**Paul:** Good afternoon. This is Paul Seacrest for the National Park Service. Today is Saturday, September 30th, 1995. I'm in Three Bridges, New Jersey and that's just outside of Flemington. I'm here with Mr. George Papazian.

**George:** Papazian.

**Paul:** Papazian. Mr. Papazian is an Armenian who came from Turkey in 1929. He was 15 and half at that time. He was detained for two days at Ellis Island when he came to this country. Mr. Papazian, can we begin by you giving me your birth date please?

**George:** Okay. It's February 28, 1914.

**Paul:** Tell me where in Turkey you were born.

**George:** Well actually, I was born in a town called Alexandropol, Russia. You see my father worked for the Turkish government and he traveled out of Turkey as well as the surrounding areas because he was in forestry business in that department of Turkey. I was born in Alexandropol, Russia but I was infant when I came to Istanbul, Turkey and that's where my life actually began.

**Paul:** Can you spell Alexandropole?

**George:** A-L-E-X-A-N-D-R-O-P-O-L-E, I think.

**Paul:** Do you know anything around the circumstances of your birth? Did anyone ever tell you stories about when you were born?

**George:** In Alexandropol?

**Paul:** Yes.

**George:** Not at all. Because as I say I was only maybe a month or two old when my father started going to different town or areas and then finally I ended up in Turkey, Istanbul, Turkey. I think most of my life until the age of 15 or between 15 and 15 and half was spent in Istanbul, Turkey. Now Istanbul is the new name for Constantinople, which was the original name. Of course I don't want to go into detail about that almost everybody knows what's what in there, how did the name came to be changed etc.

**Paul:** Actually I'd like to talk about your father since you brought him up. What was his name?

**George:** My father's name in Arameans is Ohanes.

**Paul:** Can you spell that?

**George:** O-H-A-N-E-S, which in English I think it's translated to John and anything else?

**Paul:** Yeah. What do you know about his family background?

**George:** My father is one of the four siblings of Papazian family. He was the eldest. He was the first son and he was a very, very good man and he lived to be maybe I think about 42 years old when he was stricken with a germ, meningitis they called it at the time, spinal cord system, and they did not have the serum at the time to cure that disease or to take care of that disease. He passed away within a week or two in a hospital.

**Paul:** What do you remember about your father when you were a young child? Do you have stories about your father?

**George:** He used to go around in horseback most of the time because he went in the forests and roads, and he had several people following him, his guys, not exactly guys but like helpers. I remember him, in fact I've seen him on horseback a couple of times, and most of the time he was away from the family because of his job. What else do I remember about him? He was very good. In fact, I was 12 years old when he passed away.

**Paul:** What do you remember about that experience?

**George:** About passing?

**Paul:** About when your father died?

**George:** Well it was a very sad experience because he was running a very high fever and he was not himself at all and they restrained him. He wanted to jump out of the window. That was how severe the disease was. The following day, they took him to the hospital, an Armenian hospital in Istanbul. We were living in Scutari there before.

**Paul:** In where?

**George:** Scutari. S-C-U-T-A-R-I. I don't know if you know about Istanbul. It's situated between Europe and Asia. There's the Straits there, Black Sea and Sea of Marmara, we were in the Asiatic side. Scutari is a town in the Asiatic side of Turkey, of Istanbul rather. The European side is on the other side. We were living there and of course they had to take him on a boat.

First they took horse-drawn coach, because at that time there were no cars around. They took him to where the ferries are to take him to the other side, Istanbul where the hospital is situated. About a week or 10 days later, they just brought his remains or body to be buried in an Armenian cemetery there.

**Paul:** Can you describe for me a traditional Armenian funeral?

**George:** It was a very sad experience for me. I sometimes think about it, but that's life. We all have to go through those... Yes, what you want to know?

**Paul:** I was just curious about what Armenian funeral would be like? Can you describe the ceremony?

**George:** That was another sad experience. Scutari is a very small town, and we have a church there, it's always there today, one church and then the cemetery is a walking distance. I remember the day of the services when my father's burial was laid out, there were a lot of Turkish dignitaries in the place.

Besides that there were a lot of Armenian friends and relatives etcetera, and after the service was over, the remains was carried on the shoulders of six people I think up to here where the cemetery is and that's where he was buried.

**Paul:** Can you tell me a pleasant memory that you have of your father when you were a child?

**George:** Pleasant memories?

**Paul:** Maybe something he enjoyed doing with his children.

**George:** Well, a lot he would do with me, I used to go to an Armenian school there in Scutari. He would take me to Istanbul, the European side and before the school term started he would buy me my books and pencils etc. That was a pleasant memory.

In Scutari, we had a big park in the back of the house. It was for general public and he used to take me around for walks holding my hand. He would give me money, small change, once in a while. What else can I tell you? He was very good. He was great to my mother and to me and-

**Paul:** Do you know how your parents met?

**George:** Oh, yes. Well that's a long story. I was told, of course I don't know. My father was in love with a woman before my mother and unfortunately he was head over heels, I would say, in love with her. That's what I was told. The woman had tuberculosis and she passed away and he was very heartbroken over that. My mother's parents, they are born in- My father and mother are born in Dardanelles. I guess you've heard of Dardanelles.

**Paul:** The Straits of Dardanelles.

**George:** Yes, that's where actually the meeting took place between my father and my mother. My mother was a very pretty woman, very good looking woman. She was only 16 and somehow the two sides, my father's parents and my mother's parents, I guess they knew each other. Dardanelles is called Chankale, its Turkish name.

**Paul:** Can you spell that?

**George:** Oh boy C-H-A-N-K-A-L-I. Chankale.

**Paul:** Thank you.

**George:** Or L-E rather. Chankale, Chank in Turkish means plate. Kale is fort, where they fight from the-

**Paul:** For protection. Yeah.

**George:** Fort. Chankale is the name, the Turkish name right now. Where was I? Let me see.

**Paul:** Your parents' parents were arranging the-

**George:** Oh, okay. They were both sides well to do people in that town. Chankale or Dardanelles, they had mostly Turkish populated. The Armenians were minority there. They knew almost everybody. Each family knew the other family more or less.

Most of them are related to each other, blood related or something like that, so they, being wealthy families on both sides. They had a big wedding I was told and the next year I was born. My father started going around to other areas and Alexandropol is the other stop and that's where I was born.

**Paul:** So your mother was traveling with him then?

**George:** Oh, yes. Yes, of course. How else would I be born? Then of course we settled in Istanbul or Scutari first and then when I was... Let's see, my father died when I was 12, that's in Scutari and a few years later, we moved. By the way, where we were living, my father's father lived with us as well as- you see my grandfather was the head of the family, there's a word for it. It will come to me. He was a man. He wanted to have all his children, all his grandchildren under the same roof. So we were all living in the same house because it was a big house.

**Paul:** Describe your grandfather a little bit. What was his name?

**George:** His name is Agop or Hagop, H-A-G-O-P, of course Papazian. He was a very religious man. His grandfather was a priest. That's how our name originated actually, I was told. Papaz in Turkish means priest so Papazian... You see what they do there, like your father's father or grandfather, whatever business he's in or whatever trade he's in, most Armenian names derive from there and they put IAN at the end. This is your surname.

