

EI-491/PASHAYAN

EI-491

VRAMSHABOUH PASHAYAN

BIRTH DATE: JUNE 19, 1906

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TURKEY VIA CORFU AND FRANCE (BORN ARMENIA, ARMENIAN), 1928

AGE 22

PASSAGE ON "THE ILE DE FRANCE"

PORT OF EMBARCATION: LE HAVRE

RESIDENCES: CHENGILER, DAMASCUS, ISTANBUL, CORFU

UTICA, NY

SIGRIST: Good morning, this is Paul Sigrist for the National

Park Service. Today is Thursday, July 7th, 1994.

I'm in Utica, is this Utica or are we in West

Hartford?

PASHAYAN: Utica.

SIGRIST: We are in Utica proper. I'm in Utica, New York, with

Vramshabouh Pashayan.

PASHAYAN: Pashayan, uh huh.

SIGRIST: I'm going to spell all that. Vramshabouh is spelled capital V-R-A-M-S-H-A-B-O-U-H. Pashayan is capital P-A-S-H-A-Y-A-N. Mr. Pashayan was born in Armenia, raised in Turkey, spent several years in France prior to coming to the United States, came to the U.S. in 1928 and he was probably about twenty two when he came to this country. Anyway, thank you very much for having me out here. I also want to say that Bob Jones, who has been instrumental in finding us people in the Utica area, is also present for this interview. Mr. Pashayan, may we begin by you giving me your birth date, please?

PASHAYAN: I was born June 19, 1906

SIGRIST: And where were you born in Armenia?

PASHAYAN: Darachichak.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

PASHAYAN: (gesturing towards a book) Is it in there? No. (he laughs, cuckoo clock can be heard in the background)

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D-A-R-A-C-H-I-C-H-A-K.

SIGRIST: Thank you. Can you tell me a little bit about that, that town or that village.

PASHAYAN: No, I don't even remember the place of my birth because shortly after we were deported from our home, no, my parents evidently, they moved to Turkey in Chengiler.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

PASHAYAN: C-H-E-N-G-I-L-E-R.

SIGRIST: Thank you.

PASHAYAN: That's the best of my recollection of it. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Do you know why they went to Turkey?

PASHAYAN: Oh, you see, my parents died before I had any ideas about asking such questions. I imagine it was economics. Russia was bad at that time, too, I imagine. So, one thing that I know why they

moved, because there was a lot more Armenians there probably and also the soil was good. That's what people look for in soil. There was very good soil there, so they moved there.

SIGRIST: What did your father do for a living?

PASHAYAN: My father, well, at the time of the deportations my father was the head of the village. And before that his grandfather was it, so he was, I don't know what you would call it. Not a mayor. He was working for the kings, was on the king's payroll. He was sort of a caretaker of the village. That's the best I can tell.

SIGRIST: What was your father's name?

PASHAYAN: Minas, M-I-N-A-S.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about what his personality was like?

PASHAYAN: My father was a, was a very nice man, always family. And he always tried to do the best he could for our

family. When we were all together, my father,
mother and three children, three, yeah three.

SIGRIST: When you say he was the caretaker of the village,
what ere his duties.

PASHAYAN: Like a mayor, like, he was like a governor would be
in the village, yeah, as far as I can see. Like I
said, a caretaker for the government. He was, in
other words, like a, he was everything. We
didn't, we didn't have any Turks in our village.
Just one gendarme and he was under the command
of my father.

SIGRIST: That's an interesting situation.

PASHAYAN: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me what kinds of professions people had
in this town?

PASHAYAN: Oh, mostly they, like I said, agriculture, but the
biggest money maker, I think, was raising silk
worms. And my father was expert at that. I don't

what school e went to, how much education my father had, but when I look back he was very intelligent man. He was, he must have gone to some school that we don't know.

SIGRIST: How did you raise silk worms? What was the process?

PASHAYAN: Well, you got to have lots of mulberry trees. The leaves of mulberry trees they thrive on, the silk worms. Every household, in the attic, they raise silk worms. They used to get, they call them seeds but actually it's the droppings of them. Then after a while it becomes a worm. They grow up and you can hear the noises they make as they chomp, chomp on the leaves of the mulberry trees. (he laughs) And so, my father's older sister was married to a family that they used to, people used to take their cocoons to them. They had a factory for cocoons. And they would unravel the cocoons and make it into a bale, then ship them to Europe, to France mostly I guess. Must have been Lyon or someplace specific, certain sections in Lyon in France. And if the silk worms got sick, they used to call my father. And we'd go do something so they all won't

be contaminated.

SIGRIST: You said that a lot of people in town did this.

PASHAYAN: Every, every, as far as I know, every attic almost.

Everybody's attic they had that. So it was, that's

how they made their living. They were not poor.

My oldest aunt, as I said, they even had barges that

would take the merchandise to Istanbul Harbor

because we didn't have any harbor. We had the one

harbor Yalova, which big ships I don't think came

there. I don't know. Barges would go from Yalova.

That's a port that our village used to go to. I

know I've been to Istanbul a couple of time before

World War One. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: A lot different then than it is now.

PASHAYAN: Oh, yeah. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

PASHAYAN: Martha. (he pronounces it with a hard "t")

SIGRIST: M-A-R-T-A?

PASHAYAN: Whatever you, yeah, T-H-A.

SIGRIST: T-H-A. And do you know what her name was before she was married? Her last name?

PASHAYAN: Messelian.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

PASHAYAN: M-E-S-S-E-L-I-A-N.

SIGRIST: And tell me a little bit about your mother's background, where she came from and her...

PASHAYAN: My mother was same place I was born. And her father used to be a tailor, so my mother, naturally, knew how to sew. So we were all well taken care of.

SIGRIST: What was her personality like?

PASHAYAN: Oh, now you're going back. Personality was just like any mother, was caretaking, I mean, just caretaking.

SIGRIST: What were some of her family duties? What were some of the things she had to do for the family?

PASHAYAN: What was how they did in this country way back then before World War One. They just take care of children and send them to school. That's it.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the house that you lived in?

PASHAYAN: Uh, yes. I remember some.

SIGRIST: Can you describe it a little bit for me?

PASHAYAN: Well, do you want the interior of the house?

SIGRIST: Let's start with the exterior. What was it made out of and...?

PASHAYAN: Exterior, well, it was wooden exterior. I think it was wooden. It's not brick. And as you walk in there was a big yard. The whole bottom was big yard you walk in. We had a horse stall on one side downstairs and a cow on the left side. The purpose

the cow was to give milk, make cheese and yogurt.
We call it (Armenian). And then the horse, of
course, for transportation. And also, in
winter time, it kept the ouse warm because the
bedrooms, the rooms, the living room and bedrooms are
upstairs.

SIGRIST: Over the animal stalls?

PASHAYAN: Yeah, it kept the house warm. We had also small
stoves that kept the house warm. I imagine we had a
fireplace.

SIGRIST: How many rooms did the house have?

PASHAYAN: Now you're getting in a little too much. (he laughs)
Well, my father and mother had one room, my sister
in another room and two boys in another room.

SIGRIST: What were the names of your sister and brothers?

PASHAYAN: My sister's name is Varsenig. My brother's name was
Deran. I got a son I named Deran, D-E-R-A-N. And,
of course, my name is there. That's it.

SIGRIST: And spell your sister's name, too, please.

