

The Peale, Baltimore

Out of the Blocks Storytelling Series

Recorded by Aaron Henkin; Photographs and Music by Wendel Patrick

Produced for the *Out of the Blocks* website, created by the Peale, <https://ootb.thepeale.org/>

Out of the Blocks is supported by PRX and produced with grant funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Cohen Opportunity Fund, The Hoffberger Foundation, Patricia and Mark Joseph, The Shelter Foundation, The Kenneth S Battye Charitable Trust, The Sana and Andy Brooks Family Fund, The Muse Web Foundation, and the William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund, creator of the Baker Artist Portfolios



Spiro (00:00):

My name is Spiros Asmenios. I'm at 4711 Eastern Avenue, which is the Greek Village Bakery and Coffee Shop. My father was Greek. He was born here though. His grandfather was born in Greece in Ios. But I never spoke Greek because my mom was a Polack for real, and she raised us while my dad worked down in Sparrows Point. But back in like '91, he needed eight more hours for full pension and he was down there working, and he got killed on the job accidentally.

Interviewer (00:32):

He was eight hours away from retirement?

Spiros (00:35):

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Correct. Full pension, retirement, eight hours. And it happened on Memorial Day weekend in 1991, May 28th. He was supposedly on a scaffold. They were repairing something. Yeah, I guess there was grease on a scaffold is what they said. And he slipped on the grease and fell into a pit head first, 20 feet, so he went into cardiac arrest soon as he hit the ground. So by the time the chopper got there, he went into cardiac arrest again. And he was on a machine, and my mom didn't want to remember seeing him like that on a machine. So they asked her if she wanted it shut down because he was brain dead, bottom line. And she said, "Yeah, shut it off." They said he was never going to come out of it, so she shut it down. Life changes. You just got to stay strong with it.

I used to paint and all that stuff, but I hurt my arm so now I can't paint no more. I was a union painter. I did all that, climb steel. But I fell off a ladder when I was young, and I ain't got no muscle in my left bicep. I have no muscle, so now I can't use this arm. And I'm left-handed, so that makes it even worse. So now I'm just treading water, bottom line. Living life, treading water.