

NPS-109
HAGOP NERSESIAN
BIRTH DATE: 1904
INTERVIEW DATE: 7/3/1978
RUNNING TIME:
INTERVIEWER: FRANCY BOCKOVEN
RECORDING ENGINEER: UNKNOWN
INTERVIEW LOCATION: BEVERLY, MA
TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: CHARLENE A. KEYLOR, PETER HOM
TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: IRV SILBERG

ARMENIA, 1922
AGE: About 18

SHIP: PROVIDENCE
PORT:
RESIDENCES
ARMENIA:
US: BEVERLY, MA

HISTORIAN'S NOTE: Mr. Nersesian's daughter is also present.

BOCKOVEN: Now Mr. Nersesian, first could you tell me a little bit about your home in Europe.

NERSESIAN: In Europe?

BOCKOVEN: Yes.

NERSESIAN: I wasn't born in Europe. I was born in Armenia, Turkish Armenia. As I was a young boy, I was in school every day except summer vacation. You know, but-- back in 1915 where the massacre in - in our nation, in Armenia --

DAUGHTER: [interposed] They wiped out all the army -

NERSESIAN: wipe out all the army -` people. Genocide. But I had a Turkish friend, a --

DAUGHTER: He comes from a very big family, about seventeen, eighteen. They were all killed.

NERSESIAN: Yes.

DAUGHTER: And they had this Turk friend that was very friendly with them for years--

NERSESIAN: Yeah.

DAUGHTER: and he came and took him over and saved his life. So, after the war was over and then he came and found his aunt and then he worked as a young kid to support his aunt. And then later on, around 1921, 1922, he escaped to Syria because he didn't have anyone else there, see. And then his mo - his aunt, and he has a sister which is a little younger than he is, they came to Syria. Alright, you say the rest now. You --

NERSESIAN: She says Syria, but I wasn't exactly--I had in my mind--I had - I didn't had in my mind then to go to Syria --

DAUGHTER: [interposed] But he escaped there.

NERSESIAN: But it happened that way. Because I was a young - young boy about seventeen, eighteen years old. But the Turkish -- I had a good job. You know, I never go hungry because I was working in a bakery. (laughs)

DAUGHTER: He had a loaf of bread a day.

NERSESIAN: Yes, you don't go hungry in a bakery. So for a while, I thought I stay there. But then later on, the --I -I hear Armenian the-- they run away from Turkey, just like today the Soviet Union, you know. They don't like the regime. They - they go out. So I decided to - to escape the Turkey, come into Free World. But we're three - three boys. We - we had a guide, you know.

DAUGHTER: They hire a guide to direct them through the mountains.

NERSESIAN: He was a - he was not a Turk, but he was a Kurd. So we decided to go with him.

DAUGHTER: They paid ea--they paid so much

NERSESIAN: We came in -

DAUGHTER: [superposed] to get them free to Syria so they could escape to America. They could come to America.

NERSESIAN: We - we came in to Syria.

BOCKOVEN: So was your plan to go to America and your first stop was Syria?

NERSESIAN: Just as soon as I -

DAUGHTER: [interposed] Yes, they would have to come to Syria.

NERSESIAN: Just as soon as I come in to Syria, I -- I write to my uncle. He lives in [not understood]--. He's -

DAUGHTER: [interposed] He's dead.

NERSESIAN: He's - two -- about three years ago, he died. You know, just as soon as I come into the United States, I call him up. I - I --

DAUGHTER: [interposed] When you came to Syria.

NERSESIAN: I write to - I write to my uncle. So he send me the money. He says, "I - I arranged everything so I'll transfer you to United States." Because my - my father was in the United States then. There is my father over there.

BOCKOVEN: Oh. Handsome man.

NERSESIAN: He was (laughs)

DAUGHTER: Most of his life he spent in the United States.

NERSESIAN: He lives in [not understood] become a - a citizen, but in order to become a citizen, you have to have a first paper. He had a first paper, but he never got the second paper.

DAUGHTER: Because he was coming back with his family, but they didn't give him a chance, they killed him.

