



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK  
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

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**Interview with Maria Calomiris**

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**Interviewer:** Ev Barnes  
**Transcriber:** Monica Servaites

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TAPE 1/SIDE 1

**BARNES:** ...Maria Calomiris this morning and we're going to talk with her about the work that she has been doing at Eastern Market for many, many years. Maria when did you first come to the United States?

**CALOMIRIS:** I came 1957.

**BARNES:** 1957. So that was after World War II?

**CALOMIRIS:** Oh yes, definitely. Yes, uh huh.

**BARNES:** And did you come to Washington?

**CALOMIRIS:** I came—of course—I came first in Canada.

**BARNES:** Oh

**CALOMIRIS:** But—and then I came—I had sister over here and brother. And of course lots of relatives, aunts and uncles. I came through New York and then to Washington where of course with one of my brothers. And I stay with my sister which was married and had a little child. And we had fun and I met my husband through the relatives...

**BARNES:** Oh through relatives.

**CALOMIRIS:** ...and we get married and of course I never went anywhere else from Washington.

[Laughs]

**BARNES:** When were you married?

**CALOMIRIS:** Um...Fifty... uh, 58.

**BARNES:** A year after you moved here.

**CALOMIRIS:** Yes, uh huh.

**BARNES:** Did you begin to work with your husband at the Market at that time?

**CALOMIRIS:** At that time, of course, we have the first child and I was—stay with my mother-in-law. For almost 20 years together. And I—since then work with my husband. We start K St but I just remember a little bit because I didn't work that much over there. And we moved in Eastern Market, since then we are part of the beautiful family around the neighborhood.

**BARNES:** So now your sons work with you, correct?

**CALOMIRIS:** My sons work with me and of course my husband since little bit before he got sick. He was there everyday. All our lives. [Laughs] All those years. And now he can not work anymore so the boys took over. And the rest of the family.

**BARNES:** Did you open the Market in 1963? Was that when you came to Eastern Market?

**CALOMIRIS:** I cannot tell you what year it was. But uh, yeah. Yes, maybe it was '63.

**BARNES:** And you've been working there ever since?

**CALOMIRIS:** Oh yes, ever since.

**BARNES:** Tell me about your customers at Eastern Market.

**CALOMIRIS:** Well at Eastern Market we have beautiful people and wonderful customers through the year. Of course I was young and everybody, oh my god, admire me and I love them too. So they try and help me, sometimes I was pregnant with you know children and I pick up 50 pounds bushel basket and some beautiful, wonderful people say, "No, no, don't do that because you know you hurt yourself." I said, "Don't worry, I'm not. I pick up sack of potatoes—put them here, put them there." And I never forget the guy said, "No, no, I'm going to pick up for you." I said, "Okay, thank you very much but you know you don't have to. I do all the work." And I went home, cook, washed my windows, paint the house, do the job whatever I'd have at home. The next day back to work.

**BARNES:** You have a lot of energy.

**CALOMIRIS:** Well I—yes, part of my culture yes. My country—because after we have the World War II—we have to work. We have to find something that's why we came. God Bless America. To find opportunities like everybody else from around the world. Really, we very lucky.

**BARNES:** Who are your suppliers?

**CALOMIRIS:** Well I tell you the truth—I never—I never all the years, my husband do that work. He was buying and we used to have a lot of people around, you know close to the O Street Market. But of course everybody had a business and now the boys go sometimes to Baltimore, sometimes over here—you know they move out of Washington and really I don't bother with those things.

**BARNES:** They take care of...

**CALOMIRIS:** They take care of everything.

**BARNES:** ...of the supply.

**CALOMIRIS:** Right, right, I came over here you know I help in the Market but everything else—the papers, the buyers and all this—they take care of them.

**BARNES:** Sounds to me like you have the best of all worlds. You get to have all the fun and they get to do...

**CALOMIRIS:** ...the work.

**BARNES:** ...the early morning work anyway. They have to start very early.

**CALOMIRIS:** We do. We do start early. You know they do a little more but I help them you know early in the morning, I come some days too—they need to be—take care of some customers, some other things. So that's the job. That's the kind of work it is in the markets.

