

California State College, Bakersfield

San Joaquin Valley Oral History Project

Recorded History

INTERVIEWEE: Chris Poulogianis  
PLACE OF BIRTH: Greece  
INTERVIEWER: Francisco E. Serrano and  
Jack Coy  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: April 20, 1974  
PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Bakersfield  
NUMBER OF TAPES: 1  
TRANSCRIBER: Andrea Anderson  
FILE IDENTIFIER(S): DR-100\_0274

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J.C.: My name is Jack Coy and Francisco Serrano. We are here for the purpose to interview Mr. Chris Poulogianis of 713 8th Street Bakersfield, California who came to this country as a young man from Greece.

Poulogianis: 1900.

J.C.: He is going to tell us of his experience and progress of his family and so forth. Chris, where did you arrive in this country?

Poulogianis: 1900.

J.C.: Where did you arrive?

Poulogianis: Chicago.

J.C.: Chicago.

Poulogianis: (?) I came in 1906.

J.C.: Then you came to Bakersfield?

Poulogianis: What are you jumbling that? You've got it going on? Is it better for ya? (the tape recorder)

J.C.: You've got it going now.

Poulogianis: All right. 1909.

J.C.: You come 1909 to Bakersfield.

Poulogianis: That's right!

J.C.: All right. Now tell us something 'bout you started out as a shoe shiner in Bakersfield.

Poulogianis: Well, Pat O'Brian and Ben Sale give me rotation. And I met Alexandra, cousin to Mr. Weills. She comes from Chicago. He told me they got some girls to shine shoes. I told him I got two Greek girls come from the old country, shine shoes. The Greeks they want to kill me because lose their reputation and I done got them good business shoeshine stand. Three years I make 9000 dollars and I met this Greek girl and I got married. Five days she must she work she cook, and I met her. And I raised five kids. Then I raised my grandchildren, then Pat O'Brian, he's been good to me. Fred Borton

been good to me. Mr. Howell has been good to me. All those people have been nice to me. And I've worked a long time shine shoes. Sell Diamonds. Shine shoes. Get by. Put my boys in college and make 'em men. I don't want no goddamned fools. I don't want the taxes (?) for my boys. I want my boys to make their own living in this best country in the world. And I hope to keep this country up not down. Up!

J.C.: Three of your boys are doctors, right?

Poulogianis: Three. You're right. And third of all, doctor. Regardless, another one grandchildren, Tom. I raised that kid. My daughter's boy Tommy.

J.C.: And you done all this shining shoes.

Poulogianis: Shining shoes, yup. I be nice to people. Everybody help me. I owe nine thousand dollar, twenty four thousand dollars once and I paid the loan off shining shoes. I tell all my boys, I want to make this the best country in the world. This the only country in the world that you play square. And anybody doesn't get his hair cut, he don't get his shave and he dresses down. First of all, shut this goddamned fools out. We don't want no bushkas down. And I want to give everybody haircut, looks nice clean. Gentlemen. And women? No goddamned dresses, its not goddamned right. I want it up!

J.C.: Can you tell us something about the cable cars in Bakersfield?

Poulogianis: What does that means?

J.C.: Streetcars.

Poulogianis: Streetcars?

J.C.: Yeah, The old time streetcars.

Poulogianis: Yes, nickelback. I got one here.

J.C.: You made a hobby.

Poulogianis: I made the bedrooms because I had the house in a fire and I didn't get enough insurance, and I only have four thousand dollars in the bank, then I bought the streetcar, then I put a big sign that told the shoes "no good, no good". But pretty soon I get my money and I build me this house for 585 dollars, this house. Then I bought the streetcar in 1935.

J.C.: How about, do you remember how the streetcars used to run here in Bakersfield?

Poulogianis: Yeah, P Street and goes through town. Yeah. Nickel (?).

J.C.: How much did they charge then?

Poulogianis: Five cents.

J.C.: Five cents?

Poulogianis: That's right.

J.C.: Did they run to East Bakersfield too?

Poulogianis: Yes, and clear to SP Depot.

J.C.: The SP Depot. How about the Red Light Districts, do you remember that?

Poulogianis: Used to be from Brooks? Way down to California used to be both

Poulogianis: sides five hundred pimps, fifteen hundred whores.  
(Laughter)

J.C.: Well business is business. A friend's a friend. Tell me another thing you wanted to know, all right?

Poulogianis: Chris?

J.C.: Yes?

Poulogianis: We do have permission from you to use this recording solely for the educational purposes of Bakersfield College and whatever else they may want to use it for this purpose.