NERSESIAN: So he - he brought me to the United States, but I - I - I got out the order to [not understood] -- I got --. But I - I didn't get out because I didn't - I - I want to escape but the - the ship. But my uncle says, "No, you will stay there. Whatever happens, I'll take care of you."

DAUGHTER: Because he had Trachoma, you see.

NERSESIAN: I didn't know that my trachoma was--I was operated on my eyes in the Syrian city, Aleppo.

BOCKOVEN: Oh, so they discovered that you had trachoma in Syria?

NERSESIAN: Yeah, well -

DAUGHTER: [interposed] Yeah.

NERSESIAN: The doctor -

DAUGHTER: [interposed] They operated on him but --

NERSESIAN: The doctor he wasn't -

DAUGHTER: [interposed] he thought he was cured, but he wasn't.

BOCKOVEN:; I see.

NERSESIAN: That doctor wasn't exactly a surgeon, you know.

DAUGHTER: What was he?

NERSESIAN: He didn't know anything about -- an ordinary doctor. So he made a wrong incision, but - but at that time It goes for cured. But later on it grows back again. Every time - he - he -- didn't break up the [not understood] it grows - grows up again. So I come into France. He - he -- I went to the doctor. He look at me, he says, "You got a trachoma." I says, "Can't you - can you take care of it?" He says, "Yes. I'll take it out, but right -- not right away." he says, "It takes three, four weeks before I can cure." I went every and my eyes are -- he was put in some medicine, you know. It hurts. But later on he says, "Now you are all right. You are [not understood] " Yeah. Have - have cure. (laughs)

DAUGHTER: That means that's cured. But when he came in the boat to get out they found out it wasn't.

NERSESIAN: And until this time, my eyes is still got the trachoma.

BROCKOVEN: Oh dear.

BOCKOVEN: So they examined you when you got off the boat in --?

DAUGHTER: In Providence.

BOCKOVEN: In Providence?

DAUGHTER: Providence, Rhode Island.

NERSESIAN: They brought her out to Boston. Later on they brought her out to Boston. I was in the immigrant information office for a part of the day -- the end of January.

DAUGHTER: Where was it you landed?

NERSESIAN: Later on they took me to hospital.

DAUGHTER: Where was it you landed in Providence?

NERSESIAN: I landed in Providence, November 1st.

DAUGHTER: I see.

NERSESIAN: Yeah.

BOCKOVEN: Now when you came to the United States, first of all, what year was this?

DAUGHTER: 1922.

BOCKOVEN: 1922. Okay.

NERSESIAN: In 1922 I landed -- landed in Providence, but -

BOCKOVEN: Okay. And -

DAUGHTER: [interposed] They was going deport him back.

NERSESIAN: In order my eyes, they - they - they put me -- put me down for --. They were deport me --trying to deport me, you know.

BOCKOVEN: Because of your disease?

NERSESIAN: Yes, because of my eyes. Later on when I hear the departing date, they are going to deport me, I telephone my uncle, they - I - I'm not going to - they - they wanted me to deport to France again because my eyes is -

DAUGHTER: bad.

NERSESIAN: bad. He - he says, "No," he says, "don't worry about it. I'll take care of you. You - you not going to be deported." So he - he arrange it with the congressman, you know. He has the congressman. He put a - says, "I want my nephew -- he says, "I want my nephew be treated in the hospital." So they - they take me right away the next day --

BOCKOVEN: To Ellis Island?

NERSESIAN: -- before the - before the arrangement. I mean they took me to Providence, put him on a boat.

DAUGHTER: They put him -

NERSESIAN: They lock -- lock up with a bars on it.

DAUGHTER: (Snorts). Jail.

BOCKOVEN: Why? In providence this was?

DAUGHTER: Yes. Well, they was planning to ship him back again.

NERSESIAN: Three - three and four hours later , I see is a man comes in, opened up the gate. Now he says, "You come with me." he says. I says, "All right."

DAUGHTER: Could you speak?

NERSESIAN: Yeah, a little bit. I understand more than I speak but anyway, I went there, he says, "Your uncle wants you to -- not to be reported -- deported." He says "You gonna be staying in the United States." Oh boy, I was so happy. I thought I got to go home.

