

DP-59
ADRIENNE MAZLEMIAN NEVINS
BIRTH DATE: DECEMBER 31, 1910
INTERVIEW DATE: NOVEMBER 16, 1989
RUNNING TIME: 1:30:00
INTERVIEWER: NANCY DALLETT
RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME
INTERVIEW LOCATION: TUCSON, AZ
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TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

TURKEY (ARMENIAN), 1924
AGE 15 (AS RECORDED IN THE INTERVIEW)
PASSAGE ON "THE PRESIDENT WILSON"

DALLETT: Okay. I think we're going to begin here. My name is Nancy Dallett, and I'm speaking tonight with Mrs. Adrienne Nevins for the Ellis Island Oral History Project. And this is Interview Number 433 [DP-59]. Today is Thursday, November 16, 1989, and we are beginning this interview at about 7:15 P.M. I'm at her house in Tucson, Arizona. And we're going to be talking about her immigration experience from Turkey in 1924 when she was fifteen years old. Okay. Let's start at the beginning of your story, and could you tell me when you were born?

NEVINS: I was born, you want the date?

DALLETT: Please. Uh-huh.

NEVINS: Yeah. December 31, 1910.

DALLETT: And where is it you were born?

NEVINS: Izmir, Turkey.

DALLETT: Can you tell me a bit about your childhood in Izmir?

NEVINS: Uh, my childhood, I was very little and a, but I can remember there was a war. And I was the remnant of war. And we were just by ourselves at time where my mother was sick in the hospital and my older sister, who was about two and half years older than myself, and I had another sister who was about four years younger than myself. So we were in the house, and we didn't know what breakfast was and lunch was or dinner was or anything. I had my grandfather and he tried to go and fish. He had a little rowboat, and if he sold the fish, then he bought bread and he brought over. Of course, we had papers that we could go and get so much bread per day. I don't know how much, what it is now, but very, very small piece, like two slices, for the entire day. And if my grandfather was successful, then he would bring something. He would be so happy. He would wake us up.

He says, "Look what I brought." And we would sit in bed and we would eat. And, uh, sometimes I was so hungry that I would look on the ground, if I saw a raisin or something, I would pick it up and eat . So years went by like that, and then my mother came out of the hospital. Then, we were in the suburb of Izmir. Then we moved in town, Izmir. My mother got a job, and she used to go. And then, like on Saturdays, Sundays, she used to go to the farms where, the farms that they, after they had taken the crop, whatever had fallen people could go and gather it. So she would go over there and gather. And sometimes I would go with her. We would sleep right outside on the ground and she had a friend that she used to call my, friend of misery, you know, together they used to go. And sometimes they used to take me. I was the middle. So the older ones used to take care of younger ones, and I used to go with her. And, uh, it used to be scary and things like that. However, I think about it now, it was kind of a thrill, you know, for a young one. And then airplanes used to come over and they used to throw bombs, English airplanes. And they had a, that voice by itself, it used to do something to the body. Whhhhhr, your body. Then everybody used to take pillows or whatever they had. My mother used to drag us in the churchyard because they said they wouldn't throw a bomb on a church. So, but all that, sometimes I used to see my school friends, and it was a thrill. It was scary, but it was a thrill. When I walked on the street, horse carts, donkey carts passed by with parts of people, hands, feet, and all things like that. But we accepted like, s\doesn't everyone, like, you

know, as a matter of fact. And then my mother put me, I don't know how old I was, but my mother put me into a place where they had a sewing machine and all I had to do is, uh, what do you call this?

DALLETT: A foot treadle?

NEVINS: Yeah. And then used to make rope that they used to turn, and then they used to make rope. And they used to pay me four, not even cents, four cents. Even less than a cent, over there. But that's a day. And my mother needed that. So I used to go over there, sometimes I used to fall asleep and they used to wake me up, you know, doing that. Anyway--

DALLETT: Can you recall how old you might have been when you had to go and work on the treadle?

NEVINS: I don't, maybe I was five years old or something. Yeah.

DALLETT: Was it filled with women and children making rope?

NEVINS: Yeah. Other women, I guess other, there were other children too. But, and they got me. And, uh, and then my mother used to do

some kind of a factory, they used to make material. Sometimes she used to take me along with her, a mill. And I used to try to do it too. They used to feel sorry for my mother. Always the middle. I had yo go with her because the others, I don't know, maybe three of us would fight, or something like that. But anyway, that's the way, when--

DALLETT: What about the brothers?

NEVINS: I had a little brother. Then we went to an orphanage. My mother, because she couldn't take care of us any more. The orphanage, American relief orphanage that opened. And she took us over. And she got a job in the boys orphanage. And, uh, and we went to the girls orphanage, our three girls. What was that you were asking before?

DALLETT: Oh, I was asking, well, I'm not sure, but I wanted to ask whether your father had been conscripted in the army?

NEVINS: Uh, yes. My father, they came and took him away.

DALLETT: When you say they, who do you refer to?

NEVINS: The Turks. The Turks. You know how they used to do

that? The whole gang of Turks and Kurds used to pass by the street with drums, and whoever they saw, men, male, they used to take them in. You couldn't get out any more. You couldn't even let your family know, or anything like that. And sometimes they used to close the blocks and come into the houses and investigate. They would see if there is anything that you have that it's pertaining to your nationality, something like that. So my father, he didn't go in the beginning because he paid money. He was a jeweler, like he makes, from very beginning, he used to make big (?) with diamonds and everything for the rich people. And, uh, he paid some money and he didn't go. Finally, they kept coming back, you know, like blackmail.

He thought that he would endanger his family, because when he was young he used to belong into organization that they used to gather money and buy arms and these people used to leave the villages to be down the hill, and up the hill, that's where the menfolks used to live, on the hills, to protect the village because many Turks and Kurds used to come over and rape their wives and, or steal some of them, and get all the food and everything, you go. So he used to do things like that, and he was arrested. They had thrown him someplace and beat him up, and all his teeth were broken and everything, yes. And later when he escaped, then he came to Izmir, you see. That's where he married my mother and we were born. So he thought of all those things, he thought that if he doesn't go they might investigate, they might find out that he was working with these people, and he would put his family in jeopardy, so he went. This particular time, he went. Well, one time,

late at night, there were dogs outside, they were barking. And then in Turkey we have a man, we used to call him 'pazvant," he has a big stick, and he walks on the street to protect. And he bang, bang, bang, like, with his stick, and you hear that, you know. Some kind of a feeling, it feels, your entire body, you don't know to be frightened or not to or things like that.