As I say my grandfather, Hagop, was very religious person. He had a beard and he always went every Sunday, took us, me and my cousin, I have cousin who's still living in Paris, France, six months younger than I am, he used to take us by the hand and go to the church.

Every Sunday we used to go to the church like that. He was like a, what is the title there? Let me see, head of the church. He wasn't a priest but he was the elders. Let’s put it that way, elder. He was one of the elders. He was very much involved in church affairs, etcetera and he was a good man.

He worked until he died. He was an accountant. He died when he was 65 and I was in this country when he died by the way. My uncle, my father's brother, writes me a letter. He says that... I used to smoke at the time. I don't smoke anymore but he said to me, "Stop smoking because your grandfather died from emphysema. One of his lungs collapsed. I'm just warning you."

In the letter he was telling me that and that was it. I stopped smoking. That was the end of him, he died, I don't know the circumstances of course. He was very good to us, both of us. I had a sister who was born 10 years after I was born.

**Paul:** Well actually before we talk about your sister. Let’s talk about your mother so that we can get into this. What is your mother's name?

**George:** Christian name is Serpouhi.

**Paul:** Can you spell that please?

**George:** S-E-R-P-O-U-H-I. Serpouhi. `

**Paul:** And her maiden name?

**George:** Her maiden name is Alexanian.

**Paul:** Can you spell that?

**George:** A-L-E-X-A-N-I-A-N. By the way, when I came to this country, her brother sponsored me in Massachusetts, and his name of course is Alexanian. Of course that will come later probably when I was detained and came over, etcetera.

**Paul:** Tell me what you know about your mother's family background?

**George:** My mother's background is she's also one of the four siblings. She had a sister and two brothers and she was 16 when she got married. I think she got pretty good education in that town in Dardanelles or Chankale.

She spoke French. By the way, most Armenians are bi-linguist. I don't know if you know it or not- excuse me. She was very good. After my father passed away- until my father died, she never worked. She used to take care of the children, and after my father died, she became a seamstress and she had about 25 people working for her making dresses from scratch.

She had to work to take care of us, me and my sister. Until I came to this country she was in that business.

**Paul:** Tell me a story about your mother when you were a small child.

**George:** Well, she was very strict like some parents are and very doting type of mother, a woman. She would always want to know where you are, how you're doing and this and that. In other words she was a good mother and cared for both of her children.

**Paul:** Tell me what you remember about the birth of your sister.

**George:** Birth of my sister? Okay. She was, by the way, born in Scutari. That's where we were living. We had changed houses after my father passed away in that house and over there at that time, women bear children in the same house.

My mother was upstairs when the doctor came, the nurse and the doctor, etcetera. We were downstairs, the rest of the family, and I could hear her scream upstairs. Next thing I know my sister was born in the middle of the night.

**Paul:** What was your sister's name?

**George:** Sona, S-O-N-A.

**Paul:** Tell me a little bit about your relationship with your sister when she was a baby and how you accepted this baby into the family.

**George:** I was very fond of my sister. In fact, my sister doesn't remember my father at all. She was only about two years old when he passed away and I was very protective of her. I used to take her outside for walks etcetera, holding her hand. She was blond, blue-eyed, very good looking, pretty girl.

Of course after living in Scutari, what was it? About a year or two after my father passed away, or maybe three years I would say, then we moved to Istanbul, Turkey. That's where she went to school, nun school, she went, French. When I left there I was 15 so then she probably was about... Let's see, when I left there, how old would she be?

Anyway I don't remember very much that period when I came to this country where was she or what she was doing. I came to this country. My mother thought that it would be best for me to come to this country because I was a teenager, and she thought that there would be a better future for me in this country being that one of her brothers had been in this country for several years.

They decided to send me here to the States, and at the time, my mother's younger brother and his family also wanted to come to the States. I accompanied them to the states. My aunt or rather my uncle's wife had a brother and a sister in the states that they sponsored them, the sister and brother in the States, in New York. We all came in the same boat.

**Paul:** Let's not get too far ahead because I still want to talk about Turkey. I want you to describe- You lived in two places before you moved to Istanbul. You lived in two different houses. You lived in one then when your father died. Could you describe the first house for me, the one that you lived in?

**George:** The first house was a three story house, big, surrounded by a back yard and a front yard. We even had at the entrance. It was a very beautiful house. There was a man-made pool where there were goldfish in there. All around we were surrounded by fruit trees.

As I say, one time in that household we were about 22 or 23 people. For example, my father, four of us, and then my aunt whose son is six months younger that I am, they were four of them and my father's brother also married and had a daughter, my grandmother, my grandmother, and who else lived with us there?

But anyway, when we used to sit for dinner it was a big table and all the family members, all these members, my uncles and aunts, etcetera, they were all sitting at the same time having dinner. My grandfather was at the head of the table and my grandmother at the other end. We were very close knit family. We never had any arguments or anything like that as far as I remember. Of course I was a small child there growing up.

**Paul:** Were there any activities that the whole family did together?

**George:** Yes, at that time, there was no such thing as radio or television. What they used to do is play cards or games in the evenings before they went to bed, mostly cards. Us children, we were, let's see, me and my cousin who is in Paris, France now, and he had two sisters older than he is, my cousin Jirayr. We used to have either homework to do or something like that so we occupied ourselves.

**Paul:** You said your [inaudible 00:26:15]

**George:** J-I-R-A-Y-R, Jirayr. He by the way is living in Paris, France. He has a big family also and I have seen him. As a matter of fact, 1969 I took my family, my wife and my children, to Istanbul for a visit.

We spent about six weeks there, six or seven weeks and then again 73 we went twice. I met all these cousins, etcetera, all the relatives there. Now in Istanbul, I only have two girl cousins, Anoush, who is A-N-O-U-S-H is the name, who is three years old than I am and Seta who is my father's brother's daughter who was born in Scutari.

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

**George:** S-E-T-A. Where was we?

**Paul:** We're going to go back to Turkey and Istanbul. Can you tell me about your religious life? What religion were you?

**George:** All Armenians, as a matter of fact, most Armenians are Aramean, Apostolic and Catholic. These are the three religions combined is our religion. Our services, you would like to know about services?

**Paul:** I want you to tell me about how you practiced your religion growing up in Turkey?

**George:** There is the whole service lasted about two hours if not more. It's a very ceremonial service.

**Paul:** Back then, it lasted two hours.

**George:** Here is the same thing. The tradition is carried on all these years. As I say, each town has at least one church and homes of the people, Aramean people are around the church and school. One main church is situated and then there is Armenian school and missionary schools. There was one American missionary school, one English and one French. These are all surrounding that area, the area the church is situated. It's all walking distance as a matter of fact.

**Paul:** How did your family worship? How did your family practice their religion? You already talked about your grandfather a little bit.

**George:** What do you mean by practiced? They pray. You stand up. Sit down according to the direction of the priest. He tells you when to stand up, sit down, etcetera. There's a lot of singing going on. You participate in the singing songs etcetera.

