

NPS-66

MOHRUBE ATAMEAN

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TURKEY VIA FRANCE, 1952

AGE 50

SHIP NAME NOT RECALLED

NASH: Mohrube Atamean, who came to the united States from Turkey at the age of fifty in 1952. Mrs. Atamean is going to tell us where she came from. Mrs. Atamean, tell me what you remember about where you came from and what was the name of the town?

ATAMEAN: I came from the Antolya from Turkey and when I was such a small child my two parents come to Istanbul and I grew up there, and I growing up, I was fifteen years old I marry, and sixteen years old I bore my son, and we are happy together, altogether. My sister-in-law, brothers-in-law, my mother-in-law, we are living together, and after that, 1924, my brothers-in-law come in wonderful America. Then

he come here, he called her sister, my sister-in-law, and after that, two years after, my mother-in-law was to come to see her son and daughter. After that he was to come back, but my daughter-in-law, he say, "If you want don't go, I call your grandson, my son, for say my son." That was Atamean, my son. And that time he come and he come 1936 in america.

NASH: Tell me something about the town where you grew up. Tell me about the town where you grew up.

ATAMEAN: I'm sorry.

NASH: Where you grew up. What was it like?

ATAMEAN: Istanbul is a wonderful place with view, with earth, she is wonderful place at the waters. Many waters have in there Istanbul. And if you are from the sea, from (?) and view, wonderful. And Golden Horn, two side. One side is Black Sea, one side is Marmara. It is beautiful place. (?) lately make it big one--how you say, I am sorry--bridge. For that come (?) from the Arab's bridges. It is wonderful (?) I don't see it. I go 1971, that time was nothing happened there for bridge. I go and I see my family and I come back. People is wonderful too. Very lovely, very smiling people,

is liking everything, is getting day and day modern.

NASH: More what?

ATAMEAN: And before, you know, the king times is other, but now is, how is here, there is there too. Trying everything for come good. But for twenty-two years ago, twenty-five years ago I am out from my country. Three years I see it in the France before come this country.

NASH: Why did you go to France?

ATAMEAN: There we go because my husband was to work there, but I am sorry for the French doesn't want to give the strangers work. We sitting three years like that. Anyway, after 1952, August 4, we come America. We are happy all together. We are thank you and God bless America.

NASH: How did you come to this country? Did you come by boat?

ATAMEAN: Yes, we come that time boat from France. From Istanbul come France with the boat and after from the France again with the boat. That time was new that the boat, I forgot the name, United Boat, was new. It

first time come. (?) turns, we are inside there with that coming back.

NASH: Were you examined by U.S. Immigration officials? U.S. Immigration? Did you have to have an examination?

ATAMEAN: Yes, everything.

NASH: Where was that? Was that in Europe or was that in the United States?

ATAMEAN: First Europe, and after United States too.

NASH: But did you go to Ellis Island?

ATAMEAN: Pardon me.

NASH: Did you go to Ellis Island?

ATAMEAN: No, I am sorry. We don't go there. No, I don't know ever. Ever I don't know even. We don't go there. No. We go, we come and just we taking us, my son and my sister-in-law, brother-in-law, just home. Yes. We are happy and very good. And I have few things for I show you

if you like it.

NASH: Maybe you could show me afterwards. I'll ask you some
more questions. What was your trip like?

ATAMEAN: The, when I come?

NASH: The ship, how was your trip on the boat?

ATAMEAN: The ship was wonderful, wonderful. We have a very nice
time. All night, every night, we have the movies and footage was very good,
but I am sorry for first time when started for morning breakfast, we eating,
how do you say that--

NASH: Bacon?

ATAMEAN: Bacon. I cannot eat. But, today I am crazy about for
that. My husband say, "How does it looking like a, you
know, the Turkish people have pasterma calling and dry
meat. But doesn't seem like that." He say, "Seem like
other way." We cannot eat anyway. But, after now, we
liking. But, I am sorry I lost my husband too ten years
ago. And I live with my son and with my daughter-in-law.

I have wonderful son and wonderful daughter-in-law. She is French girl. Then is my son soldier on the war. She was in France. She see there, she love each other and marry. Doesn't have children, but that's alright.

NASH: What were your first impressions of the United States?
Your first impressions.