DAUGHTER: Thought he was going back.

NERSESIAN: But he says, "Oh, no." He says, "you're not going to go home," he says, "But they want to take you to Ellis Island."

BOCKOVEN: I see. Do you know why you were stopped off in Providence? Don't they usually come to New York?

NERSESIAN: No - there's -

DAUGHTER: No, there's some boats come to Providence, excuse me, and some land in New York. There's a port in - that's the - like, certain lines they have certain stations.

NERSESIAN: I wa-- I was coming to Federal -- Federal Line Company. The ship I come to, the name is the Providence. Yeah, I love that name Providence. (laughs) So -- so the company ships come into Rhode Island, they have to [not understood] to ship where their company is.

DAUGHTER: Where he come from.

NERSESIAN: Where - wherever their company is . So that's it.

BOCKOVEN: So instead of deporting you, they brought you to Ellis Island?

NERSESIAN: Yes. They - th--they bring up Ellis Island. This immigration officer was a very considerate man, you know, and he come in and he says - he says, "My boy," he says, "I want to take you to - to New York." I says, "Why you want to take me to New York?" He says, "Your eyes is bad." He says, "They're going to take you -- the hospitals down there so they cure you." So I was happy for anything else. I was so happy. I says, "Alright," I says, "I'll come in with you." So we took a train to Connecticut. I don't know what - what this was exactly, Hartford or New Britain or somewhere else.

DAUGHTER: [superposed] That you're change. [not understood]

NERSESIAN: They took us over there. They put us in a boat. So next morning, we got it in New York, next morning. So in New York they - they have a small ship that takes it to Ellis Island. They call it, I don't know what.

DAUGHTER: Ferry?

NERSESIAN: A ferry, yes.

BOCKOVEN: So when you arrived at Ellis Island, what happened then?

NERSESIAN: They took me over the -- where the old - old people, young people...

DAUGHTER: They all mixed. They were all mixed.

NERSESIAN: All mixed up. It was about 18, 20 people in a ward. They took me down there. They - they - they never try -- look at my eyes or anything else, but I didn't see any doctor, you know. I stayed there for about three weeks. I says, "This is not a ho-- hospital," I says.

BOCKOVEN: Did you? You didn't receive any treatment during those three weeks?

DAUGHTER: At the beginning, he did.

NERSESIAN: A lot of boys, they have bad eyes, trachoma and everything else, even Chinese. Chinese there. And he says, "My eyes is in a trachoma." I says, "They put me in here." I says, "They going - they gonna treat your eyes?" He says, "No." He says, "They going to deport me back again, China." So I - I wrote my uncle again, you know. I says, "Please tell Mary..."

DAUGHTER: That is his aunt.

NERSESIAN: My Aunt Mary to write a letter to the doctor because my eyes is -

DAUGHTER: They're not doing anything.

NERSESIAN: They don't take care of me. So she wrote a sympathetic letter, you know. I see a doctor come in, but he comes in and he doesn't look anybody's eyes. Right away I see a doctor, I took the letter to him. I says, "Doctor," I says, "Please, this letter is for you." He opened up and read it and that was the end. He look at me, he says, "I want to see your eyes." So he looked at me and he called up that nurse, male nurse. There's no nurse -- female nurse down there, male nurse. He says, "I want you to prepare this boy," he says, "and until tomorrow I come in certain hours, I want to look at his eyes." So he took hot water with some cotton. He put my eyes. He closed my eyes. Oh, about a half an hour like that. My eyes is--.

All of a sudden the doctor come in, look at me. He says, "You got a troublesome eyes." I didn't say anything. "Doctor," I says, "they operated on me twice, but there was some - some more trachoma in there." He says, "Don't worry," you know. The next morning, he come in, my eyes were -- put some - some long - some kind of a

DAUGHTER: [interposed] Medicine.

NERSESIAN: medicine. I don't know if they try medicine, but he put my eyes and oh, it hurts, it hurts. So I was almost crying, you know. Before -- about three months, every other day he was looking at me -- every other day. There was a Italian boy with me, but only his eyes was - e-- even myself only I was treated the doctors. All the rest of them not treated.