So late at night, we were all asleep, and I woke up like that. I saw my father and I saw my mother, it's like a dream to me. And late at night like that he came. And then he told my mother, my mother told us later, when we could understand, that he said that, "I don't know where they're going to send me. You might not see me again." So they hugged and every thing, yes, and he kissed his children. I don't even remember he kissing me or anything, you know, because we were so small. So then he went, that was the last that we saw my father. So all these things is going on without a father. He was a way. So then, like we were in the orphanage, and then my sister, yeah, my, I was talking, I wanted to tell you about my brother. I had a little brother, he was just like my grandfather, which is odd for Armenians. He had blue eyes and red hair like my grandfather had. And oh, he was so good looking, such a sweetheart. He had whooping cough. And, uh, the Americans over there, they were making him swallow ice. And over there they keep them warm. It's a different way. In the United States, ice, ice, ice, but over there is warm, warm, warm. But whatever it was, I don't know, there were two children and, uh, that had the whooping cough, in the orphanage hospital, and he passed away. Now we were in a girls school and

we had dormitory. In the middle of the night my sister, my older sister started to scream. We all woke up, and I'm sitting over there, I think my sister is sick, or what. You know, she was, and the supervisor and everything, they came over. She started to cry, cry, cry. "My brother, my brother, my brother." And the next day they got in touch, and my mother wanted to get in touch with them, too, to tell them my brother was dead. But they didn't tell us anything. They said, "You're going to go and meet your mother." So they, we got dressed and somebody took us, I suppose, you know. And we went to the boy's orphanage. And over there my mother told us that my brother died. So, and my mother loved boys. You know, she was getting girls, girls, she wanted a boy to carry on the name of her husband. But anyway, that's how I, we remained just three sisters. And that's how we were, only three, and my older sister, she used to take care of us and everything. We had some experiences. We had, I don;t know if I should say this or not, we had a minister who used to call on us. And we used to, after a while we started running, my older sister used to go run in the bathroom and lock herself. And I said, "Why?" And then he used to put his hands on us. You know, we didn't know anything, but I think, you know, he was trying, all over, like that. And then sometimes we used to close the door, and not open it. I had an uncle who was also a soldier. Sometimes he used to run away, and they used to give him, they used to give him a loaf of bread for twenty-four hours because he was a soldier. He used to run away at night so they wouldn't see, he used to bring that bread to us. It was

black bread. At that time black bread was, we didn't think, but now we thing black bread is all right. But he used to bring. So my sister told him that this minister comes to the house all the time and she knew more than I did. And one day I saw, I remember that my uncle, he says, "You should be ashamed of your beard and your--" Like, you're a priest or something. He threw him out, he said, "I don't want to see you here any more." You know, little things like. But that's when my mother was in the hospital. But when she got out and we came to, you know, she worked. And then when we were in the orphanage, it was all right. So then my sister, she became fifteen or sixteen, and some French people wanted a girl to become concierge with the little, they had two little children, a boy and a girl. So that's where she went. She used to take care of those two little children. But hey had maids to do things. My sister, all she did is get in the horse carriage and take them out, entertainment, and things like that. So then one day some lady who used to take of my mother every time she was pregnant, when I had my father, and they were all well to do. This woman, she was a midwife, she used to come and take care of my mother whenever she gave birth. But now she had a son who was in the United States. So she came one day and told my mother, this is what they tell me. That she wanted my sister for her son, and she's coming to United States and she wanted to bring my sister to United States. And my mother said, "We like to go to United States ourselves." And she says, "Oh, don't worry about it. When I go with your daughter, then we're going to send you affidavit and you'll be

able to come." Okay. My sister, my sister came and a man she didn't even know. When he took, she tells me, when he took his hat off she saw that he was bald and she felt so terrible. But anyway, she was all by herself. Mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother, two brother-in-laws, in a house, and then she gave birth to a child. But my brother-in-law, mt sister's husband, thought we were too young and he would have to take care of us if we, if he sent us the affidavit to come, he would be responsible. So he never did. So my mother now, she had me. See, I was becoming fifteen years old. And she had, while she was working in the boys orphanage, she had the charge of the underwear. She had a room, and all the underwear, the boys, I don't know, one day a week, two days a week, they used to come over. She used to have little cubbies, you know, with numbers over there. She used to give them the underwear. So there was a young boy over there that had a brother and he brought his brother, introduced to my mother. They sat down and they had Turkish coffee together and talked. And he said that some American people, they are coming to the United States, they're going to bring them, that boy and his brother, and other relatives of his, they were going to bring them to the United States. Uh, so then they became friends. When he came to the United States, my mother and he wrote to each other specially that his brother, my brother knew him from the orphanage. And, um, so when she wrote to him he says, she told him that there are some families over here, and they have a son and they want me to marry. And this other, just a hint. And he said, "Well, isn't she young?" She says, "No, they marry

young over here." And all that. So she kept hinting, hinting. Finally he wanted me to come to the United States. That's the only way my mother could get into the United States. And while she was in orphanage and my brother had died, there was another boy that kept calling my mother, "Mama, mama, mama." And she kind of, not adopted him, but it was like mother. When it became so that we were going to come United States, the supervisor over there said, "You can't leave this boy over here because he'll die because he has you like mother." So we had to bring him along, and I had an uncle who had, my uncle that he was a soldier, well, he had come to the United States. He lived in Philadelphia. And in Massachusetts was this man. So he sent us two affidavits, and my uncle sent two, because he had the first paper. They were not full citizens. They only had the first paper yet. Uh, now, if I came here, I had to be married in order to get out from Ellis Island, so we had to say I was eighteen years old, and they had prompted me, and I was not so stupid. I kept saying I was eighteen. But anyway we were, we came with President Wilson. The ship's name was President Wilson, and everybody was Italian in there, most of them. And I spoke Italian. I spoke French. I spoke Greek. I spoke Turkish. I spoke Armenian. And a little bit German because this orphanage was occupied by German nuns before the American relief came. So the children knew how to speak German, so they used to say, you know, this and that, and "Ich liebe dich," and this and the other, we picked up little words here and there. And, um, so he sent us money--

DALLETT: Tell me what kind of correspondence you had with this man you were supposed to marry.

NEVINS: Wait a minute. Now, wait a minute. Now, since my brother-in-law wouldn't send us any money, not money, affidavit, at that time we had, we had a house, before my father went away we had a house. And so my mother sold the house. My sister, I don't know how come my sister's name was on it, and she gave the authority to my mother to sell it, signed it and sent it to her. So we had the money in our hands, but we didn't have affidavit to come to United States. So then somebody said to my mother, "Look, it's very difficult to get affidavit over here to go to United States. But if you go to Egypt--" Where my uncle, I had an uncle in Egypt who had run away not to become a soldier. From there the quota is smaller. And these people had an interest, because these people's father wanted to come to Egypt because his wife already and his daughter, they were in Egypt. And he was kind of sickly old man. And they wanted my mother to take care of him. And there was another family that we knew from Izmir, and they wanted to go, they were going to Egypt too. So, but her husband, my mother used to give the money to her husband, and he used to take care of the money. So we were all together, we were in, uh, then we came to Greece, and then from Greece, you know, we're going to. But anyway--

DALLETT: Did you have to stay in Egypt for a while in order to get--

NEVINS: Yeah, so we went to Egypt. And, uh, I had my uncle and his wife. So we went to her house. She was Greek. And she had one little boy. But my mother, I mean, we were children. But my mother, evidently she couldn't stand to live with her sister-in-law. She looked someplace and she was taking some work at home. She was making tassels. You know, the Turkish people have fez, and fez has a tassel, like. She used to have a little machine, and she used to make the tassels and then take it over and they used to make, give her money. So we went to these people's house that she rent us one room and my mother went to work, but they wanted me to work. She was a dressmaker, to help her out, and it will help our rent for that room. So anyway, we stayed, we stayed in Egypt about three years, I think.

