**Janet:** Okay, today is November 12, 1995 and I'm here at the Armenian Nursing Home in Jamaica Plain, part Massachusetts and I'm with Sarah Achmajkian who came here from Turkey.

We're not sure exactly what that year was but you were about 8--

**Sarah:** I think it was in May.

**Janet:** May.

**Sarah:** Yeah, sure that month. I take the boat to come to this country with the Leviathan.

**Janet:** Okay and you came on the Leviathan. Well, I'm going to see if I can look at the records here and maybe they have the idea of when--

**Sarah:** Excuse me, also I worked for [unclear 00:00:54] for a nursing home. I was in 72.

**Janet:** Ooh good. Okay, well let’s start at the beginning when you were first born. You were born in Turkey.

**Sarah:** Yes.

**Janet:** And what was the name of the town?

**Sarah:** Kayseri.

**Janet:** Kayseri.

**Sarah:** Harput Kayseri. That’s like a town close to the capital, half a mile from capital.

**Janet:**  Okay, and did you live in Kayseri until you came to the United States?

**Sarah:** No, that’s time just the baby sit that’s where they saved. I couldn't do anything just the baby sit, that’s why they saved me.

**Janet:** They saved you because you could baby sit.

**Sarah:** Yeah, I couldn't do more than that.

**Janet:** Yeah, do you remember your childhood before the genocide when you were growing up, a little girl growing up. Do you remember that?

**Sarah:** No, I was grown and no child, nothing. My child was born in this country.

**Janet:** No, I mean when you were a child. When you were a little girl. Do you remember what your life was like in Turkey when you were a little girl?

**Sarah:** No, I didn’t any.

**Janet:** Okay, but you do remember the genocide?

**Sarah:** Yeah, they killed.

**Janet:** They killed and what do you remember? What did you see?

**Sarah:** I remember I heard my mother, she was dying in the mountain and she asked war and one day all the friend went and hardly find the war, one day come and take, dump them in the field you know top of the hill [unclear 00:02:47].

So even she didn't have a [unclear 00:02:53] and my two brothers they were so hungry they won't ask [unclear 00:03:00] to kill them too. Two brothers, the youngest one and two sisters. My mother she couldn't take care of, she left them in the bush- 2 years old and 5 years old. Turks against the Jesus.

**Janet:** Tell why you were saved.

**Sarah:** The baby sit.

**Janet:** Can you talk about that, what did you have to do? How did it happen that you got to baby sit?

**Sarah:** Well, they see I can able to do it, little girl. They can't hide too big one, they've married. I was too young just good enough for baby sit that’s why they saved me [chuckle].

**Janet:** And who did you baby sit for?

**Sarah:** Turk, no Armenian. They take our everything and they push us out, that’s the way they did. They take everything, even the ammunition, even the kitchen knife. They take them away so they can't fight back. So that’s the way but I was good enough for baby sit, they saved me. When they go visit somebody and I have to carry the baby with [unclear 00:04:50], diarrhea and I have to wipe them up and things like that. That’s why they saved me.

**Janet:** And how did they treat you?

**Sarah:** Well, not too good and then sometimes alright sometimes.

**Janet:** How long did you baby sit? For how many years?

**Sarah:** About until I come to this country.

**Janet:** Was that a long time?

**Sarah:** No, not much but 6-7 years like that, 7 not that much so I come this country.

**Janet:** Did you have many Armenian friends when you were babysitting?

**Sarah:** Not much, they killed them.

**Janet:**  Were there any others left besides you?

**Sarah:** No, nobody from my family or any neighbor or anything like that. Nobody but me. They'd killed already, [unclear 00:05:50] because first time they started, some good Turks saved a few like they saved me for baby and second time he did so nobody make sure, nobody left. So that’s the way he did.

