

EI-600

TONY GEORGE (TANIOS OBEID)
BIRTH DATE: JUNE 15, 1900
INTERVIEW DATE: APRIL 27, 1995
RUNNING TIME: APRIL 27, 1995
INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.
RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME
INTERVIEW LOCATION: UTICA, NY
TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 12/1995
TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

LEBANON, 1913
AGE 13
SHIP NAME NOT RECALLED

SIGRIST: Good morning. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Thursday, April 27, 1995, and I'm in Utica, New York, in the home of Wadih, W-A-D-I-H, Zogby, Z-O-G-B-Y. We're in Mr. Zogby's home. You will note that Mr. Zogby is one of our EI series interviewees, interviewed in July of 1994. We're in Mr. Zogby's home, and we're sitting with Mr. Tony George. Mr. George came from Lebanon in 1913 and he was thirteen at the time he arrived in America. Good morning. Can we begin by you giving me your birth date, please?

GEORGE: June 15, 1900.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me the name of the town in Lebanon where

you were born?

GEORGE: Antra.

SIGRIST: Antra.

GEORGE: Antra.

SIGRIST: Mr. Zogby, can you spell that?

ZOGBY: A-N-T-R-A.

SIGRIST: A-N-T-R-A. Antra.

ZOGBY: Antra.

GEORGE: Antra, yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about what the town looked like when you were a child?

GEORGE: Well, what it looked like, I'll tell you that. There was a small village, not too many houses. Like, for instance, you find a house here, another half a mile, a mile to find another house. So that's the way it used to be. Sometimes you'd find three or four houses close together, and that's what their whole village was.

SIGRIST: So sort of houses that were scattered . . .

GEORGE: Right.

SIGRIST: Around the countryside.

GEORGE: And road, no sidewalk, no street, just all dirt road.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me where in the country that village was?
Was it in, what part of the country was that village?

GEORGE: Uh . . .

ZOGBY: North Lebanon.

SIGRIST: It was in North Lebanon.

ZOGBY: The Province of Akkar.

GEORGE: Akkar.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

ZOGBY: A-K-K-A-R.

SIGRIST: Thank you, Mr. Zogby. Um, what did most people do for
a living in this village?

GEORGE: Make the living? They work on the farm. They own,
you see, you got some land, or you raise the fruit,

you raise the stuff in there. We had, my father, he had a couple of farm there. They had grapes, they had peaches, they had plums, lemon, and we raised, like, whole wheat, I mean, wheat, corn and that's why they lived there.

SIGRIST: Was the land that your father farmed on, was it his land?

GEORGE: His land.

SIGRIST: He owned that land.

GEORGE: Right.

SIGRIST: What was your father's name?

GEORGE: George.

SIGRIST: George. What was his name in Arabic?

GEORGE: Girgis.

SIGRIST: Can we spell that, Mr. Zogby?

ZOGBY: Well, the Biblical translation of George, you'll say G-I-R-G-I-S.

SIGRIST: G-I-R-G-I-S.

ZOGBY: And the last name was . . .

GEORGE: Obeid.

ZOGBY: Obeid. O-B-E-I-D.

SIGRIST: O-B-D . . .

ZOGBY: O-B-E-I-D.

SIGRIST: O-B-E-I-T. Obeit.

ZOGBY: I-D.

GEORGE: Obeid, right.

SIGRIST: Um, tell me a little bit about what your father's personality was like. What was he like as a person?

GEORGE: Well, he was a mixed up with the people. He liked the people. He just liked, uh, a lot of, a lot of time he used to go and he used to have the sheep, nanny goat, cow. We used to make the leban.

ZOGBY: Yogurt.

SIGRIST: Yogurt. What was the word, the Arabic word?

ZOGBY: Leban.

SIGRIST: Leban. L-E . . .

GEORGE: Leban.

ZOGBY: L-E-B-A-N. Leban.

GEORGE: And he used to say, he used to have it like this and take a (?), he used to, going with people.

SIGRIST: He was a very social person.

GEORGE: Right. Anybody there, not like here. There, because no restaurant to go to restaurant. Anybody come to town, he always brings him over the house, and they sleep and eat and go.

SIGRIST: So what do you know about your father's background? What do you know about his history?

GEORGE: Not much. I can't tell you much about that.

SIGRIST: What did his parents do for a living?

GEORGE: Who do?

SIGRIST: What did your father's father do for a living?

GEORGE: Well, like, I can't tell you about that either.

SIGRIST: I see.

GEORGE: I was too young to know.

SIGRIST: (he laughs) Just for the sake of the tape, I just want to clarify that your name in Lebanon before you came to America then was, what was your name in Lebanon?

GEORGE: Tanios, Tanios.

ZOGBY: Tanios.

SIGRIST: T-O-N . . .

ZOGBY: T-A-N-I-O-S.

SIGRIST: T-A-N-I-O-S, Tanios. Tanios.

ZOGBY: Obeit.

SIGRIST: Obeit. Tanios Obeit. Um, what was your mother's name?

GEORGE: Eva.

SIGRIST: And do you know what her maiden name was before she was married?

GEORGE: Yeah. Nizik.

SIGRIST: Nizik. Mr. Zogby?

ZOGBY: N-I-Z-I-K.

SIGRIST: N-I-Z-I-K. Nizik.

ZOGBY: And the translation of that is . . .

SIGRIST: Is what?

ZOGBY: Pretty fast.

SIGRIST: Pretty fast. Tell me, do you know anything about your mother's background and her history?

GEORGE: No. No, I don't know.

SIGRIST: Do you know how your parents met?

GEORGE: No.

SIGRIST: Did your mother ever tell you anything about when you were born? Did she ever tell you a story about what it was like to give birth to you? Did women talk about things like that?