Poulogianis: Yes. Yes. Anyplace. Anyplace. Yes.

J.C.: Now, I know you have a lot of-

Poulogianis: A lot of names I want to put it all in, Jack, please.

J.C.: -close friends and customers of Mr. Chris Poulogianis as a shoe shiner or boot black whatever you wanna call it-

Poulogianis: Southern Hotel.

J.C.: -at Southern hotel since 1909.

Poulogianis: That's right.

J.C.: Now Chris, you did donate your shine stand to the Kern County Museum, is that right?

Poulogianis: I did! Yeah, and I'm going to give them the street car, 4600 too, (mumbles) I'm gonna give them that.

J.C.: And you did the reins for the clock tower?

Poulogianis: I raised the clock tower. I raised 4600 dollars and I give them 125 dollars myself.

J.C.: Yeah, here's a list of the close friends and customers of Mr. Chris Poulogianis since 1909.

Poulogianis: Yes.

J.C.: Chris, would you just like to donate this to the museum or-

Poulogianis: I did, I will, I'd be glad to do it.

J.C.: Do you think we'd have time to get all of these on-

Poulogianis: Please, I want to get it, and I pay for next, and get all the names in.

J.C.: Now what we'll have to do is come back out here another time.

Poulogianis: Well, I don't care what you do, because I wanna put another one and will pay at my own expense.

J.C.: Chris has 245 names of very important people (mumble) some of them still living here.

Poulogianis: Yeah.

J.C.: We'd like to get on the tape to-

Poulogianis: Please!

J.C.: To donate to Mr. Richard Bailey and the Kern County Museum, and maybe next week or couple weeks, Mr. Serrano and I will be back out here and get these names recorded for this purpose.

Poulogianis: Anytime. I'd be glad to do it. I wish you'd do that.

J.C.: And we want to thank you at this time.

Poulogianis: And let me (to someone else)... Hey, give me glass of milk and this fellow a glass of wine.

J.C.: That sounds real good.  
Poulogianis: Ok.

(Pause in interview)

J.C.: Ok, Chris has some other thought and memories that he wants to tell us of his uh-  
Poulogianis: Experience.  
J.C.: All right, please go ahead, Chris.  
Poulogianis: What do you want?  
J.C.: I thought you was telling us where you started out from?  
Poulogianis: Green Bay. From Fond du Lac (?). Wisconsin.  
J.C.: Ok you keep talking then.  
Poulogianis: Two years.  
J.C.: Keep talking.  
Poulogianis: I work for the Greek, John Irvin. And I sell peanuts, popcorn, candy, and (?) basketball. I work from nine o'clock to one o'clock and I give him all the money to the Greek and then the summer time he had me sell peanuts in Lake Bride, two hundred, three hundred sacks peanuts, and then I give him all the money. And I watched (?) shine shoes across the street, and then I met an American fellow at a pool hall he said "Chris, I give you three chairs and stand, all you need to make shine shoes, clean up 45 spittoons and clean up this place." I said fine. I quit the Greek, and all he give me sixty dollars for two years. When I was in Green Bay, I saved my money, and I met a man dressed up and said, "Where you from?" "Nevada." "How much shine?" "Four bits." I don't know what the hell that means. "50 cents." How do I know you used up make five thousand dollars in gambling? Shine shoes, too much slow. Then I got a job at railroad, after that no like it. Then I got a job in a barbershop, and before then I got a job in a bank and I work three years, two years in the bank, I had fourteen hundred dollars and I thought I'd get rich. I bought some (?) stocks and lost every goddamn dollar. Then I shine shoes on the dance floor round the goddamn sport moves, then I went to San Bernadino, stayed one year in San Bernadino, I settled down in Bakersfield in nineteen hundred and nine in Bakersfield.  
J.C.: Thank you again, Chris. Now we want to... Chris wants this list of close friends and customers as we stated earlier since 1909, that I think you'll have to agree with me that the two most important two on this list are Chris, hisself (sp), and his wife, Nicoletta Poulogianis. And the number one after that is Pat O'Brien, Ben Sale, Fred Borton, Harriet Hopkins, Elly Faust, Alfred Harold, Fred Barnett, George Barnett, Henry Brant, Murry Bright, Al Freeman, Alonzo Gibney, J.A. Hughes, Bruce Payne, Pat Don, E. F. Emmons, W.G. Bayne, Tom Scott, Claude Bosit (?), Jack

