**Paul:** Good afternoon. This is Paul Seacrest for the National Park Service. Today is Wednesday, July 6th, 1994. This is considered Albany? Yes. This is Albany proper. I’m in Albany, New York with Alice Hakimian. Mrs. Hakimian was born in Turkey, correct? You came to this country in 1910.

**Alice:** It was between five and six months that we came here.

**Paul:** What year was it that you came?

**Alice:** I wouldn’t know what year it is. I wouldn’t know that.

**Harry:** [Foreign language 00:00:38].

**Alice:** [Foreign language 00:00:43].

**Harry:** [Foreign language 00:00:44], 1910.

**Alice:** 1909, not what he says.

**Paul:** Let me also say for sake of the tape that Mrs. Hakimian’s son, Harry is with us and that we will try to speak English as often as possible but we may slip in and out of Armenian. Mrs. Hakimian, how old were you when came to this country?

**Alice:** This country … I was between five and six years old.

**Paul:** When is your birth date?

**Alice:** My birthday is May …

**Harry:** 29th.

**Alice:** 29th, is it? May 29th.

**Paul:** What year?

**Harry:** 1904.

**Alice:** I think its next month.

**Harry:** 1904.

**Alice:** Huh?

**Harry:** 1904.

**Alice:** 1906.

**Harry:** Four.

**Alice:** Next month.

**Paul:** 1904 you were born?

**Alice:** I don’t know. That much I don’t know.

**Paul:** Harry says it was 1904, May 6th.

**Harry:** May 29th.

**Paul:** May 29th. Harry, when you do speak, use your full voice so it does pick up on the microphone.

**Harry:** Sure.

**Paul:** Where in Turkey were you born?

**Alice:** I was born not near the Turkey, Turks. I don’t know it, but sometimes when my mother used to tell the people and all. That’s all I know. We weren’t in with the Turks. They were out of sight around us.

**Paul:** It was all Armenians where you lived. What was the name of the village or the town?

**Alice:** I wouldn’t know.

**Harry:** Aintab, Turkey.

**Paul:** Aintab.

**Alice:** The Aintab, yeah.

**Paul:** What do you remember about that village when you were a little girl?

**Alice:** Well, the only thing I remember because we left there and we were left on the road almost nine to 10 months. There is nothing in my mind if you’re four years old or not quite four. You can’t have too much in your mind till now.

**Harry:** Why don’t you explain to him the kind of houses that you lived in?

**Alice:** Huh?

**Harry:** The kind of house that you lived in, you remember that.

**Alice:** Now we had … My grandfather is the building.

**Paul:** He used to build houses.

**Alice:** He used to build houses. Then he came to America before us. The driveway is a long driveway [inaudible 00:03:36] in the yard. You play there with the pant holes and this and that. All kids were only four years old … That’s all.

**Paul:** What did the house look like?

**Alice:** House?

**Paul:** Yes. What did the houses look like?

**Alice:** The houses? You go up quite a bit of stairs. There is a house right there when you get up and then there is stairs you got to get in there. There is one down the yard. There are four brothers and they had their houses there but half of them had come here, see.

**Paul:** Did the house have a garden?

**Alice:** No. I only remember this. My uncle was very, very sick. No matter what they did, he wouldn’t open his eyes. What they did, they put him on the yard. They don’t have quilts and all like us. We have the woman things, pieces, and they put in some material and then they sold it. They put two or three of those in the yard and put my uncle there. They’d at least maybe from the air or something … He’ll talk and how many days after he start to say small words. This I don’t know because I was very small but when they told the other people when we came here to America that’s where I learned a few words.

**Paul:** What was your father’s name?

**Alice:** My father’s name was Harry Hakimian.

**Harry:** The same.

**Paul:** What was his name in Armenian? What was his—?

**Alice:** Artin.

**Paul:** How do you spell that?

**Harry:** A-R-T-I-N.

**Paul:** A-R-T-I-N, Artin Hakimian. What was your mother’s name?

**Alice:** My mother’s name was [inaudible 00:06:14].

**Harry:** I’m sorry, Rebecca.

**Paul:** Your mother’s name was Rebecca. What was the Armenian?

**Harry:** Rebecca. They would say, Rebecca.

**Paul:** Spelled the same way.

**Harry:** Same way.

**Paul:** What was her maiden name? What was your mom’s name before she was married?

**Alice:** I don’t know that. It’s not like America …. The Armenia is not like that. It was very old. You can’t remember anything. They don’t do these kinds of talks. They came to Americans. They are Americans. They talk nice and all.