ATAMEAN: This first impression I like, but is coming very stranger. I is scared because was a very big place. Everywhere is a big place. When my son take me there the department store I was very surprising. And I looking all over. Is very big, a lot of things. I was because in Istanbul doesn't have that much big stores ever. And that much leather merchandise. I was surprised. I say my son. "What is this?" He say, "This is only one floor yet mama, we have many floor like that. Everything we have here." "Is wonderful place," he say. "Yes," I say. And I was very surprising and in the one floor I was tired. When I turn I look everything, you know, the new people, they are surprising with everything, and looking that look at the others. It was wonderful and good and I ask everything. What is this, what is that, what is that. And if my son

answer me, this is a perfume place, this is for hat place,
this is for dressing place. Everything here is torment.

NASH: What do you think are the differences between Turkish
women and American women?

ATAMEAN: Now is not too much change, but before because now is
getting trying the Turkish womans come like American people or French ladies
or American Ladies. All like that like trying everything. Before was not
like that. No. You know, it was harem, harem. One man he can marry for
three women.

NASH: How did the women like that?

ATAMEAN: Sometime is fighting. Sometime is going good. And the
man, then he is mad for one or the other, he say I leave
it to you. Finish, you don't have to go the governor or
there or this. It is going out. It's giving the package
the (?), and going out. But, not now. Then (?) Persia
come. President there that stop.

NASH: What year was that? What year did it stop?

ATAMEAN: Pardon me.

NASH: Around what year?

ATAMEAN: 1924. It started slowly, slowly changing everything. First she make the marry, civil marriage, marriage. And he say nobody can leave her wife before they have very important something. And after he started slowly changing the, you know, the Turkish people was closed the ladies with the (?). Faces closed, hair is closed.

NASH: Did you ever wear that?

ATAMEAN: And even the hands. Yes, I was--no. I know that. The man is putting face, you know, the face of, what is it, the Arabic people now using. First. He changing everything. The man is out head (?). Woman is open the head is like me and you going out. Without nothing. His hair is open. Not the face, the clothes. The clothes is same thing like us. Before like us. Like we wearing one black coat and the (?) some time. With the close the head. And the face, he want until the mouth, is suppose to close the mouth. He look (?) all the eye. But, not

now. Now is you see the Turkish people's beauty. Everything. And he is going very education now.

NASH: Do you remember the first time that you took off that costume, when you took it off?

ATAMEAN: Yes. This is in 19 until from the '24 until '29, '30 started everything finished.

NASH: Do you remember the day that you didn't wear it anymore?

ATAMEAN: Yes. I was a small child then. The old people (?) altogether other something. Is one skirt very large. And large like something on the, fit the head and the shoulders and all the clothes. And on veil on the face. Ever she cannot open when there is men. The boats, the every time, you know, the small village you going with the boat, is other place the woman sit separate from the men. At that time he can open because is all women there. If he's going out they start to close the face and like that going out. Never open the face.

NASH: And do you remember the first time that you took off that-

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ATAMEAN: Yes. At the (?). But slowly, slowly started. Started open only the face after the, take it on top the shoulder like a shawl something. Then after the skirt is going that very heavy (?). That is started very small like a (?) something with a veil (?) chiffon veils, chiffon veils. Before it was not chiffon it was heavy something with small hole. Very small hole it was. And chiffon. But, it doesn't closing place. Is putting on head like that. Is making very beauty that.

NASH: How did it feel when you first began to take it off?

ATAMEAN: And the people, old people is very angry the first time. But, the young people was very happy because, you know, the poor girls is all the time closed, closed, closed. It's either Christian people were wearing hat. Doesn't wear hat, is open. The short sleeves (?) was very angry. The young one. But, after, first young one. Everything (?) out. And after, after, the olds learning and now is when you going and see you cannot say which one is Christian which one is Turkish people.

NASH: Did you practice your religion when you came to the United

States? Are you Muslim?

ATAMEAN: Pardon me.

NASH: Are you Muslim? Do you practice the Muslim religion?

ATAMEAN: Muslim. I am not Muslim. I am not Muslim. I am
Christian. I born Muslim place, but I am Christian. I am Armenian.

NASH: But still even though you are Christian you still had to
wear that material over your face. You still had to wear all the clothing.

ATAMEAN: Yeah. Clothing.