BOCKOVEN: Just .

DAUGHTER: See, they didn't do anything till the letter came from her aunt saying, "Well, he is the only one saved out of twenty-five, out of one family. We want to do everything to keep him here." So. And then when the doctor read that letter and then he start taking care of - otherwise, he says they were all in there but they never look at them or anything. They just give a meal or so and that was all.

BOCKOVEN: And these other people, were they eventually deported?

DAUGHTER: I don't know what happened. What happened to the other people?

NERSESIAN: I I don't know.

DAUGHTER: Well, how long were you there, Jack?

NERSESIAN: I was there the first of February, they were deport me to France, but ten days later, say February 10th, I was - I was transferred to Ellis Island. From February to June 1st. June 1st.

BOCKOVEN: Several months.

NERSESIAN: Yes.

BOCKOVEN: And when you were at Ellis Island having your treatments, were you in a hospital or were you just in Ellis Island?

NERSESIAN: No. The same ward all the rest of the boys were.

BOCKOVEN: Did you have room to sleep?

NERSESIAN: Yes. See, they have a ward, beds and everything else.

DAUGHTER: They all in one place.

BOCKOVEN: And how did they feed you?

NERSESIAN: They - they - they fed us well. We had everyday each plate, we not going in a mess hall like that.

DAUGHTER: Did they serve you in the hospital?

NERSESIAN: Yes, in the hospital just like they bring up a plate, everything, coffee and everything else.

DAUGHTER: Tray.

NERSESIAN: Tray, yeah. Well, I don't say we didn't eat well. We were fed well.

DAUGHTER: [interposed] But many [not understood] .

NERSESIAN: We had a library there -- about two, three, about fifteen steps away, library is near.

BOCKOVEN: Could you read? Were your eyes affected for reading?

NERSESIAN: Yes. I could read. I - I -- I wasn't closed up.

DAUGHTER: Well, I mean the doctor allow you to read?

NERSESIAN: Yes. I could - I could read it. But only the day that I was treated I didn't read that because sore eyes. The next day I was all right.

BOCKOVEN: And how often did he treat you? Every other day?

NERSESIAN: Every other day, three times a week, three times a week.

BOCKOVEN: And he put this medicine on your eyes.

NERSESIAN: Yes.

BOCKOVEN: Did he operate on you.

NERSESIAN: No, they didn't - didn't operate on me.

DAUGHTER: [interposed] [not understood] .

NERSESIAN: [not understood] -- some medicine down there, but that medicine I know cures a lot of things like boils, everything else ,cures but eats it. So--

BOCKOVEN: Did you have the same doctor the whole time that you were there?

NERSESIAN: Yes, all the time that there, same doctor. He was a - he had a

DAUGHTER: Stripes?

NERSESIAN: stripes on his arm because

DAUGHTER: [interposed] He was a service man.

NERSESIAN: the war - war -- the Wo--the World War was ended, but is 1923, he is allowed the stripes.

DAUGHTER: He was in the uniform in other words.

NERSESIAN: Uniform stripes. His name was Ward.

BOCKOVEN: Doctor Ward?

NERSESIAN: Doctor Ward. he told me, he says, "Hagop," he says, "When you - when you go home; you wear eyeglasses. You care you eyes -- eyesight."

BOCKOVEN: So it did cure you? You never had anymore problems?

NERSESIAN: No. I never had any problems. It wasn't that. He took me to the higher up the doctors, you know, two, three was like that, and Joe and I went together. He look at me, my eyes. "Good, is good." You looked Joe's eyes and he say--.

DAUGHTER: [interposed] Who is Joe?

NERSESIAN: "Is fine," he says, "now you can go home," he says.

DAUGHTER: Who - who was Joe, Daddy?

NERSESIAN: Joe is Italian fellow.

DAUGHTER: Oh, the Italian fellow, he was with you.

NERSESIAN: Twenty-two, twenty-five years old, Italian fellow. His-his father was a -- live in New York. What is that [not understood] ?

BOCKOVEN: Oh, yes. I can't remember .

NERSESIAN: You can't remember now but - Brooklyn -- Brooklyn. He was in Brooklyn. He was a barber, Joe was barber. He was give me haircut.