**Paul:** What did your father do for a living in Turkey?

**Alice:** My father’s?

**Paul:** What did he do for a living?

**Alice:** My father used to build homes.

**Paul:** That was like your grandfather.

**Alice:** He was the only one. One used to come and say to the squad, “We may do this.” He’ll do that. Then the other one, he’ll put someone there about five or six different places.

**Paul:** What was your father like as a person? What was his personality like?

**Alice:** Very good. He did help people. He used to take me on his [inaudible 00:07:43]. I was only two or three years old … Play with me. He was a very good man.

**Paul:** Let me ask you the same question about your mother. What was her personality like?

**Alice:** My mother, you see over there, the boy if he sees the woman, they don’t go together. He saw my mother and he wanted my mother. He came home and told him, “Go over there and get her, and we’ll have a wedding here.” They did. He asked my mother. My mother says, “You people know, I don’t know.” They are married. She is only 16 years old. They got married.

**Paul:** How many children did they have?

**Alice:** They had nine children.

**Paul:** Did all nine live?

**Alice:** No, a couple died there in Aintab. We came to America. There is only four living now here in America. All the rest, they got some sickness and all. They died.

**Paul:** Do you remember your grandparents in Turkey? Were they living?

**Alice:** Grandpa?

**Paul:** You’re grandparents.

**Alice:** No, I don’t know. I was very small. I came [inaudible 00:09:22] Aintab when I was only four years old. Then we came …

**Harry:** Alexandria.

**Alice:** We came there. They made [inaudible 00:09:36]. They’re very fussy at that time. They pulled me aside and he says, “You can’t go.” My father said, “How can I go? I’ll go.” My rightful trying cleaned her eyes and did go to a doctor. Then I’ll call my wife. That’s the way they came.

**Paul:** Your father actually got here before you did. Do you remember what people ate in Turkey? What kind of food did people eat in Turkey?

**Alice:** I don’t know. It’s funny. I don’t know. I was only four years old when I got out of there. It’s not like America, everything around, no.

**Paul:** Why did your family leave? Why did they want to come to America?

**Alice:** You see the Turks were doing a lot of damage. They were killing the Armenians. The head office couldn’t do nothing with them, see. They always killed them. That’s why everyone practically all came to America.

**Paul:** You said that in your town all the Armenians lived together and the Turks were on the outside.

**Alice:** It’s a big place like here and way five or six [inaudible 00:11:14]. It’s got to be big. They all got together. That’s all.

**Paul:** Did you have any family in America before your father came over?

**Alice:** No. My father came alone and then he starts working and then sent some money down, and we came.

**Paul:** Where did your father work when he first came to this country?

**Alice:** I don’t know. He used to go work … I think he used to do the building. That was his job. He used to do a lot in the old country.

**Paul:** When he came to America first, did he stay in New York City?

**Alice:** No.

**Paul:** Did he come up here to the Albany area?

**Alice:** No, he didn’t stay in New York City. Where was it that he stayed?

**Harry:** Troy [inaudible 00:12:11].

**Alice:** Huh?

**Harry:** Did he come to Troy.

**Alice:** That’s where he came.

**Harry:** I think they settled in Troy.

**Alice:** Very small here it was. He came here and I don’t know how many months after. He had to make some money and he sent it down to us and we came.

**Paul:** Do you remember anything of the trip from Turkey to Alexandria?

**Alice:** I wouldn’t because how old am I to know that.

**Paul:** How long did you stay in Alexandria?

**Alice:** We had to stay until my father got some money and sent it down. I thought five, or six, or seven months like that.

**Paul:** Did your mother ever talk about that experience of being in Alexandria and what that was like?

**Alice:** No, she never said. The elderly ones, maybe they talked together but they never said any to a four or five year old kid.

**Paul:** How many children does your mother have at this point when you were in Alexandria?

**Alice:** She had nine children and now she has four. They all little by little … The little ones died quicker, but two older ones died. They got very sick and they died in the hospital.

**Paul:** In this country?

**Alice:** In Troy.

**Paul:** Once they were here.

**Alice:** That’s where we came to Troy.

**Harry:** If you repeat that question slower to her I think she’ll understand. You want to know how many was in Alexandria.

**Paul:** When your mother was getting ready to come to America, how many of children are with her?

**Alice:** It was one, two … The boy died and the other boy lived and me. But when we came to America, the other boy died too. My mother only had five girls. One of them died about 12 or 15 years ago.