**Paul:** Do you remember a prayer in Armenian that you learned as a child?

**George:** There's the Our Father prayer in Armenian. You want me to say that?

**Paul:** Can you say that on tape please?

**George:** [Armenian 00:30:11] and then you make the sign of the cross.

**Paul:** Thank you. Were there special ways that your family worshiped at home?

**George:** At the dinner table, yes. We used to- me and my cousin, male cousin, we used to say this prayer. Not this prayer that we say, but we say another prayer which is... you want me to say it?

**Paul:** Please.

**George:** [Armenian 00:31:06] In other words, thanks for the food in our translation in English, something like that and then everybody started eating.

**Paul:** What was the most important religious holiday at that time?

**George:** Which is the same in this country among the Armenians, we have Christmas, which is celebrated one week after the American Christmas then we have Easter which is celebrated the same day. Then there are a lot of Saints days there that are celebrated.

In fact most names, Armenian names, including mine, are derived from saints. [Inaudible 00:32:09] name is Kevork, K-E-V-O-R-K. That's how I came to this country, but afterwards before I became US citizen, I changed my name to George, which is the translation actually of Kevork.

**Paul:** You started telling me why you ended up coming to this country. Can you tell me what you knew about America when you were growing up in Turkey?

**George:**  Not much except that I knew that it was a quite distant land, and my uncle, the one who sponsored me, was in the navy, the US Navy and came twice to visit us Istanbul. He would bring each time Hershey chocolates, big chunks of them and he was dressed in the American Navy uniform. That sort of impressed me. He was a good man. Of course he passed away several years back and-

**Paul:** So that was your idea of America [inaudible 00:33:39]?

**George:** What happened, I went to British high school there, and as I was going to the school, he used to write to me in English. One word or a couple of words that intrigued me is okay. I couldn't make out what okay stand for because every paragraph almost, he was saying something is okay.

But I found out afterwards when I came to this country what it means actually. My primary education was Armenian school in Scutari, and then of course when we moved to- I went almost like senior year there in the Armenian school but then it was interrupted because we had to move to Istanbul and there I went to British high school from where I came to this country.

**Paul:** Talk about the experience of going to school in Turkey, both as a young child and then later in high school and what [inaudible 00:34:54].

**George:** I went to a school called Berberian, B-E-R-B-E-R-I-A-N, which was at the time one of the leading Armenian schools there, well known school in Turkey until recently. Well not quite recently but several years back where it closed down because Turks. They sort of were putting a lot of pressure to these foreign language students, not students, schools rather.

They wanted to have mostly Turkish schools in there so that Armenians could go there rather than Armenian school. In fact in that school, we had two Turkish teachers who used to come and teach us several months, the Turkish language and also another science language I think it was. But most of the Armenian schools taught in Armenian and that's where of course I learned my Armenian there as well as at home. We spoke Armenian at home.

**Paul:** Did your parents speak any other languages?

**George:** Oh, yes. They spoke Turkish because they were born in Turkey. As a matter of fact, my paternal grandmother never spoke Armenian. When she was born- I don't know too much about her background, but we always used to speak Turkish with her. Because in Chankale where she was born or Dardanelles, she never had any schooling, primary schooling there. In fact, she didn't have much education.

They spoke Turkish, and as I said, my mother spoke French because when she went to school in Dardanelles, they were teaching French language there too. I think one or two years when she was growing up, she went to French sisters, [unknown 00:37:22] they called it, school. That's where she learned French.

Most Armenians including my parents were bi-linguist. As I say, I also I'm bi-linguist. I speak Armenian, Turkish, French and English. My wife speaks German as well because she went to German high school there in Istanbul. All these foreign schools are missionary schools by the way there in Istanbul.

**Paul:** Is that what he British high school was? Did that start off as a missionary school?

**George:** Yes. We are bi-linguists. We can carry conversation as well as... But the only thing is I've been in this country 1929, I knew Turkish very well when I first came to this country but gradually because of lack of practice, I'm losing the language. But each time we went back visiting Turkey. I could carry myself very well with the Turkish people and so forth.

**Paul:** I have a question for you about your parents. You said that you all managed to avoid the genocide in 1915. Could you just talk a little bit about where they were during that time?

**George:** First of all, my father's brother was in the Army, Turkish Army. He was college graduate, Turkish and then he became an officer. That's number one. My father worked in a Turkish government, so because of his job, he was sent here and there. My grandfather was an accountant and worked for the Turkish company and he knew a lot of senators and congressmen there. He was very close to these people. Also my mother's brother with whom I came to this country was a veterinarian in the Turkish government. So with all these connections, we were spared.

**Paul:** You were very lucky. Tell me a little bit about- obviously your parents were educated well, but their parents were less educated? Should I understand that?

**George:** Yes.

**Paul:** I guess what I'm wondering is, what was your parents... how did they approach education? How did they-

**George:** They went through Turkish schools, the colleges, my father and my uncles and-

**Paul:** But in terms of you, how did they feel about education? Was it important for you to get your education or was that not important to them?

**George:** Not as much there at the time as it is now as in this country that most children here I see, after high school, they have to go to college. But there only well to do people, wealthy people, could afford to go because you have to pay tuition there. It's not free. Not all families were able to send their children to either missionary school or to Armenian school. They had to pay tuition.

**Paul:** I see. What was your first job? Did you ever get a job when you were in Turkey before you came to America?

**George:** No, I was student.

**Paul:** You were a student right up until- Alright, let's start talking about your coming to America. You explained to me already the uncle and the aunt and all of that. Did you want to leave your family in Turkey?

**George:** No. I was against it, but my mother was adamant about it because my father had passed away that I didn't have much future there because of the Turkish government, how they run things there against minorities, etcetera. I didn't want to come but I was finally convinced, they convinced me that that's the best way out so I came.

**Paul:** What did you do in Turkey to prepare for coming to America?

**George:** What do you mean by prepare?

**Paul:** How did you get ready to leave? What did you have to do?

**George:** I had to pack things. Well not me but my mother did of course and we had to prepare papers, passports.

**Paul:** Can you talk about that and what you had to do to get the papers?

**George:** Well actually, my uncle's wife who came with us in the boat, she was the one who handled all these paper work. You go to these people who do these kinds of things. Like here you have a passport, you've got a passport office but there, there are offices that handle this for you. You pay money to them and they get all the papers ready for you.

**Paul:** Did you have to be photographed for your passport?

**George:** I think so, I think so. Yes.

**Paul:** But nothing sticks out in your mind about that experience?

**George:**  No.

**Paul:** Was all that done in Istanbul?

**George:** Yes.

**Paul:** Where there any medical requirements?

**George:** From there? Not really until you come to this country because the Turkish government doesn't require you to go through this medical examinations, whatever.

**Paul:** You mentioned your mother did the packing, what did she pack for you?

**George:** Well first of all, I had a lot of books that I wanted to take with me from British high school and from Armenian school. That was in a trunk, big trunk and of course my clothes and underwear etc. I brought a lot of things, personal things myself.

**Paul:** What were some of those personal things?

**George:** Well, books for example, they were mostly books and manuscripts and things that I had written in Armenian, etcetera. All these things, by the way, when I came, I was here with my uncle in Massachusetts in [inaudible 00:44:58]. That's where I was for about two years. There all these books and everything else were perished.

