

OLGA XENODOXIDOU

Interviewee: Olga Xenodoxidou, Kingston June 1st 2017, Duration: 1:29:58			
Interviewed by: George Katinas; Translation: Athina Peidou			
min:sec	File:	KGHP_17_XENODOXIDOU_O_20170601_KINGSTON_GKATINAS_AUDIO.MP3	
Interview Time	Chronology	Place	Description
0:48	Born	Germany	Born in Germany in a city close to Stuttgart. Parents were immigrants. They got married in 1968. Olga was born in 1971. Olga and her sister were born in Germany. They returned to Greece when Olga was 6 and settled in Thessaloniki. Initially Olga's parents came from another city in North Greece, called Komotini. They arrived to Thessaloniki though, where Olga grew up.
1:55	Life in Germany	Germany	Olga's parents lived in Germany for 10-15 years. Her father was a driver and her mother was working part-time in a factory, because she was taking care of the kids.
2:36	First years	Thessaloniki, Greece	Once Olga's family returned to Greece, her father started working as a taxi-driver and later as a driver in public transit. Her mother worked on and off.
3:53			Olga's family decided to return to Greece once they made enough money to afford a good quality of life there.
4:45			She only had one grandmother (father's mother) living in Thessaloniki. The rest were living in Komotini and passed away at a young age. She has vague memories of them.
5:45			In Thessaloniki, they lived in a small cement apartment.
7:12			There was a lot of homework. She had no spare time during school. On summers and weekends the family made short trips.
8:01			They bought a cottage in Vrasna, Thessaloniki where they spent their summers.
9:02			In Thessaloniki Olga used to play outside (i.e., road) when she was a kid. The family visited Komotini at least once a year. Her relationship with the rest of the family was very close.
11:56			Olga was a very shy kid in the school. She was not very interested in school and was an average student. After high School she got into university pursuing Italian language studies. She was interested in this particular language due to the connection of Italian to Latin. She was interested in Psychology but did not have good enough grades to get into this school.

15:07	4th year of undergraduate studies	Sienna, Italy	Olga got into an exchange program and spent a year in Italy. During her staying there she decided that she wanted to live abroad and have new experiences.
16:52	After undergraduate studies (1999)	Thessaloniki Greece - Buffalo (NY)	<i>(speaking about how she came to live in Canada...)</i> Olga had a relationship with a man who was studying in New York. He recommended that she pursue graduate studies in Buffalo University. She applied and got accepted .She never thought about living there before this.
18:31	1995-1999	Thessaloniki, Greece	She had been working as Italian Teacher in Thessaloniki four years before Buffalo.
19:58	1999-2001	Buffalo	Olga's Master Thesis: How to teach Italian using short stories? She used Voracious stories and came up with Italian grammar and vocabulary lessons.
22:02			Dual direction Masters in: Roman Language and Literature and Teaching and Learning. It was a combination of language studies and teaching.
22:25			Olga also worked on Italian Cinema. She loved what she was doing, however, there was no funding. Olga's experience in North America led her to the conclusion that arts cannot guarantee a future job. Even nowadays she works due to the Teaching background she gained during her master studies and not due to the Italian Language (she works now as an English teacher at Queens, for engineering students).
24:55			The man Olga had a relationship with moves to another city and they break up. She meets her current husband Aris in Buffalo and they start dating. Aris was a post-doctoral fellow. They live together the second year of Olga's studies and then he moves to Kingston where he was offered a position at Queen's University.
27:00			Olga works an extra year after the completion of her master studies. She doesn't see a reason for staying in America, so she then moves back to Thessaloniki and her relationship with Aris is on a vague status.
18:31			2003