DALLETT: Waiting for the quota system for you to be able to come.

NEVINS: Yes. Not the quota system or anything, but we knew what we're going to, yes, what is going to happen with the quota and everything. In the meantime, we thought that maybe without quota we'd be able to come, but we couldn't. But we were, my mother was trying all these all the time. So I was going to school. I'm in Egypt now, we have a room, and we, I was going to school. And then from school the English people, they came and

selected a few girls to show them, the telephone company, how to work to become an operator, a few hours a day. That, and then wireless, dot and dashes, to teach. So, but for that, they were going to give us money. After we finished the course they were going to give us money. So going over there I became really good. So my mother needed the money, I got out of the school, and she put me to work there. Over here they give you stripes when you learn something. Here they used to, there they put the stripes on your collar, then they take one by one. When you don't have any more stripes, that means that you're very successfully graduated. So anyway, they gave me some, at the end, you know, they gave me some gold pieces, and then they used to give us a little money at the end of the month. But that was kind of, experience. But in the meantime, my mother was working on this guy.

DALLETT: Yeah, I'm a little confused, because what happened to the man that wanted to marry you?

NEVINS: Yeah. So my mother was working on this, you know, that my daughter, "Isn't she young?" And then, "No, because a lot of people want to marry her, and I'm afraid I'm going to marry her over here." And so on, and so forth. So, until, she made him say that, "Yes, I'll marry her." And she did all this matchmaking, you see. And, uh, finally, and she sent, he sent some money, and these people that we, from Izmir, we came to Egypt

together, now they were going to the United States too. So we all going to the United States together. You know, it was very funny. And they knew each other very well. So anyway, now the papers are done and everything else. You know, my mother's taking care of all this. So we, we had to go to Greece, Piraeus and Patras. From Patras we were going to take the ship. So this Greek man puts us on a rowboat to take us to the big boat. So right in the middle, before we got to the boat, to the ship, boat or ship? Ship, boat, whatever. Uh, President Wilson. He stopped, he says, "I want money, more money." So we had this man over there. So he was taking care of, because my mother was giving him the money, he was taking care of expenses. So he said, "Okay." He gave him a little bit. And then when we came, and then he took us to the boat. As we were getting, descending, and going on the steps to go up on the big boat, he turned around to him and said, "I had left over a lot of money, and I was going to give it to you. But because you did that--" He took all the change, he threw it right in the water, to show him that, because that's what they did to us. So we got on the boat. And there was one Italian sailor, because I spoke Italian, and he used to, we were, we came third class. And, uh, he used to pass by and he used to hum a song that's in Egypt, "Salome." "Quant Salome, sans voille ce monte dans l'hero elle avez dans ce cheveux et ca tout a chere adore, tout de la parfume adore." You know, that was the Egyptian girl that she anointed herself with perfumes and everything. But being that I was Egypt, you know, he used to sing these songs, and he used to look at me, and I'd

look at him. And in the meantime, this man that I was going to come for, he sent us a ring, but you see, in our custom, they send you the wedding band, and you put it in one hand. And when you get married, then they put that, they take that one, they put it on the other hand. Uh, he wasn't rich enough for me to have a diamond or anything like that, see. So all the boys that there were working on our ship, they thought I was married.

DALLETT: Was, or wasn't?

NEVINS: That I was married.

DALLETT: Was. Okay.

NEVINS: Because they saw that wedding band, you know, the plain one, you know, that kind and they thought I was married. And I didn't know this, but somebody said to my mother, he says, "You know, all these boys are after your daughter because she think she's married and she's easy. You know, because her husband is not with her," easy. But anyway, this fellow was very, very nice. He used to sing songs, and once in a while he used to come next to me. We used to talk, things like that. And I was young, and I know I didn't care for the fellow that I was coming for. And he kind of thrilled me, you know. But then when we approached, because I knew all these languages, everybody wanted me to go to the telegraph office and send

telegrams, and they used to tell me, and then we used to have, I knew a little English too. I had taken up in school. In school the teachers thought that I was good in English. And, uh, I translated for them, and we got, we sent the telegrams. And we sent one for us, of course. Here I'm sending telegrams for other people I'm helping, and we sent the telegram, my husband-to-be over here, he didn't believe it. He said it was too soon. He said, "They make a mistake on the telegram, they say the arrival date if--" You going to change it?

DALLETT: Yeah. I want to change the tape before we run out, so let me just switch, okay?

NEVINS: Yeah, okay.

DALLETT: That's the end of side one of Interview Number 433 [DP-59] with Adrienne Nevins.

NEVINS: See, there are a lot of things in between, but I'm not--

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

DALLETT: This is the beginning of side two of Interview Number 433 [DP-59} with Adrienne Nevins. Uh, so you were saying you had sent this telegram to your husband-to-be and he thought it was too soon.

NEVINS: Yes, too soon. He says, "They mad a mistake." Instead of saying that they're arriving at such and such a date, they meant that they're just getting on the boat such and such a date. So we came to Ellis Island. Of course, before we got out of the boat they came over, they examined us for trachoma, for our eyes, and for lice in our hair, and everything else, but everybody knew me. They liked me because I spoke Italian with them. They used to bring me, I had never seen such a big lemon, this big lemon. And they used to bring it to me because sometimes I used to get sick in my stomach, and dry bread, you know. And there was one man, "Azo." In the mornings to wake us up, "Azo, azo. Montare sopra. Prendere a aira." I don't know, it was not Italian completely, you know, but he used to say, "Montare sopra, prendere a aira." You know, "Get up and go upstairs so you can take air." He used to pass by, and we used to wake up with his noise like that. So, then, of course, we stopped in, we stopped in Algeria and all these Algerian people, they were climbing on the boat, and the people, the sailors and all, they were beating them. They wouldn't, they wouldn't care because there was ropes hanging down. They were, you know, like net. They were coming on, they wanted to sell things. And they

spoke French, and we saw that too. And then some Portugal, we stopped at Portugal, and a lot of people, they came from Portugal with bundles. I think they brought their laundry with them or something, they were laundering and everything else. Anyway, they examined everybody and everything, hair and all that.

DALLETT: That was on the boat?

NEVINS: Before we go out, when we arrived. Then we, we went, they put us on the boat, they took us to Ellis Island and we saw the Statue of Liberty. But I was sad because I was leaving this man and I was coming to someone which I didn't even know and not even care that I had seen his pictures and I didn't even care. So when we got to Ellis Island and everybody was, they have to put you on this line, that line, and then we, I was in one line, there was one man, he was American, and he was tall, he had grey hair, he had a soldier's uniform. So he talked to me. He looked at my hands, he looked at my nails, and he looked at my, I've got to do my nails tonight, when I go to bed so that they'll be, and my nails, and he said to me, "Make believe, you know--? To me, (?), "How old are you?" I said "Eighteen." And then he said some other things too, and then he said, "How old are you?" I said, "Eighteen." You know.