My uncle objected to that. There was a stove, wood-stove there in the basement of the house, he threw them in the stove and burned them. There were too many of these books and they didn't have space enough for all these things. That's one of the reasons. I don't think there was any ulterior motive otherwise.

**Paul:** It wasn't necessarily a reflection about how he felt about education?

**George:** No, no, no. In fact, he was very educated. My uncle was very educated himself and he went to school, college here in this country then he joined the navy.

**Paul:** It's just they were taking up too much space.

**George:** Too much space, yeah, exactly, exactly.

**Paul:** Was there any kind of a gathering before you left?

**George:** Oh, yeah. The entire family were together [inaudible 00:46:10]. My grandfather, my father's father, didn't want me to go. He was against it but of course, he didn't have too much weight, a decision to make on that matter so he let me go.

All these people, after the last evening there, the following day, we had to take a boat to come over here, they all came to the boat to send us off, to see us going to come here, the boat. My friends from school came as well. It was very heartbreaking occasions to part from all these, your loved ones as well as your friends and relatives.

**Paul:** Where did you go to get on the ship?

**George:** There are docks where the boats come and dock there and you just take streetcars, either a streetcar or a taxi to come to the piers. There is a famous bridge there that connects two parts, European part and Asiatic part of Istanbul. All piers are at the bottom of the bridge. The boats tied there so we came and boarded them.

**Paul:** Do you remember how much your ship ticket cost?

**George:** Oh no. I don't remember that at all. No idea.

**Paul:** Did you have any money on you?

**George:** Very little money. I don't know if I had dollars or Turkish money. I'm sure either. I don't remember distinctly about that but I did have some money with me.

**Paul:** Was anyone traveling with you from... Or were you really by yourself? Oh no, you had your uncle [inaudible 00:48:29].

**George:** No, no. My uncle and my uncle's wife, and then they had a son about 10 years younger than I was, so we were four of us in that boat. The boat itself took about 15 days to cross the ocean.

**Paul:** Was this the first time you'd ever been on a large ship?

**George:** Yes.

**Paul:** Can you tell me how you felt when you were going into the gangplank into this ship?

**George:** Well first of all ships at the time traveling the ocean, they were classes. You have tourist class, first class, second class, etcetera. I think we had tourist class so we most of the time spent time in the hull of the ship and everybody slept in the same area and spent their time during the day there.

As I said, I was a teenager there. I was always with my uncle, they used to play cards, poker, to pass the time away because 15 days, what are you going to do? So here I am going upstairs downstairs here and there to spend the time. A couple of occasions I got seasick, I remember that also, I threw up. Finally we arrived to New York harbor.

**Paul:** Did the ship stop anywhere along the way from the time you left Istanbul?

**George:** Oh, yes. We first stopped in Greece, Piraeus or whatever that sea port is in Greece.

**Paul:** It's Piraeus.

**George:** And then from there we went Athens just sightseeing. We were, I think, in Greece for a couple of days and that's the only place we stopped actually.

**Paul:** Do you know the name of the ship?

**George:** I think I knew that name but... It was a Greek ship, I think, but I don't recall the name.

**Paul:** You've said a little bit about where you slept on the ship. Can you elaborate on that and describe the actual space where you slept.

**George:** There were cots there. You slept on the cots most of the time.

**Paul:** What size room?

**George:** It was a huge area. It was the hull of the ship, the very bottom. You would go down the steps and that's where all these tourist class people stayed, lived rather and ate there and everything else.

**Paul:** Were men and women mixed in this one room?

**George:** Yes, absolutely.

**Paul:** Everybody was just down there. Were there bathroom facilities down there?

**George:** Of course there were, but I'm not very clear about that in detail.

**Paul:** What about eating? Where did you eat on the ship?

**George:** The ship, they had tourist class, the food for us, they prepared and served us.

**Paul:** Was there a special place that you when to?

**George:** There were tables one area of that hull where we went sat down and ate.

**Paul:** Does anything stick out in your mind about the food?

**George:** Food? No. Not a thing at all.

**Paul:** What time of the year were you traveling?

**George:** Was it in October or November? I'm not sure the time of the year. It was either fall or winter, in between. I'm not sure which month it was though.

**Paul:** What was there to do on the ship? You mentioned some of the older men were playing cards.

**George:** Well younger children just roamed about with nothing to do actually. You could read. I had my books with me, I could read them. The voyage itself was very rough, I remember that. It was a rough voyage and I as I said, a lot of people got sick, especially people in the tourist class where they were on the bottom of the ship. But I didn't get sick as much as other people did, throwing up, etc.

**Paul:** Do any of the other passengers stick out in your mind? Someone that you saw or spoke to on the ship?

**George:** Well there were a lot of Greek people as well as Armenians. One thing I remember in the stuck in my mind is when they were playing cards, poker. They used to say, [unknown 00:53:45]. That means quarter in English. Then they used to throw to five cents. You know how to play poker? Well whatever.

That stuck in my mind. I was saying, "What's quarter?" I knew that was... I suppose they had the American money there with them. That's probably what it was. They were playing with change, quarters.

**Paul:** How well did you get along with your uncle and aunt? During the trip, say?

**George:** Very well. They took care of us both children, me and my cousin. We were under their wing. They used to take care of us.

**Paul:** I'm wondering, were you always with them or did they let you go off by yourself?

**George:** Yeah, I used to run about the other classes, go upstairs, etcetera, sometimes, if the day were and nice and the ocean was smooth, it wasn't rough around, then I used to walk around the ship. You were allowed to go there.

**Paul:** What could you see from the deck of the ship?

**George:** just Ocean all around. I think one time we saw, what do you call this big fish? I couldn't make it out. From distance we could see whales, and we could watch the [inaudible 00:55:19] because sometimes they're following the ship. Other than that there wasn't much to see except when you approached a shore of a town or whatever.

**Paul:** Do you remember seeing land?

**George:** Yeah.

**Paul:** How did that happen for you?

**George:** When we came to Greece, we could see it. There were a lot of islands.

**Paul:** No, when you came... Once you got across the Atlantic? Do you remember seeing-?

**George:** No, nothing.

**Paul:** What was the first thing that you saw?

**George:** We saw the New York harbor. The tall buildings. That was the first thing we saw before we landed on Ellis Island.

**Paul:** Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

**George:** Oh, yes.

**Paul:** Did you know what that was?

**George:** At the time, no. I didn't know at all, nothing at all about that. But I was terrified when I was detained in Ellis Island because- you want me to tell you about that?

**Paul:** Yes. I just want to clear something up. The ship docked, how did you get out to Ellis Island?

**George:** I think we took a ferry that took us to the Ellis Island. In fact, the ferry landing is still there. There's a boat, a wreckage of the boat there in one of the ferry landings there.

**Paul:** Did everyone on your ship have to go to Ellis Island?

**George:** No. I don't think so. I think some people just got out. I don't know where they went. They probably went to New York and others other areas.

**Paul:** How were you told that you would have to go to Ellis Island?

**George:** According to the papers I think we had. Well wait a minute. I think yes, everybody on the boat ship did land on Ellis Island, if I'm not mistaken and from there they were cleared. First they had to clear the customs and this is how...

