

EI-298

ARSHALOUS NORHADIAN KEBAJIAN

BIRTH DATE: circa 1909

INTERVIEW DATE: 4/23/1993

RUNNING TIME: 1:01:42

INTERVIEWER: GRACE OFLAZIAN

RECORDING ENGINEER: KEVIN DALEY

**INTERVIEW LOCATION: ARMENIAN HOME FOR THE AGED
FLUSHING, NY**

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 8/1994

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: CHARLES MITCHELL, 4/2009

TURKEY (ARMENIAN), CIRCA 1920

APPROXIMATELY AGE 11

PASSAGE ON "THE PARIS"

PORT OF EMBARKATION: BEIRUT

**RESIDENCES: SEPASTIA (SIVAS)
EAST 20'S, MANHATTAN**

ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: Mrs. Kebabjian is the sister of Alice Khavlijian, Interview EI-290. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of Oral History, 11/3/1995.

OFLAZIAN: Good afternoon. This is Grace Oflazian for the National Park Service. Today is Friday, April 23, 1993. We are here in the Home for the Armenian Aged in Flushing, New York. I'm here with Mrs. Arshlous Kebabjian, who is an Armenian who was born in Sepastia, Turkey, came to America in 1920 when she was eleven years old. Mrs. Kebabjian, can you give me your maiden name? Do you remember your maiden name?

KEBAJIAN: Maiden name?

OFLAZIAN: Yes.

KEBAJIAN: My maiden name was Norhadian.

OFLAZIAN: Can you spell Norhadian for me?

KEBAJIAN: Of course! I went to school. N-O-R-H-A-D-I-A-N.

OFLAZIAN: Excellent.

KEBAJIAN: Norhadian.

OFLAZIAN: And which date you were born in?

KEBAJIAN: That is something unable to tell, because we were so small.

OFLAZIAN: Do you remember the year that you were born?

KEBAJIAN: Nothing. I don't remember. I don't know. Maybe Alice knows better than I do.

OFLAZIAN: I interviewed Alice. She is her niece.

KEBAJIAN: I do not remember the year, the date. I was thinking funny, that's from the medication. I am not able to speak very well. I'm ashamed of that, too.

OFLAZIAN: Don't be ashamed of anything. Never mind. Do you

remember how many members you were at home?

KEBAJIAN: How many members at home?

OFLAZIAN: Yes.

KEBAJIAN: My parents and, uh, four of us. My parents, one brother, the last one. The brother was the last one.

OFLAZIAN: What was his name?

KEBAJIAN: Barkev.

OFLAZIAN: Can you spell Barkev?

KEBAJIAN: Barkev.

OFLAZIAN: Can you spell it?

KEBAJIAN: Yes. B-A-R-K-E-V. All right?

OFLAZIAN: That's correct.

KEBAJIAN: Barkev. You say anything is right. (she laughs)
Even when it's wrong you say it's right.

OFLAZIAN: No. If it is wrong, I will say wrong.

KEBAJIAN: Because you don't want to refuse me.

OFLAZIAN: Do you remember about your sisters?

KEBAJIAN: Oh, well, sure. We went to school, of course.

OFLAZIAN: What was their name?

KEBAJIAN: The name of the school?

OFLAZIAN: Of your sisters.

KEBAJIAN: Of the sister. The oldest one was Agavnyr.

OFLAZIAN: Can you spell Agavnyr?

KEBAJIAN: Agavnyr.

OFLAZIAN: Can you spell Agavnyr?

KEBAJIAN: Agavnyr.

OFLAZIAN: Can you spell it?

KEBAJIAN: Well, Agavnyr means, in English I guess Agnes, they called. Agavnyr, they have no letter "rah." They have no letter. Agavnyr, "G" they have to use.

OFLAZIAN: How do you spell Agavnyr?

KEBAJIAN: A-G-A . . . (she laughs) We are going to, I remember . . .

OFLAZIAN: Not at all.

KEBAJIAN: G-A-V-N-I. Agavnyr, Agavnyr. They have no letter "rah."

OFLAZIAN: Actually . . .

KEBAJIAN: They use a "G" for that.