DALLETT: In what language was this?

NEVINS: In English.

DALLETT: Oh, in English.

NEVINS: Yeah. I said, "Eighteen." And, uh, but he didn't speak Armenian, but he knew of the Armenians. And then he told my, he asked my mother that, what is the situation over here. Because he didn't come. He was supposed to come to Ellis Island, they're going to marry us over there, and then we're going to get out. We couldn't get out without getting married. That's what they had told us. Because I came to be married. And, so he said, he asked my mother, and my mother said, "My daughter and myself, we're going to her fiancée." You know, we're going to get married. "And the other two are going to Philadelphia to my brother." Because that's the way the affidavit was. So he said to her, "You know a lot of things like this happen. It happens that you bring somebody, your daughter, she won't like the man, and she'll be miserable. You take your--" He told her all these things. He says, "You take your daughter, I'm going to let you get out. You take your daughter, you take your family, go to your brother in Philadelphia. And if this man wants her, let him come over there and get her." So, well, what could my mother do? He's a soldier, he works over there, you know, he's a big shot there, whatever. He's, you know, he's got a charge of things. The minute we left him that we were going to

Philadelphia, they also got us, he also helped us to get the ticket to Philadelphia. So he left us. The minute we left, my mother heard somebody who was speaking Greek, and she spoke Greek, and she said, "Look, they made a mistake. We want to go to Massachusetts, but they gave us a ticket to Philadelphia." She didn't want to go to Philadelphia. She didn't want to go with the sister-in-law over there that she didn't know. And they couldn't get along with my uncle anyway very well. They just, I used to hear, they used to fight together. He used to make my mother miserable many times. So anyway, she changed the ticket for Massachusetts. Now they put some things on our lapel. The Greek man said, "Oh, sure, sure." Because, you know, we're aliens, you know, we can make a mistake. So he right away went and changed, got all four tickets for Massachusetts. And they put over here things on our lapels. We don't know what it was, but it was "Fall River, Fall River" on ours. So now we're going, and I am such a well-dressed, you know. I had Pongi dress, and there was a belt all different colors, velvet ribbon, I had made the belt. Because I had learned how to sew and everything else. And here I had a big wooden box that it was, I don't know why my mother was taking, it was antique. I was carrying like this. Imagine, you know.

DALLETT: Under your arm.

NEVINS: Yeah. Under my arm. I was embarrassed, but I was doing

it.

DALLETT: What was in the box?

NEVINS: I don't know if, she had some things. A wooden box. Can you imagine? It was heavy, too. So, so then they had a porter, a black porter, and he was showing us, you know, where we're going to. And I was talking to him un Arabic. I said, "You speak?" He says, "I'm sorry, I can't speak." Just because he was black, I thought he was, could speak Arabic. (She laughs.) You know, Arab. So, because the Arabs over there, you know, some of them are very black. So anyway, he took us, we went someplace. There was a big door. And I said, "Why are they taking us over here?" So somebody said, "No train today. Boston tomorrow." So I thought maybe they're putting us in a hotel or something, big. Then we went into a hall, entryway, great big, with black and white square tiles and, uh, and then they put us in a room, and they have berths. So, okay, we got in that room. So now my other said, uh, I call him brother you know, that boy that came with us. They said, uh, "We're hungry." So he went outside to see if he could ask for a restaurant. So

they said to him, "No, no, no." He says, "What kind of a hotel is this? They don't let us go out to eat?" So the man said he will make some sandwiches for us. So he went over there. He paid whatever it is. They made some sandwiches for us. In the meantime, I went over to, there was a sink in that place, and there were berths, and there was a lot of other people, and there were a lot of Portuguese. And they had their guitar. They were singing (Portuguese). They were singing all evening long. And I looked above the sink. There was a round window. I turned to my mother. I said, "Ma, either we are moving, or the buildings are moving." We were on a boat. We didn't know. We thought we were getting a hotel. Because in our country to get into the boat, you have to go at the, uh, I don't know what they call, a ramp, a big, wide ramp, and you know you're going on a boat. This one is just attached to the ground and you just walking in. We didn't see any water, we didn't see anything. So then they all come to the window. Then we went outside. We saw automobiles parked in there, everything. All of a sudden we saw greenery on each side. It was the Fall Rover Line. And it was a boat, you know. We didn't know. And, uh, so anyway, uh,

overnight. That's why they say there is no train, that's why they put us on a boat. And Massachusetts, Boston, tomorrow. You see, we slept overnight there. So the next day we were in Boston. Okay, now what? So somebody evidently, you know, took us to a train station, and they left us there. But I noticed over there this lady sitting over there at a desk. So I said, I didn't know what she was doing, but she looked as if she belongs there or something. I went over there to her, and I said, my broken English, I said, "We want to go." Oh, excuse me, I said, "We want to go to Stoneham, Massachusetts." She said, "Oh, sit down over here." She was a travel aide, you see. So when she was sitting at this, I thought, you know, at the desk, then she must know something. So then I said, I said to her, "But my fiance didn't come." I said, "But," I said, "he has uncle, and the uncle has a dry goods store. He must have a telephone." And she said, "Yeah, what is his name?" And I gave his name, Tarpin. So she found, she telephoned them, she found and they were expecting, every one of them expecting. This was supposed to be my fiance's uncle and his wife, see. They live in Reading, Massachusetts. So she told her, uh, "Put them on a train

and I'll pick them up over here." So she, then she put us on a train, and when we got off with that big box on my side, she knew. She could recognize right away. She came over and she hugged us and all that and she took us into her house. Oh, it was such a beautiful, nice house and everything, you know, in the United States, you know.

But we were waiting now for, at night, for my fiance to come. But in the meantime, going back, this lady who was his uncle's wife, this lady's mother and father, they had come to Egypt to find wives for the three big sons, which were very, very accomplished. They had Ford, three brothers, For, what do they call, they're called something.

DALLETT: Agency, or--

NEVINS: Yeah, yeah, but entire. They sold and they repaired, everything. And they were very affluent, you know, people.

DALLETT: Wait. Let me get this straight. The woman who met you at the train station brought you home.

NEVINS: Yes.

DALLETT: You were waiting for the, your fiance to come home.

NEVINS: Yes, yes. In the meantime--

DALLETT: In the meantime, say that once more.