**Paul:** You said that your father’s name was Harry Hakimian. Did you marry a Hakimian?

**Alice:** No.

**Harry:** She did. My father’s name was Hakimian. Her father’s name should be Harry Esaian, not Hakimian.

**Paul:** Your last name before you were married was …

**Harry:** Esaian.

**Paul:** Esaian. How do you spell that?

**Harry:** E-S-A-I-A-N.

**Paul:** E-S-A-I-A-N, Esaian and then you married Hakimian.

**Harry:** Right.

**Paul:** Harry, I should ask you, are there any stories that you’d like to prompt to your mother to tell before we get out of Europe that you can think of?

**Harry:** Coming across you mean.

**Paul:** We haven’t gotten on the ship yet, but there is anything that …

**Harry:** They always used to … In their stories that she used to tell when she was a lot younger, we could understand that mostly all the people lived a very comfortable life, middle class comfortable life with people when there wasn’t any of these uprisings which the Turks had.

Naturally, mostly all the people that were running the Turkish government were Armenian people for the simple reason that the Turks were a backward nation of people. You got to remember here that we have Christians sprinkled in with Muslims, same type of a problem that’s going on over in the Middle East again. It doesn’t seem like it will ever end.

They used to have, for instance, a bakery. They had things at the bakery. They had bakery shops like we have. They had different kinds of weaving shops like we have. A lot of things were made by hand back in those days. For the predominant animal they had was a donkey instead of a horse because of the Terrain.

**Paul:** Do you remember the bakery in Turkey?

**Harry:** Pa would go and order stuff and then they’d send it to the house. Remember your father would go and order things and then they’d send it to the house. That’s the way it was done. They had [crosstalk 00:16:50].

**Alice:** [inaudible 00:16:51] didn’t do no cookery in the house because there is no gas, but sometimes they had a stove like that in the yard. They burned that and they’d make some pilaf.

**Paul:** Some what?

**Alice:** Pilaf.

**Harry:** Pilaf is wheat. They call it ulaf now.

**Alice:** Also they can’t do anything. In the morning, when my father’s gone, he will go in the place and say, “Send this to my wife.” That’s it.

**Paul:** Is Turkey a warm country? Is it warm there?

**Alice:** It’s not too warm. It’s not too cold.

**Paul:** Does it snow in Turkey?

**Alice:** I think so.

**Harry:** Northern part of Turkey, it does.

**Alice:** Because I don’t know too much about it.

**Paul:** You were just a little girl.

**Alice:** Yeah, four years old, three years old.

**Paul:** You and your mother and two brothers I believe were in Alexandria waiting to come to America. Your father sent you the money so that you could get out of Alexandria. Where did you go when you left Alexandria?

**Alice:** I really don’t know.

**Paul:** Is that where you got the ship to come to America?

**Alice:** You got to get another ship I think, another kind of ship. That time I don’t know much … Four or five years old.

**Harry:** Why don’t you explain the love that you had that your father had given you was your cover for sleeping and how the water used to come on the ship and then you used to dry out the …

**Alice:** You see when we are going to come to the America. The ship has got three places. The first place when the ship is coming, all the water is coming in there. I used to be wet like anything because we couldn’t go any higher. That’s higher price. That’s what they used to put a lot of things on us or cover us up. Some of us used to get sick. That’s the way we came.

**Paul:** Do you remember what the name of the ship was?

**Alice:** No, I can’t.

**Paul:** Do you remember if it was a long boat ride before you got to America? Do you remember how long it took to get to America?

**Alice:** I couldn’t go nowhere. I could see that we were always scared. We were always in a bunch like this. We can’t go nowhere. Oh my God, no, even though if it was, I wouldn’t know. I was too small.

**Harry:** I think their ship docked in Liverpool, England because they stayed there for quite some time and they didn’t quite like the fog and the mist in England. I think from there was the next journey to America.

**Paul:** Do you remember coming into New York?

**Alice:** No. I don’t know any of those things. Only a little kid hasn’t seen anything. How am I going to know? I don’t know. I wouldn’t any. I didn’t know anything. My father even came … You see my father had mustache. One day his friend says, “Come on, let’s go in and have our face cleaned.”

He went in there to get my father’s thing off. He didn’t like that on there. He went in there and they sat down and then he said it in American. The man knew it. He told him … The man went like that. My father can’t keep halfway this side and that side. They were telling me and I sometimes knew … Learned things. That’s all I know.

