

EI-275

LOUSIEN TOPALIAN CHOLAKIAN

BIRTH DATE: 1905

INTERVIEW DATE: 4/2/1993

RUNNING TIME: 55:00

INTERVIEWER: GRACE OFLAZIAN

RECORDING ENGINEER: KEVIN DALEY

INTERVIEW LOCATION: THE BRONX, NEW YORK

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 3/1994

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 5/1994

TURKEY (ARMENIAN), 1932

AGE 27

PORT OF EMBARCATION: CHERBOURG

RESIDENCES: ZELA

WEST 28 STRUMMER., NEW YORK

OFLAZIAN: Good morning. This is Grace Oflazian for the National Park Service. I'm here today, April 2, 1993, at Mrs. Lousien Cholakian's residence in Bronx, New York. I'm here with Dr. Janet Levine, Ellis Island oral historian, and Mr. Kevin Daley, the recording engineer. Mrs. Cholakian is an Armenian who came from Zela, Turkey, when she was twenty-seven years old. Good morning, Mrs. Cholakian. I'm happy to be with you today. Can you tell me your date of birth, please?

CHOLAKIAN: Zela. The place (?).

OFLAZIAN: What was the date of your birth?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, I don't know really. I don't know that.

OFLAZIAN: You told me that you were born in 1905. Is that correct?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, yeah. Really, I don't know. But we put that time.

OFLAZIAN: So you just told me that you were born in Zela. Can you spell me Zela, please?

CHOLAKIAN: Z-E-L-A, Zela.

OFLAZIAN: What was your maiden name?

CHOLAKIAN: Topalian.

OFLAZIAN: Can you spell it to me?

CHOLAKIAN: T-O-P-A-L-I-A-N.

OFLAZIAN: How many people you were at home?

CHOLAKIAN: My father's home?

OFLAZIAN: Yeah.

CHOLAKIAN: We are, I am the youngest one. Two boys and two girls, my mother had. I am the youngest one.

OFLAZIAN: Can you name me their names? Their names? Your brothers and sisters' names.

CHOLAKIAN: Oh. My sister's name, Bazar, the oldest one. Yervant, Nishen and Lousin.

OFLAZIAN: Can you describe me your house?

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah. We owned two houses, our country. My father was a wealthy man, and well-known man in the house, in the country. Harousin Topalian. (they speak in Armenian) Published a book. In my country my father (?) country paper.

OFLAZIAN: What was his occupation? What did he do for a living?

CHOLAKIAN: He was a merchant.

OFLAZIAN: What kind of merchant?

CHOLAKIAN: Material. He had a big business. You know, we have a store.

OFLAZIAN: Can you talk to me about your mother?

CHOLAKIAN: Mother? My mother was such a religious woman. For a day we, (Armenian). You understand?

OFLAZIAN: Lent.

CHOLAKIAN: Lent, yeah, Lenten Day. He kept, he didn't eat the whole day. And also he eat no, no greasy things. You know that? (Armenian) You understand?

OFLAZIAN: Can you tell me any anecdote or little story about your family life, about your family?

CHOLAKIAN: What family?

OFLAZIAN: About your family.

CHOLAKIAN: Well, we had, we had a very good living. My father have a good businessman. Manufactured that day, you know, goods, yard goods. He had goods. And then so many, so many put up with what we had there. My grandpa was in the city, a big man, you know.

OFLAZIAN: Was he living with you, your grandpa?

CHOLAKIAN: I didn't, I don't, I didn't see him. They all passed away.

OFLAZIAN: Did you go to church over there?

CHOLAKIAN: Oh, yes.

OFLAZIAN: How far was the church?

CHOLAKIAN: A couple of blocks that we have over there. And also at that time, you know, this is a long time, you know, how much it's far away. People go there.

OFLAZIAN: Can you describe me the church, how it looked like? The church, can you describe me the church, the complex?

CHOLAKIAN: It's a beautiful old church in our country, very beautiful. We had a big monastery over there in our country. Earthquake come, all down. Another church, this one.

OFLAZIAN: So you went to church, right?

CHOLAKIAN: My grandma always take my hands, morning and evening. She's going, when I'm younger one, carry me church, that's all. Because I love church. Same way, you know.

OFLAZIAN: Can you describe me holidays of celebration? Easter?

CHOLAKIAN: Holidays, celebration, we have, we go in the church. And next day we have a Memorial Day, our country.