NASH: I mean on your face, the (?).

ATAMEAN: No, no (?) is no. Nothing now.

NASH: You were Christian and you still had to wear it when you
were a young girl.

ATAMEAN: Yes. No, no. Not the Christian, no. The Christians all
time, the Armenian and the very old time is looking

wearing that kind something, but not that kind. I have
(?) I show you-- And it looks Armenian too. Wearing like
that all time, very all time. This is a (?) girls Muslim.
Turkish girls and now nobody wears this. Now this custom
using the dancing girls. These girls dancing in this
shawl, dancing in a Turkish kind. And saying (?) or (?)
or (?) or (?) this other dancing piece. And these people
most of them dancing with the (?) that means spoon.
Turkish castanets. This called (?) Turkish Kashik.

NASH: Now you're going to play for us the Kashik.

ATAMEAN: Kashik, yes. Kashikiler. (?) Temple. This is for
Temple. How is the castanet for flamingo or the other
things playing. And this is like that. And one have like
that.

NASH: Could you sing a song?

ATAMEAN: I cannot. I don't have a voice because I don't have.

NASH: Than you very much. Oh beautiful. Palace ladies--

ATAMEAN: Yes, that old time palace ladies wearing this kind dresses. I don't know is showing. This kind dresses, but head is not right kind, head is not right kind. The head is putting veil like that. Deodim, they call the deodim that time. Is like a head something and veil from here like that on the palace, you know. Is all beautiful girls because the King have many woman, (?) that they was (?). It was like that. And the people there, the ladies wearing this kind dresses. That called (?) and (?). That mean three pieces dress, because just look, you know, Chinese dress is open the side. This the two side is open and the front is open too because this come three pieces that time. And the front side is making here with the buttons taking and on top is working with the, how do you say, I don't know here, lamey, you know, lamey, this shiny things (?), is Turkish say (?). And is working many (?) on top. Is like a (?) for looking very rich dresses. Velvet or satin or pure silk, pure silk like that dressing up.

NASH: Did you ever sew? Did you ever sew?

ATAMEAN: Me, no. Not that much.

NASH: Did you ever work?

ATAMEAN: No, no. I don't work ever.

NASH: You seem to know a lot about clothes and materials.

ATAMEAN: I know the material because, you know, in Istanbul that time we doesn't have ready dresses. All have ladies for nice, how do you say, dressmakers. And you go in there and you take material what you want to do. And here model. You looking which one you like, he cut for you and he sew for you, you know. You go few times there and looking, he put it, you want here this, you want there something. He making for you like that. Now he's have the dresses, ready dresses for stores, but before no.

NASH: What did your husband do?

ATAMEAN: My husband was a jewelry worker. Yes, jewelry worker. My son is designer.

NASH: Of what? What does he design?

ATAMEAN: Like wallpaper, plates, (?), linoleum and carpet and how
do you say, many kinds of things. He says designer. Yes.

NASH: And so what year was it exactly that you left Turkey?

ATAMEAN: Pardon me.

NASH: When did you leave Turkey, what year?

ATAMEAN: What year, I leave in 1949 I leave there. And I sit three
in the France. And I come here 1952, August 4.

NASH: And why did you leave, why did you leave Turkey?

ATAMEAN: Because every born there. My mother, my grandmother, my
father all was born there. We are until growing up, until my brother-in-law
coming in the America we was there. And my son come here after that, sixteen
years I was looking for my son, you know, for mother is not easy sixteen
years far from your son. Only one, you know. After that my husband say, we
are going there too. Okay, I say. And my son that time was, he can call me.
And we sitting three years, how say (?) and my husband wants to few work
there, few years after come here, but I am sorry we cannot do that too. But,

two years after we come here. And my husband again he cannot work because he cannot speak English. He was very difficult for them. He worked a little bit in the house for stores. And after he work with the brother for design things. That's all. Our life is like that. Now I living with my son and daughter-in-law.

NASH: Where do you live?

ATAMEAN: I live Fort George Avenue, 133.

NASH: Is that Manhattan?

ATAMEAN: Pardon me?

NASH: Manhattan, in Manhattan?

ATAMEAN: Yes, in the Manhattan. And od Saint Nicholas that (?) church. Up town and of Saint Nicholas.

NASH: Well, thank you very much.