OFLAZIAN: I can understand that. And what about your other sisters' names?

KEBAJIAN: Alice, A-L-I-C-E, Alice.

OFLAZIAN: Do you remember . . .

KEBAJIAN: Barkev is the boy.

OFLAZIAN: Do you remember your mother?

KEBAJIAN: Oh, of course, of course.

OFLAZIAN: What was her name?

KEBAJIAN: Anna.

OFLAZIAN: How do you spell Anna?

KEBAJIAN: Anna.

OFLAZIAN: Can you spell it?

KEBAJIAN: A-N-N-A.

OFLAZIAN: What was her maiden name?

KEBAJIAN: Norhadian.

OFLAZIAN: Her maiden name.

KEBAJIAN: Her maiden name was, uh . . . (she pauses) Other times it's in mind.

OFLAZIAN: Okay, that's all right.

KEBAJIAN: From, the medication is doing that.

OFLAZIAN: Never mind. Take it easy. What was your father's occupation?

KEBAJIAN: Jejaian, mother.

OFLAZIAN: Your mother . . .

KEBAJIAN: Jejaian, mother's, mother's name.

OFLAZIAN: Her maiden name was . . .

KEBAJIAN: Maiden name.

OFLAZIAN: Jejaian.

KEBAJIAN: Jejaian.

OFLAZIAN: Can you spell it?

KEBAJIAN: I can, I can write that better than spelling. (she reaches for paper) May I use the paper? May I use the paper? (she pauses to write) Jejaian. And instead of "A" should be "E." (she speaks to herself as she writes) Jejaian.

OFLAZIAN: Can you spell it now? (Mrs. Kebajian does not respond.) Okay, all right. What did your father do for a living?

KEBAJIAN: He was a, like, we were very small, very young, you know. Those times we never heard, they never mentioned it to little children, you know. And, just my mother was like, what I should say? Mechanical engineer.

OFLAZIAN: What did he do?

KEBAJIAN: He made, he made machine guns, I think. If I know, everything by himself, the whole thing. And anything that, machine guns, and besides, he made a machine that made money.

OFLAZIAN: Which means that he printed money?

KEBAJIAN: I saw it with my eyes in the house, he brought the machine. And I remember he made it, some (Armenian).

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

KEBAJIAN: He burned coal, and made fire out of that. And he used, he used to melt the silver and he tried to get home. And he sure did went to us that this is money that we can mark on stars. I remember (Armenian). I don't know (Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: (Armenian) is the Armenian word for two pennies.

KEBAJIAN: (Armenian)

OFLAZIAN: (Armenian) She is asking to me if I'm from Sepastia.

KEBAJIAN: Sepastia is the name of the town we was born.

OFLAZIAN: Can you describe the town for me?

KEBAJIAN: Sepastia belongs to the Turks, of course.

OFLAZIAN: How big was the town?

KEBAJIAN: Sebatz.

OFLAZIAN: Why you say Sebatz? Why you say Sebatz?

KEBAJIAN: Why what?

OFLAZIAN: Why you are saying Sebatz?

KEBAJIAN: Because we were born in that city.

OFLAZIAN: What is Sepastia, then?

KEBAJIAN: Sepastia is higher than that.

OFLAZIAN: Oh. Sepastia is an Armenian word.

KEBAJIAN: They called, in Turkey, Turkey, just because belongs to the Turks, they call Sebatz. Higher than Sepastia.

OFLAZIAN: The Armenians call it Sepastia.

KEBAJIAN: Higher up, Sepastia. Two from (?).

OFLAZIAN: Can you describe the town for me, Sepastia? Can you describe Sepastia for me?

KEBAJIAN: When we arrived?

OFLAZIAN: Do you remember Sepastia?

KEBAJIAN: Yes. I remember because we went, we started going (Armenian).

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

KEBAJIAN: Before 1914 war started, see.

OFLAZIAN: How did you go to (Armenian), the kindergarten?

KEBAJIAN: Walking.

OFLAZIAN: With whom? Alone?

KEBAJIAN: Sometimes alone, sometimes together.

OFLAZIAN: With whom?

