

INTERVIEW WITH VASILIKI GALINAS

This interview was conducted on 27 April 2016 with Vasiliki Galinas at her home 76 Danks Street, Albert Park by Anne Miller of the Middle Park History Group. Vasiliki is generally known as Vicky.

Her son John Galinas was present.

Also present was Sonya Cameron from the MPHG.

Vicky was born in the village of St. Dimitrios close to the town of Katerini behind Mount Olympus in northern Greece on 1 February 1940. Her family was comprised of Vicky's Mother and Father and three girls of whom Vicky is the middle daughter, there were no sons. No other people lived with their family. Father ran a general store in the village at which he was assisted by Vicky. Mother did not work in the store, as although she was very intelligent she had not been to school and was unable to read and write. Vicky did not go to kindergarten but did attend school in the village of St. Dimitrios for 6 years. Vicky started working in the shop as soon as she started attending school. When she came home at lunchtime she would help in the shop for the next couple of hours while the people in the village had a siesta and would then return to school for another couple of hours. As soon as Vicky arrived at the shop Father would leave her there by herself. Her elder sister did not help in the shop, she was married very young, but Vicky's younger sister did work in the shop after Vicky had left.

Coming to Australia.

Originally the whole family wanted to come to Australia together, but unfortunately Mother was very ill with a heart problem, she had open heart surgery and was not strong enough to travel to Australia. After 6 years Mother became ill again and passed away at a very young age. At first Vicky came here by herself in March 1962, followed by her younger sister 2 months later in May. It was assumed her parents and her sister would follow but this was not the case. After Mother died Father, together with his eldest daughter, her husband and their 2 boys did come to Australia.

A very good friend of Father's had come to Melbourne, Australia and subsequently wrote to Father encouraging the whole family to come to Australia. Greece was very poor at this time, not so long after the second World War, and many Greek people were coming here. Many people thought it was a good idea to come to Australia and possibly become rich!

When Vicky left home in 1962, aged 22, she travelled here with 3 other girls in the *Patris*, two girls, one up and one down in each of 2 cabins with Father paying her fare. The *Patris* was a very popular ship. One of the other girls in the cabin sailed on to Sydney but the other 3 disembarked here. Here in Melbourne she was met by Father's friends who had originally come from Katerini, and had encouraged her family to come to Australia, but whom Vicky did not know earlier. Vicky stayed with these people for 2 months until her sister arrived and together they rented a room in South Melbourne. People would buy a house, keeping one room themselves, renting out the other rooms but sharing the

kitchen and bathroom.

Vicky mentioned earlier that the Australian government paid these new arrivals until they found work. She commenced work here doing afternoon shifts from 3 pm to 11 pm in a Chinese factory making dim sims and spring rolls. This factory was called *Wing Lee*, located in Franklin Street behind the Queen Victoria Market and owned by Elizabeth Chong's parents. The dim sims and spring rolls were made, not to be sold in the market, but in fish and chip shops. Father's friends used to have a fish and chip shop in Park Street, South Melbourne near the *Kingsway Motel*, this is how she obtained the job initially. When Vicky's sister arrived she lived with Vicky and initially she worked in a restaurant in Collins Street, but soon Vicky asked her boss at *Wing Lee* if her sister could work there too, to which he agreed. Vicky worked here for 2 years until she was planning to get married,

Vicky and Thomas's marriage.

Vicky and Thomas had met as they both lived at the same house in South Melbourne. Thomas, who was from the town of Katerini, had come to Melbourne 6 years earlier than Vicky in 1956, he was a cousin of Father's friend. He was one of 5 children whose father had died early so Thomas came to Australia to help the family's financial position. Apparently he did send money from Australia back to Greece.

In Greece Thomas had been trained as a *pâtissiere*, Vicky said he made beautiful cakes! Like Vicky he did not speak fluent English and thus worked at the *Tom Piper* factory at Port Melbourne.

Vicky and Thomas were married on the 27 July 1964. Vicky thinks that their wedding was less elaborate than if it had taken place in Greece, she thought they partied in Greece for a week, here the party was for a day! They were married at the Greek Orthodox Church in Victoria Parade, East Melbourne on the corner of Lansdowne Street. Later they had a party/reception at a restaurant in Elizabeth Street to which they invited their relatives and friends. Upstairs at this restaurant there was a big reception area.

Vicky's wedding dress was loaned by the people who were to take the photographs. Following the wedding the couple had a day off at the house where they had previously lived and on Monday they returned to their respective jobs. They stayed at this house together for 6 months and then bought their own house in December at 50 Hambleton Street on the corner of Mills Street, moving in there one week before Christmas.

Vicky and Thomas' first home

When they moved to their first home Vicky and Thomas both took holidays from their normal factory jobs and took temporary jobs at *Astor Radio Parts* in South Melbourne for 2 weeks for what Vicky called their honeymoon - the holidays! At *Astor* Vicky was soldering circuit boards but she does not remember what Thomas was doing. They were working there to make more money, but

subsequently returned to *Tom Piper* and *Wing Lee*.

Their new home was somewhat primitive, there was no kitchen, internal bathroom or hot water system, it was necessary to heat water using wood in the big copper as there was no gas. Gradually Thomas fixed all these things, he was a very competent handyman.