Schumate, Phil Jewett, Rod Jewett, Hugh S. Allen, Lon Davis, Wesley Brown, Ned Stockton, Elmore King, Everett King, Clinton McCray, Ron Irvin, Rawlin (?), Tru Gristol, David L. Honetell, Robert B. Freeman, Harry O. Smith, Ralph Smith, Carly Withinton, Dale Tibbits, Peter Hensforth, Ida B. Homeball, Louis Allen, Frank Smith, Harold Nickels, C. L. Gibson, Don Lucas, Dwight Clark, Charles Phillips, Roland Kern, Henry Isler, Deb E. Woodworth, Hugh Jewett, Nick Cass, Claude Barbough, Jocelyn Clark, A.C. Dema, Ralph Henletter, Sam Cram, Malcolm Brock, Walter Cain, George de Arman, Dr. Joe Smith, Harry West, Frank Jameson, Jack Jameson, William Visard, John McCray, Jess Darcy, A.B. Lightner, Harry McCray, Joseph Relet, Harkamer brothers, Phil Clipstine, Louis Olcy, Leo Pauly, Tom Burk, Frank Wilson, Burr brothers, Walter Mattson, Henry Mattson, Martin Coomb, Jim Brisco, Fred Tagler, George Coffee, Tom O'Brian, Dr. Schafer, Dr. Buckner, Dr. Annie Brown, Mel Smith, Pearl Kessler, Chris Stockton, Mr. Justin, Bob Blacker, Max Gunlac, Laurence Weill, Ike Miller, Charlie Day, Charlie Taylor, Charles Kern, Judge Main, Tom Owens, Ed Churchman, Jerry Shield, Stonewall Woody, Judge Mahone, George Hay, Bill Jury, Ed Benson, Charlie Burr, Fred Borton, Fred Linberg, C.A. Barlow, R.F. Flunken, Fred Hall, Dr. MacNamer, P.S. McHudson, W.A. Hall, Paul Gallads, Angus Crites, Eugene Duncan, Carl Durkam, Charles F. Abracan, Sid Metcalf, Clipstine brothers, Judas Ruthner, James Curran, Timothy P. Sullivan, Horace F. Fear, Harrison Peacock, Elbert S. Good, Dr. George Savage, Ida R. Cremfall, Walter Burke, William J. Schultz, B.D. Burt, W.W. Coomb, John W. Henderson, A.J. Spent, Grace Bird, Dr. Coonio (?), William N. Forker, Al Towbridge, Emmett L. Hayes, George Primo, Alvin Tribe, James McGuire, H.P. Jenson, O.D., Oscar Rudnick, Lee Taylor, Joe Gannon, Ed F. Benton, Charles Owen, George Calhoun, Arthur Crites, Judge R.B. Lambert, George W. Shear, Charles Lomer, Sam Johnson, Dr. Goodall, Leroy Rankin, E.A. Grogg, Ed Grady, Sam Wen, Herbert Sears, James Meacham, Charles Dally, Reece Jones, Faustino Noriego, Judge Campbell, P.S. Bible, Walter Peterson, John Canacas, James (?), Gus Catroules, P. J. O'Mear, Fred F. Ripple, Forest A. Cassidy, Les Robertson, Cal Robertson, Mel Bretton, Mac McManas, H.A. Jastro, Frank Muntzer, A.B.M. Osborn, William Dumble, Herman Dumble, Joe Haggar, Marilyn Homes, Frank Hames, James McKinney, Tom Baker, Tom Biggs, H. Lynn, Sheriff Kelly, Boon Newell, W. Esler, John L Suitt, Harry Peacock, Judge Bradshaw, Ted Hougham, William Philips, C.H. Phillips, R.L. Stockton, Jess Stockton, Elmer Jones, Peter Wilson, John Loustalot, George Groves, Tomlin brothers, Judge Owens, Charlie Lee, Mr. Tupman, C. Brown, L. W. Chinwith, George W. Wear, Alex Ward, Charles Meroni, Fred Gauntner, Guy Hughes, Judge Frank

Noriega, Judge Bradshaw, Judge Arnold, Dwight Griffith, Van Hewert, John Quinn, Frank Perino, Charles Webster, Sheriff Chatniss, Judge T. Harvey, Faustino Petrini, J.E. Flickinger, A.R., H.L. Cromroy, Van Mickelbury, T.J. Wingate, R.J. Tilson, Alonzo P. Davis, C.W. Wickersham, Jimmy Murry, Roy Galleon, Ed Jones, Cap Skulfield, Vance Anderson, Frank Jepy, Orville L. Colbin, and that is all, folks. Thank you, Chris.

Poulogianis: Thank you, appreciate it so much and hearing all those names makes me happy. The thing you're going to or you got enough. Jack, I can do anything for ya.