**Paul:** Do you know if your father came to New York to meet you when you arrived?

**Alice:** No.

**Paul:** What’s the first thing that you remember after you got to America?

**Alice:** To America … We got off the boat, ship. It was winter, all the things this high.

**Paul:** The snow?

**Alice:** We haven’t gotten all heavy clothes. My sister was … There was a boy between. He died and next was my sister. The man, the nice man, he put my hand in his pocket then the other hand he wrapped some things so I wouldn’t be so cold. That time was very cold. He brought us up to the Armenian house and then he went. In the morning my father came. I didn’t see my father. My father called me. I wouldn’t go because he looked funny without the … I wouldn’t go. My father starts to cry. This was it all. That’s all I know.

**Paul:** Where did you live? Where did your father take you to live?

**Alice:** For a couple of days, for a couple of weeks the lady said, “They are all small house.” They used to put the things on the floor, heavy things and you’d sleep on there. That’s what we did. Later on, year by year, they learned a lot. They used to build these things, whatever needs. They used to do it all.

**Paul:** Did they put you in school?

**Alice:** They put me in school, but the teacher said we can’t have her because they say something I just stay there and look at them. I don’t understand nothing, so for a couple of years, I couldn’t go to school.

**Paul:** How did you eventually learn English?

**Alice:** Mmh?

**Paul:** How did you learn English?

**Alice:** How did I learn? We used to go to school and then some of the children were before us. They came, they learned. We used to say it to one another and play. That’s all.

**Paul:** What about your mother and father? Could they speak English?

**Alice:** My father could hardly speak English. My mother never spoke English. When she went downtown to buy anything, she look at it, give the money, and that’s it.

**Paul:** Did your mother like being in America?

**Alice:** Oh yeah. She loved it because there was no more killing the Turks.

**Paul:** When you were here in Troy … I assume this is that you were talking about. When you were in Troy, did you or did any of your family ever experience any kind of prejudice because you were Armenian? Did anyone make fun of you because you were a foreigner?

**Alice:** They used to make fun of us, but we used to run back home or if the school is near, we’ll run there. That’s the only way. They used to make a lot of fun out of us. We got used to it later on. Then we start learning too.

**Paul:** Did you see anything in America that you had never seen before in Turkey?

**Alice:** No, because I didn’t go out too much because I always afraid that they hit me and I get sick or something happens because I saw a lot of them. That’s why the mother saw stopped when they get to the school. A lot of the mothers used to go and bring them home.

**Harry:** Because people were being rough on them.

**Paul:** Harry, let me ask you, since we’ve now got you up to Troy, is there any story that we should prompt your mom about when the ship arrived and that whole experience before we go in with Troy that you can think of.

**Harry:** There isn’t too much that I could add there.

**Paul:** Tell me about the house that you lived in, in Troy. Did you live in one house or did you move?

**Alice:** One house, one whole house … We used to eat there. Everything used to be done with … The children had to sleep. They used to put things like this and put them on sleep. We got used to it until they got money. They used to get it little by little.

**Paul:** Did your mother every go to work?

**Alice:** No.

**Paul:** What about your brothers or sisters?

**Alice:** I went to work, but my mother never did.

**Paul:** How old were you when you went to work?

**Alice:** How old? I was 12 years old.

**Paul:** What was the job that you got?

**Alice:** Mmh?

**Paul:** What was the job?

**Alice:** It was the neck ties.

**Harry:** Collars.

**Alice:** [inaudible 00:27:39] body.

**Paul:** The [inaudible 00:27:40] collars. Was this in a factory?

**Harry:** Yes.

**Alice:** It’s a big factory.

**Paul:** Do you remember how much you got paid?

**Alice:** Yeah, I used to make good money and I used to bring it … My father used to take it. He used to be happy about it.

**Paul:** Do you remember exactly what you did? What did you do in the factory?

**Alice:** In the factory?

**Paul:** Yes, what was your job in the factory?

**Alice:** To see the collars, these collars.

**Paul:** These are the detachable collars.

**Alice:** The top is big and the bottom that you got to button is only this wide. They connect that together and then the man just put it on and button it and then put their things on.