GEORGE: I know, but old country's different. Old country you go on a farm, you go, I used to watch the sheep, old country. I used to watch them, in nighttime, come

home, eat, too tired, and I used to go to sleep. I can't talk like that here.

SIGRIST: You said you watched sheep. What did you do? How did you take care of the sheep?

GEORGE: Well, like this country here they got dog watching sheep. I was the dog. I was watching the sheep. Like I have to take the sheep a certain place, I got to watch them. So they can't go out away.

ZOGBY: Take them to grazing land.

SIGRIST: Take them so they can graze.

GEORGE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Where did you take them?

GEORGE: I take them any place they got green stuff.

SIGRIST: Was it your property, or somebody else's property?

GEORGE: Somebody else, too. Our property, and somebody else's property. A lot of place there, like a while, nobody there. Somebody own it, but don't use them.

SIGRIST: How many sheep?

GEORGE: Oh, I couldn't tell you that. I don't know how many.
I know I used to herd the sheep and I used to herd
the nanny goat, both.

SIGRIST: Nanny goat?

GEORGE: Nanny goat, yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me, do you know what kind of sheep they
were, what they looked like?

GEORGE: Yeah. Like white. Not white, really white, like
beige.

SIGRIST: They were a big color.

GEORGE: Something like that, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did they have horns?

GEORGE: Oh, yeah.

ZOGBY: The male always had.

SIGRIST: The male had.

GEORGE: The male, horns, yeah.

SIGRIST: You smile when you say that. Do you remember a story
about somehow the sheep's horns . . .

GEORGE: Well, I'll tell you a story. One time I was, what do you call it, you know (Arabic).

ZOGBY: Huh?

GEORGE: (Arabic)

ZOGBY: Oh, the male, the male sheep with the big horns.

GEORGE: The male, with the big horn on, one time I was mad at him, I would hit him. Then he come to me, knock me out of the, out of the, uh, place, knocked me down. So I just hold on with the horn. I came home, and I knocked him down. I go away, he comes to me, knock me down again. So I hold him. I call up my brother, my big brother. He come in there. And he separate us.

SIGRIST: I knew there was a story. I could tell when you smiled when you were talking.

ZOGBY: And, Paul, the sheep have fat tails.

SIGRIST: Mr. Zogby says the sheep have fat tails. Fat tails?

ZOGBY: Ladies.

GEORGE: Yeah, yeah.

ZOGBY: They all have fat tails.

GEORGE: All there, not like this they got just tails. They got that in the back.

SIGRIST: Did they milk the sheep?

GEORGE: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: How, what did you do with sheep milk.

GEORGE: We use it.

SIGRIST: How? How did you use the milk?

GEORGE: Well, just like I tell you with the leben, the leben.

SIGRIST: You made yogurt.

ZOGBY: Made yogurt.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me how you made yogurt?

GEORGE: Oh, yeah. Just put a, get the milk, you bring the kettle, put it on the stove, and let it almost come to a boil. You shut it off, and you wait. But you figure you got to, you count up to ten. If you figure still it stay there, okay. Then you put the starter on it.

SIGRIST: Starter is what you're saying, yeah.

GEORGE: Yeah, put starter on it. And then, and here I put it inside the stove where they got a boiler, for about five hours. Then, okay, that's all.

SIGRIST: And over there in Lebanon, you didn't have a stove, so how would you cook it?

GEORGE: You cover it up. You get wool, anything, cover up, keep it nice and warm.

SIGRIST: How often did you eat yogurt?

GEORGE: Oh, well, sometimes you eat it maybe three, four times a week. Sometimes you don't eat it for a month. Don't make it no time limit.

SIGRIST: What other kind of foods did you eat?

GEORGE: They got almost, all the most dry food there.

SIGRIST: Dry food.

GEORGE: Yeah, like beans, corn, uh, and they got, uh, something else, they got, the wheat, to make the wheat with the leben, too. We mix that . . .

SIGRIST: Mix the yogurt with the wheat.

GEORGE: Yeah, with leben. And, uh, they almost dry stuff there.

SIGRIST: Did you eat meat?

GEORGE: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: What kind of meat did they have?

GEORGE: Oh, they have, like, uh, they have, well, they got beef, you got lamb, you got nanny goat, just like that.

SIGRIST: Did you kill the sheep to eat them?

GEORGE: Sometimes we do. Sometimes we don't. We sell them sometimes.

SIGRIST: How did you slaughter a sheep?

GEORGE: Well, you hang them up. You get your knife and cut the skin down, and you start work on it. Pull it little by little. Then in time you get whole skin out, you got sheep clean.

SIGRIST: Whose job was that?

GEORGE: Anybody's job.

SIGRIST: Well, would women do that work also?

GEORGE: No, no. Just the man.

SIGRIST: What other kinds of work did men do in your village?

GEORGE: Well, like in the wintertime you got the wheat. You have to raise the wheat, the corn, stuff like this. We used to go out there in the field. You got plow the dirt, and you put the wheat in, the corn in, and that's what . . .

SIGRIST: It's hard work.

GEORGE: Oh, yeah, sure it's hard work.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the house that you lived in for me?

GEORGE: Yeah. (?) make out of stone.

SIGRIST: Stone.

GEORGE: Stone, yeah. And the roof make out of dirt. Before the rain, you got to go up there, you got, like, round stone. And you have to wheel it down to make it nice so the water don't go down.

SIGRIST: And then how many rooms would be in the house?

GEORGE: Oh, that depends on you how many you need.

SIGRIST: Well, how many rooms were in your house?

GEORGE: How many rooms? We had four rooms.

SIGRIST: You had four rooms.

GEORGE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Um, how did you heat your house?

GEORGE: Heat it?

SIGRIST: Yes, how did you heat your house?

GEORGE: You got little, little place in the corner there, you make fire in it, that's all.

SIGRIST: Like a fireplace, or just a little corner?

