[88] The Man Store moved to the Asheville Mall, changed its name to Zachary's, and went out of business. Bon Marche, which was in the Haywood Park Hotel, moved to the Mall, became Upton's and went out of business. Ivy's moved into Haywood Park for a while. The S&W was closed when he came to town in 1973. The center of the city was beginning to go down hill.

[103] During the last 3-4 years the town has begun to come back and he needed more space and walk-in traffic which prompted his move.

[124] Workers in the Federal Building fill street parking spaces by going out every hour to put more money in the meters. They are going to move and will have their own parking lot.

[132] Although there is a good parking garage and the store validates tickets, some women don't want to go in a garage. They have a waiting list for steady renters. He and his 7 employees have to park on the street now.

[146] Two ladies from the city development group welcomed them when they moved in and are trying to help them get regular rental parking space in the garage. His customers, most of them in

their 50's, 60's, 70's, get discouraged driving around the block looking for a space so they can stop in for just a few minutes.

[167] Many have come to see the new store. They plan to have a woman's department - Montalgo's - upstairs where there is 10,000 square feet space.

[179] Two men's stores are going out of business - J. Pressley (see ad) and Benjamin Lewis (see photo of snapshot). When stores go out of business they drop prices at Christmas and have big sales. Pressley did this 3 years ago and Lewis this year - but remained open. Elizabeth's (a women's store) had just closed (see Elizabeth Garland tape).

[206] Men's clothes go out of style just as women's - but not as fast. He buys the middle of the road style - less than 1% in flashy designs.

[224] In 1970 the style was for flared pants, big lapels and wide ties - this was the "hippie era" - now they are normalized. Most of his customers are older. He tries to sell good quality and has high standards.

[253] We discuss the work ethic of today and compare it with Greece. She has seen changes in different places. The government offices are regulated.

[274] Their boys attend Carolina Day School and Christ School.

[283] Emily said that children of today have no loyalty to their jobs. I tell them about Harvey Haynes comment about changing jobs and going to A-B Tech for retraining. They said that being Greek and a small minority gives them a different attitude. When she was working at the VA she was considered an older person even though she was 23.

[320] If Kostas' mother had not stayed with the children, she wouldn't have been able to work. She would not consider a day center. Both boys speak, read and write Greek. They never miss church, take part in festivals, youth dances, and competitive basketball and dance contests. There are Greek groups in other cities which give strong support for the communities. They are friends of the Tsiros family (see Tsiros tape). Nick bought Mavis Deli on Pack Square (and retained the name) 5 months ago. Their son took over the restaurant on Merrimon. [Nick and Ann Tsiros]

[367] She was young when the church was built in 1953 (2 years old). The Greeks met on Market Street with a priest from Spartanburg, SC, who came to the city once a month. There were 10-15 families (see picture) in the church community. [Chakalas, Arakas, Papas]

[406] People came because they had relatives. It is hard learning English. One stays in the community. He was the only Greek in The Man Store - a woman comes in to pay, she is going to change her car parked on the street - Rantzos comes in at 9, Emily at 10:30. She leaves at 4 or 5 and he stays until 6 or 7 - so they can't share a car and can't walk. Each employee has a car, which causes parking problems.

[433] One Greek lady has been working for him for 10 years, another for three. One lady worked until she was 75. He brought some from Greece - has had sisters and brothers-in-law working for him.

[445] He came in 1973, married Emily and became an American Citizen in 3 years. His sisters have to be sponsored and come with husbands and children. Nine people came in one day. He had to go to Charlotte to bring them here and move them around to various houses. Every one helps a little bit, but the job of settling people is very complicated and time-consuming Emily helped interpret their needs, call for appointments, get Social Security cards, go to banks for loans, register children in school, get shots, buy food, furniture, etc. There are 5 in their family - his mother, Emily and the 2 boys and not enough space for more. They could only legally bring \$4,200 each with them. They did not sell property in Greece as they expected to return. They felt they would stay 4-5 years and go back rich. They don't in fact, do this. There isn't much money to be made in Greece.

[528] They acquire a house and car and have mortgages to pay. The kids adapt. It is hard to pick up and move back.

[541] He felt like "The Godfather." He gave one relative a building in Fairview to open a restaurant, helped another who was a shoemaker. If they have fights they call him. He had to help with rent and electricity to get them started - buy dishes and pots and pans.

Side 2:

His brother-in-law was a shoe-maker and worked in Kostas' store on Chestnut Street. People needed shoe repair but, because he could speak no English and needed to call for translation constantly, he decided to try something else.

[2/19] When he started working he was the only tailor in town and called his shop Kostas' Tailor Shop. When he started carrying clothing lines he changed the name to Kostas' Men's Wear. Tailoring is a dying profession all over the world.

[2/31] In Greece, with the apprentice system, trades are learned when people are young. He started in 1957 (age 11) working for 25 cents a week until he learned - then he was paid well. In the U.S. when he arrived the minimum wage was \$2.25 an hour but he was paid \$5.00 an hour. Five months later his salary was raised. In U.S. students stay in school through the 12th grade and don't have a chance to be an apprentice - [and an employer can't afford the wage].

[2/51] He is still doing tailoring and has taught 2 ladies how to work for him, though he can't teach them everything. He will be handling shoes and ladies' wear. His younger son has an "eye" and a "feel" for the look of perfect tailoring. He may go into the business.

[2/83] When she was growing up, Emily learned how to make her own clothes. A-B Tech teaches tailoring but Kostas said this is for ladies and different from men's work.

[2/119] He feels uncomfortable with the way young (30-35 years old) doctors dress. Nobody cares how they dress. He likes to see people dressed up. Some men in their 65's and 70's and retired don't care how they look. However, some 70- year- olds dress well.

[2/137] Emily said there is an unwritten dress code at the church - no woman wears slacks. She thinks there is a place for dress and a place for jeans. The fad is to wear oversized clothes - the "grunge" look. When she was a kid she was glad to have clothes that matched.

[2/154] He said that in the 50's all men wore a hat. Now, if a man wears a hat people will think there is something wrong with him unless it is a baseball hat. Men used to have one good suit, now they have many that are not good.

[2/164] Emily says that when a person who is applying for a job dresses sloppily, they give the impression their work will be sloppy too. [I tell them about Nancy Marlowe's comments about first impressions - see her tape]

[2/187] He is going to carry more sportswear for the summer and broaden his merchandise to take care of younger customers. His suits cost between \$600-\$1000 originally. Now he will carry suits from \$295-\$2,000. The big money spenders are dying out. He is the only person in Asheville selling top quality clothes and wants to stay that way.

[2/219] His father died in 1971 and his mother, with two unmarried daughters and not enough money for dowries, came to this country. Her brother, who had been here for many years, sponsored her. After 5 months the twin sisters were brought over. [Iotini Rantzos, Anastasia Rantzos, Antigoni Rantzos]

[2/249] They go back to Greece every 2 or three years. They took the boys last year. They learned how to bargain and did well. They went to discos every night.

[2/290] We discuss the Carolina Day School (formerly Asheville Country Day School) and Christ School. She was in the last graduating class at Lee Edwards High School. It became Asheville High when integrated.

[2/307] She had two friends who were at the school during integration. She was away at college and one friend called to say there had been a riot and everyone left the school. She did not find much change in the city when she returned.

[2/330] She was 23 and he 28 when they married. They worked all the time - his job during the day with the Man Store, hers at the VA and together in the evening. She was also "on call" and, when pregnant had to go out at night in the snow - it wasn't easy. He now has 30,000 square feet of space. They hope the boys will follow in their footsteps.