OFLAZIAN: What kind of Memorial Day?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, today is Easter. Next day always we kept holiday for Memorial Day, our country over there. I know that much.

OFLAZIAN: Did you go to school in your country?

CHOLAKIAN: School? Oh, yeah. I was, (Armenian). Kindergarten. (she laughs) And then a couple of years go up, you know. How you call that? (Armenian)

OFLAZIAN: Higher level.

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah.

OFLAZIAN: Higher level. What was your favorite subject?

CHOLAKIAN: My?

OFLAZIAN: Favorite subject.

CHOLAKIAN: Well, go to church. Go to, people see their friends, everything, you know. And then our church, church hall.

OFLAZIAN: Did you graduate from that school?

CHOLAKIAN: No, not much, not much. (Armenian)

OFLAZIAN: Do you remember the name of the school?

CHOLAKIAN: A long time, I don't remember.

OFLAZIAN: As a little girl, have you learned any needlepoints?

CHOLAKIAN: Needlepoint? Our country, every fine needlepoint, everything. When we're younger, we start that.

OFLAZIAN: What kind of needlepoint you know?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, (Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: Needlepoint is Armenian word.

CHOLAKIAN: And then (Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: With a silk thread.

CHOLAKIAN: With the silk, with the silk thread. My sister used to work. And they did a slipper. You know? Explain to her. Slipper here. And then they built the slip.

OFLAZIAN: Did you sell from the slippers, or you use them? Did you sell the slippers to other people?

CHOLAKIAN: No. I didn't make it. My sister was grown up. I was too young that time. I didn't make, no.

OFLAZIAN: Did you help your mom in cooking?

CHOLAKIAN: Me? I was too young. (she laughs) Younger one, I was. Two brothers and two sisters.

OFLAZIAN: You told me that kind of interruption happened in your town, right, by the Turks. Can you describe the Turkish attack for me?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, Turks persecuted us. You know, the (?). How do you call that Turkish? Araba. (Armenian) We just come back from our house. We didn't get anything. All live in the house. Only I bury my uncle (?). Gold things, everything in the house. I slipped under the floor. I dig, I bury over there gold, gold pieces over there. If I go, maybe I can find it over there.

OFLAZIAN: Where was your father at that time?

CHOLAKIAN: My father?

OFLAZIAN: Yeah.

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah, when the Turks came to your town?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, they pick up from the store. They didn't come home from their store. My brother, my, two brothers

I got. One is nineteen, the other one fourteen, older than me. A Turk.

OFLAZIAN: So how did you manage to get out from that situation?

CHOLAKIAN: Who?

OFLAZIAN: You.

CHOLAKIAN: Well, (Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: So they put you out from the scene.

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah, out from the house. We didn't get anything. We didn't get anything. Waiting, waiting, waiting, waiting. (Armenian) But we didn't. And besides that, they could, younger one, which I was younger. Very few boys they left, you know. All killed them.

OFLAZIAN: Did you . . .

CHOLAKIAN: Turks.

OFLAZIAN: Were you with them?

CHOLAKIAN: Before. Very few. My uncle's son over there, look at that. Only that was twelve years old, see?

Left, they didn't take it.

OFLAZIAN: So where did you go?

CHOLAKIAN: (?)

OFLAZIAN: Where did you go?

CHOLAKIAN: Me?

OFLAZIAN: Yes, uh-huh. After they kicked you out from your house?

CHOLAKIAN: They put them some Turkish school, Turkish school, like my age, a little bit, I mean, older, younger ones. All put, the Turk school. And then Turk invite the people, if you want a boy, get you a boy. If you want a girl, get you a girl. Some Turk woman was military man's wife, take me home, in her home. (Armenian)

OFLAZIAN: She took her home.

CHOLAKIAN: I stay over there until Zela (Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: After the fires.

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah. And then my, one of the Armenian women working there, cooking some men, government men,

cook. And he heard about it, that I am with the Turk woman, you know. Turk home. She come over one day. (Armenian)

OFLAZIAN: The Armenian word "to go to."

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah. I said, "Yes, I want to go." But the Turk woman make me very comfortable. Nothing, nothing wrong, nothing do anything, you know.

OFLAZIAN: She did not hurt you.

CHOLAKIAN: No, no, no. She loves me. But she fainted when people come from (Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: The government people.

CHOLAKIAN: The government people come to pick up me, went into the office. Then I go over there, (Armenian). She fainted. She doesn't want to give me.