**BARNES:** Where do your customers come from?

**CALOMIRIS:** We have beautiful customers. Of course the neighbors first, around Washington but we have lot of customers too from Maryland, Pennsylvania—you know they come—everywhere. everywhere. But most of them of course live closer by.

**BARNES:** Are you now serving the children of your original customers?

**CALOMIRIS:** They do—we have fun with the children and all my life when the mothers—you know—had them like me, in the stroller—they bring them in. Now they move, they got married, they bring the children and they say this is the lady—you know—give us banana, an apple or I treat the children. Sometimes I used to peel the grapes for them. I have fun. They love me. Oh my gosh, they come and hug me like I'm grandmother. I'm very proud, very proud. For all the people I know through my life and now they, like I say, they got their children. Sometimes they got the grandchildren and I feel great. I feel like a million dollars.

**BARNES:** How has your business changed since you started at Eastern Market?

**CALOMIRIS:** Well the new building or the old building?

**BARNES:** I guess we'll go back to when you started in 1963.

**CALOMIRIS:** Well, it was good. We never had problems because we treat the people nice and they treat us the same way. We love them and like I say, they come and say no, no, no we want you to help me or was like a part of the family. Really, I have more loving neighbors and the customers and the people

around. And the politicians since like [in] Washington we see all the time but we never have any problems. Both people everywhere, all kinds. We treat each other like we are part of a home.

**BARNES:** How did the fire affect you and your business?

**CALOMIRIS:** We very upset like everyone else. We never expect to see that but thank God and we very blessed. Everybody supporting and we here no matter what. To continue our job and to help the neighbors, everybody. They helping us and we helping them. And no problem. No problem.

**BARNES:** But you were closed for awhile, right? I mean... you had no place...

**CALOMIRIS:** No, not...

**BARNES:** ...until they opened the temporary building.

**CALOMIRIS:** But we stayed outside. For us, with the vegetables...

**BARNES:** Oh you stayed outside?

**CALOMIRIS:** We stayed outside. Yeah.

**BARNES:** How was that for you?

**CALOMIRIS:** I tell you, I had very fun. In the morning, we come and open. And the people come and working to the jobs, Metro and everything. And they say, "Good morning, oh my gosh! How are you? We're very wonderful. Come on." We hug each other, kiss each other. And they get something, go to work or they come back, pick something and go home. We never have problem. I loved it. I loved it, no problem.

**BARNES:** So your business really didn't stop?

**CALOMIRIS:** No, we didn't stop. Huh uh. No.

**BARNES:** Just...

**CALOMIRIS:** ...Just continue. Put tables—put some outside and we bring you all the stuff. Of course, like I say, people supporting and people give to the community. All kinds of funds. And they help everybody in the Market. And that's it, no problem.

**BARNES:** Has your business been less profitable since the fire?

**CALOMIRIS:** Well, some things, it's a little more expensive but it's the Market. Sometimes it depends the season. When the things come from other parts of the country, we don't expect to get them less. That's part of the business. Wherever you go. And the quality you're getting that has a lot to do too. Lot to do.

**BARNES:** So when you actually can buy on the local market, it's a lot less expensive for you and so you can sell it for less?

**CALOMIRIS:** That's true too. But sometimes they're not enough for the local. Because local stock, they don't bring that much. I mean they have a little bit. Ok, who is going to get the most. Now we got the guys, we know them through the years and we used to have more. We used to have, my husband, we knew the farmers from Pennsylvania, South Carolina, or Virginia. But now they don't have no farmers anymore, those people. They getting jobs and they don't have farms anymore. And if they have a little bit, like the guy, he bring us arugula. Beautiful arugula. Everybody loves it. Or you know, some kinds of tomatoes, heirloom or this. But he brings a little bit. Okay, I have them for one, two, three times and then, no more. So they have to bring them from other parts. But very good quality, number one.

**BARNES:** Have people changed in the way that they shop?

**CALOMIRIS:** Well, some people but I don't see that much change. Because, like I say, we treat them good and they love us and they're supporting. And they know they're getting very good quality. We don't have that problem. No. I mean a little more expensive but it's okay. I came from the country, we got to survive. And we have to do around things.

**BARNES:** Are there younger people shopping now?

**CALOMIRIS:** They do. They do. A lot of young people. Lot of new families. A lot of with new children, of course of lot of them move out but a lot of them they come back.