**Paul:** You said you were terrified. Did you know what Ellis Island was?

**George:** No, not at all. In fact, I was there two days or two nights and three days or something like that and where I was detained we had cots to sleep on. You could see the Brooklyn Bridge in the dawn, early morning hours, and then the tall buildings and the boats whistling and this and that the first night that I was there. Well anyway that lasted two days like that. Do you want me to tell why I was detained there?

**Paul:** Yes. Well in a minute because we're going to put in a new tape in. We're almost out of tape. What I'd like to know is when the ferry pulled up to Ellis Island, what was the first thing that you had to do?

**George:** Well we went out on the plank, I remember, to go to this big hall. Thousands of people there from different, not only our boat, other people were detained there. I suppose they were going processing there, lots of people, all different nationalities in that big hall. That's what I remembered sort of clearly, distinctly rather and the area that I was detained and where we went from one room to another for physical and this and that.

**Paul:** Did you have your luggage with you during this?

**George:** I suppose, the small things that I could carry, but I don't know where the big things were. I suppose we were told to leave certain things, trunks and things like that in one area. We could go and claim them afterwards.

**Paul:** Do you remember what you were wearing when you arrived at Ellis Island?

**George:** Oh, wearing? My God. I had three quarter pants, a jacket or a sweater, and my cap, my British school cap I had on.

**Paul:** We're going to have to pause now and I'll put on a second tape and then you can explain was why you ended up detained Ellis Island. Okay we're beginning tape two with George Papazian who come from Turkey, an Armenian man who came Turkey in 1929 at age 15 and we're talking about his detention for two nights at Ellis Island. When we left off, you had just arrived at Ellis Island. Tell me why they held you at Ellis Island.

**George:** Okay. If I remember clearly, you have to go through different offices for [inaudible 01:00:36], I think that's the proper word and one of the areas that I was in- I knew English at the time and when I came and they knew that I knew English.

Our interview there was done in English. They asked me who my sponsor was and my uncle is actually is the sponsor from Massachusetts and his last name is Alexanian. My other uncle's wife's brother's name is Anbarlian, A-N-B-A-R-L-I-A-N so I was confused, instead of saying... The examiner asked me, "Who's your sponsor?" I said Anbarlian instead of Alexanian.

That did it, that technicality. What happened, I was separated right there and then from my uncle and my uncle's wife and my cousin. They were taken to another area and I was taken to another area. I was just wondering why, why we were separated. But they wouldn't tell me that and I thought that they also were going to different questioning in different areas.

I found out later on their papers were in order and their sponsor came to claim them, so they went out right away without spending any more time than is necessary for them. But I was detained. Here was my uncle already came from Boston or Revere, Mass, to claim me, to take me home, but they wouldn't let me go for a technicality like this. Here I was detained. I don't know where he was staying at the time, my uncle from Revere, Mass.

**Paul:** You're saying Revere, Mass, right?

**George:** Yes, Revere.

**Paul:** R-E-V-E-R-E.

**George:** That's where my uncle lived at the time. ...like me we were detained and started to spend first day there, first night, whatever it was. It was just like a jail as far as I'm concerned because I was terrified, a young boy, teenager and I was wondering where my uncle is. I knew him, but I was looking around if my uncle was around to claim me. That went on... Now I don't know if you know how things were at the time, were you're told-

**Paul:** Tell me what you remember. Can you tell me what you remember about it?

**George:** First we were sent to a place where all these cots were one on top another. That's where we were supposed to spend our first night or as long as we stayed there.

**Paul:** When you say- Men and women?

**George:** Men and women but men were separated from women. For food, we were served long tables, wooden benches. We were sitting on there to eat our food. Most of the time, I wouldn't eat because I was terrified, and I was worried what's going to happen to me.

During the day for recreation or pastime, we were just in that big hall. We weren't allowed to go out at all. We spent our time talking to each other. I don't remember very clearly what kind of pastime we had at the time those two or three days that I was detained there.

We weren't allowed to see any examiner or anybody else to explain why we were there, why we were detained. But at the end of second day, my name was called to go to a certain office, one of the offices that I was there before for questioning. Here I see my uncle there too for the first time and so I suppose he came and straightened everything out as far as this misunderstanding of names and then I was discharged from there.

**Paul:** We should say for the sake of the tape that you learned English at the British high school. Is that correct?

**George:** Yes, yes.

**Paul:** When you got to Ellis Island and they began to question you, what was their reaction to the fact that you could speak English?

**George:** Their reaction?

**Paul:** Yes. Do you remember how they reacted to that?

**George:** First of all, I had an English accent and people were asking questions to me... English had different accents to certain words. I supposed they understood what I was saying naturally but it sounded odd to them, and their questioning sounded likewise to me odd in American. Other than that, they were just clerks working there but my first impression of them was that authority figures.

In Turkey, things like that, government officers, police stations. They expect respect from you when you go for anything, whatever you're going there. First of all, in Turkey they're very rude especially towards minorities when you have any dealings with the government.

Of course here it's not like that. My impression, I was carrying over from Turkey to here, and I thought that these people questioning me were authority figures. So I was afraid to say what I wanted to say or had reservations rather not fear. That's all I can remember of that time.

**Paul:** It's an interesting situation because they were probably not used to having immigrants who can speak English.

**George:** Right.

**Paul:** Did you undergo any medical examination at Ellis Island?

**George:** Over there? Yes. Everything was perfect. I didn't have anything wrong with me.

**Paul:** Can you tell me exactly what they looked at and how they went about that?

**George:** Oh my. You go into this cubicle, different cubicles, and they examine you and listen to your heart and eyes and ears and so forth. Different cubicles, they transfer you from one to the other. If they find something wrong, which I could see with other people that I befriended, they would detain them for other reasons like eye disease or whatever, TB or something like that. But I was released either way.

**Paul:** You mentioned some of the other people who were detained. Does anyone stick out in your mind from that time?

**George:** Well first they were grown up people. I don't remember there was anybody 15 years old that I saw there. They were grown up people, but they were very nice. They were talking to me in their own language, I couldn't understand. Most of them I would carry with sign language sort of.

Some of them, I think one or two, knew little English. Then we were thinking what's going to happen to us. We were detained, we were in the dark. We didn't know what was the next thing that we're...

**Paul:** That's right, and you had said that they hadn't explained to you why they [inaudible 01:09:48].

**George:** They didn't. They didn't. Because one of the reasons probably they saw that I was first of all terrified, they could see that, and also I was a teenager so what could they tell me? They were rather wondering why my sponsor wasn't there to claim me because of the fact that I made a technical mistake.

**Paul:** You got the names mix up.

**George:** Yeah.

**Paul:** You had mentioned that you slept in different places? The first night you slept in a different place than the second one in Ellis Island?

**George:** Where? In Ellis Island? No, the same place.

**Paul:** You stayed in the same...

**George:** And on the same cot.

**Paul:** Does anything stick out in your mind about the experience of sleeping there through the night?

**George:** First of all, I didn't sleep soundly because of the fact that I thought I was going to be sent back. That's the first thought that came to my mind. But other than that, a strange country, a strange area, the circumstances, as far as I was concerned, they were terrifying.