OFLAZIAN: The woman fainted because they came to take her away.

CHOLAKIAN: And then we went to the office, military office. They asked me.

OFLAZIAN: Was that Turkish military office . . .

CHOLAKIAN: Turkish military office. And they asked me, "Which way you want? Your side, your mother's side, or this way?" I said, "If some men come, not my uncle's son (?)." (Armenian)

OFLAZIAN: Somebody pretended that he is her uncle, but he wasn't her true uncle.

CHOLAKIAN: It wasn't much. And then they took me the police station, the police station. They asked me, "Which one, which way you want to live?" I said, "My uncle's son come over, I want to go over there." That's all. They finish. This was (Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: After the cease fire happened.

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah, yeah. I know in English but I'm, I'm excited. I'm too excited. I can't talk English.
(she laughs)

OFLAZIAN: So where you decided to go, then? Where did you see?

CHOLAKIAN: Police station.

OFLAZIAN: You went to police station.

CHOLAKIAN: They asked me. (Armenian)

OFLAZIAN: Okay. After they asked you which way you wanted to go.

CHOLAKIAN: Which way you want. I said, I said, "My uncle's son alive, I go with him." That's all.

OFLAZIAN: So you went with your uncle then.

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah. They said nothing, nothing, the other side.

OFLAZIAN: So where did you go with him?

CHOLAKIAN: That's the big problem for me. (?) for me. Evening, they take me to just a hole. All men. (Armenian) Yeah. (?), they take me. I have nothing, that's not my country. I don't know anything about it, Armenian, you know. Four years I stay with the Turk. But I kept my religious myself. I was too young. But (Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: (Armenian) is the Armenian word for, whatever. (they laugh)

CHOLAKIAN: (?) for me, that. You know that? And then, that's all. And then they took, they said, "Hajara." About nine days, eight days, old man. He lives with the daughter-in-law, and grandchild, granddaughter.

They take me their home. I have nothing. I have nothing. Nothing to wear, this or that. No money. And then every evening (Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: Young people use (?).

CHOLAKIAN: A good-looking girl I am, (Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: She was very pretty when she was young.

CHOLAKIAN: (Armenian)

OFLAZIAN: They wanted to get married the young man.

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah. There is someplace, two weeks, in some family home, you know. They took them home like that. And then I married one man.

OFLAZIAN: What was his name?

CHOLAKIAN: Hagop, Hagop Cholakian.

OFLAZIAN: Can you spell me his name?

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah. H-A-G-O-P. Hagop.

OFLAZIAN: After you went through all this horrible experience in your earlier life, have you ever wondered what your future will be?

CHOLAKIAN: (Armenian)

OFLAZIAN: After you went through all this terrible situation, did you think about your future?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, two weeks later they married me, the same man over there.

OFLAZIAN: Did you like him? Did you like him?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, you like or not, I don't know anything about it. Different country, different country, different man. Well, I have no hope any place, you know. No money, nothing.

OFLAZIAN: Had you ever heard . . .

CHOLAKIAN: They married nine people when I married that man. Nine people in the house.

OFLAZIAN: In one day?

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah. Four brothers, two sisters, mother, something like that.

OFLAZIAN: Were they all Armenians?

CHOLAKIAN: All Armenian, yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah. But different country, not my country. Different

country. It's all right.

OFLAZIAN: Can you describe it, please, the wedding? The wedding ceremony, can you describe the wedding ceremony?

CHOLAKIAN: The wedding ceremony? I married Greek church.

OFLAZIAN: Not Armenian.

CHOLAKIAN: Greek church, that time not Armenian church. I was seventeen years old. I don't want to marry, but I have nobody to take care of me. Understand what I mean? That's it. Greek church we married.

OFLAZIAN: How was the ceremony?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, they did, (Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: They slaughter lambs. It's the tradition, Armenian tradition to slaughter a lamb in front of the bride and groom.

CHOLAKIAN: First time, first time was my wedding, the wedding ceremony. People pouring in to see this.
(she laughs) Well, that's it, that's it. I live a long time with my husband. He was a nice man.

OFLAZIAN: Have you ever heard people talk about America?

CHOLAKIAN: America? No. My husband established in America a Jewish merchant with the business in Istanbul, understand? You understand? And then making business, my husband, a couple of years. A fur business, a fur business, my husband establish. And then he decided to come to America. He lived seventeen months here, come back, take me here.

OFLAZIAN: What was the name of the Jewish person?