31:22	After moving to Canada	Kingston, Canada	Her first impressions of Canada were very bad. Cold weather, worse than Buffalo. She did not have a permanent residence yet and had limited working options. She had to wait a while to be able to work. She did not know anyone and had nothing to do. Aris was over-working to get his tenure. These were the worst years.
34:17	First years in Kingston	Kingston, Canada	Olga was talking to her family over the phone on a weekly basis. There were no internet platforms yet, like Skype.
38:03			Things started to improve when Olga started working. She doesn't like to just stay home: she likes to work somewhere and get to know people. She started working at Queen's as an event organizer for the Chemical Engineering Department Centennial ceremony. She had just received her work permit, so she could work. After organizing the event Olga received an interim undergraduate assistant position. And after this position she got a 2 months contract for an office position.
39:57	2006-2013	Kingston, Canada	Olga got a position in Greek School as a Greek School Teacher in our community, after she finished working at Queens. She was working there for 7 years. It happened once a week, every Saturday from 9-3. It was fantastic. She better organized the school, initiated traditional Greek dance lessons and introduced more Greek culture and language to students. She found that she had introduced many things to the children, such as the 10 Greek dances they learned perfectly.
44:43	2013	Kingston, Canada	Olga was also trying to get pregnant with lots of effort in Canada, Greece and the USA. She finally made it after 9 years of effort in 2013. She has also had a permanent part-time job at Queen's since 2009.
47:07	2013-2014	Kingston, Canada	Olga gives birth to George. She decided to resign from Greek School and to invest more time into her family. She decided she needed to put her energy elsewhere.
49:31	2013-2014	Kingston, Canada	Olga was disappointed of the low expectations that parents had for their kids in Greek School. This was not the situation she anticipated. She felt that people didn't care. Some students prioritized other activities and not Greek School. Parents did not invest any time working with their children on Greek School Homework. This tired her out.
52:48	2014-Today	Kingston, Canada	Olga's son changed her life. At the beginning it was very

			<p>difficult. They had no relative to assist them. They are close to Greeks <i>coming from Greece</i> and living in Kingston (Marianna, Vasilis, Pavlo). These are the people who feel like family for Olga here. Marianna Kontopolous is the godmother of George. But it is still very difficult to not have any member of your family close to you. She feels she misses the help from her family.</p>
56:39	2014-Today	Kingston, Canada	<p>Olga and Aris are really concerned about their son's Greek culture. They speak only Greek in house and George speaks only Greek. This year he went to kindergarten and he started speaking English, but he is bilingual. They only listen to Greek music and visit Greece every year. They read only in Greek, even for books written in English (they read out the translations of the phrases). He understands English perfectly now. She finds that her son has a high sense of humor.</p>
1:04:48	Today	Kingston, Canada	<p>Olga wants to teach George both spoken and written Greek. That is their dream. They will continue to have a constant contact with the Greek culture and they will travel every year to Greece.</p>
1:07:01	Today	Kingston, Canada	<p>Olga and Aris plan to move to Greece and some point. They are both very tired of life in Canada. Some decades ago Canada provided a good quality of life. Nowadays, they should both work the entire day and they have no spare time to spend with their family. Nowadays a professor is assigned even with administrative duties. When he retires they both decided they will move back to Greece.</p>
1:07:01	Today	Kingston, Canada	<p>They plan to move back to Greece and want George to attend the last years of high school in Greece. They do also want him to attend a Greek University. Although they are teaching him Greek, they want him to have Greek teachers other than his mom and dad.</p>
1:15:04	Today	Kingston, Canada	<p>Olga is disappointed in the education system in Canada. It is too easy, and it is too much like a 'playground' instead of a school. They are not being taught correctly. Students she has seen can not use appropriate grammar and they struggle in math. During her experience at Queen's year by year the quality of students gets worse.</p>
1:18:09	Today	Kingston, Canada	<p>What Olga enjoys most in Canada is the freedom and the very low racism. People seem happy and smile a lot here. She doesn't remember so much happiness in Greek people: they tended to complain and be more miserable. People in Canada say hello to each other on the street more often too. Canadians do not focus on the image of people. On the contrary in Greece people focus and criticize people's image.</p>
1:22:30	Today	Kingston, Canada	<p>Greeks after all this financial crisis have changed a lot. They do not look happy</p>
1:23:28	Today	Kingston, Canada	<p>Olga is a citizen of the world. But above all she is Greek. She refused a German citizenship because she was asked to refuse her Greek citizenship. She doesn't consider herself an immigrant.</p>

1:26:39	Today	Kingston, Canada	Canada is an inclusive country. Everyone has a right to live here. Olga lived here for about 15 years. But she always considers herself Greek.
---------	-------	------------------	--