PASHAYAN: Varsenig, V-A-R-S-E-N-I-G.

SIGRIST: Varsenig. Is she older or...?

PASHAYAN: She is older than I am.

SIGRIST: So are you the middle child of the three?

PASHAYAN: Yes. I lost my brother beginning of the war. He's buried in Damascus, Syria. We got a lot of people buried around there.

SIGRIST: Tell me about, you said that the house opened up to a big yard inside. Did you have vegetables? Did you grow any vegetables?

PASHAYAN: We had a garden in back of the house. But everybody had an orchard, more or less. They used to go and do their planting there outside of the village. I remember quite a bit.

SIGRIST: What did people eat in Turkey when you were growing up?

PASHAYAN: In the vegetables, they had all kinds of vegetables. They used to grow their own. And they had a lot of grapes. They had vineyards, vineyards. They, we had regular food. We had chicken. We had beef.

SIGRIST: Does something stick out in your mind that, that was something that your mother frequently prepared or something that you remember?

PASHAYAN: Well, we had, like with chicken, with had pilaf with the chicken. We had either with rice or with bulgur. Bulgur is the crushed wheat. I guess they boiled the wheat first and after it dried they used to ground them into different sizes. They used to put sometimes in a salad you see in the Greek restaurants like they have, almost the same thing. Incidentally, I lived in Greece, in Greece, before I went to France I was in Greece.

SIGRIST: You've been a lot of different places.

PASHAYAN: Just like a frog. (he gestures a hopping frog with his hand, they laugh)

SIGRIST: Talk to me a little, this is all pre-massacre that we're talking about, talk to me a little bit about, did you attend school in this town at all?

PASHAYAN: In our home town?

SIGRIST: Yes, in your town.

PASHAYAN: Uh, I didn't even finish it. I went to school evidently late. You know, I was not very, I was sort of a, not as healthy as my brother was, for instance. I don't know what it was. I found out way afterwards I had, I guess, I had my operation of appendicitis for no reason at all. Of course, the doctors came to the conclusion that I had appendicitis. But I remember the, one of the internists in a French hospital jokingly said, "They had a hard time finding your appendix." So I knew then that I didn't have any because I didn't, I found out after I came to the United States that there was a stone in my kidney from the

food we ate during the deportation days. So,
first doctor I went to over here, the man gave me (?),
and put his finger down. I jumped. He says, "Yeah."
He says, "You got kidney stone." (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Let's, let's talk about that period around 1915. Can
you tell me what was the first thing that happened in
your town that you remember that wasn't quite right?

PASHAYAN: 1915? Well, as I said, my father was in charge.
Well, I should go prior to that. Well, I guess, all
these Turkish governors had sealed letters to open
up when the time came for their dirty work, to open
up and execute everything in their letter says.
And that no mercy to nobody. You got to eliminate
the Armenian cause once and for all. You see, don't
forget, Armenia, Turkey today, they're on
foreign soil. And they want to, because there were
all these demands, Armenians were demanding more
freedom, more freedom. And they get promises,
promises, which they don't do anything. In other
words, they come, grab you out of your house, anybody
they wanted, take them to jail, that's all. You
don't hear any more about it any more. They take

out someplace and kill them. That was the way they
done it. Well, you'd think my father would hear
something about this but we don't know. As I said,
he never talked to us about anything.

Evidently, the orders came when the World War One
broke out. They were lined up with Germany, and, what
you call them, the Eastern Block, what did they call
them then? It was Hungary, Austria and it was all
together. Of course, they were all under German rule
anyway. So orders come out that they all got to be
moved.

SIGRIST: All the Armenians?

PASHAYAN: From all their houses, everybody has to go on a
march. I marched. I don't know how many miles. We
marched from Istanbul area all the way down to
Damascus. I end up in Damascus, Syria, which was
lucky because the Arabs up there were not bad. They
were ready to explode themselves against Turkey.
In fact, they told Turkey that they didn't want any
massacres in Damascus. But they did inside,
in the interior they did.

SIGRIST: So how did, how, how was your family informed that you would have to leave your house?

PASHAYAN: Oh, the gendarmes came to houses, every house.
"(Turkish)" "Get up and go! Get up and go!"
"(Turkish)" The Turkish words for "Get up and go."
You got to move, everybody. So they said anything you want to take with you, you can take to your church, lock them up. Smart Turks. That's what they did. A lot of people, they have valuables, so forth, that they put in there hoping to come back. They were supposed to come back and take their things and they give you receipt. Of course, that never happened. Well, anyway, everybody had to go that certain day. So my father was with all the officers in the office. And we were all out, what they call (Turkish), that's the place where everybody, after there's wheat crop, whatever it is up, they come over there to thresh them, what they call, there's an English word for that.

SIGRIST: For threshing the wheat?

PASHAYAN: Yeah, uh, but anyway...

SIGRIST: The area where they did it...

PASHAYAN: Yeah, it's a big place. And after all those things were done, they used to have a big parties over there because winter is coming on, pretty winter parties. Well, everyone was there including us. We had some tents for us and what not. We never knew that my father and seven other friends of his, they had guns put away up in the mountain top because they suspected that something was going to happen. And the Turks never thought that my father would suspect anything. So my father asked this commander, general over there, "Can I go say 'good bye' to my family?" He says, "Sure, Pashayan Effendee [ph]" They used to call him "Pashayan Effendee [ph]." "Sure, why not. Go say 'good bye' to them." So, (he laughs) well, it was getting gradually darker and darker. Dark, I mean the sky was getting darker and darker and almost dusk. My father says "good bye" to us and takes off. Never knew where. I don't know if my mother knew anything or the sister knew anything because we were all together, her family, my sister's. Of course, the

first thing they did, the Turks, they took all the men
power away. They shot them. They make believe as
though they were going to take them into the army.
They didn't do it. They make them dig the
trenches. They shot them and kick them in the
trenches. That's nice people. So, so there was
hardly any men. We were the only men. We were
kids, my brother and I in our family. Once I met my
father, although my sister says he came down more
than once to say "hello" to us and told us not to go,
try not to, try to avoid going this way. Go that
way, you know. (he gestures) In other words, this
way will take you to like where Iraq is today, to the
Euphrates and Tigris rivers, Mesopotamia. He
said, "Don't go that way. They got the most, desert
was a bad (city?) to be in. Anybody went to desert,
my wife's mother went through there. She got away
but very few of them survived. In fact, she had a
daughter, my wife's mother had a daughter six,
seven years old, something, and she give her to a
Kurd family. She says, "It can't be worse than
leaving her behind," because nobody lives through
there. Very few got away. (Mrs. Pashayan enters the
room) So, that's my wife, Florence. (Mrs. Pashayan

laughs)

SIGRIST: Hi, Florence. (Mr. Pashayan laughs) So, your father's up in the mountains. You guys are still at home.

PASHAYAN: Yeah, yeah. So we, once in a while, I hop a train. A freight train go by and maybe get a few miles for nothing. Then the gendarmes come after us. We jump back out of the train. It was very slow moving train. They used to burn wood and a lot of time the train stop, the crew gets out, cuts some trees down, bring them back to burn again. Well, that's what it was. So we came to, I guess my father ahead of us got to Damascus. So we, he directed everything, from the hills, from wherever my father directed everything for our safety. Of course, as I said, he was very fluent in Turkish, very, very fluent in Turkish writing, that's the old Arabic writing. That's why I say he must have gone to, because a lot of times the generals couldn't write their name. They used to come to my father to write things for them. So, then...