CHOLAKIAN: The Jewish person? What Jewish person?

OFLAZIAN: His partner. What was the name of his partner? Do you remember?

CHOLAKIAN: He had no partners. My husband, Tessman Brothers, Tessman Brothers, Jewish, three brothers and one brother-in-law in my store. My husband, a small room, hired over there. Merchants coming from Turkey. He was a merchant man, my husband, and put them over there. And a long time, and then he had, later on he had his business, different office, his own office.

OFLAZIAN: Did you want to come to America? Did you want to

come to America?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, my husband carried me. I had to come.

(she laughs) That's wrong asking for me.

(she laughs) Isn't it? When he is there, I'll be there.

OFLAZIAN: Did anyone come to say goodbye to you?

CHOLAKIAN: Who?

OFLAZIAN: To you. Did anyone come to say goodbye to you?

CHOLAKIAN: When I come in America? Well, four other people coming, saying goodbye for me.

OFLAZIAN: Who were these people?

CHOLAKIAN: They, Armenian people. My neighbor, my relatives, just like that, you know. And before we, you know, to go out. All rooms, fill it up, say, "Bye-bye."
(Armenian)

OFLAZIAN: Bye-bye is the Armenian word for (Armenian).

(Mrs. Cholakian laughs) What did you take with you? What did you take with you?

CHOLAKIAN: We took nothing, not much, not much. Not much, not

much.

OFLAZIAN: So what did you leave behind?

CHOLAKIAN: You mean clothing, something like that?

OFLAZIAN: Yes.

CHOLAKIAN: We have a, we have a silk, or a rug with us, and then put in, my husband having a business with the Jewish people, Kessman Brothers. They come in.

OFLAZIAN: Did you bring the silk rug with you?

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah, rug for them. Silk. Made by the silk.
(Armenian) Present.

OFLAZIAN: (Armenian) is the Armenian word for present. (they laugh) Please describe me your separation from your neighbors and your loved ones.

CHOLAKIAN: Well, they come in evening before I, next day we have to get them out. They come over. They said goodbye, that's all. What can I do? I have not close relative over there. Oh, God, 1915, oh, God.
I was orphan.

OFLAZIAN: Where you were at that time? What was the name of

the town at that time?

CHOLAKIAN: My country?

OFLAZIAN: No.

CHOLAKIAN: Istanbul.

OFLAZIAN: You were in Istanbul.

CHOLAKIAN: Turkey, yeah, Istanbul, Turkey.

OFLAZIAN: From which port you departed?

CHOLAKIAN: We took the train and . . .

OFLAZIAN: Where did you go by train?

CHOLAKIAN: To the Cherbourg, Cherbourg. French, French,
(Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: (Armenian) is the Armenian word for harbor.

CHOLAKIAN: And then took the Mauritania, a big ship, about
three-and-a-half, four years, four-and-a-half days,
not years, at that time. We come with the ship.

OFLAZIAN: How did you get to the port? How did you get to the
port?

CHOLAKIAN: My husband second time.

OFLAZIAN: How did you go to the port? By which transportation?

CHOLAKIAN: By the train, train to the Cherbourg. From Istanbul to the Cherbourg, we went over there, and then get the ship, the big ship. Mauritania, Mauritania. The name was Mauritania.

OFLAZIAN: Were there any other people with you during that time?

CHOLAKIAN: No, no. With my husband only.

OFLAZIAN: Can you spell me the name of the ship?

CHOLAKIAN: Mauritania.

OFLAZIAN: Can you spell it to me?

CHOLAKIAN: Let me write, write here. (she pauses while writing) Mauritania.

OFLAZIAN: Can you spell it now?

CHOLAKIAN: M-U-R-I-T-A. Murita, N-I-A, Mauritania. That's right, yeah.

OFLAZIAN: What did you do in the boat?

CHOLAKIAN: (she laughs) What kind of question is that?
(she laughs) Nothing. What were you going to do?
I'm telling you, at that boat was, at that time, in
the Greek persecution, you know, (?) to the country,
Turk. Greek peasant people was in the ship. All
Greek people. Only make our (Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: Only they were the only ones, they were wearing nice
clothes. But the Greeks were the peasants.

CHOLAKIAN: The Greek people persecution that time. Only
Armenian, couple of Armenians with us, you know.
One side, we check the place, sitting over there.

OFLAZIAN: What did you eat in the ship?

CHOLAKIAN: I don't remember that. Long time. (she laughs)

OFLAZIAN: Where did you sleep?