DAUGHTER: Oh, you had a free haircut?

NERSESIAN: Free haircut.

BOCKOVEN: So he was also treated for trachoma? Joe and you?

NERSESIAN: Yes, he was treated in trachoma. Him -- and my -- me exam me same day, he treat us, both of us. But I don't know whether...

DAUGHTER: What happened to the rest?

NERSESIAN: He had a letter from [not understood] but I don't know. It happens. It happens. He was with me all the time.

BOCKOVEN: So you became pretty good friends?

NERSESIAN: Yes, he was good friend, good friend.

BOCKOVEN: Did your uncle or your father -- your aunt visit you at Ellis Island? Were they permitted to visit you?

NERSESIAN: My uncle was --.

DAUGHTER: His father was killed. They wipe out all his family. He was the only one and his sister were saved.

BOCKOVEN: Did any of your relatives that were in the United States come to visit you?

NERSESIAN: No. I - I -- I had visited while I was in Boston.

DAUGHTER: But it was pretty hard. He was in business in Salem, you know. He couldn't very well leave to...

NERSESIAN: My cousin [not understood] was in this country, you know, his family and all. My other distance cousin, he come in and see me one time.

BOCKOVEN: So you could have visitors? They allowed you to have people visit you?

NERSESIAN: In Boston. Not Ellis Island.

BOCKOVEN: Okay. Now, when did you go to Boston?

NERSESIAN: I was in --

DAUGHTER: From Providence. From Boston, he went to --

NERSESIAN: I was in Boston November 1st.

BOCKOVEN: Before you came to Ellis Island?

NERSESIAN: Before I come into Providence, they - they - they put a [not understood] they ship it in Boston. So I stay -

DAUGHTER: Immigration office.

NERSESIAN: Immigration office. And so they took me in a county hospital in Boston. Then I was free, practically. I was going out and walk around and everything else and come back.

DAUGHTER: What were they doing at county Hospital? Did they...

NERSESIAN: I was in the--take my clothes and everything else, no. I have my clothes on. I used to go out and two or three times a day would take a walk and everything else. I come back though.

BOCKOVEN: Were they curing your eyes in Boston?

NERSESIAN: No, they didn't cure me, but they would take me in the hospital because they didn't want all of us in the -- at the-- . I was - I was -- they were -

DAUGHTER: Contagions?

NERSESIAN: contagious.

BOCKOVEN: Okay, so that's why they...

DAUGHTER: Well, why they let you go out then if it was contagious?
(laughs)

NERSESIAN: I -I couldn't answer that. (laughs)

BOCKOVEN: Yes, that seems a little funny. Well, now what could you do at Ellis Island besides you slept there, you ate there, you could read?

NERSESIAN: Yes. My -- rest of the time, I was in the library, I was librarian help, you see. We were taking the books into the other patients.

BOCKOVEN: I see, so you had a job at Ellis Island.

NERSESIAN: Yes. This librarian, he was a well-educated -

DAUGHTER: [interposed] man.

NERSESIAN: lady.

BOCKOVEN: Oh, lady

NERSESIAN: Lady, yeah. But she had - she - she - she had a diploma for several languages.

BOCKOVEN: Could you speak much English at that time?

NERSESIAN: Well, I could speak a little bit because I - because I was a - when they were - I was young, they - they were teaching the school.

DAUGHTER: [interposed] Whatever he took in school.

NERSESIAN: We had a - we take France -- French and English, one year, last year English, but French two years. You know, in the old country they - they want to take foreign languages while the children are small. They learn quick.

BOCKOVEN: Right, that is the smart way to do it.

NERSESIAN: That is -- that's why they were teaching it.

DAUGHTER: In grammar school, they teach the languages to children.

NERSESIAN: Grammar school.

BOCKOVEN: ..grammar school

NERSESIAN: Yes, I used to--besides the Armenian, we used to have a Turkish, too, Turkish. It was a compulsory thing. You have to learn the Turkey in order to become a conversation, you know what it is. But a lot of people, they didn't care for learn other languages. So my uncle has a son, he sent him to Turkish college, you know. But his father was a smart man. He was a head of the - head of all villages because like say every time a governmental work was being done, he used to write a letter and everything else. The government - he was a big man.