Australian Friends

While Vicky worked at *Wing Lee* she met an Australian girl on the tram. This girl, whose name was Dorothy, happened to catch the same tram as she lived in South Melbourne, she also worked at *Wing Lee* so that Vicky and Dorothy became good friends. At *Wing Lee* there were a few Greeks and a few Italians together with a lot of Chinese. Vicky thinks that Dorothy was the only Australian person there. But in general Vicky socialised with Greek people, she does not recall socialising with Dorothy. Vicky did not have any English classes, she did not feel that she had time for these. If she needed anything Vicky enquired from the other Greek people at her work place.

Learning English

Vicky learned her English from other people particularly at work, from Dorothy and from the television. When Vicky arrived at the house in South Melbourne they already had a TV, but not with a Greek channel. There was a radio that had a Greek station which was not operating all day but in the evenings giving the news and some music.

The arrival of the family

Two years after the wedding their son John arrived and two years later their daughter, Anna was born. Vicky stopped working when John was born and remained at home with the children until they started at school.

Returning to work.

When both the children were at school Vicky started work at the *Notts Albert Park Laundry* in Mills Street between Herbert Street and Canterbury Road. This closed after 1983 and was replaced with some more modern houses. Vicky would take the children to the Middle Park School and go the laundry from 9 am until 3 pm returning to school to collect the children after work.

Middle Park School.

At this school there were many Greek children, more recently many of them have moved out to Oakleigh and Clayton for a larger backyard in which to grow vegetables. Thomas wanted to move too but as Vicky did not drive they remained in Middle Park. Vicky mainly travelled by tram.

Shopping

This was mainly done at the South Melbourne Market and the local shops. There used to be a milk bar on the corner of Wright and Hambleton Streets and a butcher in Mills Street and also in Hambleton Street - *Baileys*. John recalled that these milk bars were the only place one could buy soft drinks with

the advent of home deliveries.

Housing

When Vicky's sister arrived here they rented a house for 6 months in South Melbourne. But after that Father's friends bought an investment house at 65 Patterson Street which they rented out rooms to various people. Vicky and her sister were in charge, they lived there but also collected the rent from the other occupants. Vicky lived here for 1½ years and although she had met Thomas at the South Melbourne house, it was here that she was married from. There were a number of individual shops in this area, including a licensed grocery and bottle shop on the corner of Richardson and Langridge Streets. They seldom went around to the Middle Park shops in Armstrong Street. There was a milk bar in either Patterson or Danks Street, possibly on the NE side of McGregor Street.

Social life

Vicky and Thomas did not belong to any clubs, but sometimes the people from a town or village would get together for a dance. Vicky was not aware of one from Katerini but there was one from De Valli, another village outside Katerini. This was actually the village where Thomas had been born. The club for St. Dimitrios was in Collingwood.

High schools for John and Anna

John attended the Albert Park High School, the first one, which is now located directly opposite Vicky's present house. Anna started her secondary studies at J.H. Boyd High School and subsequently satisfied the entrance examination for Mac.Robertson Girls' High School where she finished her studies. John finished his schooling after 6 years. During this time they played tennis and soccer during the school day, not at the weekends.

Notts Albert Park Laundry

Vicky worked here for 11 years but left when it was purchased by the *Princes Laundry* and closed down, this was about 1988 or 1990. Vicky did not get another job, although *Princes* asked Vicky to work at their Mentone laundry but this was too far away.

The Family

Vicky's older sister, her family and Father had lived with the Galinas family for one year in the house in Hambleton Street, 10 people in all, with Vicky cooking for everybody. The older sister and family then bought a house in Albert Park and moved there. Father returned to Greece and came back in 1992 to Australia, had a big stroke and then Vicky nursed him for 15 years. Vicky's younger sister lived with the Galinas family for seven years until she was married in 1969 to a Greek man.

The Galinas family moved to the house in Danks Street and renovated this house. Vicky was looking after Father there too.

Returning to Greece

Vicky recalled that everyone planned to come here for 5 years, during which time they thought they would get rich, and then return to Greece. Now that she has been here for more than 50 years she prefers Australia and does not want to go back to Greece. When Vicky and Thomas returned to Greece in 1993 for a holiday Vicky said privately to Thomas she wished she could close her eyes and wake up in Australia, with which Thomas agreed! Although they stayed in Greece for 2 months when they landed at Tullamarine Vicky thought it was the happiest day of her life! They did visit St. Dimitrios, but Vicky has no immediate family there now so that people did not recognise her. She has become an Australian citizen. She has only been back the one time. John and Anna have been to Greece by themselves, once they had finished school.

Thomas' work

They had bought the house in Danks Street in 1979 but did not move here until 1992. After Tom Piper closed, Thomas purchased a tip-truck and became a cartage contractor for Albion Reid, now Boral. The truck was parked outside the Hambleton Street house, which was good initially but later the council introduced by-laws that prevented the truck parking. When they moved to Danks Street the truck was parked at the end of Danks Street on the old gasworks location which is now an apartment block. This was very labour-intensive work of 5½ days each week, doing repairs at night and at the weekend. If the truck was not on the road they would give the job to someone else.

Vicky's hobbies

Once she was not working Vicky took up many handcrafts and particularly knitting and sewing the childrens' clothes. She taught herself these activities.

John commented that he is married with 3 children and Anna is married with one child. John regarded the area surrounding their Hambleton Street house as more his home territory where he used to be constantly riding his bike. He would be regularly at Albert Park and St.Kilda for much of the day.



Thomas and Vicky on their wedding day in 1964



Father farewelling Vicky at Piraeus, Greece