**Paul:** Tell me about meeting your uncle when he finally got there and [inaudible 01:11:08].

**George:** Well as I said, I had a very vague image of him, the times that he came as a navy officer. Here he was in civilian clothes and I hardly could recognize him. We embraced, and he explained to me the reason why that I was detained there. I said, "Oh my God. That's it." It was my fault.

**Paul:** Was he upset by that in any way?

**George:** Not really. He didn't show any emotion really.

**Paul:** Where did he take you when you left Ellis Island?

**George:** Well I think we went... How did we go to Revere? I think we took the train because I don't think he drove all the way from Revere to New York. I think from Pennsylvania station, we took the train to Boston and then they have another train that goes to Revere, Mass.

**Paul:** Does anything stick out in your mind about that train ride going up to Massachusetts?

**George:** Not really, except that I would look out the window and see all the scenery, landscape, farms, etcetera along the way. In the meantime, my uncle was asking questions to me in Armenian as well as Turkish. He'd been in this country so many years that his Armenian wasn't up to par, so he would ask me questions in English. He wanted to know how was my voyage on the ship and my trip in general and we carried a conversation and a couple of hours later we were in Boston.

**Paul:** Did you see anything that you had never seen before either on the ship or Ellis Island or in that first day in America? Something that was completely knew-

**George:** You mean on the train ride?

**Paul:** I was going to say either on the boat or at Ellis Island or on the train ride, something that you had never seen before once you came-

**George:** First of all, Paul, as I remember clearly after the detention, I was really not myself. I wasn't sure whether... I was in America, US, but I was under the impression that I'll be sent back, so I wasn't relaxed in other words, that's the word. I couldn't pay attention to my surroundings except to follow whoever I was supposed to follow, my uncle, both uncles and so forth.

**Paul:** Right. You were nervous wreck, understandably.

**George:** Yes. I don't know how much you know about Ellis Island at that time, but they had bars in the windows in that area where detention... It was just like a prison actually because you can't go out, you can't do anything, you can't call anybody. I suppose if I was a little grown up more or had experience, I could say I want to call my uncle and they would allow me because I wasn't a criminal.

**Paul:** Even though you felt like one.

**George:** Yes, exactly, The way I was being treated.

**Paul:** Describe for me your uncle's house in Revere.

**George:** My uncle at the time that I came to... First of all I wasn't impressed by Revere, Mass at all at that time. It was a very small town, very quiet whereas I was coming from Istanbul. Istanbul by the way is a big metropolis. It’s like Paris in France. After living all my life up to 15 years old in a place like that, from day one, when I arrive to Revere, I said, "Oh no. I'm not going to stay here. That's no place for me."

**Paul:** It was just a little town...

**George:** A small town and his business was sign painting. He wanted me to help him with the sign painting in his business during the day and of course do other chores around the house. He was married but he didn't have any children until I arrived there. After I left there, they had two other children, two children of their own but my feelings were he was using me for his business or around the house.

That's the impression I got because he was like an authority figure to me in comparison with my other relatives in Istanbul, Turkey. Being a stranger myself to them, to him and his wife and they in turn being strangers to me, we didn't have a very good rapport with each other. I did the best I could. Of course then he wanted me to go to high school here in Revere, which I did all the time I was there.

But only I would go... for example high school here is... Well first of all, schools here and Istanbul, Turkey are different schedule. There are less hours here. Over there you go all day to school. Here Revere, I'm going to high school there and I'm only there for a couple of hours till I came back and here I'm helping him again with his sign painting. Do this, do that, give me this, give me that.

His wife was... I don't want to delve into that. She was a very reserved person so she wasn't open at all to me. The only thing that I remember in the evenings, when he closed shop, my uncle used to go to a club to play cards with friends and other people. Here we are with this woman. I had never met her before, so she wasn't afraid to tell me, "Let's go to a movie in the town." There was a movie there.

Almost two or three a week, we used to go to a movie to spend the time over there. I was impressed with the movies there because even though we had movies in Istanbul, Turkey, here was it was much more elaborate, let's say it that way. I enjoyed going with her to movies.

She was also born in Dardanelles or Chankale so it was sort of.... Their getting together or union, my uncle and his wife, by match making. She was brought here to marry him. They didn't have any children as I said, until that time and their relationship that I could remember now and I could see then that it was very distant. They weren't very close to each other. I don't want to go into detail with that. It's not important.

**Paul:** Where did you sleep in their house?

**George:** They gave me a room.

**Paul:** Oh, you had your own room?

**George:** Yes, upstairs I had a room. The shop was down the stairs and the living quarters upstairs. The only thing I can say about my aunt, my uncle's wife, very good cook. She made good Armenian dishes. Oh, she was an excellent cook. I guess my uncle liked her because she would cook the best things for him as well as for me like ethnic dishes and whatever. My uncle was a good eater. He would enjoy his food so she satisfied him that way I suppose.

**Paul:** Did you have responsibilities in the house aside from helping your uncle in his business?

**George:** Yes. One of the responsibilities was... It was winter time I remember. It was cold. I had to get up first thing in the morning and start a stove downstairs, put wood in there, so that the house will get warm. It was down stairs from the basement.

**Paul:** Were you accustomed to cold weather? Does it get cold in Istanbul?

**George:** No, not at all. Not as much as in the States.

**Paul:** Was that something that you had to adjust to?

**George:** Actually, yes. Absolutely. Up till now, I'm sort of cold blooded. When cold weather starts here, I feel very miserable. That's why after I retired from my job, I bought a place in Florida so in each winter for the past maybe 12, 13 years, we used to go and spend our winters there, Very cold blooded.

**Paul:** Tell me about going to school. The education part is important to your uncle. He wants you to go to high school. Tell me about that experience and what it was like to fit into the high school.

**George:** Of course I had the same education as they here had except that my education there was interrupted there one year. I went in, I think junior class or senior, I think, to continue my education. He took me to the school and registered me there and they asked questions to him as well as to me how much I know of what the grade I was in. Then I continued there and then I finished there.

**Paul:** Tell me about the first week or so. What was it like?

**George:** In school?

**Paul:** In school. What sticks out in your mind about that first week in school?

**George:** Well first of all the classrooms there at the time, they were overcrowded. In Istanbul, schools, classes weren't as crowded as they were here at the time I'm talking about. You couldn't concentrate too much because there was lot of interruptions. That was one impression I had of the school. Of course the activities there like gym and this and that and baseball and this and that, these were strange activities to me because our games over there in Istanbul are different from here.

We play soccer there which they don't have it here but of course now they do. I'm talking about the British high school, soccer and then other games they had there for sports. That's another thing that I was impressed by. Well of course the school building itself was so big, spacious, a lot of classrooms, a lot of floors, you go up and down and so forth.

**Paul:** What about the fact that you were just recently arrived from the other side? How were you treated by your fellow students and by the teachers because of that?

**George:** Well, I didn't have very much close relationships with any of the students. First of all, they looked down on you because you're from a different country. Probably most of the students knew about that at the time. I really didn't have too much close relationship with any of the boys or girls there.