SIGRIST: Was everyone rounded up at the same time? I mean, did you all leave...?

PASHAYAN: Every, villages, all the villages in Turkey. The only ones that they got away with was that they have an American institution or an English institution. They congregated in there, and how many people can do that? And some of the kids with those schools, even they got them after a while, too. But initially they missed them because they're afraid that they'll get more punishment afterwards. But, see, it's a nation of politics. It's dirty business, you know, it's...

SIGRIST: Well, and that was a difficult time. World War One is going on in Europe. America is not in the war yet but...

PASHAYAN: President Wilson was the best friend Armenians had, in fact, yeah. If he had lived a little longer, didn't die so young, he would have helped out more because, well, anyway, we came to Damascus shortly after my brother died, my grandmother died...

SIGRIST: Can you tell me about the experience of going to Damascus? What do you remember about the march to Damascus?

PASHAYAN: Well, as I said, there wasn't anything that you want to remember, so I don't know. It was very, very hardship. We were starved to death, don't forget, half of us.

SIGRIST: What did you eat? What were you...

PASHAYAN: Whatever you found. We found, my mother and my aunts, they were very good at going through a field of weeds and pick up this root and that root that was edible. And they just cooked them and throw a little bulgur in there, that's crushed wheat as I said before. We had some of that stuff with us, I mean, they, she brought, in fact, we brought even fat, cooking fat along with us. And sometime they give this to some Turkish officers to have a little break, by giving some of this to them, although they didn't have to. They could grab it anyway, but bribery, my, I don't know how much gold my aunt had saved here and there that they couldn't find.

So she bribed her way through. That's why we got,
once in a while we got train ride, by bribing some
soldiers.

SIGRIST: Now, during the march, you went to Syria first,
right? Mr. Pashayan nods) During the march, were you
always in the presence of soldiers or..?

PASHAYAN: All the way through they were after us. They say
they rest a little while, they come back with the
bayonets at the end of their guns, "Get up and go.
(Turkish)" So you fold up everything you have and
start to walk. And, as I said, it was very hard for
me because I was, I wasn't a strong kid.

SIGRIST: And you're what, around ten years old at this time?
Correct? Nine or ten?

PASHAYAN: Ten, twelve.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Tell me about how, how you were treated by the
Turkish officers. Were all of them...?

PASHAYAN: They were all bad...

SIGRIST: They were all bad.

PASHAYAN: ...because if they were not, they'd get shot themselves, so they were all bad. So, as I said, my father ahead of us came with friends to Damascus. They had quarters for us so we moved into a house in Damascus. And my father got a job, with the Turks again in Damascus. Of course, if it was nowadays, they would have picked him up and thrown him in jail but they didn't know they were looking for my father. In those days, you know, no computers. (he laughs) They didn't have hardly any telephones. The army had telephone but...

SIGRIST: Would you say that there was a large percentage of men that hadn't escaped into the mountains or would you say most of the men had been rounded up by the Turks.

PASHAYAN: Our, our group, as I said, my father's group was only eight. Well, maybe somebody didn't have the opportunity my father had because, as I said, he could pass for a Turk. He was so good at it. He

spoke better Turkish than Turks.

SIGRIST: And he could write. I mean, he was...

PASHAYAN: Oh, beautiful. In fact, after he got this job, I guess they were looking for an engineer. My father happened to know what, what for. He said, "I'm engineer." I guess he had seen some machine like that up in Bursa. Bursa is the capital of our area. And there was a (state?) at Bursa. He used to travel a lot. He must have seen it some place. So he got the job. What he had to do is turn down the steam, shut the steam. This was a delousing joint, you know, every three months or so, or a month, Turkish soldiers would take a bath. So they bundle all their clothing with a rope or a piece of leather and they bring them over. They throw them into this huge vat. Anyway, pulls out, fill them up, they close the vats, they turn the steam on. They better get out of that place. It stinks to high heaven. And they go right back to where the soldiers are. They're just dressed the way they are, filthy as Hell. My father had a helper. The helper used to do the work for him. (he laughs)

Those sold--, those officers used to come to my father
to have, write letters to their families back home
because he could write them real flowery, you know.

SIGRIST: So once you got to Damascus, things were a little
better for you than they had been before.

PASHAYAN: We were safer, more of less. I mean, I had tough
time in beginning. We get a, like they used to give
me two pieces of black, muddy bread that I could
never eat. But I used to exchange that for one
small, white, what looked like white bread. And I
used to put, get a, put a little water in a pan,
put salt in there and dip my bread in there and eat
it.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

SIGRIST: Before we get to, before we talk about being in Damascus, is there any one event or one thing that happened along the march through Syria that really sticks out in your mind? Something that you witnessed that you can...

PASHAYAN: Well, I couldn't say I saw any real atrocities. I'll tell you that but the other people were not as lucky as we were. They went through atrocities like, my other grandparents, they didn't want to come with our group. They went with a separate group, were never heard, were never found a trace of them at all. Every one of them was wiped out. You see, the Turks used to let out, every step of the way they used to let out these criminally insane people out of jails. Let them go out, attack all the refugees. These, these were nice people, those Turks. But such atrocities I never saw as people used to describe. As I said, the reason we didn't see too much of that, my father wouldn't let us, I mean, they helped us a lot from the hills.

SIGRIST: You were very lucky.

PASHAYAN: Yeah, my father, yeah, and his group. In fact, in fact one of the, one of the members of his group used to go around the villages as a doctor and he used to describe these Turks. They used to fight among themselves, too. They stab each other. So he'd go around as doctor, he'd sew them up with a burlap bag needle and burlap bag thread. (he laughs) And he was hoping they would die but he says they wouldn't die. (he laughs) He was a funny guy.

SIGRIST: I guess you have to have a sense of humor. (they laugh) When you got to Damascus, was there a large receiving area for all the Armenians that had been brought there?

PASHAYAN: No, that's, uh...

SIGRIST: You said you went into a house, you went to a house.

PASHAYAN: Yeah, we went into a house in the, we were (unintelligible). I think we were the only one,

Armenians.

SIGRIST: Was it, was it a Syrian household that you were
living in or was this a house...

PASHAYAN: They rented a house.

SIGRIST: You rented a house.

PASHAYAN: undoubtedly somebody owned it. They rented it. My
ther rented the house. And, so we stayed there for
the duration, duration of the war over there. (to
Bob Jones, who is also present) There's a picture
over there on the wall, Bob. (he gestures) That's
on the other wall, Paul. You can go see it.

SIGRIST: We'll do it actually after the interview.

PASHAYAN: Oh, okay. There's a picture of me in the last few
days in Damascus. We were all having a picnic, all
the big shots, the Armenian big shots. My father's
in there. I'm in there. My brother's picture, my
brother wasn't there. I don't know what happened to
him in there. Of course, it was all men there

mostly.

SIGRIST: Because of the deportations out of Turkey, were there large Armenian populations in the cities in Syria and around there?

PASHAYAN: Well, they, after, eventually when they moved around, they moved from Damascus. Most of us come back to our areas. Don't forget, Turkey is a big country and we had three million Armenians in Turkey. Out of three million, they eliminated a million and a half. A million and half they, either by sword, by starvation, by the elements. You know, around Iraq, Mosul those places there are bugs, all kinds. Remember when they had the war (referring to the early 1990's Gulf War), they had I don't know how many tons of spray they used, Americans. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about what Damascus was like as a city in 1918.