**Janet:** So did you know any good Turks? Did you know any?

**Sarah:** That Turk was at least good saved me for babysitting that’s why. Some of them they helped. that’s why they did second time in case some good Turk helped them out and they did second time so make sure [unclear 00:06:42]. The dead I remember alright, that I remember alright.

**Janet:** So you took care of one baby?

**Sarah:** Yeah, one baby. When they go visit each other, they have no carriage there that’s why make sure somebody has to carry the baby with them if they go to the bath house or visit or their friends.

**Janet:** And did you have any other duties or any other things you had to do besides watching the baby?

**Sarah:** House work.

**Janet:** Housework.

**Sarah:** Yeah, cleaned the house or anything. After do the baby and still after do work. I was doing much as I can.

**Janet:** Do you remember the name of the person who you were babysitting for?

**Sarah:** Oh big shot. I remember [unclear 00:07:54]. That’s big shot.

**Janet:** What did he do? What did that big shot do for a living?

**Sarah:** Ooh, he was in the government chart, whole family was in the government chart.

**Janet:** So how was it decided that you would come to this country?

**Sarah:** One Armenian boy married with me and he come first. His aunt was here living Boston, Back Bay. So the aunt nieces life and ride with, he brings in this country and stayed 5 years so he can be citizen and then--

**Janet:** He sents for you? He sent for you.

**Sarah:** Yeah.

**Janet:** How did you know your husband? How did you know him?

**Sarah:** We meet there. Some Armenian woman introduced, said, "Nice little girl, she had nobody," and my husband was like me and also his families are killed.

**Janet:** No, why was your husband saved? Why didn't he get killed too? How come he was alive?

**Sarah:** Somebody saved him too to work.

**Janet:** What did he do for work when he was there?

**Sarah:** Not much after the baby sit I do those things and sweep the floor, whatever I can do. Whatever they say do.

**Janet:** Ahaa, and how about your husband. What was he doing?

**Sarah:** My husband was like same as I do.

**Janet:** He was babysitting and cleaning?

**Sarah:** No babysitting. He was [unclear 00:10:18] things so the grass and thing like that. Well man.

**Janet:** I see. What was your husband's name?

**Sarah:** [unclear 00:10:33].

**Janet:** And that’s Achmajkian?

**Sarah:** Yes.

**Janet:** So he came here to his aunt in Back bay and then he became a citizen.

**Sarah:** Excuse me, that aunt his son was doctor, I think war time hospital.

**Janet:** War time hospital, I see.

**Sarah:** Doctor Peter Titus, just he have a sister left. When he died he was a [unclear 00:11:18], he died and his mother died, father died all those sister died just one sister left.

**Janet:** I see. So after he became a citizen he sent for you to come to this country.

**Sarah:** Yes and they bring good and you he come to citizen and I come, [unclear 00:11:38] ride me he was waiting and then he picked me up.

**Janet:**  Okay, well tell me first about leaving, leaving the family you were babysitting for. What was that like when you left?

**Sarah:** I don't know not much good.

**Janet:** So how did you go? How did you go from the town where you were to the port to get the ship?

**Sarah:** Some poor Turk transferred the people that time, whenever left they want to move with come to Syria and of course Syria was good to open the Turk, so we can survive from there. That’s we're appreciative, Syria, Halep Syria. If it didn't open the Turk, we can't move, that’s true.

**Janet:** So you went to Syria first?

**Sarah:** From our country, we went to Syria Halep, from Syria we moved to France, France to here.

**Janet:** Ahaa, as soon as you got to France, did you get on the ship?

**Sarah:** No, I stayed there 2 years until my husband come and see visit. He come before me. He just bring so he can be citizen so he can able to bring me.

**Janet:** Where did you live in France?

**Sarah:** Just a lot of apartments, friend’s lot of apartments.

**Janet:** What town? Do you remember what city or town?

**Sarah:** Marseille, France. Our station is there. Marseille France has a beautiful station. When you get up, restaurant is there, all those lights, there's steps. It’s really [unclear 00:13:52]. The Marseille France.