GEORGE: Yeah, just like in that corner there, and you got a place there, make fire in it.

SIGRIST: Did it get cold in Lebanon?

GEORGE: Only in the morning. In summertime, we sleep outside on top of the road.

SIGRIST: How did you light your house?

GEORGE: I light it? Kerosene.

SIGRIST: Where did you get the kerosene?

GEORGE: Well, whatever place you sell it.

SIGRIST: So that was something that you had to buy.

GEORGE: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you have water in the house?

GEORGE: No.

SIGRIST: Where did you go for water?

GEORGE: You have to go to spring water. The woman, they got to go to spring water.

SIGRIST: So that's a woman's job, to get the water.

GEORGE: That's the woman's job to carry it on her head, uh, her shoulder, bring the cattle or whatever you call it in, and that's how we got the water in the house.

SIGRIST: What about bathroom facilities? What did you do for a bathroom in the house?

GEORGE: I don't know. I can't . . .

SIGRIST: Didn't have one probably. (he laughs)

ZOGBY: They went out in the field.

SIGRIST: They went out in the field, Mr. Zogby says. Tell me about how many brothers and sisters did you have in Lebanon?

GEORGE: We had two, four brothers, one sister.

SIGRIST: Four brothers, one sister.

GEORGE: Right.

SIGRIST: Can you name them for me?

GEORGE: Yes. Habib.

SIGRIST: Habib. Just a minute, Mr. Zogby, we're going to need you to spell, I think. (he laughs)

ZOGBY: Okay.

SIGRIST: Habib.

GEORGE: Habib.

ZOGBY: H-A-B-I-B.

SIGRIST: Thank you.

GEORGE: Obeit.

ZOGBY: Obeit, like the family's name. O-B-E-I-T. (spells
in unison with Mr. Sigrist)

GEORGE: Youssef.

ZOGBY: Joseph, Youssef. Y-O-U-S-S-E-F.

GEORGE: And me, Tonios.

ZOGBY: Tonios.

SIGRIST: Right. And then what was your sister's name?

GEORGE: Uh, that . . . Ameen.

ZOGBY: Ameen. A-M-E-E-N-I.

SIGRIST: Thank you very much. (they laugh) Was she the
youngest in the family?

GEORGE: No, she was the older, my brother Obeit, he was the
second one.

SIGRIST: You're in the middle, then.

GEORGE: Right. I'm the, uh, the fourth one.

SIGRIST: The fourth one.

GEORGE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Which brother or sister were you the closest to?

GEORGE: Uh, I think we were close to all of, our whole family together.

SIGRIST: Is there a story that you remember about maybe something you did with your brothers or your sister, or something that happened with your brothers and sister?

GEORGE: No, I don't remember anything happening.

SIGRIST: When you think back to your brothers and your sister, what sticks out in your mind about your relationship with them?

GEORGE: Oh, the only thing, we was brothers and sister, that's all.

SIGRIST: Did, um, were your brothers responsible for doing work outside the house like you were?

GEORGE: Oh, yeah, sure.

SIGRIST: What kinds of work did they do?

GEORGE: Well, they all do the same thing. You got to go out

in the field, you got a chance to plow the dirt, my father, my brother. Sometimes I was his chief, they go there, so they got to put the wheat in, and the corn. Whatever they're going to raise.

SIGRIST: So, again, they're doing all this farm work that you, like you're doing.

GEORGE: Right, all the farm work, right.

SIGRIST: And you said pretty much everybody in this village had their own farms, that they were doing this.

GEORGE: Yeah. They got some farms, and some of them they got, like, a camel. They go, like you got something to sell, or something to move. Just like that.

SIGRIST: So they would take the camel and put the goods on it.

GEORGE: That's right, so you get paid.

SIGRIST: Was there a marketplace in town?

GEORGE: No.

SIGRIST: No. Where did you go if you wanted to sell some of your vegetables?

GEORGE: Oh, you got to go faraways.

SIGRIST: Did your family ever do that?

GEORGE: They got to go, you got to go to a different city.

SIGRIST: Did your family ever do that?

GEORGE: Not much, because the only thing sometimes they would sell the grapes, and make a, sometimes they make the butter out of milk.

SIGRIST: Make butter out of milk, uh-huh.

GEORGE: Yeah. And sometimes you sold that, too.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about, could your parents read or write? Could they read and write in Arabic? Your parents?

GEORGE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: They could?

GEORGE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What about the children? Were you given any kind of instruction, school or something?

GEORGE: Well, some of them, they got time to go to school, they go to school. Some of them they haven't got time

to go. See, like me, I was going to watch the sheep,
and I don't go to school.

SIGRIST: Did anyone in your family try to teach you reading,
writing, arithmetic?

GEORGE: No.

SIGRIST: No. That wasn't important, really, for your life.

GEORGE: No. That was not important, right.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me what kind of clothes you wore in
Lebanon when you were a child?

GEORGE: Well, you wear the pants, I don't know, what do you
call it? Long one, here.

SIGRIST: Like wide pants?

GEORGE: Wide pants. And, uh, and they get short, like, almost
like this country here.

SIGRIST: How often did you take a bath?

GEORGE: I couldn't tell you that either.

SIGRIST: Okay. (he laughs)

GEORGE: Only thing, we go swimming. Lots of times when you

take a bath you go swimming.

SIGRIST: Um, how, do you know how your mother did the laundry?
How did your mother wash clothes? (Mr. George
laughs) He's gesturing that, up and down, like on a
rock or something, like.

GEORGE: Just like here we used to do it.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

ZOGBY: Washboard and a tub.

SIGRIST: Washboard, or in the stream, probably, in Lebanon.

GEORGE: Well, see, they do it in the stream, like in the
water. And there sometimes they hammer it with a
stick.