PASHAYAN: Oh, it's a, was a beautiful city, even in 1918. It was beautiful city.

SIGRIST: What things stick out in your mind about when you were a boy in Damascus?

PASHAYAN: Well, the, it's pretty hard to describe, they were, people, most of them were Muslim but they were not bad. They were good people. They, as I said, of course, you going to find bad ones up there, too, but generally speaking they were humane. And there was a lot of Christians, of course, in Syria, a lot of Christians. Like Lebanese, Lebanese were mostly all Christian. So...

SIGRIST: So, were you attending church at the time?

PASHAYAN: We had, oh yes, we had church. We had, they got an old Armenian church over there. It's beautiful.

SIGRIST: What would that be considered, Armenian Orthodox?

PASHAYAN: No, we have Armenian Apostolic. That's Greeks, the Orthodox are Greeks.

SIGRIST: Was there one place in Damascus that you enjoyed

going to as a, maybe as a form of entertainment?

PASHAYAN: Sundays, oh, no entertainment, please. We were not in that league yet. (he laughs) As long as our stomach was full, that was entertainment enough for us. We were not looking for anything big, just safety. And we made out on food. As I said, they were very clever. A lot of these old country people, they're very clever. They could pick up mushrooms without even asking questions, I mean, they knew what to pick up. They were, they were good. It was their job. I mean, they knew how to raise food. The Turks, a bunch of lazy people. All they like to do is you build and they come and take it away from you. That's all.

SIGRIST: Was there a Turkish population in Damascus?

PASHAYAN: Oh, sure. There was the Turkish, there was the German and Turkish headquarters in World War One. I watched them in (?). I went down to that ammunition dump. Scared the daylights out of me. People coming in with arms hanging and eyes out because they, things are shining, they think it's gold. They

grab them, they blow up. I see one guy there, big, huge, I don't know it he was a Turk or an Arab or what, but naked, standing in one corner with the (Alley Oop?) stick in his hand. Anybody walking away with some merchandise on his back, pow, over the head. I got so scared, I ran home. (he laughs) I was, really.

SIGRIST: Now, were the, were the Turks that were in Damascus, were they still exercising some kind of violence against the Armenians?

PASHAYAN: Well, as I said, Syrians told them point blank, it must have, they did it outside of, outside of the main city there, Damascus. You know, Damascus is a holy city for Muslims and also the Christians because I guess Christ went through there. They show some tunnels that are, Christ here in those tunnels, places. I've seen some of them. I don't know how true they were but, well, anyway, we were able to breathe easier in Damascus than anywhere else during that time.

SIGRIST: And then from Damascus you went back to Turkey.

PASHAYAN: Istanbul, we came there.

SIGRIST: Yes. Tell me about that experience, going back to Turkey and what that was like when you got there.

PASHAYAN: Well, we went from Damascus. Because Damascus doesn't, doesn't have a harbor, so we went to Beirut. We stayed overnight, one or two nights, in Beirut. Then this huge ship, it was an Austrian ship taken over by the Allies and they, I think it must have been the biggest ship afloat that time. I forget the name. And it picked all the refugees up, brought to Istanbul. From Istanbul Harbor, I went to, we, my family and I, we went to Uskudar. Uskudar is across from the, from Istanbul, the Asiatic part.

SIGRIST: Was this some kind of organized program to bring the refugees back to Turkey?

PASHAYAN: Yes. I don't know, really, who was the, the United Nations or something like that, whatever they had I don't know. Hell, I just did it anyway so I don't

know.

SIGRIST: So the ship that you're traveling on is specifically for the purpose of...

PASHAYAN: Oh, yeah, bringing us.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about being on that ship?

PASHAYAN: I remember that we almost got blown up by a, by a mine. I remember seeing the mine. We yelled and somebody took, got the attention and veered off. Missed it by, maybe (frightened me too much?) I don't know. (he laughs) I forgot the distance. It was the ugliest looking thing you want to see floating. Must have been, broke away from its mooring. You could see the chain on there hanging. And there's just, and then I think I saw a destroyer come by later on passed s. The captain must have notified the, whoever was responsible for that, to come and look, break that up, blow it up.

SIGRIST: Now, were all the refugees all put in one room basically?

PASHAYAN: On the ship?

SIGRIST: On the ship, yeah.

PASHAYAN: Oh, no, everybody, well, we have a lot of people. How are they going to do that? Well, they had, I don't know really. We had our quarters. It wasn't big, like you say. But it doesn't too long for the ship to come from Beirut to Istanbul anyway. It isn't that far away.

SIGRIST: And tell me what you, what you found in Turkey when you got there.

PASHAYAN: When I got there, immediately I was, well, we had to, rented a place. And immediately I was put to school over there, in Uskudar.

SIGRIST: What was the relationship like between the Turks and the Armenians now that the refugees were coming back to Turkey?

PASHAYAN: Oh, they were very, very scared. The Turks were very

scared because everybody had revenge coming. But I don't think they did the revenge business. They did, they revolted in, in, that's one thing I can't say too well, Caucasus. Armenians in, where they are right now, Yerevan and so forth, they started to revolt against the Turkish rule over there. They had a, they had a war. They won. They got independence in 1921, no, 19--, yeah, about 1920 or '21. Then, of course, the Turks and the Russian Bolsheviks got together, wiped them out after two years (?) wiped out.

SIGRIST: There's this constant historical fighting...

PASHAYAN: It was, it was, the Turks are a lot better now if Russia helps the Turks.

SIGRIST: But when you got to Uskudar...

PASHAYAN: Uskudar.

SIGRIST: ...which is where you were living, there was no, no conflict between the two groups.

PASHAYAN: No, no, no. We were, we were mostly Armenians in Uskudar anyway. The Turks were all in hiding. They were afraid to show their face, although we didn't do anything. In the big city they didn't do any bad things to them, which we had the right. They robbed us blind. Not only materials but human lives, I mean.

SIGRIST: When you, when you got back to Turkey, now it's you and your mother and your father...

PASHAYAN: Father.

SIGRIST: ...and your...

PASHAYAN: My brother and my sister.

SIGRIST: ...brother and your sister.

PASHAYAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: It's the exact same group that left Turkey initially. You're all coming back together.

PASHAYAN: Yeah, no, except, no, my brother is buried.

SIGRIST: Oh, you lost, you lost a brother along the way.

PASHAYAN: I said the first thing that happened was in Damascus,
my brother got sick and died. My grandmother got
sick and died. A week apart they both died.

SIGRIST: What did they die of?

PASHAYAN: Oh, I'd say it was cholera or one of those, one of
those things. Mostly it was cholera.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the experience of your
brother and your grandmother dying? What sticks out
in your mind about that?

PASHAYAN: Oh, just like a brother, brothers once in a while are
very friendly, once in a while you fight. (he laughs)
That's nothing unusual but, but, we were good kids.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how the bodies were dealt with when
they died?

PASHAYAN: Oh, they took, they buried them. They took them and buried them, my father. That was my father's job. We had the priest and got the proper, you know, they got proper burials. Not as good as should have been but it was, under those conditions they got burials. Some people didn't have any burials. The vultures got them. Ever seen vultures hover over a dead body? Oh, you don't want to see it. We used to get scared. (he laughs) They come in groups and they're so ornery. You can throw stone at them. They jump away, come back again.