**Paul:** You were making the collars themselves?

**Alice:** I used to do it in the factory at 12 years old.

**Paul:** Did you want to go to work when you were that young?

**Alice:** Mmh?

**Paul:** Did you want to have this job when you were that young?

**Alice:** I watched it.

**Paul:** Did you want to have the job? Did you want to go to work when you were young or did you have to go to work?

**Alice:** I had to go because you need … Everybody needs money.

**Paul:** Were you not going to school then when you were-

**Alice:** No, I never went to school. My other sisters, they did because they were small. Me, I had to work, make money.

**Paul:** Make your father happy. Tell me about when you got married. How old were you when you got married?

**Alice:** I was 16 years old when I got married.

**Paul:** What was the name of the man that you married?

**Alice:** [inaudible 00:29:44].

**Harry:** First name was Avedis and the last name was Hakimian.

**Paul:** Can you spell Avedis?

**Harry:** A-V-E-D-I-S.

**Paul:** How did you meet Mr. Hakimian?

**Alice:** What do you mean?

**Paul:** How did you meet your husband?

**Alice:** You don’t meet nothing, the boy comes or the boy’s parents come to the house and they always watch. They watch what I do and this and that. I didn’t even know anything about it. Then the mother and father came and said we want your daughter for our son.

**Paul:** That was it.

**Alice:** Then we got engaged and then we waited. I was too small … another year then we got married.

**Paul:** How many children did you have?

**Alice:** Me … How many did I have?

**Harry:** Three children.

**Alice:** Yeah, that’s all I had.

**Paul:** What are their names?

**Alice:** My mother had five. I had three.

**Paul:** What were the names of your children?

**Alice:** I don’t know. I forgot all about them. That were all years and years ago.

**Paul:** Your children, what are the names of your children?

**Alice:** Mmh.

**Paul:** Your children, the children that you had, your own children.

**Alice:** My own? Here is one Harry. The other one is George. I didn’t have too many children.

**Harry:** How about my sister. You had my sister and she died.

**Alice:** Yeah. I had a sister and she died. I only had three children. That’s all.

**Paul:** Did you ever want to go back to visit where you were born, to go back to Turkey?

**Alice:** Never. Nobody did.

**Paul:** Your parents never wanted to go back.

**Alice:** The Turks there will kill you. That’s why they all came to America.

**Paul:** Were there a lot of Armenian people in Troy?

**Alice:** Yeah. In Troy, there was a lot of Armenians. Now they are all over.

**Paul:** I was wondering can you speak some Armenian for me on tape?

**Alice:** I can’t speak Armenian.

**Paul:** What about a prayer? Do you know a prayer in Armenian? Do you ever pray in Armenian?

**Harry:** [Foreign language 00:32:14].

**Alice:** We pray.

**Paul:** Can you do something for … While the tape is running. Can you pray out loud and slowly?

**Alice:** I pray all, every time small when I start to talk. My mother taught me how to pray. I still pray all the time.

**Paul:** Do you know one of the prayers in Armenian?

**Alice:** No, I don’t.

**Harry:** No, just in English.

**Paul:** In your house when you were a little girl everyone spoke Armenian, correct? When you were little, everybody spoke Armenian here. Harry, is there anything else that you would like to add before we conclude on this hot day?

**Harry:** The only thing was that one of the condition in which they came, they just about started from the bottom of the barrel and they worked there through [crosstalk 00:33:22]. With the amount of people that were in Troy, they were mostly a very close knit bunch of people, the pioneers that came here.

Mostly anyone that got any kind of work later on down the line or even in dry cleaning or in the meat business, hoot business. Eventually, as their children grew up, they got to college and then they branched out into other fields. They were here when Troy was its [inaudible 00:33:52]. Troy one time was quite a town.

**Paul:** I assume that a lot of them had jobs in the factories.

**Harry:** Yes, [crosstalk 00:33:59] was one. There were also steel factories here too. Of course, there was good employment as Troy got [inaudible 00:34:07]. These people worked their way. Some of them got to school and some of them like in my mother’s case had to help support their family like a lot of people did.

**Paul:** I’m sure that that was probably the more common scenario.

**Harry:** Right, like a lot did, especially when they were large families. It’s almost like the same scenario we have today when husband and wife have to go out with things the way they are. They both have to work to make ends meet and to provide a good family. She paid her dues.

**Paul:** They did. Thank you very much. Thank you for letting me ask you a few questions.

**Harry:** I’m sorry, but I get tired.

**Paul:** That’s all right. It’s hot too. This is Paul Seacrest signing off with Alice Hakimian and her son, Harry in Albany on Wednesday, July 6th, 1994. Thank you.