SIGRIST: I see. Do you remember when you were a child, anyone
in your family being very sick or getting hurt
somehow?

GEORGE: No.

SIGRIST: No. Well, what did they do for, was there a doctor in
town?

GEORGE: No.

SIGRIST: Were there any home remedies that you remember your mother or father making? Like, if you had a headache, how would they treat that?

GEORGE: I don't remember that.

SIGRIST: You don't remember that.

GEORGE: No.

SIGRIST: Did you have any toys that you remember as a child?

GEORGE: We had what?

SIGRIST: Toys.

GEORGE: Toys? We didn't know what toys looked like.

SIGRIST: You had the sheep. You didn't need toys.

GEORGE: That's all. That's the toys. That's my toys, was.

SIGRIST: What religion were you?

GEORGE: Christian.

SIGRIST: Christian. And who was more religious, your mother or your father?

GEORGE: I think we're all the same.

SIGRIST: Was there a church in the village?

GEORGE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you remember about the church?

GEORGE: Well, only thing, in church we got there, like here is the village, you got a church where you're at from the village. Every Sunday everybody ring the bell, everybody go to church.

SIGRIST: So once a week you went out to the church, which was outside the village.

GEORGE: Right, right.

SIGRIST: How did you practice your religion at home?

GEORGE: Practice at home?

SIGRIST: Yeah. How . . .

GEORGE: Well, you sit down, you pray.

SIGRIST: Do you remember a prayer in Arabic?

GEORGE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you say one for us on tape?

GEORGE: Sure.

SIGRIST: Go ahead.

GEORGE: (he prays in Arabic)

SIGRIST: Thank you.

GEORGE: You're welcome.

SIGRIST: What does that mean? What does that prayer mean?

GEORGE: Uh . . .

ZOGBY: That's the Lord's Prayer.

SIGRIST: That's the Lord's Prayer, Mr. Zogby says, the Our Father.

GEORGE: Right.

SIGRIST: Um, tell me about what you did for entertainment, if there was any such thing. What did you do for fun when you were a kid?

GEORGE: Entertainment? What does that mean? It don't mean nothing. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Did you have games that you played as a child?

GEORGE: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: What games did you play when you were a child?

GEORGE: Well, we used to have a piece of wood. You put it in there and you had it, and you had the wood the other way got to catch it.

SIGRIST: Like a little ball or something, you're hitting with a piece of wood?

GEORGE: No, just like they had the sticks.

SIGRIST: The stick. Oh, you're hitting a piece of wood with a stick.

GEORGE: And you put it, you put it on something like this. And you hit it, when you come up I hit it. The other one you got to catch it. If you catch it, you come here, he do it.

SIGRIST: You're, like, hitting a stick into the air, and someone's got to catch it.

GEORGE: Right.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Did that game have a name?

GEORGE: Uh, I don't remember it.

ZOGBY: (?)

GEORGE: Huh?

ZOGBY: (?)

GEORGE: I don't know, (?) name.

ZOGBY: That's one of them. (?)

SIGRIST: Can you spell that? (he laughs)

ZOGBY: I cannot spell it. I wouldn't be able to spell it.

SIGRIST: We've stumped Mr. Zogby.

ZOGBY: Named after a fact that when you hit that piece of wood it would go tick!

SIGRIST: Oh, I see.

ZOGBY: And that, the tick. And then, one side, and over there, and somebody catches it.

SIGRIST: So the name of the game is named after the sound that you're making when you hit the wood.

ZOGBY: That's right.

SIGRIST: Did you, did your family have anybody in America, when

you were in Lebanon?

GEORGE: No. Only thing when my brother was here.

SIGRIST: Did your brother, was he the first from your family to come to America?

GEORGE: Right.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what year he came?

GEORGE: No.

SIGRIST: Was it, was it several years before you came?

GEORGE: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: So he was here a while, then.

GEORGE: Well, when he was here, he used to take it to my older brother, when my older brother come in.

SIGRIST: Which brother came first?

GEORGE: Obeit.

SIGRIST: And where did he go when he came to America?

GEORGE: Pennsylvania.

SIGRIST: And what did he do when he got there?

GEORGE: He used to work on, when they're making sidewalks outside with the . . .

SIGRIST: Slate?

GEORGE: Cement work.

SIGRIST: Cement work?

GEORGE: Cement work, cement work. All the concrete work.

SIGRIST: Do you know why he went there? Of all the places in America, why did he go to Pennsylvania?

GEORGE: I think that's the only place he can't find a job.

SIGRIST: And you had no other family there. He just went.

GEORGE: That's all. Oh, he had my, uh, what do you call it, my aunt's son. When he came here, he come to see my aunt's son. Because he got to have somebody here to come in, otherwise you can't come.

SIGRIST: So he worked in this factory, this cement work.

ZOGBY: Oh, no. They working outside on the sidewalk, and (?).

SIGRIST: Putting the sidewalks down. I see, I see.

ZOGBY: Right, yeah.

SIGRIST: And he sent for your older brother.

ZOGBY: Right.

SIGRIST: Which brother was that?

GEORGE: Habib.

SIGRIST: And then did your older brother join Obeit when he was here?