**Paul:** Did you experience any prejudice?

**George:** No.

**Paul:** No one made fun of you or anything like that.

**George:** In Revere, Mass itself, most of the people are Jewish there and their offspring of course they went to the same school with me, so they were minorities themselves. I suppose there were other Armenians there but I didn't... Well I think I did find one or two Armenians. They treated me better maybe, a little better than the other students did but in general, they were all good. I had no complaints about them.

**Paul:** That was going to be my next question. Can you talk about the Armenian community in Revere? Was there an Armenian community in Revere?

**George:** The Armenian community, the ones that I came into contact with, most of them are immigrants from Istanbul or Dardanelles, so they were born there. Even though there were probably other Armenians from different countries or other areas. But my uncle and my uncle's wife relationship with the Armenians were people who came from Dardanelles, also Istanbul. Yes, I met these people. They were very nice to me. In fact they were much nicer than my uncle and my uncle's wife. They treated me nicely.

Often when I have my own time, I used to go visit them, different families and spend time with them. They would ask me questions about Istanbul or my family. They knew... Dardanelles is as I say a small Armenian community so they all knew all these people. They knew my parents or my relatives there so they would ask questions and I would tell them what everybody is doing and so on.

**Paul:** Did that get tiring after a while having constantly supply this information?

**George:** Well in the beginning, it got tiresome but after a while... You can ask so many questions and answers and after they were satisfied with the inquiries, then they started to get adjusted to life in Revere. I still used to visit them. One of them was shoemaker in town. This man was a first cousin to my aunt, my uncle's wife. In fact they were responsible for her to come to this country and meet my uncle, that family, the shoemaker's family. They were nice people.

I'll tell you, for what reason I don't know, but my uncle's wife, as I said, she was a strange woman. I don't know what the reason was, but she never associated with them, for what reason I don't know. She knew that I was going to visit to these people. She wouldn't object to it of course, but she herself wouldn't come with me so honestly it was a strange situation.

**Paul:** Were you in communication with your mother in Turkey?

**George:** Oh, yeah. We used to write letters back and forth.

**Paul:** What kinds of things did you tell...? How did you want your mother to think about your life?

**George:** I was complaining to her a lot about my life in Revere, with my uncle and his wife... Oh boy, did I give it to her? She would say to me in her letters, be patients, have patience, don't do abrupt things. She would give me advice. I suppose she realized that she made a mistake by sending me to this brother's house because she didn't know not too much contact with her brother in Revere.

Well at one point, my other uncle who came with me on the boat, he came to visit us in Revere. He stayed with us for a while because he wanted to see his brother. Alex, my brother over there, treated him just as roughly as he treated me. He wanted him to help him with the signs to hang the signs because he was the only sign painter in town. I don't know if you know much about Revere. Revere is like Coney Island here in Massachusetts.

It's a sea shore and summer time especially, very busy place. All these stands over by the beach they want new signs made. They would come to Alex. The name of the company was Alex Signs so he was very busy. He needed more people, so when my other uncle came, [unknown 01:24:35] is his name, came and saw, oh he was in his [inaudible 01:24:42].

He was using us in this and that. Of course he had other men working for him at the time and he made good money, in the summertime especially. When the wintertime also he was busy making signs for people in town, businesses.

**Paul:** What was the first job that you got that you got a paycheck for that was not with your uncle?

**George:** Well when I came to New York. My other uncle was in New York.

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

**George:** Two years.

**Paul:** Yes.

**George:** After that I just took off. I wouldn't even tell them that I was going. One of the families that I knew there helped me to get my tickets on the bus, I came with the bus. So I came to New York to live with my other uncle. At the time they were living in Washington Heights. Are you familiar with New York?

**Paul:** I know Washington Heights.

**George:** We had a big church there, Armenian Church, a very big Armenian community there. That's where I started earning my money. What I did is I was a soda jock was one of the jobs I had and an errand boy. I used to work for an Armenian man who had a drugstore in Second Avenue. I worked there for a while, quite a while and for money, very few dollars. At the time there was depression. Remember 1930?

**Paul:** Yes.

**George:** You weren't born then.

**Paul:** No.

**George:** But you know about that?

**Paul:** The stock market crashed on October 1929.

**George:** Exactly.

**Paul:** Did you mother ever express any desire to come to America?

**George:** Of course. I wanted them to come. 10 years later, I sponsored them, my mother and my sister. They came and...

**Paul:** They came to live?

**George:** Yes. I sponsored them and they came to live. All these years, of course my mother passed away and my sister passed away so here I am all alone, so to speak. No relatives in this country except my wife and my children, I have two grownup children.

**Paul:** You said there was a big Armenian community in Washington heights in New York. Talk to me about Armenian organizations. Did they exist at that time? Was there an Armenian-

**George:**  Oh, yes. Well even until today, there are two different parties among Armenians, political. They are called Tashnag, is one of them.

**Paul:** You're going to have to spell that please.

**George:** T-A-S-H-A-G. The other one is Ramgavar, R-A-M-G-A-V-A-R, Ramgavar. I think there's another third party too but I'm not sure. I never belonged to any political party. All these parties were alien to me because in Istanbul you're not allowed to have any political ties with any organizations, political organizations. They're very strict, the Turkish government. Over there, Turks, Armenians, don't belong to any parties at all, political parties. But in this country they're free to do whatever they want to do.

So here was different parties living side by side with each other, the people who belong to different parties and there was a lot of political activities going on among Armenians at the time. In fact, I considered myself Ramgavar because Ramgavars are people who believe in our church or they’re more religiously attached to each other rather than politically. I can go further back and say the history and Armenia right now and what it was then, but I don't think it's necessary.

**Paul:** No, I'm just... We'll just pause- Now I'm resuming. What I was curious about was at that time, 1931, 32, 33, when you're in Washington Heights in New York, I was specifically interested in social organizations. Not necessarily political organizations, but were there social organizations for instance that gave charity to Armenian families?

**George:** Yeah church-related organizations for example. I had a good voice at the time. I used to sing in the church choir. That's one organization. I was mostly involved in church activities. I had many Armenian friends there in the choir as well as outside. I used to go to church every Sunday and visit their homes. Most of the time when I wasn't working because it was very difficult to get jobs, when you didn't have jobs then we had a- In certain parts of Washington... Are you familiar with Washington heights?

**Paul:** I know where it is.

**George:** The main thoroughfare? There was an auto-mart there, eating place, cafeteria like here. They don't have [inaudible 01:36:51]. We used to congregate there with several other boys, my age or older and we used to pass time away. As I said, I belonged to choir outside of church, chorus rather so some of these boys were also in the chorus.

**Paul:** So there were indeed different ways that people got together?

**George:** Yes. We had social gathering, dances, etcetera where you meet other people, there were girls. I had two girlfriends at that time.

**Paul:** I'm curious, most of the Armenian people who had come to this country earlier than you had, I'm assuming that these are people with whom you are in association with, did they talk a lot about their experiences during the genocide? Was that an important factor in holding the Armenian community together?

**George:** Yes, but the families that I had relationship with. They were most of them from Istanbul, Turkey. I don't remember ever mentioning about genocide any members of these families. I suppose they were in the same category as I was in that they were spared from genocide, but as I said at the time, the Armenian population in Washington Heights at the time was [inaudible 01:38:40]. So many household that were Armenians coming from different parts and they got along together, social gatherings.