NEVINS: In the meantime, this is afternoon. In the meantime I'm going back that this, what had happened with her parents had come to Egypt. They had seen me there and they wanted me for their daughter. Says, so my mother, for their, one of the sons, the youngest son. So they said to my mother, "How come you're sending your daughter to this man," and which they are related, far related, with this man, and they know him, they live in the same town, Stoneham, Massachusetts. "He owes money everywhere. You know, he borrowed money, he brought his aunt over here, and he hasn't paid back yet, and he's so poor, and my son is so nice. And you, I see your daughter can play the piano. When he comes, my son will let her take lessons. And my son plays the saxophone." And all that. And my mother said, "No. I promised. I can't go back on my promise." Because my mother thought that if she gave me away, then she would never be able to come to the United States. It will be from the first experience, like my sister, her husband didn't send, promised us but never sent us the affidavit, it's going to be the same thing, they're going to get stuck. I'm going to be here but

they're going to get stuck. So she said, "No, I promised him, and he is going." They took my picture, among the other pictures. They didn't get a girl. They didn't like any girl, and all that, but they just took a lot of girls pictures to bring to the United States, show to their children, to the boys, and whomever they liked, they should go over there and bring them. So my picture was among those pictures. So now I'm back. We just arrived, and we're waiting for my husband, my fiance, to come at night. So all of a sudden her brother comes, that one that the mother wanted me. She must have telephoned or something. Oh, I looked at him, so tall, so handsome, and the way he spoke the Armenian with an American accent. Ooh, I just loved that, you know, because when I was in Egypt, when I used to walk on the streets going to school or coming back from school, I used to see some English soldiers. I used to walk right beside them, you know, for people to think that I'm with him, you know. I used to like them, you know. They didn't have beard, moustache, nothing, clean. I used to just like them very much. And this fellow was like that, you know. And he just looked at me, you know. And I'm bashful, I'm fifteen years old, you know. And she said to her brother, she said, "How you like our bride?" You know, ours, because her husband is the uncle of my fiance. And he says, "I like her very much." You know. And I hear the story, that when her mother came with these pictures to show to her sons, while she was showing, this boy took my picture, selected my picture, and my fiance happened to be there, because that's his uncle, you know, they're related. He said, "Let me see which one

you picked?" You know. He sees my picture, he says, "Hey, that's mine." You know, takes it away from him. But anyway, then he married some local girl, and they wanted to have a boy, they wouldn't have, and I had a boy. And I had nothing, you know. But they, because they got children, but not a boy, they were all jealous that I got a boy. They gave gifts, you know, and they built a house, this fellow that wanted me, that he married somebody for United States, and they built a big house on a hill and everything, yes. But my husband, now he was telling me, he said, "Yeah, but," he says, "I never went out with girls, but these people went every day with different, different girls." In other words, in character, he is better than they are, or something like that. But anyway, in the beginning, I wasn't going to, you know, I wasn't going to get married at the beginning. So we came to live with another uncle and his wife. That's where they were living. And his brother too. So all of us, into their house. But my sister, who was in Connecticut, she wrote and said, "Look, since she's not married, why can't she come over and stay with me for a while?" Then my uncle called, "Why can't she come and stay with us?" So my mother thought that without me she's nothing over there. I'm the cause that she is welcomed over there. And my husband-to-be, my fiance, you know, he was a good man. Not prosperous, but, you know, low-pitched man. He said that since I got out without getting married, he says, he would send me to school, not getting married. And then they had an organ in the house that you pedal, with the organ. I used to play songs, and all the neighbors, the day that I didn't

play the neighbors used to come and say, "Where is Adrienne? How come she is not playing today?" Things like that. And it's a small town. Stoneham was very sweet little town. And, uh, I don't know what I was going to make out. But anyway, I was going to go to school. But then everybody wanted me. Even then his uncle said to him, "Look, you better marry this girl, because once you let her go they're going to take her away from you. You're going to lose her." So then we got married. Within a few months we got married. And from that, from that time on, I started suffer. Then I had to go to work. I used to go looking for a job. If they, when they said, "There isn't, we haven't got anything for you." I used to cry. I used to be insulted, because I didn't know the difference. And then I used to take the trolley car to go to this place and there used to be snow on the ground, and it was the first time that I saw snow. We came, we came to the United States the Fourth of July. When we were, came to Massachusetts it was Fourth of July. And all these firecrackers and everything, but it used to frighten us, because we thought right away, you know, the bombs are, you know. Until we went to a fireworks, and we saw, we said, "Gee, what a beautiful country this is." You know, and all that. It was real nice. But then he brought me some work at home. I used to make the curtains, embroidery, the curtains. And my back used to, I was young, but my back used to hurt. Now I sit like that, my back doesn't hurt, but at that time my back used to hurt because I used to put it in my lap and then work, and he used to take it, and he used to take the money. And then he always used

to lose his job. He used to work one place, they used to lay him off, work in another place, and he used to owe money here and there. And my folks, we all lived together. Then we got another apartment. My mother and my brother and my sister and myself and my husband, we lived in one house, and they went half and half on the expense. And they started to work, they paid him back the money that they borrowed to come to United States. But he used that money for our half of the living expenses, and he still owed money. And I had to, I used to stand on one leg first on the snow. You know, because the trolley car used to come every half hour, and for them to tell me we have no job for you, how long does it take? I used to come over on the snow, stand on one leg, then on the other leg, and all that. And, you know, it wasn't an easy life. Then the move from one place to another, then we moved in Connecticut, then from Connecticut they moved us into New York, some friends that he had over there. And things didn't work. And then we got an apartment, we started to live in Roxbury, Massachusetts, and I was doing work at home. This, now I didn't have my mother any more, because he was in Massachusetts, you know. He had gone over there, so I went over there with him. I used to leave the children to the neighbor that lived upstairs. And then at night I used to come, they used to be in a, they had gas at that time, and then on the stairs, that it was kind of dark. You know, they light the gas late. And I used to find my little, my boy at the door over there waiting, his pants full, you know. And then he would say, "Ma, look what Manita did." You know, she probably spanked, and things. I

had two children by this time. Ahh. And then on my second one, he, the first one, when he saw that I was pregnant, when we were in Stoneham, he brought big, big pills like that for me to take. But I didn't have a miscarriage. It just didn't affect. All the things that I did, you know. I got sick, but it didn't affect. So I got the boy. And thank God nothing, my son is normal, you know. So then my mother-in-law said, "Well, this can't be. You know, you're here, and your husband is over there." And I went back, I went to Massachusetts. By that time he had an apartment, and he owed, the owner of the apartment had a grocery store and he owed. I went over there and he owed money to the groceries and everything, so I had to start to work. And the neighbors, that they knew him from Izmir, there were some people over there. And he kept saying, "She doesn't stay with me, she always likes to go to her mother." They said, "Make her pregnant again so that she can stay here." That happened again. That's, it's a big story. Now I was pregnant about seven months, he sent me to my mother, again, to Connecticut, they're living in Connecticut now, over there, so that my mother could take care of me, to bring the baby. Seven months, two months. I think it was more than that. Three months. It must have been six. Now I'm going to have a baby, I don't have any money. He doesn't send me any money, I don;t have any money in my hand. He sent me without money. My mother is taking care of, what am I going to do. So I took some work home. I was making flowers. At that time I think they were garters, to make flowers on garters. And, uh, so I made those things and I made, I had about

thirty-five dollars. And, uh, then I went to the hospital to have the baby, we spent it on that, and I was trying to give, when I came home, five dollars to my mother, at least, for three of us. I had the other boy, and I had this one. And I think it was thirty-five dollars, it was just enough, it covered the expenses. And--

DALLETT: I just want to pause for a moment. (Break in tape.) I'm sorry I had to interrupt there. Okay.