GEORGE: No, he don't want to come. When he sent a ticket to my older brother, my brother didn't want to come in, I told my father I like to go. My father say, "You're too young to go." I say, "Well, I'm too young, but I like to go." So he make his mind up. He say, "Okay, we let you go." So instead of changing the ticket, you know, I supposed come in with half ticket instead of full ticket. They say, "No, let her go there, he go nice and smooth, nobody bother him, because he got ticket already." I come to Ellis Island, but before we come to Ellis Island we stop in Marseilles. We stop a whole week in Marseilles there. Then we come to Ellis Island. When they go, you got to go through

there, the judge ask you, you know, where are you going, what are you doing. When I come in front of the judge he ask me, "How old you are?" I told him, "Twenty-one." He looked at me, you look a little bit younger than twenty-one. I say, "I can't help it. That's the way I am." And behind me was a fellow, God bless him, about six feet. He asked, "Come here." He comes down. "How old you are?" He say, "I'm nineteen." He tell me, he call me, he said, "This guy nineteen. You're twenty-one?" I said, "I can't help it. Maybe I'm midget." They say, "You make it hard. How about your face? It don't look like a midget." They build a cross to me. I go through there, the guy catch me there. "Come on sit, down." I sit down. He tell me sit down, I don't know what he mean. He go like this. I sat. He tell me, (?). (?) is money. (?). He wants some money. So I, you're supposed to come in with some money with you. So I give him the money, gold pieces. And he, he take the gold pieces, and he give me the change. I put it together, put it all in my pocket, paper and silver. I don't know nothing about the paper. Old country we didn't have no paper money. So I put them all together, and then they call my brother in Pennsylvania. If you want

your brother come over, you got to give me his real name, his real age, otherwise we're gonna send him back. So my brother, he used to go sometimes and work for the priests. He goes to the priests and tell them about it. They say, "Okay, that's all right." And he tell them he want twenty dollars. He say, "Okay." He sent him twenty dollars. Then when I come back to Pennsylvania my brother asked me I got the money. I say, "No, I don't get no money." So he went to the bank and ask him he want his twenty dollars back. So they call Ellis Island, what happened to the twenty dollars he sent there. They send there, now he got Habib George and Tony George, two names there. He said, "Well, you'd better catch him. That's a big crook." He come over, he come over the house, to my brother, and told him, "I want Habib Georges and Tony Georges, trying to steal (?), come in here in this country." He say, my brother, he say, "I got no Habib Georges and Tony Georges. I got Tony Georges." So he say, "Well, you better go and report down the police station." So he goes to the polices station, he called the priests. He called the priest about it. The priest, he say, "Okay, we'll go." So he said, "Tomorrow you come, you and your brother here. We'll

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see what we can do." I said, "All right."

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

GEORGE: When we go there me, my brother and my cousin went there, when we sit down there like we're sitting here, he gives cigar to my brother, he gives cigar to my cousin, he put his hand in his pocket, take, give me five dollars. My cousin say, "Well, nah, I don't want the cigar. I want the five dollars." He say, "You're lucky you got the cigar." So, and then he start joking. After a while he go to the bank and he told his bank, "Habib George work for me. He sent twenty dollars to his brother, his brother here, (?) don't make a different age. Old age, young age, don't make no difference. That's why he come with ticket from his brother. Get there, Habib George twenty dollars. (?) don't find the ticket, I'll buy (?)." So after that we don't listen, we don't hear nothing about it.

SIGRIST: That's a good story. When you were in Lebanon growing up, how did you perceive America? How did you think about America? Why did you want to come . . .

GEORGE: Oh, we thought that's heaven. The old country

everybody go back there, they got money, they got rich. You think that's all you got to do is just come here, get the money out of the street. You don't have to work for it.

SIGRIST: So you actually saw people who had been in America who then went back to Lebanon.

GEORGE: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: They seemed very wealthy to you.

GEORGE: Right.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you packed to take with you to America? What did you pack to take to America?

GEORGE: I couldn't answer that.

SIGRIST: Did you have a suitcase with you when you left Lebanon?

GEORGE: I don't remember.

SIGRIST: You don't remember. Do you remember saying goodbye to your parents?

GEORGE: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what that was like for me, please?

GEORGE: Well, I wrote to my mother. I guess my mother (?), I guess my father (?), my brother same thing, (?).
That's all.

SIGRIST: Where did you go to get on the trip?

GEORGE: Uh, Tripoli, Beirut. Uh, no, Troblis.

ZOGBY: Tripoli, that's . . .

GEORGE: Tripoli.

SIGRIST: And how did you get from your village to Tripoli?

GEORGE: Oh, we, uh, you got a donkey. Sometimes you ride on the donkey and you go there.

SIGRIST: And that's what you did. You rented the donkey and you went to Tripoli.

GEORGE: Right. My father and I, we went down to Tripoli.

SIGRIST: So your father went with you down, down to Tripoli.

GEORGE: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you have to stay there overnight before you got on the ship?

GEORGE: No. Only thing we were there, used to take us from here and there and there was a, you can't, because you can't come here when you're underage. You got to stay there. You go to go to the service. And you used to run us away from them. The (?), we got a chance, we go on the ship.

SIGRIST: Did you have to undergo any examinations in Tripoli before you got on the ship?

GEORGE: No.

SIGRIST: No medical exams, or . . .

GEORGE: Nothing.

SIGRIST: Did you have to do any of that, even when you were in your village before you got on the ship?

GEORGE: No, no.

SIGRIST: No. You told me earlier you didn't remember the name of the ship that you went on, correct? You do not remember the name of the ship.

GEORGE: No.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me what the ship looked like on the

inside where you slept on the ship?

GEORGE: Yeah. Well, they got, the low spot, we used to sleep there and eat there. And then sometimes we go on the top. And you got a store inside there, you got, like, if you want to buy some food, something there, they got store, you buy it there.

SIGRIST: How did they feed you on the ship?

GEORGE: Well, the long table there. Bring the food, put it on the table, you sit down there, you eat.

SIGRIST: What kinds of food did they feed you on the ship?

GEORGE: Oh, I don't know.

SIGRIST: Excuse me, we're just going to pause for a second.
(break in tape) All right, we're resuming now. Do you remember what kinds of food they fed you on the ship?

GEORGE: Oh, some kind of meat. I don't know what you call it. I couldn't tell you.

SIGRIST: Did you get seasick?