**Janet:**  Now, how did you have money to stay in Marseille France for 2 years?

**Sarah:** My father had property. After [unclear 00:14:11] they rented them they gave me that money and of course it wasn't those Turkish family I live. There was a big shot tycoon, I couldn’t do it but they helped me give my property the rent and [unclear 00:14:31] so I had that money.

**Janet:** So the big shot, the Turk. He arranged for you to get money of rent from your father's property?

**Sarah:** Yeah, it wasn't that I couldn't do it.

**Janet:** So then he gave you that money for you to go.

**Sarah:** Yeah, after they help me to come to France, my husband family.

**Janet:** And when you were in Marseille, were there are other people- Armenian people who are also there?

**Sarah:** Lot of Armenian people was there, France lot of Armenian people. Even the bought I had same friends in the boat. I had friends to visit and every time we was visiting each other.

**Janet:** So were you travelling alone?

**Sarah:** No, I didn't [unclear 00:15:36] just we were back and forth work. Sometime was a boat was coming, I was working night time even come home late because we have to finish the laundry, so boat going to move. France I work, Syria no work.

**Janet:** And how long were you in Syria?

**Sarah:** A year.

**Janet:** Okay and you didn't work in Syria but then you worked in Marseille.

**Sarah:** No work there.

**Janet:** You worked in a laundry?

**Sarah:** I worked the laundry yeah, at whatever time I get, I worked the laundry.

**Janet:** And when you travelled to France from Syria, were there other Armenian people travelling with you?

**Sarah:** Yeah, was a lot of them with us. A lot of friends we come together same boat.

**Janet:** What do you remember about the voyage on the Leviathan on the ship? What do you remember?

**Sarah:** Ship was big ship and Leviathan, that’s the [unclear 00:17:05], that’s what they were saying in [unclear 00:17:11]. I take the boat from [unclear 00:17:17] to Ellis Island.

**Janet:** And when you were on the ship, what kind of memories do you have about the ship?

**Sarah:** Friends [unclear 00:17:38] some kind of trouble but the Leviathan no trouble. Take from [unclear 00:17:48] friends and come to this Ellis Island right away. My husband was there pick me up.

**Janet:** Did you see the statue of Liberty when you came in?

**Sarah:** Yes and it was beautiful. It’s beautiful. Statue was beautiful, really something.

**Janet:** What do you remember about Ellis Island?

**Sarah:** Ellis Island is big big place and nice place too.

**Janet:** Did you get examined there?

**Sarah:** No, I was citizen. They didn't give no trouble nothing. Right away with my husband we came to Back Bay.

**Janet:** And what was it like to see your husband at Ellis Island?

**Sarah:** Oh it was a pleasure, was so happy.

**Janet:** So when you left Ellis Island with your husband, how did you get to Back Bay?

**Sarah:** He bring the [unclear 00:19:02].

**Janet:** Did he have a car or did you go by the train?

**Sarah:** No, he didn't have a car. We go by I suppose some kind of....

**Janet:** Do you remember those first few days and weeks when you were in this country? Any of the things that you saw that were new to you [chuckle]?

**Sarah:** My aunt was so good you know there was in the Back Bay because that Back Bay before was nice place and so visit some other people comfortable, would visit each other and that’s it.

**Janet:** And then did you stay with your aunt, you and your husband?

**Sarah:** Yeah, I stay a little while until we're able to make money.

**Janet:** What was your husband doing for work when he was here?

**Sarah:** He was a mechanist [unclear 00:20:07] mechanist, auto mobile. He can take old car and buy a new motor that cheap and make that car brand new. That was [unclear 00:20:30] make him able to do it.