SIGRIST: All right, so you lost your grandmother and your brother in Damascus. How long did you live in Uskudar?

PASHAYAN: In Uskudar, I don't know. Two years or less than too years.

SIGRIST: And was this even better than living in Damascus?

PASHAYAN: Oh, yeah. After all, my father started in business.

SIGRIST: What did he start? What business?

PASHAYAN: Well, first he started with a friend of ours. They used to sell yards goods on the, in the big place there in Istanbul where they sell everything, you know, it's a big, open space there.

SIGRIST: And yards good meaning like fabric and..

PASHAYAN: Yeah, that's what it was, fabrics. So, the way they were doing business, my father didn't agree with that so he got out of there. He didn't stay very long. In fact, the sister of the fellow he was in business with, a few years ago I was in Las Vegas. I said as long as I'm in Las Vegas, I said, (?)I think I take a flight to Los Angeles. Her [sic, his] sister was in Los Angeles. I went down to see her. I called up first. She has died now since then, oh, no, I don't know if she did or not but must be. I'd like to call up to her daughter some one of these days.

SIGRIST: Did you have your own house in Uskudar or were you...?

PASHAYAN: No, it was rented.

SIGRIST: You were renting a house.

PASHAYAN: Yes. Well, that didn't last very long because the, then the Turkish-Greek war start, had started already. So, I knew, we all knew if the Turks won it would have been bad for everybody because a lot of Armenian soldiers, boys went and joined the Greek Army. They get their revenge. And, but anyway, the Greeks lost the war. In the meantime, of course, I had lost my, my mother died in shortly after we were in Uskudar.

SIGRIST: What did your mother die of?

PASHAYAN: Uh, sickness that they picked up on the way. She, I think she died of, uh, hemorrhoids were the biggest problem. And she didn't want to go hospital to have an operation. They were a little peculiar, the old ladies those days. She wasn't that old, either. Well, she died in the Armenian National Hospital in Istanbul. They got an Armenian National Hospital in Istanbul. In fact, to this day

it's still there.

SIGRIST: Was that a difficult time for your father, when your mother died?

PASHAYAN: Yes. Then, he married short, well, was, I don't know, six months after or so, because he was always out of town. He want somebody to stay with us. So he married again, with my wife's mother. This is a peculiar story. And then my father died. (gesturing to his wife) Her mother was still young, and she had an aunt and fixed her up with somebody in the United States. So, she came here and married this man. He was a farmer (after?) in Marcy [NY]. So, my mo--, my sister got married and came to United States, and she was visiting some Armenians here in Utica. She came in this place. She saw her mother. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: You mean your wife's mother.

PASHAYAN: Yeah, what a coincidence. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: You said, you said your father died at Uskudar, too?

PASHAYAN: Uh, yeah.

SIGRIST: While you were living there? (Mrs. Pashayan opens up a drawer in a piece of furniture near where Mr. Pashayan is sitting) I want to say for the sake of the tape that the sound that you hear is a drawer being opened.

PASHAYAN: (to Mrs. Pashayan) No.

MRS. PASHAYAN: I'm sorry.

SIGRIST: It's okay. (he laughs)

PASHAYAN: My father, as I said, started an import and export business after with, uh, he would buy things in Istanbul, take it to the interior that they needed and buy with that money buy things over there that Istanbul needs it. So he started by doing this. Already the Turkish Revolution had started. This Kamel Ataturk, they called him, "Ataturk" meant the father of Turkey but, his name was Mustafa Kamel Pasha before he became. He change his

name. He did everything on his own. He says, "I'm the president of Turkey." He became the president of Turkey. Well, anyway, what was I saying?

SIGRIST: You were in Uskudar. You were talking about when your father died.

PASHAYAN: Yes. And he got shot with dum dum bullets in the interior of Turkey. So by the time they brought him to Istanbul Hospital, because there was no hospitals in Turkey (he laughs), they brought him to the hospital in Turkey. My father was told that the doctor to cut his foot from here (he gestures) because, as I told you, my father was pretty smart guy and he knew what was going on. He knew that the dum dum bullet was poisonous.

SIGRIST: What kind of a bullet was it?

PASHAYAN: Dum dum.

SIGRIST: Dum dum?

PASHAYAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What does that mean?

PASHAYAN: I guess it explodes twice. When it goes in, it explodes inside. And it's the poisonous stuff. Gangrene sets in. The director of the hospital was a good friend of my father. He had a lot of good friends. And he said, "Now, we will cut him over here (he gestures) so it will be easy to put, uh, what they call prosthesis, his would be easy to fit." Well, they did that. Well, one day I went to visit him in the hospital. He was giving me fatherly advice, you know, how to behave, how to be a nice boy and try to take care of family. And funny, funny thing, we used to have a ferry from Uskudar to Istanbul. Now, that day we were coming back from my father's visit. We were all feeling low. We got in the wrong ferry coming, to go to Uskudar. And the ferry goes into the Sea of Marmara over there. We don't know what's the next stop. But anyway, we find out the ship wasn't going this way. (he gestures) It started going this way. (he gestures) We were lower than a penny, more or less.

So we told the, one of the officers on board and he says, "Well, I say the ship will return tomorrow in the morning back to Istanbul. Then you can." In the meantime, I guess the mayor of that island was an Armenian. he heard about it. He says, "Don't worry about it." He says, "You come with us tonight, to our house." So, who was with me anyway? Mother was with me, and I. My sister, too, I think.

SIGRIST: You wife's mother and you and...

PASHAYAN: I think my sister was with me, too, with us. So we went over to the mayor's house that night. In the morning, he took us to the wharf and we got the ship back to Istanbul. Then we went to Uskudar. When we went to Uskudar, there was a telegram that my father had passed away. So I became an orphan. We became orphan.

SIGRIST: How old were you when your father died?

PASHAYAN: Oh, I don't know. As I said, everything happens almost within that, within that year almost, so...

SIGRIST: Well, so what happened to you after you father died?
What did you want to do with your life?

PASHAYAN: Well, two, two friends, well, I couldn't go to school anymore. I couldn't. Who's going to take care of us? (gesturing to his wife) And her mother moved out. We had friends that, they had a friend to this school in Uskudar. It was an English lady who was trying to get a school for Armenian boys. (?) School name was Hauver [ph] Boy's Home. Hauver [ph] is a humanitarian man, Swiss man from Switzerland. She had, I guess she admired him so the name. In fact, she had the school before World War One in Bardizak [ph], that's the name of the town. Bardizak [ph] means garden. She had the school there. Then, after the war, she moved to Uskudar. So it was, we had quite a few. We had, it was about ninety people in there, I guess, kids.

SIGRIST: This was in the home?

PASHAYAN: Yeah. And everybody was Armenian except Miss Noonan. She was English maiden. She was never married. And they had a nurse, Swiss nurse. And they both spoke

good Armenian. They could read and write Armenian,
in fact. But, anyway, there was, I was able to with
two friends, I was able to get into school. But then
when the, when the Greeks lost the war, the Turks
were coming back to power now. Everybody's
trying to escape Turkey again. So my school
moved to Greece but they left it behind. Anybody had
a place they could stay behind for a while, they did
because they didn't have enough facilities or money,
I don't know, to move the whole, everybody. So they
left one of my aunts. I used to be, stay with them
before anyway. So they moved. And I don't know how
many months or half a year or something they left
later, they asked me, they sent me a letter saying
they want me to join the school. Now, how? I
have no money. This was in Corfu Island, Greece.
I know she had a friend at the Robert College of
Istanbul. That's American college.