GEORGE: Me, I don't. I had, uh, let me see, (he counts) I

had four people with me on the ship. All of them was dizzy, sick. And I'm the one was going around and see if they want anything. I don't get dizzy at all.

SIGRIST: How did you help the people? What, did they give them medicine on the ship, or . . .

GEORGE: Oh, sometimes they throw up. You know, sometimes the whole of, he hold his head and decided wash his face.

SIGRIST: Do you have any stories about anything that happened while you were on the ship?

GEORGE: Nah. Only thing we had story was in the Marseilles. We were there, we went there in one place there, it was swimming. One guy, he can't swim, I don't know, he can't swim, what happened to him, he drown there, drown there.

SIGRIST: Drown!

GEORGE: Drown there. So one woman there, she stays out on the boat, she get some oil and throw the oil on top of the water. So she says, "Look down, you see clear without have anything. But the oil on top of the water, it has to clear now, you see, all the way through."

SIGRIST: Did the ship stop anywhere else other than Marseilles?
Did it stop any other places before it got to New
York?

GEORGE: Yeah, it stopped in, uh, Beirut.

SIGRIST: So it went from Tripoli . . .

GEORGE: To Beirut, yeah.

SIGRIST: To Beirut, to Marseilles, then to New York.

GEORGE: Right.

SIGRIST: Did you see anything on the ship that you had never
seen before?

GEORGE: Oh, a lot of things I see on the ship that I never,
that, we don't see nothing old country. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Is there one thing that you remember seeing that was a
real discovery for you?

GEORGE: I don't remember it. I can't tell you.

SIGRIST: How long did the ship take? From the time it left
Tripoli, to the time you arrived in New York?

GEORGE: One month.

SIGRIST: What time of the year is this?

GEORGE: I don't know exactly what year.

SIGRIST: Do you remember coming into New York Harbor? Do you remember arriving in New York?

GEORGE: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

GEORGE: Oh, yeah, sure. That's the first thing you see when you come.

SIGRIST: And what happened when you saw it?

GEORGE: What we say? We thought we're in America now.

SIGRIST: And, um, then, then what happened? Once the ship came into New York Harbor, then what happened?

GEORGE: Then we get off out of the ship. They got a place there, everybody go in there. They sit down there, when your turn come in, they go to the (?), they go see the judge.

SIGRIST: So that's at Ellis Island.

GEORGE: Right.

SIGRIST: So that's the story you were telling us about the judge not thinking you were twenty-one.

GEORGE: Right, right. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, you weren't twenty-one, of course.
(they laugh) What else happened at Ellis Island when you were there? Did anything else happen?

GEORGE: Oh, yeah. When you're, at nighttime they're supposed to give you a blanket and you go to sleep. When you take the blanket, you take it out of, there's a steam part, a steam, uh, what do you got, the radiator. The radiator? You take the blanket out of there. You're supposed to sleep. After a while you get cold, the bug come down and bite you. You hardly can't sleep.

SIGRIST: So the bugs are biting you.

GEORGE: Right.

SIGRIST: How many nights did you stay at Ellis Island?

GEORGE: One week.

SIGRIST: You stayed a week at Ellis Island.

GEORGE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Um, where did they feed you at Ellis Island?

GEORGE: Oh, just like everyone meet and stuff.

SIGRIST: Where did they feed you?

GEORGE: Oh, they had a place, like a restaurant, you go there.

SIGRIST: What did it, what did the inside of Ellis Island look like? What do you remember about the inside of the building?

GEORGE: Well, only big building I see, and they got a lot of places to sit down there, and that's it. That's all I remember about it.

SIGRIST: How, how many people were there?

GEORGE: Oh, Jesus. You find them in a line. See, Arabic, they got one line to go to, you know, the judge. The judge is a different language, he got another one. So they keep going as they're going, all different language.

SIGRIST: Did you have any medical examinations at Ellis Island.

GEORGE: No.

SIGRIST: So what did you do for a whole week? What did you do

during the days?

GEORGE: You just walk around, that's all.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing anything unusual that sticks out in your mind?

GEORGE: You got no place to see. You're right inside.

SIGRIST: Now, tell us, refresh our memory from, you told the story already about getting off. Who came to get you at Ellis Island?

GEORGE: Came to get me? Nobody came.

SIGRIST: Nobody. They just released you.

GEORGE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And then you went on to Pennsylvania.

GEORGE: Yeah. They release you, you go from upstairs, you go downstairs. When they you go downstairs, you got to buy lunch. You give them a dollar, they give you a baggage. And then you go on the train.

SIGRIST: And there were interpreters there for you, yes?

GEORGE: Yeah, the first, early. Then when you go down, you

don't need no trouble, because on the line.

SIGRIST: So when you got on the train to go to Pennsylvania, was that the first time you had been on a train?

GEORGE: That's the first time, right.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that experience of taking the train to Pennsylvania?

GEORGE: Well, that's a big surprise for me. (he laughs)
All those people.

SIGRIST: Was your brother waiting for you when you got off in Pennsylvania?

GEORGE: He was waiting for me, but I come different station. He was waiting on one station. My cousin was in a different station. I come in the third station. The guy, when we was coming on the train, I stayed in the chair, the guy sat beside me, and he was in this country. He's a Polish guy. And he went back old country. He started asking me, you know, in English, "Where are you goin'?" So I had a number, I just showed it to him. And so he motioned to me, just like me, I'm going there. So I, that's my habit.
(he laughs) Any place he go, I go with him. When

he gets message at Pittsburgh, he get off out of the train, I get off with him, too. He take the bus, I go to the bus with him, over his house. Then a (?) was waiting for him there. You know, it was dancing, playing. So he called one guy, he gave him the address where I'm supposed to go. So he take me up, up to Traffic City, he call it. I went up there. I don't see my brother, I don't see my cousin, I see his wife. And she told me, "How you get here?" I saw the guy there, he told her what happened, how I get there. And then she called up the (?), my brother and my cousin, I went already up there.