**BARNES:** And then you have your people that you've had forever...

**CALOMIRIS:** Oh my gosh, forever. Forever. I do. Like I say, now I got their children and their grandchildren...

**BARNES:** ...coming.

**CALOMIRIS:** ...coming. And some of them I had the other day. She used to live close to the Market. Years back and after the children, I don't know what happened, they bought sold this house and they left. And the other day, I saw them and said oh my gosh, where you been Nora? She said we move out but

now my son—he say he bought the—his close friend, whatever, that I don't know—and he's moving in and he said I'm going to sell the house and I'm going to buy house again to the Capitol Hill. I'm going to be back to you. [Laughs] I said, Okay! I was very happy. And now the two, three customers they told me that. They're moving back...

**BARNES:** They're moving back.

**CALOMIRIS:** ...Oh my gosh, they were thrilled to see each other, to hug and kiss. I said, my gosh, I miss my sister or my cousin. It was very good, very nice.

**BARNES:** What do you think will happen or will be different when you move back into the old building?

**CALOMIRIS:** I don't feel any different. I feel like I'm going back home. And wherever it is, people, the same people. And we have more coming from different parts of the country. And I feel great, like I said, I'm going to be back home and welcome everybody else around. [Laughs] I think it's wonderful.

**BARNES:** You look forward to that?

**CALOMIRIS:** I do. I do. Which we're very comfortable over here. I mean, no complaints. We're blessed. We're very lucky but the supporting around... like I say, like all of you wonderful people. All of you.

**BARNES:** Will you do anything different when you go back home? [Laughs]

**CALOMIRIS:** Um, no really. I'm going to be older, you know everyday getting older. [Laughs] That's the different part. I think... but I think I'm going to continue the same.

**BARNES:** Same merchandise. Same customers.

**CALOMIRIS:** Yes. Same customers. Same people. Same... we welcome everybody in the house.

**BARNES:** Just a different location.

**CALOMIRIS:** Just a different... right. Little temporary way, we had our vacation a little bit, now we're coming back.

**BARNES:** Oh, that's a wonderful way to look at it. You had a vacation. [Laughs]

**CALOMIRIS:** [Laughs] That's our vacation.

**BARNES:** And now back to work.

**CALOMIRIS:** Back to work, right. Uh huh. In the beautiful place. I hope it's going to be much prettier.

**BARNES:** Will you be in the same location?

**CALOMIRIS:** Same location. Same place. Uh huh.

**BARNES:** And all of the customers....

**CALOMIRIS:** All of the customers, all of the people, all of the merchants—they're going to be again in the same place they was before. So all of us.

**BARNES:** But it will be much nicer.

**CALOMIRIS:** Much nicer. Cleaner of course. No question about it. When something new, it's new. When I was young, I was young but now, you know. [Laughs] But still good.

**BARNES:** Have you had any difficulties with licenses or things like that since you have been in the new location?

**CALOMIRIS:** No, not necessarily. People, the government, the District—they all cooperate very good. All the people—we had the license you know not burnt up which something they have copies and they made it so we didn't have no problem. People was very, very nice. Very nice. District or whatever we have to go through—they're very helpful. Very helpful.

**BARNES:** And you don't think that anything will be different when you go back home?

**CALOMIRIS:** Like I say, they only thing it's going to be clean and new things around. New walls, new roof but to me it's a good, beautiful, old Eastern Market.

**BARNES:** I had a list of the original people who came to Eastern Market from, I guess, from K Street? That was on your husband's interview....

**CALOMIRIS:** Uh huh.

**BARNES:** ... and all of those people are still there. Maybe not the same people but the stands are still there.

**CALOMIRIS:** Yeah, the stands yes. Not the same people. They changed because some of them was old and some of them pass away and some of them they...

**BARNES:** ...they were sold.

**CALOMIRIS:** ...yeah, they were sold. Right.

**BARNES:** But other good people came in?

**CALOMIRIS:** Yeah! Beautiful. We've had no problem. Beautiful people. We communicate. We're cooking and eat each other's products what we have. They eat my fruits and vegetables and I eat their meats and [Laughs] and like I say, we cook, we feed each other and taste each others... [Laughs] No problem.