CHOLAKIAN: Ah, don't say that. On the ship they have a small
boat, you know. We found the one corner with my
husband, just sitting over there, that's all. It
was Greek peasants, all dirty people, you know.
Different people.

OFLAZIAN: Can you describe me the ship?

CHOLAKIAN: Big one, Mauritania, big one.

OFLAZIAN: How big?

CHOLAKIAN: Three chimney, three chimney. Big one, Mauritania, big one. French, French ship.

OFLAZIAN: What was the color of the paint? (Mrs. Cholakian laughs) Do you remember the color, how it was painted?

CHOLAKIAN: Black. What do you expect? (she laughs)
(Dr. Levine makes a comment off mike)

OFLAZIAN: Did you have any blankets?

CHOLAKIAN: Blankets? Not much. We haven't got any carry here, not much. We have overcoat, overcoat. One side, you know, both, they put them big, rowing boat.
(Armenian)

OFLAZIAN: A small boat.

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah. We were sitting over there, that's all, until we arrived at America.

OFLAZIAN: So what did you see in the, during the journey?

What did you see?

CHOLAKIAN: Ocean. (she laughs) That's all! (she laughs again)

OFLAZIAN: Okay, Mrs. Cholakian. I think we are going to pause for a few minutes while Mr. Kevin, the recording engineer, flips the tape.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

OFLAZIAN: This is Grace Oflazian. We are resuming now the interview on Side B with Mrs. Lousien Cholakian. Mrs. Cholakian, you said that you came to America in 1932. Which month was that?

CHOLAKIAN: March, April 1st you, I get off with my husband from Ellis Island April 1st, Fool Day, and I remember that. Maybe five, six days we were in the Ellis Island.

OFLAZIAN: How did you get to Ellis Island?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, on the ship they carry us over there. They won't let . . .

OFLAZIAN: Which ship?

CHOLAKIAN: Mauritania, we came with, the Mauritania. You know, agent, agent make some kind of wrong things for us. Nothing wrong, but my husband we here, merchant, you know that. He come back over there, he carry me. But sometimes agent make a wrong statement that a small, wrong things, they do, you know, trouble for us. (she laughs)

OFLAZIAN: When the ship arrived to New York Harbor, did you see the Statue of Liberty?

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

OFLAZIAN: What was your feeling?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, we were glad. Believe me, when you go one country from the others, you don't know what's going on. You're worrying about it. That's the way.

OFLAZIAN: Was the ship crowded?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, mostly, mostly Greek people was in. Not much Armenian people at that time, yeah.

OFLAZIAN: You said that you came to Ellis Island for a problem. There was a problem.

CHOLAKIAN: Government people come to ship, examine all the people, what kind of people coming, you know.
(Armenian)

OFLAZIAN: (Armenian) is the Armenian word for official or armed official.

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah, see. Well.

OFLAZIAN: What was your particular problem?

CHOLAKIAN: Nothing. They took us to the Ellis Island and one man, my husband was before here. The Armenian man was over there, they, as long as he sees my husband, he said, "What you doing here?" You know. And then he fixed, he make our paper right one, right to get in, that's all.

OFLAZIAN: Can you describe me Ellis Island?

CHOLAKIAN: Ellis Island, they separate us. Not my husband, gave me one room for me, one room the other, my husband, like that. Well . . .

OFLAZIAN: So where did you sleep in Ellis Island?

CHOLAKIAN: Night time.

OFLAZIAN: Night time, yes.

CHOLAKIAN: Where you sleep, different room.

OFLAZIAN: Where did you sleep? Where did you sleep? Where did you sleep? (Armenian)

CHOLAKIAN: A room, I said room, different room they gave us. Not I sleep with my husband. His separate room. I'm separate, he's separate.

OFLAZIAN: What did you eat in Ellis Island?

CHOLAKIAN: Whatever they gave. American food. (she laughs)

OFLAZIAN: And what was that?

CHOLAKIAN: Hot dog. (they laugh) A long time, don't ask me that. Not much.

OFLAZIAN: How long did you stay in Ellis Island?

CHOLAKIAN: What?

OFLAZIAN: How long did you stay in Ellis Island? How many days?

CHOLAKIAN: About, less than a week, Ellis Island. Less than a

week. And then we look our paper, my husband's records, that's correct.

OFLAZIAN: Was Ellis Island crowded at that time?

CHOLAKIAN: I think so. Well, I don't remember much that.