SIGRIST: Robert College?

PASHAYAN: Robert College of Istanbul. I knew one of the
professors up there. He was very good friends with
this Miss Noonan. I said, "I think I'll go see

him." I don't remember whether she had asked me to go see him in a letter or I went on my own. I, things were going so fast, so if somebody ask me my name I'd probably would stumble. I don't know, for a young man to go to a big city, Istanbul, you know, it's a good thing I knew a little bit about it. I went from Uskudar all alone to the college, found out his office. I ask him. I said about the situation. He says, "Mr. Pashayan," he says, "I don't know how we're going to do this." He says, "Everybody is trying to get out of Istanbul and," he says, "our facilities are limited." He says, "Give me a couple, a few days to see what I can do for you." Well, I don't know, two or three days after I get a note from him to go to certain waterfronts with the wharf, a certain ship. I get right on there. They had chartered a ship. It was a freighter, actually, to take, transport a whole school of girls to Greece. So I got a passage on that free of charge. Now, when I got to Greece, without getting off the ship, I was going to go to, move strictly to another ship that would take me to Corfu Island. And, but what am I going to do in the meantime? So the captain found out about it. The

captain, I don't know, was a Russian, I don't know what he was. In fact, I don't remember what language I talked with the captain. He told me, he says not to worry about it, that he going to Corinth. That's another city in Greece. That's (?) canal. In fact, that's the first place that, first time I saw locks that ships go through. They raise the, you know. Well, I went there, as I said, a couple days after. They've got enough stuff to unload. Wheat, I guess, it was mostly. It took two days to unload. In the meantime, I said, "I think I'll take a little walk." The weather was nice. I got off the ship. I went for a walk. Before I even got off the ship, the last step maybe, I see a kid walking in the back. I said, "Victor," his name is Victor-- Vartan in Armenian, that's Vartan--, I said, "Vartan." He looked around. He saw me. He start to cry. I knew him from our village and also from Damascus. He was in Damascus with his family. He lost almost everybody, except him and his sister was alive. Before I left Istanbul, his sister was in Istanbul, she came to see me. He said, uh, (correcting himself) she heard that I was going to Greece. She said, "My brother's in Greece. I don't

have his address and I don't think he has my address."

She says, "If you can find him, please give him my address." I said, "Okay." Who knows? Greece has got thousands of islands. (he laughs) Well, anyway, I gave him his sister's address and they were, I guess, they were moved to Armenia after the World War Two. They moved from Greece. They went to Armenia. They got together anyway. So imagine the, from where I was going to find this, the thousands and thousands of orphans around. Well, after that I came back to Piraeus Harbor. The ship I was supposed to be on was waiting. (he laughs) I looked, I went on the ship and ended up in Corfu Island, Greece, in twenty four hours. (he laughs) I'm telling you, things can happen to you.

SIGRIST: Now, how long did you stay in Greece before you went to Corfu?

PASHAYAN: I was in Greece from 1922, just about Christmas time, and I left in 1925.

SIGRIST: Okay, we're going to pause for a second and I'm going to stick another tape in the machine, so we'll just

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pause for a second.

PASHAYAN: Okay.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

SIGRIST: Okay, we're now beginning Tape Two with Vramshabouh Pashayan. And today is July 7th, 1994. Mr. Pashayan, you were just talking about, we got you to Corfu. You finally made it to Corfu. And you stayed there about three years?

PASHAYAN: And, I, yeah, I joined the school, about, approximately three years. Then they, my, in the meantime my aunt and her family had moved to France from Turkey. They were very poor, but anyway, they managed to send me some francs. And I want to join them in France. So, in order to go to France, because they didn't have any French consul on Corfu Island, I had to go to Brindisi, Italy to get pass--,

to get my visa to France. But, luckily in the meantime, there was a whole school of orphans being moved to France, to Marseille, France, and I took a passage with them. I paid my way with them. And I met my sister in Marseille, France. She was, she was working in somebody's house there. Then I stayed there in Marseille about three days. Then I took a train to Paris. In Paris, I went and joined my, was not my family, my aunts. I had two aunts.

SIGRIST: Tell me what it was like for you, who's seen so much of the Mediterranean world, what was Paris like? What was different in Paris than what you had been used to?

PASHAYAN: Oh, everything is. I mean, the scenery is beautiful but we were still broke. Don't forget, we worked, we were, here I am six hundred francs in the hole already. (he laughs) And it was tough to get a job, but I managed to get a job in a metallurgical factory.

SIGRIST: What kind of factory?

PASHAYAN: Metallurgic. Uh, was a, they used to make wires.
And I worked there maybe a year or so. Then there
was unemployment again so I was laid off. I tried
to do it, take little jobs here and there. Once I
got a job in Paris itself. Before I was doing,
working in Alfortville. And I got a job in
Paris itself but the trouble was I had to get up five
o'clock in the morning, walk to the train
station. That's about a half a mile or more. Then
get off in Paris, take the subway, change the subway
and then walk about a mile to the factory. So this
went on for a few weeks. I said, "This is not worth
it." So I quit. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Was there a large Armenian population in Paris?

PASHAYAN: Oh, yeah. They have, they have, Paris was the, even
before the World War One, anybody wanted to go
someplace it was Paris, you know. Because, don't
forget, United States was too far. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Right. Paris is very international.

PASHAYAN: Paris, yeah, from Istanbul take a train to go to Paris.

SIGRIST: Well, how was it that you finally decided that you wanted to come to the United States?

PASHAYAN: Well, as I told you, my sister got married with someone from the United States. She moved.

SIGRIST: Where did she meet this person?

PASHAYAN: Uh, actually it was done through friends, to meet. So he came down there. They liked each other. She married him and they moved. First they moved to South Otselic [NY], I guess, because they had a farm there.

SIGRIST: To where?

PASHAYAN: South Otselic. That's New York State. It's about fifty miles from here. (to Bob Jones) Do you know the place? I've been there a few times. (he laughs) Well, anyway, it was a nice, clean village. Well, then she told me about who she met. (he

laughs) So, all I had in this world was the sister
who left. So what do you do? You try to come here.
So...

SIGRIST: What did you know about America before you got here?
Growing up in Turkey and Syria and France and all
the places you'd been, what did you know about
America?

PASHAYAN: Well, we knew quite a bit. We knew more than you'd
think. We knew quite a bit. We knew it was
freedom, for one thing. And we knew that no matter
where you go, you had to work for a living. So we
were not afraid to work. And I came here. It
was a hard time to get a pass--, to get a visa. Very
hard time but I managed.

SIGRIST: Why was it difficult to get the visa?

PASHAYAN: Oh, they passed a law here, I guess, and if I didn't
have a sister here I'd never make it. And if I
didn't have the money, I'd never make it because it's
not easy to pay so much transportation and visa
fees and the special doctors you have to go see

before you can get a visa. But, because of my
sister, I did everything I could and I was
able to fight my way to get a visa. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: You had to undergo medical exams before the visa?

PASHAYAN: Oh, oh, oh, before the visa, after you get on board
ship they still give you an examination because they
don't want to bring you back free. Then, after you
get off (he laughs) and, just before you get off
the ship they still give you an examination. And...