KEBAJIAN: Of course, I had my Alice, the sister, the young one. The older one did usually go by herself like that. If I remember. I don't know. I'm not sure of that either. And usually I send, I went together.

OFLAZIAN: What about Agavnyr?

KEBAJIAN: Agavnyr, Agavnyr went by herself. I don't remember much about her. I remember war, then I remember Agavnyr. Agavnyr, I see her.

OFLAZIAN: Do you remember going to church?

KEBAJIAN: Oh, yes! My grandmother used to hold our hand and go to church, yes. She took us. And we loved it, a lovely (?).

OFLAZIAN: Was your grandmother living with you at the time? Did she live with you?

KEBAJIAN: Oh, yes, yes.

OFLAZIAN: What was her name?

KEBAJIAN: Anna.

OFLAZIAN: What was her maiden name?

KEBAJIAN: Norhadian.

OFLAZIAN: Her maiden name, do you remember?

KEBAJIAN: Oh, her, well, mother, father's name, Jejaian. Now I remember I should write Jejaian, see. That was his brother.

OFLAZIAN: Do you remember that she's telling you any anecdotes, any stories, your grandmother to you? Did she ever told you any stories?

KEBAJIAN: No, not so much stories, but singing songs. The melodies, with the melodies.

OFLAZIAN: Like what?

KEBAJIAN: Like, oh . . . Like I guess, you know, Armenian church, and (Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: The protest on the . . .

KEBAJIAN: . . . are singing, and we used to learn, and we just practiced in the house, our singing.

OFLAZIAN: And how far the church was from your house?

KEBAJIAN: Huh?

OFLAZIAN: How far the church was from your house?

KEBAJIAN: How far?

OFLAZIAN: Yes.

KEBAJIAN: Well, by remembrance, maybe, I should say, more than, more than a half an hour.

OFLAZIAN: So did you walk to church?

KEBAJIAN: Walk. She used to hold our hands, and she used to take us to church. I remember that.

OFLAZIAN: You remember . . .

KEBAJIAN: Especially Agavnyr, the older one. She always took us.

OFLAZIAN: Do you remember your father coming with you to church?

KEBAJIAN: I remember?

OFLAZIAN: If your father came with you to church.

KEBAJIAN: I remember a couple of times that my father and mother went with, together. I remember. But not so many years passed, because they knew, they knew the, a scare, like they were afraid of the war. Those time, I say that to myself because they must have been worrying about coming along the war some time.

OFLAZIAN: Which war was that?

KEBAJIAN: Which war was that?

OFLAZIAN: Yes.

KEBAJIAN: 1914.

OFLAZIAN: With whom?

KEBAJIAN: With the Turks! With the Turks.

OFLAZIAN: You mean the Armenians with the Turks?

KEBAJIAN: Armenians with the Turks.

OFLAZIAN: And then what happened?

KEBAJIAN: Then what happened? Just, you know, start to, in 1914 they start to throw out the people from their homes.

OFLAZIAN: Who threw out the people from their homes?

KEBAJIAN: The Turks did.

OFLAZIAN: Oh, the Turks threw out the Armenian people from their homes.

KEBAJIAN: Sure.

OFLAZIAN: And then what happened?

KEBAJIAN: (?) I remember like a child, some other older, older persons, you know, better than I. We only, you know how we know those things? People used to tell after the war, when we were in the orphanage and some special family took care of us, they used to tell us those things. That's how we know it.

OFLAZIAN: Where was your mother at that time?

KEBAJIAN: Huh?

OFLAZIAN: Where was your mother at that time?

KEBAJIAN: Oh. My mother, after, on the road walking day and night, sleeping on the stones. And all the children. My grandmother, I remember she used to sit down and put our hands, our heads on her . . .

OFLAZIAN: Lap?

KEBAJIAN: Lap, on her lap, on the lap. Now I remember what, what they were all angels, those people. They were angels. How they take care. Three man, we walked over the mountains.

OFLAZIAN: With your mother?

KEBAJIAN: Mother, we had granmother always holding the hands together.

OFLAZIAN: So you went to the mountains all together, by holding hands.

KEBAJIAN: Yeah.