OFLAZIAN: Was it clean?

CHOLAKIAN: (she laughs) I don't remember much that.

OFLAZIAN: Did you go through the medical examination in Ellis Island?

CHOLAKIAN: In the trip, you mean?

CHOLAKIAN: No, in Ellis Island.

OFLAZIAN: No, no.

CHOLAKIAN: Did you go through medical examination?

CHOLAKIAN: That they look eyes first.

OFLAZIAN: Why they examine the eyes?

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah.

OFLAZIAN: Why they examined it?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, nobonin, something like that they called,

nobonin, eyes. Some people, if you have a glaucoma, something like that. They didn't, they sent, when you come back over there, they sent over there, and then looked, you know, (Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: Was it a disease that . . .

CHOLAKIAN: We have no problem like that, no, no, no. My husband and me. We were coming with good health. (she laughs) Am I saying it right?

OFLAZIAN: How did you leave Ellis Island?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, you had to come with the boat, ferry, you know, over there. And then my husband, second time, come here. He take the taxi, or something like that. We live two weeks in a hotel until . . .

OFLAZIAN: Hotel?

CHOLAKIAN: Until, 23rd Street, Chelsea Hotel. Chelsea Hotel, you know that?

OFLAZIAN: How long did you stay over there?

CHOLAKIAN: I think less than a week. My husband found a furnished room for us on 28th Street near the Seventh Avenue, downtown. 28th and Seventh Avenue.

OFLAZIAN: You said after you left Ellis Island you went to the hotel. (a telephone rings) (break in tape)
This is Grace Oflazian. We are resuming again the interview on Side B with Mrs. Lousien Cholakian.
Mrs. Cholakian, you said to me after you left Ellis Island you went to the hotel, Cherbourg [sic] Hotel.
How did you get to the hotel?

CHOLAKIAN: My husband, first time, by the way a small boat, we come to the ferry, you know, downtown. And then we took, I don't know, taxi, maybe something like that, taxi. My husband know before over there, see? I stay hotel about a week, and then we find the furnished room over there, 28th Street and Seventh Avenue.

OFLAZIAN: How was the accommodation of the hotel?

CHOLAKIAN: I don't remember. I don't care about, maybe we sometimes outside, sometimes inside, you know.

OFLAZIAN: When you ate inside, do you remember what did you eat?

CHOLAKIAN: Huh?

OFLAZIAN: When you ate in the hotel, do you remember what did you eat?

CHOLAKIAN: No, no. I don't think so. (she laughs)

OFLAZIAN: So you went, after hotel you went to an apartment, right?

CHOLAKIAN: After hotel? No, furnished room. Furnished room, we had, 28th Street and Seventh Avenue. And we stayed over there a couple of years. And then we move Riverdale, here, we find apartment. And then a couple of years later we bought the house on the Hudson, a big house. It was mansion, was a good mansion, until twenty, thirty-six years over there, until my husband passed away, and then I sold and I come here.

OFLAZIAN: Did you go to school in America?

CHOLAKIAN: English school? Yeah. It was German, German teacher was. I remember always sometimes you sit down and then you remember, but Mrs. Kiel was German. She taught us very nicely. They explained this one in English, "This is glass, this is glass." A little bit, we learned there. And then we had

The American and Armenian Club from Riverside Church. They were all principal teacher and we had, of course, nice living at that time, you know, my husband was merchant. And then we had a long time, American Armenian Club we had, Riverside Church. And Christmas time tower they have, you know, nineteen floor. They're all Armenian going with the husband over there. We met at Christmas over there. We had a nice time.

OFLAZIAN: What kind of activities you had in the club?

CHOLAKIAN: They teaching English, English. Every month somebody home, somebody's home, you know. We set the table. We gave them (Armenian). (she laughs)

OFLAZIAN: (Armenian) is the Armenian word for pastrami.

CHOLAKIAN: They eat. (she laughs) We had a lovely time that time, a long time, you know. And then the people, some of them passed away, this or that. They know my name everywhere, in church, too.

OFLAZIAN: Did you work in America?

CHOLAKIAN: No, no, no.

OFLAZIAN: So did you participate in church activities?

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah.

OFLAZIAN: So what did you do?

CHOLAKIAN: And I belonged to Presbyterian Church, sewing, I was, a couple of years, a couple of years. And I have a picture of, I don't know where is, I could find them. And so many volunteer jobs I had in America, here.