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you took with you from Paris
when you left for the United States?

PASHAYAN: I had a suitcase that I paid a hundred and nine
francs, I guess about three, four dollars. And so
what I could put in there, so a suit. I was well
clothed. I was, I had, that one aunt that I live
with, she's the one that lost two beautiful sons
that the Turks took them away and they're never seen
again. They killed them, as I said. There's no,
Uncle Sam denies, I mean, doesn't deny but it says
"alleged massacres." But there's no "alleged

massacres" because you go to the, anybody can
walk into the Congressional Library and read
anything you want about those things. And it's right
there, black and white. I mean, those guys are liars.
Ambassador Morgenthal, in fact his son and a
grandson were very active trying to have this
recognized as genocide. I don't know what, I don't
know why these people are so involved with
Turks. They love the Turks in Washington.
I don't know why. They know how to (kill?)
people. Oh, and they talk to them. If you have
talked to a Turk, oh, they talk such marvelously as
to make you feel like you're a king. I mean, it's,
but actually, don't turn your back. There's a type of
a people and these people in this country, there, we
had this congress Bullard [ph] here, you know.
Bullard [ph]. I wrote him a letter once about this,
about certain things. He voted for them once. And
then Turkey invited these guys to visit Turkey, the
whole families, they went. On the second time, I
wrote him a letter. Altogether was changed because
God knows what they did to them over there. (he
laughs)

SIGRIST: Do you remember what time of the year it was that you left Paris?

PASHAYAN: Uh, in the fall. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: It was in the autumn of...

PASHAYAN: I was in Utica [NY] on October 1st. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: (reading from Mr. Pashayan's immigration papers) Oh, yeah. August 20th, 1928. Where did you go to get the ship?

PASHAYAN: Well, I took the train from Paris to Le Havre. From Le Havre I took the ship.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what the name of the ship was?

PASHAYAN: Ile de France. The newest ship afloat. Newest and biggest ship afloat. I think, I must have been, I could be wrong, at first they have a six month shake down cruise. I wasn't on there. (he laughs)
Then I think it was first or second transpor--, uh, the regular crossing on the ship.

SIGRIST: And where did you sleep on the ship?

PASHAYAN: Oh, in a cabin. A small cabin.

SIGRIST: Were you by yourself or were you with other people?

PASHAYAN: We had two or three other guys. A friend of mine was with me, a person that's from the same village. And there was a girl, but the girl was in another cubby hole. I think was three of us.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how long...?

PASHAYAN: One was a Spanish fellow, I think. Was hard to talk to him because I don't know Spanish and he didn't know anything. I mean, I could manage at that time I could manage Greek, French, English, of course, Armenian and Turkish--and Arabic probably. I could have, yeah, Arabic I forgot the first. I knew a little bit. (a popping sound can be heard) I didn't like the language. I don't know why. I just didn't want to learn but I could manage to get by. Turkish, I'm beginning to forget completely now

which I'm glad. I don't want. It's a lousy language.

SIGRIST: How long did the ship take to get to New York?

PASHAYAN: About five days, I think. I think we left there the twenty, (referring to his immigration papers) it says over here?

SIGRIST: (reading from the immigration papers) On the green card it says August 20th.

PASHAYAN: It left the ship France?

SIGRIST: Or that's when you landed, maybe.

PASHAYAN: No. What, when, August?

SIGRIST: It says you were at the American Consulate in Paris on August 20th, 1928.

PASHAYAN: That's the time they give me the visa, probably.

SIGRIST: All right, so it must have been later...

PASHAYAN: No, I was, I got, I got, let's see, I left there the 25th. I got here the 28th. I think very fast. They made it in less, well, five days, or less than five days I got here.

SIGRIST: Well, that was a nice boat, the Ile de France.

PASHAYAN: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember arriving in New York Harbor?

PASHAYAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about when the boat first arrived?

PASHAYAN: Well, of course, everybody sees the Statue of Liberty first, and that makes you a good feeling. Well, as I said, I knew about the country so I didn't expect to it to be Utopia, you know. You have to work for a living, so...

SIGRIST: Did you have to undergo any kind of examinations when

you arrived in New York?

PASHAYAN: Uh, yes, on Ellis Island they examined me, as I said.

SIGRIST: Do you remember specifically what happened there
or...?

PASHAYAN: Well, I have, (referring to Bob Jones) like I told
Bob, I could manage English pretty good. I mean, I
was surprised myself that I had retained what I
learned in school. In fact, I think I knew more
after I left the school because I never let it go
down. And, in the meantime, I learned French so I
had no difficulty in, uh, there's a lot people
having difficulty conversing or understanding
the questions. That's why they have problems, a lot
of them. And I had people waiting for me to take
home. I had two families wanting me to go home
with them. (he laughs) So, so it was so fast for me.
A lot of these people stayed behind one day or two
sometimes because they had nobody to go to where.

SIGRIST: So it was very easy for you.

PASHAYAN: Well, it was very easy for me.

SIGRIST: You got in and out.

PASHAYAN: I had no problem. That's why I don't have much remembrance of what happened. It was so fast.

SIGRIST: Now, you said two families are waiting for you. Your sister is one of those...

PASHAYAN: No, my sister was not there.

SIGRIST: Who were the two people who, the two families that...

PASHAYAN: I had a, I had a friend there. There is, I never met this friend, actually, but they knew me. They knew my family. He was, he was pretty old, much older than I am. He had a restaurant on Lexington Avenue. And there's another fellow who came. He was from our village. That he came to United States before we did and his sister was on our ship with us. We were supervising her, more or less. Last I heard she was in California. In fact, her brother called me up one day. I was still not retired yet

from the store. He called me up. He wanted to know some information about, like you asking me right now, because she was having difficulty in Medicare or Social Security or some problem because she could not answer certain things about her, when she came or what happened. So I told him on the telephone the few things that she asked me (correcting himself), he asked me for. That's why I know that she's in California now. In fact, he died, too.

SIGRIST: Tell me about after, with whom did you go when you left Ellis Island? Which...?

PASHAYAN: I went with this person, do you want his name?

SIGRIST: Yes, sure.

PASHAYAN: It's kind of hard to say it in English. I may not say it right. Mgridich.

SIGRIST: Can you spell it?

PASHAYAN: Uh...

SIGRIST: (handing Mr. Pashayan a pen and his release form to write on) Here, if that helps.

PASHAYAN: What a moment, what is this?

SIGRIST: Well, that's all right. That's all right. We'll figure it out later.

PASHAYAN: Wait, where do you want it? Anyplace?

SIGRIST: Yeah, just spell it out for us. (reading as Mr. Pashayan writes on the release form) M-G...

PASHAYAN: Mgridich, M-G-R-I-D-I-C-H, first name.

SIGRIST: And where, yeah.

PASHAYAN: Papazian. (he continues to spell on the release form) Papazian.

SIGRIST: (reading) P-A-P-A...

PASHAYAN: A-Z-I-A-N.

SIGRIST: I-A-N.

PASHAYAN: That's right.

SIGRIST: And where did he take you?

PASHAYAN: He took me to their house.

SIGRIST: Which was where?

PASHAYAN: In New York City.

SIGRIST: It was New York City.

PASHAYAN: Yeah, it was New York City. On Lexington Avenue in
New York.