**BARNES:** That sounds like you have a picnic everyday.

**CALOMIRIS:** We do. We do. Sometimes, you know, we're laughing and have fun. And I think that's the way people should feel with their jobs, with whatever they're doing.

**BARNES:** Do you have any memories of special people that were customers of yours?

**CALOMIRIS:** Well I do have lots of memories. But if you ask me their names, forget it.

**BARNES:** Laughs

**CALOMIRIS:** [MS: Please check this following text, hard to transcribe] I've got lots of memories and lots of good people. And lots of, oh my gosh, pictures together. I have, how can I say, I had people, who once, they came, like I say I was very young. I never had any other experience in the world when I left my mother's home. We never went out of my country. We just take the boat and leave out. And when I came here, I didn't have nothing else of any other school, very little bit in my country. Over here it's nothing. No school at all. So he came to me and I was fixing a pile of fruits. Summer fruits. He say, "I like peaches can I buy one?" I say, "Sure, I'll find you." And he's trying to pick one. I say, "Do you want them to be nice?" and he said, "Yeah" I say. "To tell you the truth if you get this peach..." It was a little bruised. A little bit soft. I say, "It's bad in that one you pick" So he said, "How do you know?" I say, "Well, I'm telling you because I'm here and you asked me." Well okay I say, "I give it to you and you eat it and come back and tell me. And you can buy any other one you want but this [one] is for you." I don't know the guy. Very nice, handsome guy. And he left. In a few days, he came and he say, "You know something, I don't know if you remember, but the peach you gave me it was the most delicious peach that I ever have." I say, "You know, didn't I tell you?" and he say, "I had to get you this book." I said, "Ok, thank you very much." he said, "Open it." He marked something. In the book, I said to my husband, this very nice, beautiful fella he give me... he told me to read. He opened it up, he said, "You know something, he dedicated to you." He said Maria Calomiris. He write inside [the book] the peach you gave

him it was the most delicious and the way.... I said, "Oh my gosh, did he say that?" And all his books, he's had one—oh my gosh, I don't know. That's the way.

**BARNES:** Who was he?

**CALOMIRIS:** That's the name, I never—I had the book—but we left them...

**BARNES:** Oh, you left the...

**CALOMIRIS:** ...so my husband save a lot of things but those things I never forget. And we have the newspapers and we have a lot of people from other books. For pictures, paying one guy and once he took a picture. We don't know, he was a famous photographer. For White House, for Capitol and everything else. I know he was famous. He was coming lot of time. Lot of times. And I said, well how can I forget you? Oh my gosh, very nice. He said, "Okay, Mrs. Calomiris" but he move out of the Capitol Hill. So anyway, so I have those but I don't have any names or years. [Laughs] Because through my life...

**BARNES:** [Laughs] There were so many.

**CALOMIRIS:** So many. A lot of them, I mean, beautiful—senators, congressmen, doctors. Beautiful—all of them. Pictures.

**BARNES:** What was the neighborhood like on Seventh Street when you started working there... in the 60s?

**CALOMIRIS:** Well, like I said, it was always nice. Always, maybe become a little more, uh, old—the neighborhood, I cannot say, it was a little bit older but now very modern a lot of things. And they fix a lot of things. It's a little bit more prettier and a little more people maybe you know get together a little more. Not too support each other—to love each other. But me, I never had a problem. Never.

**BARNES:** When you came to the Market there was a Safeway across the street.

**CALOMIRIS:** Yeah, yeah. Of course, there was Safeway. Yes. Lot of times, a lot people, I have the children and they say, "No, mom, the bananas it was a little bit less cheaper" for example. We cannot compete those big stores. Never but the quality we have—it's a number one. So there were children come and I give them a banana. Oh my gosh, they loved it. Say, "How do you do that Mrs. Calomiris? My child likes your bananas and that's all." I said, "I don't know, I love the children" that's the problem. I said, the way I give it to them. So anyway, one day she came to me and said, "You know something, I have to tell you something. I bought bananas from the Safeway and they didn't like it. When I came to you and I buy from you, they like it, why?" I said, "Because it's better!" [Laughs]

**BARNES:** [Laughs]

**CALOMIRIS:** And lot of little things. [Laughs] Other things. Those things. It's going to be with me even when I'm going to be six feet under. I never forget those things. It was part of my... future and my life all those years.