OFLAZIAN: What kind of volunteer jobs you performed?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, I sit down with the machine, sewing machine. I cut apron, this or that, the Presbyterian Church over there on Riverdale Avenue at 256th Street, near for me. And then we go over there every Monday. I sit down at the machine, sewing machine, and I cut the apron, different kind of apron. And they sell for the poor people, you know.

OFLAZIAN: How many hours you . . .

CHOLAKIAN: Well, we go twelve afternoon, and until two, two o'clock, three o'clock.

OFLAZIAN: Every day?

CHOLAKIAN: No. No, no. Every Monday, every Monday. They're all principal and teacher. They taught us. A couple Armenian people over there.

OFLAZIAN: So what was your participation with the church?

CHOLAKIAN: Nothing, except that. Helping, helping them. Helping them.

OFLAZIAN: What kind of business was running your husband?

CHOLAKIAN: Fur business, fur merchant.

OFLAZIAN: So he continued the fur business.

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah, fur merchant, coming from Turkey. He had two brothers over there, and then . . .

OFLAZIAN: Where they locate their . . .

CHOLAKIAN: Twenty, 28th Street near to Seventh Avenue, downtown, business section. The furriers are all over there, for business.

OFLAZIAN: Can you describe me in a way your life in America?

CHOLAKIAN: I have a good life America. We like very much. Why

not? All right. I don't work. My husband have a good job, a good business, it's all right. We brought here three, four people. Orphan, we raised the orphan. We bring, my husband brothers, we bring here. And then his girlfriend bring here, and then my sister-in-law daughter, they sent me here. I made it. She's living in Jersey, (Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: You said that you brought orphans. From where you brought the orphans?

CHOLAKIAN: A long time, (Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: In Zela, you mean?

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah. He was big man, both here. Sent an affidavit over there. And my husband's brother were sent a paper from here to there. He's come, and his girlfriend come, living, my, next door.

OFLAZIAN: Did you provide education for these orphans in America?

CHOLAKIAN: Here? Yeah. Well, yes, yes, yes.

OFLAZIAN: So you raised them?

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah. We raised, we raised orphans, yeah.

OFLAZIAN: Did you have any children?

CHOLAKIAN: No, I haven't got any, no. I didn't have. I didn't have that chance. (she laughs)

OFLAZIAN: So you raised the orphans. (Mrs. Cholakian laughs) God bless you.

CHOLAKIAN: We help what, how much we could do, the people. My husband and I. They brought us, bring here, and in three years my husband brought brother. I fit him here until he married. A girlfriend put in here, so many people from my house married.

OFLAZIAN: So in one word you had the community. Were they all Armenians, these people?

CHOLAKIAN: They're all Armenians, yeah, yeah.

OFLAZIAN: Now, in America, have you ever learned, or did you do some needlepoint?

CHOLAKIAN: When I come in America, everything we learn here, and we learn a little bit English here, so what?

CHOLAKIAN: Did you learn how to do Armenian needlepoint? Like (Armenian) is the lacework.

CHOLAKIAN: Oh, yeah. I do. So many (Armenian), I did.

OFLAZIAN: Can you explain me which one you did? You did that?
Which one? (Armenian)? Which one?

CHOLAKIAN: Handmade, you mean? She did this one? Yeah.
That's, see. And then, let me see, let me see, let
me see.

OFLAZIAN: Mrs. Cholakian, wait. (referring to the microphone
becoming disconnected as Mrs. Cholakian moves)

LEVINE: I think after we finish, Mrs. Cholakian, we
will . . .

CHOLAKIAN: I have something, I forgot that. Where is that?

LEVINE: Mrs. Cholakian, when we finish with the interview
you can find it.

CHOLAKIAN: I have so many (?) here. Where is that?

OFLAZIAN: (Armenian)

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah. I'm sorry. I forgot this. (referring to
the microphone)

OFLAZIAN: Never mind. We can see later on all this
needlepoint you have done by yourself. Can you talk

to me about the way you cook Armenian cooking?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, Armenian cooking, Armenian, what (Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: Okay. How do you prepare the dorma?

CHOLAKIAN: What? (Armenian)?

OFLAZIAN: Explain me which one you want?

CHOLAKIAN: Meat. A big onion, I chop, you know.

OFLAZIAN: You chop.

CHOLAKIAN: We chop it. Salt and pepper and a little (?), rice.
Sometimes I put a little bulgur.