DAUGHTER: In other words,

NERSESIAN; [superposed] He was so smart.

DAUGHTER: He had been well educated. He had

NERSESIAN: (coughs, loudly)

DAUGHTER: so much language, so when there was any letter to be written to the government, well, he had to do it.

BOCKOVEN: He must have had a very responsible job.

NERSESIAN: Yes.

BOCKOVEN: Now when you left Ellis Island, what did you do then?

NERSESIAN: When I left Ellis Island, because I was - I - I - I was with my uncle.

DAUGHTER: See, his uncle has a business and he was working there.

NERSESIAN: I went to six - six months in the American school.

DAUGHTER: Day school?

NERSESIAN: Day school, yes. Some kind of school was all foreigners coming together, you know, to learn the language before they took them in a different grade.

BOCKOVEN: And then you worked for your uncle?

NERSESIAN: I worked my uncle.

BOCKOVEN: And what did you do? What was your job?

NERSESIAN: He was a

DAUGHTER: [interposed] He had a grocery store and [not understood]

NERSESIAN: He had a grocery market and a confectionery store and everything else.

BOCKOVEN: So again, you didn't have to worry about food.

NERSESIAN: No. (laughs)

BOCKOVEN: When did you become a citizen?

NERSESIAN: I was becoming - I was, you know, I was twenty -- twenty-four years old, so I made my mind to become a citizen. I told my friends I want to become a U.S.A. citizen. They are all laughing at me. They says, "I don't think you become a citizen because they don't accept you." I says, "Why?" He says, "A lot of people we know, the First World War, the army and they ask them about going in the service and they say they won't go in the service because it's happened to be - it's happened to be one of them - one of a [not understood] is - is rescued or something like that, who is going to support them. [not understood] If the government will guarantee support my family or something like that?" he says. "No, government only support in the family in the United States. 'If you have

a wife or a child or something like that, we'll take care of it, but we don't take no [not understood] foreigners.'" So lot of 'em - lot of 'em didn't want to go. Some went.

DAUGHTER: But you wasn't at the age.

NERSESIAN: Marco [ph] didn't go, but my cousins, he went in the service because he was a - he hasn't - he has --

DAUGHTER: He had a big family to support, you know. He had four children.

NERSESIAN: --nobody. So while I was in the old country, one day government give her a little freedom, you know. My uncle sent ten - no, fifty - fifty dollars in order to. [not understood] or not. He took a chance.

DAUGHTER: Well, during -- after the war he didn't know if there was anybody left so he sent fifty dollars to American Consulate there, Mr. Reeves, saying, "If I had any relatives living, let me know and give this money so I could send some more." So through that he discovered that they were alive.

BOCKOVEN: Did your sister come with you in the same...

NERSESIAN: No.

DAUGHTER: [superposed] No. He escape, because the men -- they would let the women come, but they wouldn't let the men, so he had to escape.

NERSESIAN: I escaped the country. But later on the whole Armenians come - pull together, get out of the country.

DAUGHTER: You know, Americans, they have or-- orphanages there. They move all the orphanages to Syria, Beirut, Lebanon and different places. And then, the other people could come. But the man, well, he was allowed to be in the service. He was about 18, 19, and they wouldn't let him come, so he had to escape. That was the whole reason.

NERSESIAN: After I - what was I going to say -after I escaped, all the - all the Armenians, they had permission to leave the country. No? My aunt and my sister, my aunt is about forty years old then. My sister was seventeen years old. I didn't know that they were permitted to leave the country. That's why I run away from them. Because we had a lot of property down there. We could have sold it, but we didn't know anything about it. We left everything there and come - come over here.

BOCKOVEN: Had to start over again.

NERSESIAN: Yes. Well, last -- last time I went to Ellis Island; my granddaughter, my grandson and my son and myself..

DAUGHTER: He was visiting there. He says, "Dad, I'm going to take you somewhere that you would like to see."