**BARNES:** And people will never forget you or your husband. And all the kindnesses that you have done.

**CALOMIRIS:** I mean, it was like, like I say, lot of people. I said, "OK, go ahead, no problem," my husband too, he said "It's okay don't worry about. Pay me next time. Bring me next time. OK."

**BARNES:** Did you ever live on Capitol Hill?

**CALOMIRIS:** Myself, no. My husband, yes. So because when I came, like I say, he was out. They lived in Washington [a] lot of years because all his family and all his cousins. They are Washingtonians. They still are. Lot of them.

**BARNES:** But when you were married, you moved to Maryland?

**CALOMIRIS:** Yeah, he was living in Maryland, my husband.

**BARNES:** Oh, he was?

**CALOMIRIS:** Yeah, he was. But I have sisters and brothers—they living in Washington. One of them still lives in Washington. And all his relatives because they have real estate and they have a lot of buildings and very nice, very—people love them. They've got big family and they love them too.

**BARNES:** What kind of businesses are they in besides real estate?

**CALOMIRIS:** Well, It used to be again with the restaurants. It used to be—one of his uncles—they have vegetable business. And he has like I say, from his mother's side—that's a lot of not only Calomiris, it's also Kalavritinos too which they family and they still have some. But they move on and after they have, like I say, the lawyers and the doctors. And they all live all of them around here in Washington. Not in the neighbors but in the, you know, the Washingtonians.

**BARNES:** Not all on Capitol Hill but ...

**CALOMIRIS:** ...not on. Yeah, in Washington.

**BARNES:** ...in Washington.

**CALOMIRIS:** In Washington.

**BARNES:** Oh. [Pause] How is your business affected by the seasons of the year?

**CALOMIRIS:** Maybe summer, we a little bit, maybe I can say we're a little bit slow but we have all the, like I say, the coming of, maybe not local all of them but they come from South Carolina, so they grow outside and all the things from Georgia, from Pennsylvania, from you know a little farther but still we have all kinds of things [in] summer and all year around. And we keep busy, we keep busy.

**BARNES:** Even though on weekends when the vendors come in and set up on the street, does that affect your business?

**CALOMIRIS:** Well, it does. It does a little bit because they stay outside and it's not local. The groceries that's not local. They have few things. If everybody have—you know, they say—okay, every things from here. Okay, every things from here—but they're not. And the minute people—they think—they go and say oh yes, we're getting local stuff, we're getting [from] the farmers. Everything grows on the farm but what farm? Maybe one here, one little farther away but everything comes from the farms.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

TAPE 1/SIDE 2

**CALOMIRIS:** And of course, like I say, you know I was—of all of my sisters and everybody more going and more energy. [Laughs]

**BARNES:** You have more energy than your sisters.

**CALOMIRIS:** Of everyone of them I think I do. I never believe that but seems like I do.

**BARNES:** Do you still have family dinners and...

**CALOMIRIS:** Not like I used to because it's, you have growing families too. And also they also got sickness. One of my old sisters, she has Parkinson's and she's very sick. But her family trying to take care of her. And I have brother, he's not here close by and he's getting older and his family is in Massachusetts. He's not here. And I have another brother which he used to work in a Press Club. He was a bartender. He was good and he got his family, grandchildren and everybody so he's—and all of us, we got a little bit older. But I do, I do though with my family and grandchildren and everybody. I cook and get them together.

**BARNES:** What church do you attend? Is it on the Hill?

**CALOMIRIS:** Not on the Hill, no. It's St. Constantine. It's a Greek church. Which I grew up [in] and I still have the same church. So my husband when he was close by, he had the Peabody [School]. He used to say to me—you never went there. And a lot of people used to be around here with the churches and the neighbors but I was not here.

**BARNES:** And... you said that only one customer, in all of your years, did you have a problem with. Only one. That is amazing.

**CALOMIRIS:** I never had problem. And that people, I don't know they took them that way. Like I say, I repeat and I don't know why I didn't—I say people I don't speak English. And please, like I say to you, right, wrong, I don't mean anything. I don't know what you're talking about. But you know they got very upset and they left.