NEVINS: So when I came back with my second child and I found that he, I had to work. I made buckles, and my friend told me that I couldn't make ends meet, she took me to the furriers, and she taught me how to finish fur coats, and then she got me a job with another firm, and they liked me very much, they liked my work very much. I was making fancy linings of satin and that he working for this department store and everything. And, uh, it was a seasonal work around Christmas, like, I was working until eleven o'clock at night, and then I was taking the trolley car, coming home, and washing the children's diapers, and put it to soak, and then next morning wash it again and go back to work. And I had to be at work at seven o'clock, at work again. So this, and the dust and everything, evidently, I became ill after the season was finished. I was kind of coughing all the time. So he had to get the doctor, and this doctor came in and examined me, and he said, he scolded my husband. He said, "Look," he says, if you can't

support a wife, why do you get married?" He says, "Look over here. There's not a window, there's no sun coming into this apartment or anything." He said, "Now," he says, "if you don't take care of yourself, you're going to die, and these children are going to be orphans." The doctor said so. He was an Armenian doctor. He said, "Do you have a mother?" I said, "Yes, but she is in New York." He said, "Okay. You take your children and go to your mother and don't stay with her. There's the Catskill Mountains, they call. Leave the children to your mother and go to the Catskill's and have fresh air over there so you can become, you'll get better, because otherwise you're going to die." Okay--

DALLETT: Did you have tuberculosis?

NEVINS: Bronchitis.

DALLETT: Bronchitis.

NEVINS: I had bronchitis. That's what he told me. With this dust and everything, you know, it didn't help. Okay, so he packed and sent me to my mother again. And this was, uh, I think they were in Connecticut, I think, at that time. So anyway, no, no. They were in New York. They had moved in the meantime, moved in New York, some

apartment. So I went over there. And then as soon as I went to my mother's house I was better. In a little while it just started, about in a week I didn't cough any more. So I didn't have money to go to Catskills. So I said to my mother, I said, my mother was working. She was making about twenty-two dollars a week, subways and everything. So I said, it was on Coney Island Avenue in New York. So I said, "Mom, let me go to work, you stay home and take care of my children." And I said, I'll give you the twenty-two dollars that you're making. Whatever I make, I'll give you." So I went, and another friend of mine helped me, and I got in the garment center, and I started to make dresses and things, and I made a little bit more money. And my mother took care of the children. And my mother was very, very strict. If I was going to a movie at night, she would look out the window, she would put her alarm clock, and she knew what time I was getting out from the movie, and the alarm clock would go, she would look out the window to see if I was coming and if I had a boyfriend with me or not. You know, that's how she used to protect me. And anyway--

DALLETT: Okay. We're going to have to end this side now. I'm

going to go to another tape. This is the end of side two of tape number one of Interview Number 433 [DP-59] with Adrienne Nevins.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

DALLETT: This is the beginning of side one of tape two of Interview Number 433 [DP-59] with Adrienne Nevins for the Ellis Island Oral History Project. Today is November 16, 1989, we're beginning this first side of tape two at 8:25 P.M. and Mrs. Nevins came from Turkey in 1924 when she was fifteen years old. Again, this is--

NEVINS: From Egypt. From Turkey I went to Egypt, from Egypt to the United States.

DALLETT: Uh-huh.

NEVINS: Yeah.

DALLETT: Oh, you actually had been living in Egypt, right. And this is the beginning of tape number two of Interview Number 433 [DP-59}. Okay. We were up to the point where you had your children and you were

going to go live with your mother, and--

NEVINS: Yes, I, because I was sick.

DALLETT: You were sick.

NEVINS: Yes. So I got myself a job and I started to work. I took care of the children and then I had some distant cousins who got me a job to work in the garment center and they got him a job and he kept saying that he's going to come, he's going to come, he's going to come, and every week we were waiting for him, he never came. For a year and a half I was taking care of the children myself, not a penny, not a word from him. He says he was learning a trade which our future was going to be better. Then I heard from other sources that he wasn't even doing that. So he lost this job. They had gotten an easy job for him. He was going to work a United Cigar store. You know, they knew that he didn't like to work so much, easy job. But he didn't come. One day I wrote him and said, "Look," I said, you're not sending me any money, I'm taking care of the children and you're not coming over. You lost your other job. What is it going to be? You don't even miss your children, to come over? Some fathers would steal the money and come over and see their children. You don't." I said, "From now on, and I heard that you're not learning your trade either. We have no future." I said, "From now on, my children have no father, I have no

husband." And I left it at that. I didn't hear from him. And after two years he came to out doorstep, to my mother, I was living with her, of course. He came to her and he said that he's moving to New Jersey and he's going to have a tailor shop and he wants me to, he wasn't talking. This other friend of his was telling to my mother that if she comes over, instead of hiring somebody she works in the store and the money will stay with them. So I said, "Who's going to take care of the children?" He says, "Oh, we'll put them in a school." And I said, "Oh, no you don't." I said, "They are used to my mother, and I'm not going to pull them out and put them in a, close them in a school. I'm not doing that. We got along all these years without you." I said, "You didn't even say, 'I love you and my children and I want us to be together'." I said, "i'm not coming." So I left him that way. And then, and he says, "Well,--" I said, "From now on, I would like you to contribute some money for the children." And he said, "Well, there's a law over here, you can do it by the law." This cousin of mine got an attorney. We went to the court and the judge put fifteen dollars a week, and then he said, they made him say it, because he wouldn't do that, that I run away from home. I didn't do anything like that. I'm running away from home. So I said, "How could I run away from home?" I told the attorney, I said, "He sent me, and he sent the luggage after me." Not luggage, but big, what they call is a big footlocker, like, something. He sent after me. So he said, "Well, who sent, who took her to the station?" My lawyer asked him. He says, "I did." "Well, how can you say that she left--" Anyway,

fifteen dollars. A couple of times he paid the fifteen dollars. One check the lawyer was taking and one check us. And we had already given one hundred and fifty dollars to the lawyer. My cousin, you know, he says, "Look, he doesn't deserve more than one hundred and fifty dollars. You tell your husband to send the checks to you." But that was the wrong thing to you. When he started to send the checks, then he never sent it any more. So I brought up my children from that time on. And I went to work, and my mother took care of the children, and that's the way it went on. And then finally, about three or four years later, I got a divorce. Some friend of ours said that if you have a divorce at least somebody would ask you to marry you, or something. There were people that they thought I was single and they wanted to marry. I went to the dentist, he thought I was single, he wanted to marry me. Then I told him that I had two children, and stuff. But, um--

DALLETT: So these first few years that you lived in the country were very--

NEVINS: It was very, very tough. Only we were glad we were in United States. We didn't have that fright and tragedy. We left all back there, and then we just, we just enjoyed living here. Only thing that, like Saturday, if, they used to, salesmen used to come to the door and sell blankets. I said, "Well, we don't have the money." "I leave it here," they

used to say. And then one time they left the two blankets over there. "I leave it here, you." They says, "I come back tomorrow." And then, "Sign here that I left the blankets here." So I go ahead and sign it. And then they used to want the money. And my husband said, "From now on, don't sign anything, and when they come over just--" We didn't know about the salesmen that they do that, they make you sign. Well, it's, sure I have to sign, since the man left the merchandise here, but it was a contract that we're buying it, and then we had to pay for it. So I learned that too, you know.