One incident that really impresses me a lot until now, we have a church there, and we had an archbishop in the church who was very outspoken, very well educated person. The Tashnag party members were against his political views because whenever he could, whenever or wherever, he would chastise them, "Why are you doing this kind of activity, political activity?" Well one thing led to another. One Easter Sunday, he was murdered in the church after the services and that was a really big event.

The Tashnag party leaders, they came to the church, all prepared. I was in the church then too, and they actually stabbed him in the procession while he was coming out of the church after the services. Of course there was a lot of investigations. They caught the people. They were put in prison after the trial. But that impressed me a lot because he was a good man, Archbishop Tourian, his name was. They just couldn't stand him anymore with all this protest and all that about all this political activities that they were doing, so they got rid of him.

**Paul:** Do you remember what year that happened?

**George:** Huh?

**Paul:** Do you remember what year that happened?

**George:** 1933.

**Paul:** So that was [inaudible 01:41:02]

**George:** His remains are buried right under the alter there in that church. That's a very famous church, Holy Cross Church in Washington Heights.

**Paul:** So there must have been some people who really loved this man too?

**George:** Oh yes. All the Ramgavars, the majority of Ramgavars as a matter of fact, were living in Washington Heights at the time. I didn't belong but I believed in their activities or in their beliefs because they were mostly church-related activities.

They were good people, very good people but of course when it came to show off, they thought that they were being true Armenians and Tashnags were alien to them with their political activities and beliefs. Then it was a clash between them, globally and otherwise. They had their organization and Ramgavars had their organization, their activities in the organization.

**Paul:** Really split the Armenian people.

**George:**  Oh yes. In half, as a matter of fact, right after this murder in the church, for years and years after that, there were two parties among Armenians which they never, never got together. They had their own affairs, until now there is this Tashnag party even in this country but now of course Armenia is a Republic.

Ever since then I don't think the Tashnags have any voice in the government or they don't do anything underhanded to throw the government down. But since the Soviet Union, it was part of the Soviet Union. Armenia was at one time, for many years. But now that they split, all these different republics had their own countries so Armenia was one of them. Now it's Ramgavars who's running the country actually.

**Paul:** We have just a few minutes left and I want to make sure I get marriage and children and everything.

**George:** Well I earned my money today.

**Paul:** You did. What year did you get married?

**George:** We were married in 1949.

**Paul:** And what is your wife's name?

**George:** You want the Armenian name or English name? Haygouhi is the name H-A-Y-G-O-U-H-I. Haygouhi. But now after she become a citizen, her name is Hedy, H-E-D-Y.

**Paul:** And her maiden name, her last name before she was married?

**George:** Varjabedian, V-A-R-J-A-B-E-D-I-A-N.

**Paul:** Tell me how you met her.

**George:** I was about 38 or 39 years old. I had several girlfriends here in Washington Heights, Armenian girlfriends, but none of them really appealed to me. I was always saying to people who wanted to find a suitor for me, a girl for me, I would say, I'm waiting for a girl to come from Istanbul. [Inaudible 01:44:54] I want to marry.

My sister at the time was very active in Washington heights among different clubs and she knew a lot of Armenian families. She found out that my wife had come to this country as a visitor to her aunt in Malden, I think. Malden, Mass?

**Paul:** Malden Mass.

**George:** Malden, Mass or Bedford. Either one, I'm not sure. Anyway she was here as a visitor so she had to get married to stay in this country. Otherwise she would be going back. They decided to both of us meet in New York. It's a long story but I'll make it short.

We met and we liked each other. It's so happened or turned out that her parents in Istanbul were friends with my parents there. In fact, my sister here went to school with her in Istanbul. Really Hedy wasn't a complete stranger to me. It just worked out perfect. We got married and we're married now 46 years now.

**Paul:** And children?

**George:** She had five pregnancies, three didn't live. [Inaudible 01:46:34] miscarriage, the other one lived two days. We had one boy who's 39 years old and my daughter, which I just spoke to, is four years younger than she is. My daughter married. I have two grandchildren.

**Paul:** What are your children's names?

**George:** My children's names? Linda is one of them and the other one is Robert.

**Paul:** Robert and Linda. Before we end, I want you to tell me about the first time you went back to Turkey and what it felt like to be in Istanbul.

**George:** 1963.

**Paul:** What did it feel like-?

**George:** I was looking forward to that. First of all, I wanted to bring my children over there and introduce them to my family because most of them were living at the time in Istanbul. That was one of the reasons. Another reason, I hadn't seen my relatives there, my cousins they were all there, so I was looking forward to meeting them. I found that Istanbul itself wasn't what I was expecting. The time that I lived there, it was quite a change.

First of all it was overpopulated. At the time that we first went was about 8 million people. The second time that we went was 10 million people. All that hub bub and the city itself was dirty. They don't have the same hygiene conditions as we have here. I was disappointed in that aspect but of course I went there to see my relatives. I didn't go to see the city. I was familiar with the city anyway. We had a good time. We stayed about five weeks there.

**Paul:** Did you see the house that you lived in as a child?

**George:** Oh no. All these places in Scutari that I went because I wanted to see my school, original school. I wanted to see the homes that I lived in. None of them are around anymore. They built condominiums or homes. They're all gone.

**Paul:** All gone. Did you feel any kind of emotional connection when you were there?

**George:** With who?

**Paul:** With the place. Did you feel like-

**George:** Yeah. In Scutari I had a lot of emotional connection because I had a lot of memories. The school I went with, the building was there but it was dilapidated. I had a lot of memories coming back to me. The homes weren't there anymore, but the town itself, there wasn't much change the first time I went there.

**Paul:** How do you think your life would have been different if you had never come to the United States?

**George:** Well that's a good question. I don't know. I really don't know. But I'll tell you one thing. A very close friend of mine that we went to Armenian school together, he was a dentist when I went there. He became a dentist. I probably would have ended up to become a doctor. My aspirations were to become a doctor or a dentist or something like that because we had a very good background educationally in Istanbul as well as in Turkey.

**Paul:** You might have turned out just as well there or you [inaudible 01:50:09]

**George:** Oh sure, sure. I'm almost positive. But of course my mother's thinking was different from mine. I don't know if I made a mistake. However, I don't think so because I'm well-adjusted in this country.

**Paul:** How do you think about America now?

**George:** Oh well. I feel as though I was born here. That's how I feel about it. I like this country. I worked for the labor department so I have no complaints about that and I retired from there. The country was good to me even though probably I would have been better off or worse of if I stayed in Turkey I don't know. That's hard to say so that's it.

**Paul:** That's a good place for us to end, I think. Mr. Papazian, I want to thank you very much for letting me come out here.

**George:** You're welcome. I'm very happy that you came and we had the interview.

**Paul:** Yes, I put you through your paces today.

**George:** You did too.

**Paul:** This is Paul Seacrest signing off with Mr. George Papazian on Saturday, September 30, 1995 in Three Bridges, New Jersey. Thank you.

**George:** You're welcome.