SIGRIST: Tell me about the house where your brother and his wife were living. What was the house like that you went to?

GEORGE: What do you mean?

SIGRIST: What, you went to their house, right? The wife was there. Just describe the house a little bit for me.

GEORGE: Oh, you mean, the (?).

SIGRIST: In Pittsburgh, yeah. What was the house like that you, your brother's house, where he was living?

GEORGE: Well, he was renting. It was not his. And, uh, that was a big house. That's like in a farm there. There was nothing, a city there. Like a farm there. (a telephone rings) They used to live upstairs. They got upstairs and downstairs. So many are up, so many are downstairs.

SIGRIST: So when did your brother finally come to see you?
When did he finally get to the house?

GEORGE: The same day. Since she call him up, he come up and he take the bus and go over the house.

SIGRIST: And explain to me a little bit about how you felt when you saw your brother?

GEORGE: Oh, Jesus, I was so happy. I can't tell you how I feel, because I don't know my cousin, but I know my brother, that I just, just something like, you know, somebody give you so much thing that they might as well give you a million dollars.

SIGRIST: So you were very happy to see your brother.

GEORGE: Right.

SIGRIST: How did you, what did you do that first night? Where

did you sleep in their house that first night?

GEORGE: Oh, they got, they only got a room, actually a room there. They're sleeping in the same house.

SIGRIST: And did they cook dinner for you?

GEORGE: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what they fed you in your first night in America?

GEORGE: No.

SIGRIST: No? Well, tell me what happened next. What was the first thing that you had to do the next morning when you woke up? Did you . . .

GEORGE: Well, you get up and have breakfast and start talk. And that's the time my brother asked me about the twenty dollars. And that's the time I told him, I said, "Here's the paper, I got all the paper, and that's the money I got. That's all I got." So he find that twenty dollars short. That's what happened, we have to go to the priests.

SIGRIST: I see. And then you eventually, you told us the story. How long was it before you went out to get a

job?

GEORGE: How long?

SIGRIST: Yeah.

GEORGE: That was in summertime. I had, my brother was working, like I told you, on concrete and laying sidewalk. So he knows the boss there. So he create a job there, waterboy.

SIGRIST: As the waterboy. Of course, you really are thirteen years old.

GEORGE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah, right.

GEORGE: I was carrying the water. Like you're working, I got a bucket full of water. I come to you, you want a drink, after you drink out of it, go to him, keep going right along.

SIGRIST: Now, tell me how you began to learn English?

GEORGE: Just go around with the people.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what the first word was that you learned in English?

GEORGE: No.

SIGRIST: Were most of the people who worked where your brother worked, were they immigrants?

GEORGE: Yeah. Most of them Italian. All the most of them Italian. Even the boss, he was Italian, see. He take it like a contract on job, and he had all Italian people.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how much you got paid as the water boy?

GEORGE: No. I remember how much money I got when I was working setting the pin up, after it was, you know, summer finish, I go to the city, I go around to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, working in the bowling alley, setting the pin up.

SIGRIST: Setting up the pins.

GEORGE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And how much were you paid?

GEORGE: Nine dollars a week, twelve hours.

SIGRIST: Twelve hours a day.

GEORGE: Twelve hours a day, six days.

SIGRIST: It must have been a very busy bowling alley.

GEORGE: Oh, yeah, it was busy, though.

SIGRIST: Was there a, was there a large Lebanese population in Pittsburgh at that time?

GEORGE: No, not too many. There was enough. I wouldn't say there was too much, but there was enough. I mean, you find, almost every place you go you find somebody.

SIGRIST: How did you feel, did you miss Lebanon when you first came to America?

GEORGE: First came to America, yeah, I miss it. A lot of time I sat and cry, because I think about old country, about my mother, my father, my family.

SIGRIST: Did you communicate with them through letters?

GEORGE: Oh, yeah, all the time. Oh, yeah. We do all the time.

SIGRIST: Did you send them money?

GEORGE: I send a lot of money. That's why, see, my father

used to buy the land, (he coughs) he had the land already been paid for. So he go market that land and buy another one. You keep on doing like this, so he own, I don't know, about, we had about six, seven. But he, every one of them, he owe money on it. And that's why he come to America, to get the money to sell it, to send it to him. And that's how we did.

SIGRIST: So you're sending money, your brothers are sending money.

GEORGE: Right.

SIGRIST: What was the hardest thing to get adjusted to in the United States?

GEORGE: Hardest job?

SIGRIST: Well, what was the hardest thing for you to get adjusted to in America? What was difficult for you in America?

GEORGE: I don't know. I don't think there was anything difficult.

SIGRIST: Did, um, did you go back to Lebanon?

GEORGE: No.

SIGRIST: What about your brothers? Did they ever go back?

GEORGE: No.

SIGRIST: Did any other members of your family come to America?

GEORGE: No, that's all.

SIGRIST: So it was just the three brothers here in America.

GEORGE: Yeah. Just two brothers here, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, when you were learning English, do you ever remember making a mistake trying to say one word and having it come out something else?

GEORGE: Oh, lots of times I make mistakes. You don't know what the word "we." Sometimes you make mistakes, and then you got to ask somebody about what does the word mean? Sometimes they correct you. Sometimes they correct you right away. Sometimes they don't.

SIGRIST: Do you remember a specific story about this happening to you?

GEORGE: No.

SIGRIST: No. Um, do you remember experiencing any kind of

prejudice because you were an immigrant? Did anyone make fun of you because you were foreign born?

GEORGE: No, thank God, no, I don't remember.

SIGRIST: What about when you were a water boy and you were young. Did the Italians make fun of you?