SIGRIST: And then how long did you stay before you met up with
your sister?

PASHAYAN: Well, my sister was following the ship arrivals, so
she knew I was in America. (he laughs) So, I called,
I called her. No. She didn't have a telephone. I

stayed in New York for three days, then came to,
October 1st I came into Utica [NY]. And this
family in Utica, never met them before of course,
their, their wife was in the hospital for baby
and she got a boy. Eh, I was a hero who brought good
luck (he laughs) because all their families,
there was quite a few of them, the (?ian) family,
they all had girls. No boys in the family. When I
came, the first night they had a boy. (he laughs)
So I became a hero.

SIGRIST: Do you remember when you were in New York for those
three days of what you thought about New York City?
Of course, you've been in large cities before.

PASHAYAN: Well, to tell you the truth, I, first morning I got
up five o'clock in the morning, I went for a walk in
New York City. I walked, must be, walked, I don't
know, hundred some blocks. I went up and down
because I knew everything is numbers, (?), like I
said, I knew how to speak around. If I got lost,
I'd ask questions. (he laughs) So, you
know, there's nothing like knowing a language more
than your own, extra languages. I stress that to

my kids but they can't even speak Armenian.

SIGRIST: Well, and that gave you a great advantage once you got here because you could speak English.

PASHAYAN: Oh, yeah. In fact, I got a job in Ilion [NY] working in this, do you know anything about Ilion?

SIGRIST: That's a town around here? I-L-I-O-N, I believe it's spelled.

PASHAYAN: Uh, the name of the family that owned this factory was Russell. (to Bob Jones) Remember they got Russell Library, Russell Park, Russell this...?

BOB JONES: Yes.

PASHAYAN: Well, the reason I got the job, it was Depression years already. It was hard to get a job. Before that, of course, I worked here in Utica for a month. They closed up the joint. There was a auto, auto finishing place. There is Willoughby's. (to Bob Jones) Remember there was a question and answer in the paper one time. I was on the way to

Washington D.C. When I got to Washington, I wrote them a letter to (?), telling them that I worked there. Well, anyway, I said to myself, well, they asked me if I'd done the job. I looked around at what they're doing. I said, "Yeah, I can do that job. There's no problem." I said, "It's no problem to learn that, whatever they're doing." It was rubbing and polishing furniture. Well, it was store fixtures, actually. It was woodwork, anyway. I said to myself, "With all the experts in that trade in Ilion," because in Ilion, Herkimer [NY] they're well know for that job, I said, "How come they hired me?" to myself. The only reason I think they did it because they were amazed I spoke English. At that time, anybody who came from the old country, in fact, the owner of the plant, the first week I worked there the father was in the hospital. He died, Mr. Russell, the first week I worked there. He was, as I said, he was in the hospital. But his son, ever so often he'd give me a ride to Utica because I used to take a streetcar from there to over here. Twice a week, almost, he used to come to Utica for the Kiwanis meeting or something. It was in Utica they had it, get together. And he used to get,

he used to get just thrill out of, with me, and he was trying to use his, polish his French with me. (he laughs) I used to speak good French. In a short time, I picked up so fast.

SIGRIST: Let me just ask you...

PASHAYAN: Come back to business.

SIGRIST: ...the first job you got was the place that closed down quickly? Was that the first job you got when you came up here.

PASHAYAN: Yeah, Willoughby's was the name.

SIGRIST: How much did you get paid?

PASHAYAN: Oh, our pay checks wasn't much. Fifty cents an hour, probably.

SIGRIST: And what was the job at Willoughby's?

PASHAYAN: It was the same thing. You tried to rub and polish the body. They used to make bodies for, for Lincoln

cars, the big Lincoln cars. Seven passenger cars.
We used to make the bodies for them. Not the
chassis, just the body. It was aluminum top.

SIGRIST: Was this, were a lot of immigrants hired to do this
kind of work up here?

PASHAYAN: That was a big place. If they had fifty people
working, it was big. No, anybody that needed a job.
Most of the time you got those jobs if somebody was
working there. They knew that they needed another
man. They'd recommend you or you'd go yourself,
apply for it because you know they need men.

SIGRIST: Well, I know we could talk all day, I think. Bob
[Jones] and I have to have another appointment but I
do want to ask you, were there any things that your
mother and father taught you, philosophies that
they had, that have carried you throughout your
whole life? Things that they instilled in you as a
child that have been important to you?

PASHAYAN: Well, they didn't have to do that. That just by
seeing them work, how much they care for you, those

are the things that you remember. Nothing else.

You don't, they'd never, this is only you read in the books, the advice. My father gave me advice before he died. I guess he felt that he might die. You know, how to behave and so forth. Well, I was always a good kid anyway. I used to get, as I said, once in a while, like even in the school, even in the orphanage, they didn't want to call it "orphanage" but it still was an orphanage. After somebody stepped on my toes, I didn't give a damn. I used to fight back. Like, for instance, one week I was in charge of the tables. And she has always told us that our boys can eat as much as they can eat. And she was, and every so often she used to go to England to raise money to support the school. So that teacher was not in the school. And this lady's in charge of this food business. I said to one lady, "You know, when you eat beans, it makes you eat bread." I said, "Mother so and so," I said, "how about another loaf of bread." I said, "The boys are hungry." She got, she says, "They get enough." Oh, that blew my head. I said, "Mrs. so and so," I said, "if you don't give me that bread, I'm going to break the door down and get it." And my

eyes, I guess, really turned red. I managed to get awful. You know, when you're a refugee and so forth and everybody steps on you. Everybody has a chance to (step?) back. Sh got scared. So she writes, they write a letter. (?) her daughter's husband was the head of the school when she was, I mean, as a teacher. Not as the head, like Miss Noonan. So, they report to Miss Noonan, write a letter to England telling her how I'm behaving. They're trying to get rid of me, see? When she came back, she had a talk with me. No expulsion for me. I think she liked, really, she like me. Once she gave me (a slapping sound) like this because, it fell lightly, because some teacher protested. We used to go swimming in the Adriatic. It was right down the hill from us. And we had orders not to fool around in the water. Just swim, play ball, whatever you want to do, throw (?) but no horsing around. Well, this one guy kept jumping, you know, from the water, push my head down, push my head down, push my head down. So finally I got mad. I give him a back hand. The teacher caught me. He was on the hill. (he laughs) He says, "Mr. Pashayan, come up here." I went up there. He's got a nice stick in his hand.

And I have a Boy Scout buckle. I said, "Mr. Kerrigan [ph]," his name was Karikan [ph], in English would be Kerrigan [ph], I said, "If you touch me," I said, "you're going to get this." What did he say? He didn't see what the other guy was doing. He saw the time I did mine. I got caught. (he laughs) So that's when he complained to Miss Noonan. That's when he did this. I didn't talk to the poor lady for six months, I think. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Well, Mr. Pashayan, we need to end now. But I want to thank you very much for letting us come out...

PASHAYAN: You finished? As I said, (a bunch of important things are on the way?). (he laughs)

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Vramshabouh...

PASHAYAN: Vram, Vram...

SIGRIST: ... Pashayan, Vramshabouh. (Mr. Pashayan laughs) And Bob Jones is also with me. And we're signing off here in Utica, New York on Thursday, July 7th, 1994. Thank you very much.

EI-491/PASHAYAN

PASHAYAN: Well, thank you.