OFLAZIAN: Where was your father at that time?

KEBAJIAN: I had to, a brother. I had a brother, too. That was the smallest, the youngest one.

OFLAZIAN: You mean Barkev, right?

KEBAJIAN: Barkev.

OFLAZIAN: Where was your father that time?

KEBAJIAN: Father, they collected, all the mens they collected before.

OFLAZIAN: Who collected?

KEBAJIAN: Before, they threw the people out of the homes, see.

OFLAZIAN: Who collected the men?

KEBAJIAN: They collected . . . jandarma The Turks!

OFLAZIAN: The Turks, (?) Jandarma is the Turkish word for soldier.

KEBAJIAN: (Armenian) . . .

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

KEBAJIAN: (Armenian)

OFLAZIAN: (Armenian) is they took them out from the house.

KEBAJIAN: You don't know what happened to the men. They collect the men first, and they send them some place. Nobody knows where they send it. They don't know.

OFLAZIAN: So you did not see your father then?

KEBAJIAN: No, never, never, from that day on. We did not see father. We were with the mother and grandmother. Of course, they took care of us.

OFLAZIAN: So you walked through the desert?

KEBAJIAN: Walked, walked, walked, day and night.

OFLAZIAN: For three months?

KEBAJIAN: On the desert.

OFLAZIAN: So where did you go?

KEBAJIAN: No water at all. Three months, three months.

OFLAZIAN: What did you eat in the desert?

KEBAJIAN: Nothing. They took something out of the house, what they were there. They (?), that man is finished.

And after that they have to say, "Hungry and thirsty." They send the Turks wherever there is no water you can find. So you, you know, you are begging for water.

OFLAZIAN: Where did you go then?

KEBAJIAN: All, small villages and (Armenian). Big cities, of course. Haleb.

OFLAZIAN: Hama and Haleb are the big cities in Syria.

KEBAJIAN: In Haleb we were (Armenian).

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

KEBAJIAN: (Armenian) America. They write the names, they send our names to, every Armenian send their names to America and they read it, read the papers, and they send, they send, sometimes, money. They send letters, that they don't believe wanting to be here. Agavnyr used to take care of those.

OFLAZIAN: Who were these people they send you money?

KEBAJIAN: Who were the people they send the money?

OFLAZIAN: Yes.

KEBAJIAN: Oh, I, my uncle, uncles, uncle was, at that time he was alive. But later he died. He passed away. (?)
Excuse me.

OFLAZIAN: We are going to pause for a few moments right now.

KEBAJIAN: Thank you for . . . (break in tape)

OFLAZIAN: This is Grace Oflazian. We are resuming now the interview with Mrs. Kebajian. Okay, Mrs. Kebajian, you told us that you were in the orphanage, right? Where was . . .

KEBAJIAN: It was in Haleb.

OFLAZIAN: It was in Haleb. Can you talk about the orphanage?

KEBAJIAN: Oh, yes. Uh, we had bad times. People had bad time over there. One day all the Arabs, Turks, Turkish Arabs, came. And they tried to kill the, kill all the orphans. We have the song on that. When you sing, I used to sing and I used to cry about that. They want to take everything they had in the house there. And they want to, oh, kill all the orphans there. In Haleb, such a big place, they were so strong that they were able to do this kind of things. Imagine that?

OFLAZIAN: Very cruel.

KEBAJIAN: And they had the song. Every day the orphans, every day they sang, and they used to cry, especially persons like, you know, some persons have no feeling. But some of them, they feel it through, in their hearts. They start to cry like rivers.

OFLAZIAN: Do you remember the song?

KEBAJIAN: A river.

OFLAZIAN: Do you remember the song?

KEBAJIAN: Yes.

OFLAZIAN: Do you remember the song?

KEBAJIAN: Oh, yes. I remember the song. It went something like (Armenian). (a telephone rings) Not to forget. (she recites in Armenian)

OFLAZIAN: Mrs. Kebajian is explaining the orphanage to tell . . .

KEBAJIAN: Of course, too (?). Arab . . .

OFLAZIAN: How did you manage to get out?

KEBAJIAN: How did we manage?