**BARNES:** ...And they left.

**CALOMIRIS:** ...Uh huh.

**BARNES:** ...But that is remarkable.

**CALOMIRIS:** All the other years, we never have any problems. Wonderful. We laughing, we eating, we this and that—supporting, loving.

**BARNES:** Where do you get your beautiful, sunny... attitude?

**CALOMIRIS:** Um, I don't know. I guess my mother's gift. I have very wonderful mother. Very wonderful.

**BARNES:** Did she ever live here?

**CALOMIRIS:** No. Huh uh.

**BARNES:** Did you go back to visit with her?

**CALOMIRIS:** Well, I went twice. And of course the first time, I took my children and my mother-in-law because she was from there—from the same place. I had her blessings—all the time. And I tried to take care of her until she was best way [I know how]. I say, 'Mom, to me [you are] the best mother.' She said, 'I don't have anything to give you, my child.' I said, 'Mom you give me your love, you give me your hugs, you give me your blessings all the time.' Everytime I was writing, in those days—we didn't have telephones to talk. Writing—and every time she said, 'I cannot write to you, my daughter.' But she put little flowers from the roses. She put them in the envelope and she write to me, 'You got my blessing,

your mom.’ Your efxoula which is Greek way—you know, more closer to you. And that really was the best. And before she got sick she had a little stroke—I went there just 15 days because I had family and couldn’t leave them. And she give me all the blessings in the world. And I said, ‘I’m going to come back to see you. I said, ‘Don’t worry about it, you want me to take you with me.’ She said, ‘No, not for me.’ Not for me to travel, you know to come that far. She said, ‘No, I cannot do that.’ I have another sister down there which take care of her. And she said when she died—for 24 hours I didn’t want to go—to see my mother dead. So I didn’t—went. But all those things, they give me courage.

**BARNES:** She gave you so much...

**CALOMIRIS:** She did.

**BARNES:** ...just giving you such a sunny disposition and love of people. She must have loved people like you do?

**CALOMIRIS:** She used to love everybody in her family and she told me when I left the country—like I say, I was teenager—and in my young years, she said to me, ‘Don’t go, don’t go away.’ I said, ‘Mom, I have to take care of you. When I go to America, I’m going to work and get you anything you want.’ We said, ‘I’m going to get you the Empire Building’—of course—you know, but that we thought we can do it. She said, ‘No, no, no, when you go there you have to work hard—and maybe you’re going to regret leaving because if you work hard you’re not going to have anything you think you want.’ I said, ‘Don’t worry, I’m going to have it, I’m going to have it and I’m going to take of you so you’re going to have chocolate and I’m going to send them the first banana seeds.’ I sent them from here—of course those days you know...

**BARNES:** Did they grow?

**CALOMIRIS:** They didn’t grow, no. They didn’t—those bananas—it was very expensive for us when we’re growing. But when I came here—nice customer—again, she said, ‘You know something, I’m going to travel to Greece.’ I say, ‘You do? You know something, I want to send a bunch of bananas to my mother.’ And I send the bananas. One of my relatives went to get it—I guess I give them—I don’t how I get them the place—and they went to get it and oh my gosh, see I had my blessings.

**BARNES:** But they couldn’t plant the seeds?

**CALOMIRIS:** No, they don’t grow in the country. They have to be the countries—how they grow things. The climate has to do with a lot of things. Like they don’t grow bananas over here, they don’t grow oranges over here. We got oranges down there but in California, yes, we have the same but those

things you know—and oh my gosh—I said people, when I came here I ate bananas. I never had bananas as a child. I didn't know any.

**BARNES:** Were there other fruits that you did have?

**CALOMIRIS:** We did. Well, we didn't have—of course—the climate over there that's not with pineapples and papayas and those things. But we had a lot of oranges, we had cherries, peaches, uh, olives of course—that's the country of the olives. Grapes—beautiful grapes...

**BARNES:** And wine.

**CALOMIRIS:** ...wine, of course. No question about it. We have apricots, all the other summer fruits. But some things, they don't grow in the country.