DALLETT: So they could try to take advantage.

NEVINS: Yes, yes. Not to sign anything. And they used to say, sometimes, "How old are you?" You know? And I used to say the real thing. "Oh, you look like eighteen years old." That I used to feel proud. I was glad that I looked eighteen years old. But anyway, my children and myself, we just lived and struggled, and my mother took care. I was happy to have mother with me. And then many, many years later I found this American man, Paul Nevins. I was working at the Ford Instrument Company as a junior draftswoman. I went in the N.Y.U. and I learned how to do that. During the war, my son told me I should take up something that I, contribute to the war, war work. So I went and learned that and I was drafting. And, uh, I found, Paul Nevins used to come to the water cooler. Every time I was getting water he used to come to the water cooler to talk to me. And he

read "The 40 Days of Musa Dagh." That's an Armenian tragedy book, and he had read that. He used to ask me questions, and all that. And, uh, it took us a long time to become friends, and there was, he came to the house one time and there was another fellow over there that he had stopped by, that I had met, and he said, "Adrienne, bring me my robe and slippers." I said, I was flabbergasted. What was he talking about? He purposely did that, and the other fellow didn't come any more. So he kept coming. I didn't have any feelings before, but seeing him all the time, then we went together quite a few years, and he became friends with my son, and they used to talk. My son was going to the music school, what, I forgot the name right now, you know, in New York, that music school.

DALLETT: Juilliard?

NEVINS: Juilliard, yes. And then my son used to teach him about music, and he used to teach him about other things, uh, you know, his class work, and everything else. And, uh, but I didn't want to get married because he was divorced and has a little girl, responsibilities. His mother was taking care of, but he had the responsibility. And I, we couldn't come in one house and bring my boy in there, and my older boy was already in Arizona. He was in the service, and he wanted to be a pilot, so he was in the Air Force. And, uh, well, we just saw each other almost, you know, every day, you know, we ate together and everything else. But then one day

my son was playing instrument, and he had a trio. And he went to Vermont. I used to say to him, "How come you don't go out with, go out with girls?" I didn't know at that time anything else. I didn't think it was bad. But, "If you haven't got any money I'll give you money." Because I used to put the, I used to have envelopes. I used to put, budget. And then what's left over I used to put in a box, and if they wanted something, if there was in the box, they would use it. If there was nothing in the box, they couldn't use it. First it went in the envelopes where we owed some money, our obligations, paying bills. You know, so, anyway, he had a trio. They got a job in Vermont, a yacht club. He went over there and he saw this girl, and he fell in love with her. She's French Canadian. And, uh, sometime later he said he was going to marry her and so he decided he was going to get married. And now Paul said, "Okay, now that he was going to get married, and my daughter my mother is taking care of, why can't we get married?" So Sunday he was going to get married. Saturday we got married, so that when we go over there we don't have to say, "This is my mother's boyfriend." And his mother and father stood up, we got married, we got in a car, and we went to Vermont. And the next day my husband stood, he was Catholic, but he, not functioning Catholic, you know. But he stood up for them because my son's wife was Catholic, she was French. And, uh, that's how we got married. And I was very, very happy. Happiest girl in the world. And I thought he made life for me and everything else. So we were building a house in Connecticut. And we were so happy we were going to go. In another week we

were going to move. So we were on Merrick Parkway. He was going over there to see our, how far our house had gone. They said that the electricity was connected, the neighbors told us, and come on over and we'll have some cocktails in our house, you know, happy. So on the way we were going, Merrick Parkway, another came, car came, head-on collision with us, ended up in the hospital. I had injuries all over, but his injuries were on his head, he never gained consciousness, and we got married '50, 1950, and I lost him 1955, in October. He, they never expected me to live either, but I made it. And I had ribs broken. I had my cheekbone broken. Over here was cut, that they sewed it, and my leg over here was hanging, hanging from the thing. I passed out. And then my arm over here they had to cut here and cut there, put the stainless steel with two screws here to hold it. And, uh, my life went into the air. Here we were going to be so happy and I was working all the time, and now I was going to stay home and be a wife, and I lost him. My life completely folded up. So, and then son. Of course, I got a job here and there and I worked, but my son was in Phoenix then and he said, "Mom, why don't you come over, be near one of your sons." The other one was in Vermont because his wife was there, that where they made their home. And the other one was over here, and he was already nineteen years old and he already married a woman fifteen years older than himself. Uh, I just had a good job and I was working in a gift shop and it was real nice and I was making good money, but then it was in my head that my son always said, "Why don't you come near us, why don't you come near us." So about

two, three years later I came. But I didn't want to be in Phoenix. They lived in Phoenix. I didn't want them to have a mother-in-law, you see. So I said, "Where is the nearest town?" And they said, "Tucson." I didn't know that it was one hundred twenty miles from Phoenix to Tucson, because to go to my sister's house when I lived in Connecticut it was twenty miles, and I passed so many towns before I got to her house in twenty miles. But here I didn't know. But anyway, I was quite lonely and everything, then I got myself a job, Desert Treasures, they call it, over here. And, uh, I, every morning I got up and I said, "I'm going to go to work now. I'm going to go look for a job." And I didn't look for a job, and I didn't, I hated myself, I didn't know what to do. I wish I had my job and worked a week. So at that point, you know. I wish I had a job already a week. I was feeling that. So finally one day I got out, because I didn't know the roads and everything else. I went several places to look for a job. So this, it was Friday and it was raining. So Saturday they called me up, and I said, "Do you want another interview?" He said, "No, I want you to come to work." Because at first when I asked for the job and I said, he says, "But this job is for the university girls." And I said, "Well, I'm not a student." I said, "I'm forty, but," I said, "I'm strong on my feet." And after I started work for them they liked me so much because a lot of people used to come from out of town, and I spoke all these different languages with everybody else, you know. And after that I went into real estate, and I lived by myself. I never, I never married.

DALLETT: You're an amazing survivor. It's a real survivor's tale that you tell.