OFLAZIAN: How did you manage to get out?

KEBAJIAN: At that time, we were out of there.

OFLAZIAN: How? How did you come out?

KEBAJIAN: I think, I don't remember if we were in or not. I don't know. My mother was living there. She got sick. She had the cholera. And there was no, there was no hospital. They took them to the Turkish, the Turkish hospital, only one hospital, for so many. And I wish you, you live long there. One day I went to the hospital to see my mother. My Agavnyr sister, the big one, told me to go down and see Mother and, not very far from the orphanage. And I went there, the nurse, Armenian nurse was there. She said, I said, "How is my mother?" I don't know what she tell me. And she said, "She died." I don't know, I don't know, I did not know what that word is, see? "She died," she says. I didn't know the word. But remind me, like, like, "She cannot come back no more." That word came. I went home, I went home and . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

OFLAZIAN: This is Grace Oflazian. We are resuming now the interview with Mrs. Kebajian. Mrs. Kebajian, so you visited, you just said that you visited your mother in the hospital and the nurse said that she died. So you stood alone. Now, where did you go, or what happened?

KEBAJIAN: I don't remember where I went, but I know I found Agavnyr and I told Agavnyr that she's, the nurse told me she died. And I guess she understood a little, she got something out of that word, or ask somebody what does that mean. (Armenian)

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

KEBAJIAN: (Armenian)

OFLAZIAN: Mrs. Kebajian is explaining in Armenian how her mother died.

KEBAJIAN: Right away I remember that when she died means when anybody is not speaking, cannot walk, cannot drink, cannot, I said speak, that means dead. So that's how I explained to my sister.

OFLAZIAN: How did you manage to come to America?

KEBAJIAN: How?

OFLAZIAN: How did you come to America?

KEBAJIAN: How did we manage?

OFLAZIAN: Yes.

KEBAJIAN: Well, leaving?

OFLAZIAN: Yes, from Haleb, right?

KEBAJIAN: Agavnyr, they had other people in the orphanage.
All the orphans went there. That was the only (?).
(Armenian) The name was (Armenian). Mrs. and
Mrs. Aronian used to take care of us.

OFLAZIAN: How did you come to America?

KEBAJIAN: (she pauses) How I came?

OFLAZIAN: To America.

KEBAJIAN: To America, I think my uncle, my uncle was leaving,
which came very early years beginning the century.
He came to America. That was the youngest brother
of, Hanes, his name. Right away when they knew,

Agavnyr wrote letters to, know the address. They lived in 25th Street between Second and Third Avenue, they used to live. And that's where we came. And got (?).

OFLAZIAN: How did you come to America? (Armenian) America?

KEBAJIAN: Well, (Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: Excuse me. Can you say it in English?

KEBAJIAN: (Armenian)

OFLAZIAN: Can you say it in English, in English?

KEBAJIAN: Find out (Armenian).

OFLAZIAN: Mrs. Kebajian is explaining in Armenian how they managed to come to America. Your uncle sent the money.

KEBAJIAN: Yes.

OFLAZIAN: And Agavnyr took care of you, right?

KEBAJIAN: Agavnyr took care.

OFLAZIAN: And . . .

KEBAJIAN: She did not know she had to ask about it, anyway.

OFLAZIAN: From where you took the boat to come to America?

KEBAJIAN: Where we . . .

OFLAZIAN: Did you take the boat from Haleb?

KEBAJIAN: Some, no, no. Some friends at that time, they were going to go. I don't know who she asked. My sister must be asking, I don't remember those. But my sister Agavnyr, I think she asked all the people, Armenian friends or if they know each other who go. Like group, groups, they eat together, they sleep together, and they have each other. That time was very helpful.

OFLAZIAN: So were you took the La Paris, ship, La Paris?

KEBAJIAN: Oh, La Paris, I think was Beirut.

OFLAZIAN: From where did you . . .

KEBAJIAN: From Beirut, I think.

OFLAZIAN: How did you go to Beirut? How did you go to Beirut from Haleb? Do you remember that?

KEBAJIAN: (she laughs) No.

OFLAZIAN: You don't.

KEBAJIAN: You . . .