NERSESIAN: There are a lot of people visiting the Ellis Island, you know. They had a guide in there -- explained everything else. I says, "It don't look the same to me, this Ellis Island." It is different. The guide, he heard me. He says, "You were here at Ellis Island?" I says, "I was here 55 years ago." You should have seen the reaction there. A lot of people wanted to know what happened to the Ellis Island. Is it really people living down there?

BOCKOVEN: Well, that's right. That must have been the visit when they found out that they wanted someone to interview you, and they called us up.

NERSESIAN: Yes.

BOCKOVEN: Do you live in Beverly?

DAUGHTER: Yes.

NERSESIAN: I stay there. But he says, "No, they are not taking any chance through -- walk through the corridor." He says, "Liable - cause the ceiling .goes over the head. They have to - they have to bar everything else down there. "They are fixing up", he says, "We want to-- we want to take a contribution if we can toward this re-building these Ellis Island. The government don't help any, but any civilians are like that --probably they are -- would help.

DAUGHTER: When your uncle was paying them hundred dollars.

NERSESIAN: No, no, no. Now I'm [not understood] No.

DAUGHTER: We were there.

NERSESIAN: People don't live down there -- the winter and everything else. All the ceiling and every wall was -- crumbles.

BOCKOVEN: They need to repair them all.

NERSESIAN: Just touch the wall...

DAUGHTER: The moisture and everything .

NERSESIAN: ...over cement and everything else.

BOCKOVEN: So are they fixing it up now or trying to?

NERSESIAN: Well, it wasn't very [not understood]. Two years ago, I was there. I don't know if they fixing up. I suppose every time they get a few dollars up there like that, they try to fix it up.

DAUGHTER: Don't the government pay for ?

BOCKOVEN: Well, yes, I would imagine that they would be able to fix it up someway.

NERSESIAN: If they make a national museum, they have to fix it up because that Ellis Island is so beautiful, you know.

DAUGHTER: Really?

NERSESIAN: Yes. They fix it up so beautiful. It is in the ocean.

DAUGHTER: I know. It's an island.

NERSESIAN: An island.

DAUGHTER: Well, some day we go and see it. (laughs)

BOCKOVEN: Maybe it will be even better next time. Well, do you have anything else that you would like to add about your experiences when you came here?

NERSESIAN: Well, I'm gonna add or not is -- you know. I'm going to say this. I'll -- I love this country. Opportunities, or if anybody works, tries, they make a living. They - they can be a good citizen. There is no country around like it in the world like --. Who want to -- in Russia, who--you know, ten years ago we went to Russia. I went to Russia in 1958. But...

It's still

DAUGHTER: Not '58, '68.

NERSESIAN: I mean '68, yes. no matter where you go, it's still large loves the world loves the United States. I was a citizen back in 1929. I belonged to YMCA and I went to night school. I become a first citizen then. You know, during that years a lot of people, they give a graft to do-- to become a citizen, you know. They - they thought I -- I was one of them, so immigration officers come in to see me. Says, "You are so and so?" I says, "Yes." He says, "From the government, Immigration Office want to question you." I says, "What for?" He says, "You - you become a citizen? You want to become a citizen?" I says, "Yes." I says, "I have application already, second - second application." He says, "You don't mind I ask you questions, few questions?" I says--they ask me about Civil War, about Revolutionary War, who was the governor, who was the president. I asked him. He says, "I'm very sorry. We - we didn't know anything about it." I says. "You are alright," he says.

DAUGHTER: See, the reason they asked those question, some of the people by bribery, they get their citizen papers.

NERSESIAN: They told - they told me a lot of people, they were--they were going to grab people become a citizen. They pay a - they pay bad to become citizen.

BOCKOVEN: So they were checking.

NERSESIAN: "Sorry, won't bother you this time." So, they were happy to go back.

BOCKOVEN: So it turned out alright.

DAUGHTER: Yes, he is living happily ever after. He had his own business for 26 years.

BOCKOVEN: What was his business?

NERSESIAN: Confectionery store, making ice cream. (laughs) Would you like something?

DAUGHTER: (laughs) Well that interview is over.

BOCKOVEN: (laughs) Well, thank you very much for sharing your story with us.

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