GEORGE: No, no. I think, because we always young, it don't bother. See, maybe if I was old enough, probably they make fun out of me. But I stayed on my job because I was a little kid, it don't bother.

SIGRIST: How long did you live with your brother and his wife?
Or, did you live with your brother and his wife?

GEORGE: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: How long?

GEORGE: Well, long, when I, when we was working on the road, was lived together. That's when I went Pittsburgh. (?) lived there, in a different place. So that's why I moved down there, like I work in the boon alley.

SIGRIST: How old were you when you moved to Pittsburgh?

GEORGE: It was only about a year, a year-and-a-half after that

come to this country.

SIGRIST: So you're still pretty young, then, when you moved to Pittsburgh then.

GEORGE: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, where did you live when you went to Pittsburgh?

GEORGE: Well, we used to have a place. You pay the rent, and you pay board. Whatever you want to go. You want to pay just the rent, or you want to pay board? You pay board, they feed you and they sleep and everything, wash your clothes and everything.

SIGRIST: Were there other Lebanese people in this boarding house?

GEORGE: No, they was American.

SIGRIST: They were all American.

GEORGE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you, did you feel all alone being all by yourself?

GEORGE: No. You get along with, after a while you get friends.

SIGRIST: Did, um, did you become a citizen eventually?

GEORGE: Ah, quite a back. I got a citizen from here, from Utica.

SIGRIST: So that was when you, what year did you come to Utica?

GEORGE: I'm not sure. 19, 1919 or 1918 or 1920, something like that.

SIGRIST: So you've been in Utica for a long time, then.

GEORGE: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: But you moved around, I think you told me, before you came to Utica you were in different places.

GEORGE: Before and after. When I came here, I used to work up at Clarks Mills, in the Cotton Mill.

SIGRIST: What kind of work did you do in the cotton mill?

GEORGE: The spindle room.

SIGRIST: Can you explain to me what you, what you did?

GEORGE: Well, that frame there, we got that, they call a ribbon.

SIGRIST: A ribbon?

GEORGE: Yeah. They got the string on it. They come down, they got a (?) in the bottom, and they come down like this. And then if they break you got to go connect it. You got to take the one, tie with the other, the other side so they get together, and start spinning.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how much you got paid for that job?

GEORGE: Let me see. No, I don't remember exactly how much.

SIGRIST: Were there mostly immigrants working in the factories at that time?

GEORGE: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Were the factories unionized at that time?

GEORGE: Yeah. And some of them union, and some of them not union.

SIGRIST: Were the Clarks Mills unionized?

GEORGE: No.

SIGRIST: So you didn't have to join the union to . . .

GEORGE: No, no.

SIGRIST: Um, were you able to get any kind of schooling in

America once you got here?

GEORGE: No, because I was working.

SIGRIST: You had to go to work.

GEORGE: Right, and make my living.

SIGRIST: Did you become a citizen, a U.S. citizen?

GEORGE: Yeah. They come here in Pittsburgh, I mean, Utica.

SIGRIST: What year did you become a United States citizen?

GEORGE: I forget that either.

SIGRIST: How old were you? Do you remember how old you were?

GEORGE: I think about twenty-eight, something like that. I'm not sure, either.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me the process of studying to become a citizen? I mean, what is the process? How do you go about becoming a United States citizen?

GEORGE: Well, they, when you got to go there it used to be they want to give you the citizen, Ms. Barkley, call it. She's the one that decide if I'm supposed to have a citizen or not.

SIGRIST: Ms. Barkley. She's making this decision.

GEORGE: Yeah, she's the one that make it. So they teach you, you know, the words what you're supposed to answer. And I forget that I was, anyway.

SIGRIST: And, um, was there a ceremony when, when you became a citizen was there some sort of a ceremony?

GEORGE: Not when you become citizen. After. They start the date for you, like my twenty, thirty people together. They set the date for you. Then you go.

SIGRIST: How did you feel when you became a citizen?

GEORGE: I feel different person.

SIGRIST: Tell me what year you got married.

GEORGE: '31.

SIGRIST: 1931. What is your wife's name?

GEORGE: Rose.

SIGRIST: And what was her maiden name?

GEORGE: I don't know.

SIGRIST: Don't know. And how many children did you have?

GEORGE: Six.

SIGRIST: Can you name them, please?

GEORGE: Sure.

SIGRIST: Go ahead.

GEORGE: Uh, George, Evelyn, Janice, Rosalie, and I, I
mean . . . (he laughs)

ZOGBY: Philip.

GEORGE: (?)

ZOGBY: That's five. There's one more.

SIGRIST: Philip.

GEORGE: Jimmy.

SIGRIST: Jimmy.

GEORGE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Does that come out to six, I think? (he laughs)
What advice would you have to people, you've lived a
long life, a long, interesting life. What advice
would you give to a young person who was listening to

this tape about a successful way to lead their life.
What would you want to tell them to do?

GEORGE: What would I tell them to do? Just make work, make a living. What are you going to do? What are you going to give them? The only thing, you got to work in this country. If you don't work, you don't eat.

SIGRIST: Were you surprised when you couldn't pick the money off the street when you got here?

GEORGE: Right. Yeah. Make a lot of money. I work like a, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you think of yourself as more Lebanese or as more American?

GEORGE: Well, I can't say Lebanese more, because I born, my blood Lebanese, but I got all my children here, I got to be an American.

SIGRIST: Well, you've been here a long time, too. Eight some-odd years.

GEORGE: That's right.

SIGRIST: Well, Mr. George, I want to thank you very much for letting me ask you all these questions.

GEORGE: Thank you.

SIGRIST: It was a very interesting interview. And, Mr. Zogby, for your talent as speller. (they laugh) This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Tony George on Thursday, April 27, 1995, in Utica, New York at the home of Mr. Zogby. Thank you.

GEORGE: You're welcome. Thank you.