**Janet:** Then did you work as well?

**Sarah:** After I started, yeah.

**Janet:** And what did you do?

**Sarah:** Just cleaning and things like that, not much.

**Janet:** Then did you have children?

**Sarah:** Yeah, I had two sons, that’s when they were going to the army. One of them was in Germany and the other one was in Korean War and that’s the one did like a president Kennedy did but after he retired 30 years after, he had a heart attack and died because today is [unclear 00:21:17]. It’s very sad for me.

**Janet:** What were your sons’ names?

**Sarah:** Joseph.

**Janet:** Joseph and the other one?

**Sarah:** Jackie.

**Janet:** So did you and your husband settle in Back Bay or where did you live?

**Sarah:** No, after we buy our own house Watertown.

**Janet:** Watertown, because you told me this before we put the tape on but tell me about your son going into the service.

**Sarah:** He went to the service 4 years without joining and that’s [unclear 00:22:05] government job and he did what the president Kennedy say.

**Janet:** What was that?

**Sarah:** He says, "Do wait for, see what you contribute to you. You do what you can do for your country." That’s what he done and they appreciate, even he died and now he put a stone and president Bush put on and the defeat [unclear 00:22:38] and of course we got pictures two sons they're side by side and then the flag they deliver whatever war did in honor them. That’s the paper we got the picture.

**Janet:** So your son was honored for being in the service.

**Sarah:** Yes, after he retired, a heart attack.

**Janet:** When you look back on your life of coming to this country, how do you feel about it?

**Sarah:** It was a pleasure to come. I was so happy because nobody left nobody left.

**Janet:** What can you think of that you have done in your lifetime that makes you feel proud?

**Sarah:** Not much just when I was new here. John Adams- when I was working in a nursing home President’s John Adams cousin was there, every time I go to just visit after work just for natural thing she was saying, I did nothing. You visit us pleasantly come on we sit down and they start to give me good [unclear 00:24:26].

"You know Sarah, if you work , if you're children they will help you, they will like you before, don't get mad that’s the thing- change." When I go and get up says, "Everything is alright, your visit was pleasant to me, don't forget to come again."

**Janet:** So you visited in the nursing home?

**Sarah:** Yeah, I was working in the nursing home.

**Janet:** How long did you work in the nursing home?

**Sarah:** I don't know, [unclear 00:25:06].

**Janet:** Was this after your boys were grown up?

**Sarah:** I come this country.

**Janet:** Ooh, when you first came.

**Sarah:** So that’s the way. She was Mrs. Adams. She was a smart woman. She was making a doll and thing like that. She was little [unclear 00:25:33] but she was smart.

**Janet:** So that gave you a lot of pleasure.

**Sarah:** And also she had somebody in [unclear 00:25:43] and he died. Cousin or whatever they left some money and he left, he went 3 months there, he sailed and he come this country. She was [unclear 00:26:00]. Mrs. Adams.

**Janet:** Have you been a religious person in your life?

**Sarah:** No.

**Janet:** Not particularly. How about this time and being here in the home here. How do you like this?

**Sarah:** I like it because it is no good back at the [unclear 00:26:23], I'm alright, I won't expect too much so.

**Janet:** So you have friends here?

**Sarah:** Yeah, everybody not bad to me. They say hello, they ask me and I ask them. I'm satisfied anyway, I won't expect too much.

**Janet:** Is there anything else you can think of about life in this country that you want to say?

**Sarah:** No, not much.

**Janet:** Well, it’s been a very big pleasure for me to talk with you, thank you so much.

**Sarah:** And the pleasure was to me to talk to you. I mean I was the one lucky, thank you a million.

**Janet:** Thank you, I've been speaking with Sarah Achmajkian.

**Sarah:** Yeah, that’s a translated baker.

**Janet:** It means baker in English and you started out in Turkey, with that you lived in Syria and then you lived in France before you came.

**Sarah:** Yeah, Marseille France.

**Janet:** And today is November 12, 1995 and you think that you're around in your 90s somewhere.

**Sarah:** Yeah.

**Janet:** We have to see if we can find that out. Okay, this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and thank you I'm signing off.