OFLAZIAN: Must be, must be, you know, the groups speak together, and they come together, like a conference, you see? And what time they're going, what time they have to meet the ship, and what country they have to meet the ship, who's going there. All these things, you know, they tell, they told each other.

OFLAZIAN: Did you come to America alone?

KEBAJIAN: Huh?

OFLAZIAN: Did you come to America alone?

KEBAJIAN: No. That was, well, before we come, came to America, we traveled through Beirut and Marseilles. All those countries we passed. The ship passed from there, see? And a lot of, lots of Armenians there in the ship. Oh, they (?) there.

OFLAZIAN: You mean, in the La Paris?

KEBAJIAN: La Paris, yeah.

OFLAZIAN: Do you remember how long the trip took place, the

voyage took place in the ocean?

KEBAJIAN: Huh?

OFLAZIAN: Do you remember how long the voyage took place? How many days you traveled?

KEBAJIAN: Oh, about six days with La Paris, six days from Beirut, I think. That much. About six, seven days.

OFLAZIAN: So, which means that from Beirut you took the La Paris and you went to Marseilles?

KEBAJIAN: Marseilles, yeah.

OFLAZIAN: And then from Marseilles, you came to America?

KEBAJIAN: In, in those places we went, near the, where we had to stay until another ship comes. You had to wait, see? Not only one ship brought us to America. We had to stay in a month. A month in Marseilles, a month like in Beirut, where all these things.

OFLAZIAN: So you stayed one month in Beirut to take the boat. You went to Marseilles, and you stayed one month in Marseilles, and then you come to America.

KEBAJIAN: Whatever country was, is near the ocean, we had, the

ship had to stay. Not only for us, but they're going to take things, you know, inside.

OFLAZIAN: Do you remember the ship? How big was it?

KEBAJIAN: Oh, I remember the ship, but I don't know. Some of them were small, like from what country we had to take. From Beirut, Beirut.

OFLAZIAN: When the ship came to New York, do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

KEBAJIAN: Oh, yes, yeah.

OFLAZIAN: Can you describe it for me?

KEBAJIAN: They told us, there was lots of Armenians at that time in the ship, as I said. The last ship we took to come, the one came to America, there was lots of Armenians there.

OFLAZIAN: That's great.

KEBAJIAN: And, yeah.

OFLAZIAN: So all the Armenians saw the Statue of Liberty?

KEBAJIAN: All together, yeah.

OFLAZIAN: Did you see?

KEBAJIAN: Sure. They show us, they were so happy, and so friendly.

OFLAZIAN: What did they say?

KEBAJIAN: Oh . . .

OFLAZIAN: Do you remember what did they say?

KEBAJIAN: They start to see, and I had, I had a beautiful voice that time, and five, I guess that was from childhood. My father knew that, and we were always trying me to sing and practice, see? And I loved that Armenian songs and Armenian acts. (Armenian)

OFLAZIAN: (Armenian) is the drummer, Armenian drummer. Do you remember singing with the group when you saw the Statue of Liberty? When you saw the Statue of Liberty, did you sing with the group? The people, you said the people were singing in the boat, right, when the saw the Statue of Liberty.

KEBAJIAN: They all saw, but at that time we did not know that belonged to America. Later on we, people used to say, but we were so small, but from far away we saw.

But it's beautiful.

OFLAZIAN: What did you feel?

KEBAJIAN: Well, we felt like that was, we were in America.

OFLAZIAN: How did you go to Ellis Island? How did you go to
Ellis Island?

KEBAJIAN: How did we go to Ellis Island? I guess, I guess the
ship, (?) stopped there.

OFLAZIAN: And how long did you . . .

KEBAJIAN: The ocean there.

OFLAZIAN: How long did you stay in Ellis Island?

KEBAJIAN: I think if I am not mistaken about two weeks we had
to stay in Ellis Island, before we came out.
Because the government, I think they, they had the
(?).

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

KEBAJIAN: The (Armenian). They had, well, people of the ship,
they have to, they have notify the government that
the ship is already in America, or those
people . . . (they laugh) I am telling, you

understand better.