NEVINS: Yeah. Really, I survived. I'm so surprised, you know. Because some of my friends, one of them got sick and her husband died. The other one, she lost her mind, they put her in a home. And I said, "My goodness, I loved my husband so dearly." We couldn't, you know, if I walked without my husband I would fall, I would trip, and if I went someplace without him I would get lost. There was a lot of, and he used to get a kick out of that, too. We were like one. Everybody, after he passed away they were all trying to tell me, you know, every time, he says, he came to our house, all the time, "Adrienne, Adrienne, I have to check with Adrienne. Adrienne, Adrienne." He says, "Some day I want to go with you to Turkey to see where you are born and everything." We were so happy together, tremendously. And I was so thankful from God because when I was alone I felt kind of lonesome on Christmas days and times like that. My sisters were married, they had their husbands. When tragedy happens you don't have somebody to talk to. The children are sick, earache or something, you haven't got anybody to talk to. But now I had him. Everything was all right. But only five years, from '50 to '55. October 19th. And when I was in the hospital they were playing "The Falling Leaves." So until today when, "The Falling Leaves" plays, I cry.

DALLETT: Let's have a pause here. (Break in tape.) Some of the things that I really want to ask you about were that process of getting used to this country and how different, maybe, it was for your mother who was older and maybe didn't have some of the language skills that you did, and the difference between those generations. Can you talk about that a little bit?

NEVINS: Yeah. Oh, naturally she just loved this country, you know. And, h, she tried to learn, because she knew a little bit French, so it came a little bit. She knew how to read the signs to go to travel, to go this and this and that place together. And, then when we were in Stoneham, the first place that we landed in Massachusetts, they, the government, I think it was from, I can't tell now, but I think back, they used to send some teachers at night. And then we used to speak English with her, and that's how she learned. And then later we were better in English. And then of course we spoke Armenian at home. When the children started to go to school they started to speak English. And then she, too, learned. And she got older, and then my brother, who was her son, and he married, and his wife didn't want her, so she got her, we got her an apartment that she was living. So I always say that, then two of them, they were married there. They were working. I was the one that was working. And, uh, I, they said that I should take of my mother, I should give her money. But it used to,

she used to die a thousand deaths before. She always said, "I have, I have." She didn't have anything. She said, "I have, I have." She used to say that all the time. That's why I think that if there was a social security then she would live much longer. She was seventy-five when she died, and that's when I came here, after she passed away I came to Arizona to live.

DALLETT: Did she become a citizen?

NEVINS: Oh, yes. She was so proud. Oh, yes. We were all proud when we became a citizen. We were so happy. And, you know, we went, everybody, now if you ask, probably I've forgotten. But we knew about George Washington, we knew this and that, everything. And she, too. That teacher helped her.

DALLETT: Did you do it at the same time?

NEVINS: No. Not at the same time. And, uh, when she became a citizen, uh, you couldn't tie her, she was so happy that she was, she became a citizen on her own. Of course, I didn't, we didn't go with her. I didn't go with her because we had to work all the time. And she took herself, and that night we came home and she told us. And she was always taking care, I was lucky to have her. She was helping me bringing up my children.

DALLETT: And what language did your kids learn? What languages were spoken at home?

NEVINS: They learned to speak Armenian, because we spoke Armenian. And they learned some words in Turkish because once in a while we didn't want them to understand anything we spoke Turkish. But then when they went to school completely, it left them. And my older son now, he, words come to his head in Armenian and he tells me. I'm flabbergasted, you know. And he says, I don't know, it must be in back of his mind that it's coming out now, and I forget, when I'm speaking on the telephone to him, I speak Armenian once in a while, and he tries. He understands everything, both of them. But the older one knows a little bit more than the younger one, the Armenian. They understand a little bit, and they say little words, but, but I spoke all those languages, and I didn't need it over here, but I went back for a tour, I went to Greece and I spoke, whichever country that I was, the language came to me. Because now I didn't think English. I thought that language they were talking. And it came all back to me, because the minute they started talking, like in Turkey, somebody said, "You're Armenian. Don't talk Turkish because they slaughtered the Armenians, you know." And that's how my father and my grandfather, they killed him, too, on the road. So, but the men over there, right away, he started to speak Turkish. He was talking Turkish over there. It just came

to me, and I started to talk Turkish. And they were happy that I knew how to speak Turkish.

DALLETT: What were your feelings when you went to Turkey? Did you have--

NEVINS: My feelings, oh, my feelings, I was hungry for Izmir, to go back. I was hungry for church, for the school. So I went and I, and this fellow met me on the street. He says he is a guide, and I took him, and Is aid you take me to the, the suburb that we used live before we came to Izmir. I said, "I want to go to such and such a place." And in front of my eyes, finally, you know, I made him, I talked about this. I said, "There was something over this corner, there was something over that corner." I found the school. Kindergarten, and the street was steps. And to me, in my mind, it was so wide. And now that I went over there it was not that wide. It was little. But my husband over here had me realize, because I used to say, "In Izmir, we have trees, not palm, but trees that they go way up. Palm trees also, but mostly the cone, they make the cone, what is it called, pine trees, pine trees, that they go in the sky, they get lost in the clouds." And I kept saying that to him. This was so big, this was so big. Finally he said to me, "Don't you realize, Adrienne, that you were small yourself?" And I knew this time, because he wasn't, he passed away when I went there. So I saw the school, they had a chain put in on an iron door.

And I looked inside with my mind's eye, and I saw myself too. All the children, they all have red smocks. And over here on the chest is "M.B." embroidered, cross stitched, and it's Manga Bardez, kindergarten. And it was, in my, right in front of my eyes. And then I went up. One corner was the church that they had closed the door and built a concrete wall in front of it, and the other corner was the school that I used to go to after kindergarten. And then the other, there were four corners. And then the other corner there was long steps, and my godmother used to live there. They didn't have any children. They used to like me. They used to always take me to their house. They used to like me. I spent some times. So everything was in front of my eyes. My godmother, my godfather and their daughter. She used to, she was a painter, artwork. And she had taken a photograph of me, like Renoir, watering. I think I was about five years old or something, with my hair long and curled. She wanted me to look like a Renoir. She said, "As soon as Adrienne can hold a brush, I'm going to teach her painting." But it never got to that, you know. And I saw the school, and I imagined how it used to be the church's day, and they used to celebrate, like a block party. And they used to put all this paper from here to there, you know. They used to put paper there. Everything came in front of my eyes. If I was a writer I would fill forty pages. What feelings. I saw my father, I saw my mother, I saw all my friends, that size. I saw myself there, and I saw the houses. What a feeling that was.

DALLETT: Did you see, or have a vision, what your life would have been if you had stayed there rather than come to this country?

NEVINS: No, no. But I had a vision that, what my life would have been if I stayed in Connecticut and my husband didn't die. We would have a wonderful life. Sometimes I think that they should make movies and they should put a story into a story that if this had happened, this is what the life would have been. If that happened, this is the life that was going to happen.

DALLETT: Okay. I'm afraid we're going to have to end here.

NEVINS: Okay, dear.

DALLETT: Although I know we could go on for many, many more hours.

NEVINS: There was a lot of things in between that, when I was living with my mother for a while, it's not on?

DALLETT: Well, the tape's, we're about to run out. Okay. This is the end of side one of tape two of Interview Number 433 [Dp-59] with Adrienne Nevins. The time is now 9:00

P.M.