OFLAZIAN: Chopped wheat. Bulgur is the Armenian word for
chopped wheat.

CHOLAKIAN: Mixed a little bit. Dorma, that's it, dorma. And
the cabbage, we do cabbage, too, cabbage, too. And
pilaf, roast.

OFLAZIAN: Do you know how to make chorek?

CHOLAKIAN: Oh.

OFLAZIAN: Can you explain?

CHOLAKIAN: I haven't got now.

OFLAZIAN: Never mind. Can you explain me how you do chorek, how you prepare chorek, how you bake chorek?

CHOLAKIAN: It's, the dough is most important if you do chorek, see.

OFLAZIAN: How you prepare the dough?

CHOLAKIAN: (she laughs) About two pound flour, and two pound butter, melted butter. I have first made, and then, you know, a clean one I put. Two yeast, two yeast.

OFLAZIAN: Two package of yeast.

CHOLAKIAN: Two package, yes, yes. Sometimes I put one. No salt. I don't put the salt in anything. And then a couple of eggs.

OFLAZIAN: How many eggs?

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah.

OFLAZIAN: How many eggs?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, maybe four. Four, and make a dough, a good one. After my (Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: After it rises.

CHOLAKIAN: Rise, yeah. And then you have to make a shape, anything. I make a big dough like this. And then grease all over, like this.

OFLAZIAN: You fold it. You fold it.

CHOLAKIAN: Yes. (Armenian) This is dough, grease. And then . . .

OFLAZIAN: Mrs. Cholakian is explaining how she mixes the dough.

CHOLAKIAN: Like that. Different shape. You could do a different shape.

OFLAZIAN: Chorek is the Armenian word for sweet bread.

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah, yeah. That's a special one. A special, Easter and Christmas we make, you know.

OFLAZIAN: So how to you celebrate Christmas in America?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, we celebrate, too. American Christmas and Armenian Christmas.

OFLAZIAN: What's the difference, American and Armenian Christmas?

CHOLAKIAN: Different, well, Armenian, 6th. January 6th we celebrate Christmas.

OFLAZIAN: What did you do on the 6th of January?

CHOLAKIAN: What you do. (she laughs) Same thing.

OFLAZIAN: I know, Mrs. Cholakian, but for the sake of the recording, can you explain us what you do during Christmas time, how you celebrate Christmas?

CHOLAKIAN: Christmas time? We go church first. And then we come home, have a good dinner, or sometimes we go to the friends' house, you know. They invite or I am inviting somebody, like that. The whole day we have a good time. Okay?

OFLAZIAN: And how do you celebrate Easter in America?

CHOLAKIAN: Easter? We make a chorek, you know, Easter chorek. And eggs.

OFLAZIAN: You boiled eggs?

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah.

OFLAZIAN: Why you boiled eggs in Easter time?

CHOLAKIAN: Egg.

OFLAZIAN: Yes.

CHOLAKIAN: For color. Make egg, make color.

OFLAZIAN: Why you boiled the eggs in Easter time?

CHOLAKIAN: Boil them? Not much boiled.

OFLAZIAN: Okay. Why you do eggs in the Easter time? What's the meaning of the egg in the Easter time?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, usually Easter time we have an egg, a colored egg, see. On the table, must we have on the table.

OFLAZIAN: What else? What you have other things on the table?

CHOLAKIAN: A chorek, we have.

OFLAZIAN: So you have chorek, eggs, and what else? That's it?

CHOLAKIAN: You know, I'm telling the truth. Now I am alone, I have not much. If you have a company, you prepare different kinds. Am I right?

OFLAZIAN: And how did you celebrate it in the church, the Easter time?

CHOLAKIAN: Well, we go to church.

OFLAZIAN: How the church celebrates the Easter, Armenian church?

CHOLAKIAN: The Armenian church, Jesus. He was raised up, you know, from the . . . (she laughs)

OFLAZIAN: You celebrate the Resurrection, you mean?

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah, the Resurrection, yeah. We pray to God, health, everything, you know. My English sometimes too short.

OFLAZIAN: Okay, Mrs. Cholakian. I thank you very much for your precious time you give to us.

CHOLAKIAN: All over now asking. Thank you.

OFLAZIAN: Well, this is Grace Oflazian signing off with Mrs. Lousien Cholakian.

CHOLAKIAN: You telephone to me all the time, isn't' it?

OFLAZIAN: For the National Park Service.

CHOLAKIAN: Yeah, uh-huh.