OFLAZIAN: Thank you very much. Yeah. I appreciate that. And what was the reason, why did you stay in Ellis Island for two weeks?

KEBAJIAN: And I guess they picked it up that they were (?), go in the place we are going has no man. The persons, the person where, to which we go, her husband is died, orphan, she's going to keep.

OFLAZIAN: You said you stayed two weeks.

KEBAJIAN: That's why Ellis Island kept us as much as they kept, see?

OFLAZIAN: Where did you sleep in Ellis Island?

KEBAJIAN: Oh, they have the, something, what should I say? I don't know how it was. Other words, they had, you know, like pieces of, pieces of heavy, heavy, very heavy sheet made, you know. And they made a bed out of it, adn they used to have them on the walls which they used to, you sleep there, one under the other, see, like that. One way up in the top, another one like, three, three rows, like. You sleep beneath that. Maybe if they have a person, they make it

four. As much as they can make it. People used to sleep there.

OFLAZIAN: Do you remember what did you eat?

KEBAJIAN: Huh?

OFLAZIAN: Do you remember what did you eat in Ellis Island?

KEBAJIAN: (she laughs) I tell you, I never remember what we ate. But that part I don't know.

OFLAZIAN: Did you go through medical examinations?

KEBAJIAN: Almost, almost on the, on the ships, usually, almost every country used to get examined. If you are in Beirut, Beirut has to examine.

OFLAZIAN: So they did not examine you in Ellis Island? They did not examine you in Ellis Island?

KEBAJIAN: I think they did, but I don't remember. Of course they do. Ellis Island is almost America.

OFLAZIAN: So you didn't tell me what was the main reason that you . . .

KEBAJIAN: I'm sorry . . . (break in tape)

OFLAZIAN: This is Grace Oflazian. We are resuming now.
Mrs. Kebajian, you did not tell me what was the main reason that you stayed two weeks in Ellis Island. What was the purpose?

KEBAJIAN: I guess we were young, you know. Everybody, everybody was, the case is different. Different, different cases we hear. I don't know what was the, what was the reason to stay. I, I now can that's the way I think now. It was because she was like, my uncle's wife was lame, see. And she used to walk a limp. And she was like an orphan woman, understand? That's why Ellis Island kept us longer, see.

OFLAZIAN: So who came to meet you in Ellis Island? Who came to meet you in Ellis Island?

KEBAJIAN: If I remember, nobody did. But some, like (Armenian).

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

KEBAJIAN: (Armenian)

OFLAZIAN: Soldiers (?).

KEBAJIAN: (Armenian)

OFLAZIAN: (?) There were soldiers to help them how to get there.

KEBAJIAN: They showed us what train we have to go, and, of course, conductor, you know, they . . .

OFLAZIAN: So where did you go?

KEBAJIAN: Gonna get off, where.

OFLAZIAN: So where did you go from Ellis Island? After you left Ellis Island, where did you go?

KEBAJIAN: Right, if I remember, I don't know about that much, but I think we went home.

OFLAZIAN: Where home?

KEBAJIAN: Where she was living.

OFLAZIAN: Who?

KEBAJIAN: My uncle's wife.

OFLAZIAN: And then?

KEBAJIAN: And we have the address, and it's easy for us to find, because we know how to read.

OFLAZIAN: Do you remember how did you get there? Do you remember? Do you remember how did you go there? Did you walk to her house? Did you take the train? Do you remember that?

KEBAJIAN: Uh, it must have been, it must have been we asked some people, they showed us. We know.

OFLAZIAN: Okay.

KEBAJIAN: In the street, we show the address, and they tell you you have to go this much, that much, and they went, they went to take you there.

OFLAZIAN: What did you see in New York you didn't seen before? What did you see in New York that you never seen before?

KEBAJIAN: What did I see? Oh . . .

OFLAZIAN: Do you remember seeing something that . . .

KEBAJIAN: It was a surprise. (she laughs) What a surprise.

OFLAZIAN: What were your expectations from America?

KEBAJIAN: The expectations all . . .

OFLAZIAN: What was your expectations from America?