**BARNES:** Like grapefruit?

**CALOMIRIS:** Oh, no grapefruits we had...

**BARNES:** ...Oh, grapefruits you had!?

**CALOMIRIS:** Grapefruits we had—grapefruits because it's a citrus. All kinds of citrus. Mandarins. You know, beautiful—all the other things we have. But like pineapples, bananas and again, we didn't have any chocolate. Chocolate for us, it was very, very rare. Very rare. You have to be very rich to eat chocolate.

**BARNES:** So you sent your mom...

**CALOMIRIS:** When I came here, I said, 'Mom, you're going to have chocolate.' So I made a package and I put some chocolate. I said, 'Mom, you're going to eat as many chocolates as you want.' So I put a little package and "pshhht" there and give to the neighborhood. Because, you know, the neighbors... they didn't have any of that. I say, you have to give the children, my friends, I say you're going to give them because I sent it to you.

**BARNES:** What a lovely gift.

**CALOMIRIS:** Oh my gosh, history.

**BARNES:** But she gave you so much too.

**CALOMIRIS:** She did.

**BARNES:** Yes.

**CALOMIRIS:** She did. She did. And I have, like I say, I have my clean heart. And I have my clean—I say, oh my mother—oh how wonderful she was. And, of course, like I say, the families—and the people around here—I didn't have my mother here but I had so many other people—you know like my mother to me—and my aunts, my you know...

**BARNES:** And your mother-in-law.

**CALOMIRIS:** My mother-in-law, she was very good—very good—I didn't have no problem.

**BARNES:** And she was...she was from Sparta also?

**CALOMIRIS:** She was from Sparta also. Right. But she came here—she had brothers in New York. And she told me very good stories in New York. And all the Broadway—she remembered all these beautiful things. So and she was very good, very kind, but of course I was good to her too.

**BARNES:** That's the way it works, isn't it?

**CALOMIRIS:** That's right, yes. I say, 'Come on mom, I'm going to cook—come on let's eat.' and she said, 'Okay, I'm going to fix my hair but let's fix—I say, okay, let's put color. So she wants to be now me but I don't want to paint my hair. You know I don't want to—but she said, 'No me, I have to do it.' That's the way she was. She said, 'I have to dye it and don't forget to fix my hair.' [Laughs] I say, okay, if you want. [Laughs]

**BARNES:** Everyone has...

**CALOMIRIS:** their own...

**BARNES:** ...different pride...

**CALOMIRIS:** ...right...

**BARNES:** ...and for her it was dyeing her hair...

**CALOMIRIS:** ...right...

**BARNES:** I can't imagine you with dyed hair.

**CALOMIRIS:** No. [Laughs] Me, no. [Laughs] I say, no, my hair I not dye. I say, that's okay, I'm getting old, I'm getting old. I think I'm very happy. I'm living. [Laughs] I say, no, no, not me. [Laughs]

**BARNES:** If you had one thing that you would want everyone to know about Maria, what would it be?

**CALOMIRIS:** Oh, sigh, I hope everybody remember me the way I am. And I think I tried to love, to care for everybody. And that's I think—that's all matters to me.

**BARNES:** The love that you give and the love that you receive.

**CALOMIRIS:** That's it. And I think I'm so happy.

**BARNES:** We're all so happy to have you at the Market.

**CALOMIRIS:** Thank you.

**BARNES:** We all miss Leon [ed: her husband Chris]. And we wish him well...

**CALOMIRIS:** Thank you.

**BARNES:** ...and the few times he can come we hope we get to see him.

**CALOMIRIS:** Thank you and he feels that way too.

**BARNES:** And all the best to you, always. And it will be wonderful to see you back in your home!

**CALOMIRIS:** Yes.

**BARNES:** Which is your home away from home. But it really is your home at Eastern Market and you're such a part of that and we appreciate so much your sharing your thoughts about Eastern Market and all of your wonderful customers, as you call them "your beautiful customers"...

**CALOMIRIS:** Oh, yeah.

**BARNES:** ...and they are manifold. And I'm sure when they read this online, they will know who they are. So again, you have shared with us, thank you so very much.

**CALOMIRIS:** I'm very happy. I'm very happy and blessed, I know, all of you and we going to wait to see each other...in our home, all of us. We'll be together.

**BARNES:** Thank you again.

END OF INTERVIEW