KEBAJIAN: I think, you think we would know, we know that much. We were, we grow up orphans, hungry. We are not worried about that. We are worrying that our stomach is got something inside of us. We were all dried up, half dead.

OFLAZIAN: How did you learn English? Tell me about that. How did you learn English?

KEBAJIAN: Oh, how did I, we went to school, that's it. So much, no. The government said these children, they have to go to school, they said.

OFLAZIAN: So did you go to school?

KEBAJIAN: So we went to school, public school. And, you know, P.S. 27 on 27th Street?

OFLAZIAN: Did you graduated?

KEBAJIAN: P.S. 27, she could not afford my uncle's wife. But my uncle died. She could not afford to send us. We were wishing to get diplomas. We liked it. But after that, you know what we did? We used to go to, after the day school, we finished the day school, to

go down and then we start going night school. There was night school all the time, a lot, everywhere is night school that was. We went night school.

OFLAZIAN: So did you work?

KEBAJIAN: And then we used to go in the day time and we went, we work in the day time. We went to school at night. There was night school, too.

OFLAZIAN: Have you learned any needlepoint?

KEBAJIAN: Yes. Used to do it, used to do it.

OFLAZIAN: What kind of needlepoint you know?

KEBAJIAN: Well, now I don't know.

OFLAZIAN: Which one you made?

KEBAJIAN: (Armenian)

OFLAZIAN: What do I have to understand from (Armenian)?

KEBAJIAN: Huh?

OFLAZIAN: You said you made it round and round. What do I have to understand from round and round?

KEBAJIAN: I did not understand what you mean that?

OFLAZIAN: I ask you if you know how to do needlepoint, if you made any needlepoint.

KEBAJIAN: I learn, I guess from, I don't know where I learned from. I learned from seeing the people doing, and we were interested (Armenian). They learned.

OFLAZIAN: Are you happy that you are in America?

KEBAJIAN: Huh?

OFLAZIAN: Are you happy that you are in America?

KEBAJIAN: Oh, well, of course, of course we are. Who cannot be happy, these kinds of people? Everyone is happy and thankful. We are thankful first from the Lord. Lord, all from the Lord.

OFLAZIAN: Have you ever thought going back to see your home country?

KEBAJIAN: Never expected what it is.

OFLAZIAN: So do you have . . .

KEBAJIAN: I love to join every year that I celebrate, every year time has passed I'm glad that I was here. I tried to go, I could not go.

OFLAZIAN: What they do in Times Square?

KEBAJIAN: I was crying, because I wanted to remember that.

OFLAZIAN: What they do, the Armenians, in Times Square? Why
the Armenians go to Times Square?

KEBAJIAN: Yeah.

OFLAZIAN: Why they go there?

KEBAJIAN: About the war.

OFLAZIAN: About the war.

KEBAJIAN: War, they should celebrate that every year on the
same, same month, same, same year, same time.

OFLAZIAN: Do you know which month is that?

KEBAJIAN: When I was outside. Not, before I came here I was,
I never miss it. I wanted to go every year there.
You can't go back.

OFLAZIAN: Mrs. Kebajian is explaining how the Armenians
commemorate the Memorial Day.

KEBAJIAN: You can't forget that.

OFLAZIAN: Every 24, every year.

KEBAJIAN: We go walk in the street, we see in the main time, in the street, everything goes in the machine. And the (?) and cries, go on the record, you know, in Times Square.

OFLAZIAN: Okay, Mrs. Kebajian.

KEBAJIAN: I never like to miss it.

OFLAZIAN: We have to memorial. Okay. I thank you very much, Mrs. Kebajian.

KEBAJIAN: Did I make to satisfaction, satisfied, or no?

OFLAZIAN: Yes, you did. Yes, you did. You answered very beautifully. I really thank you so much.

KEBAJIAN: I thank you to giving the time and what you call anxious to, anxious to know something to look at those and make stories writing about it. You think you're doing a small job, you're doing a big job.

OFLAZIAN: We are doing a great job for Ellis Island. Ellis Island would like to have your precious voice in her heart. That's what we are doing for Ellis Island.

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KEBAJIAN: Perhaps you have our names in Ellis Island.
(voices garbled) (tape ends)