

Narrator: Mary Bogosian Carson

Interviewer: Kendra Payton

Date and Place: November 10, 2001 at the home of Mary Bogosian Carson at [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Kendra Payton: Tape 1 Side A. This is Kendra Payton and I'm interviewing Mary Bogosian Carson in her home in Belleville, Illinois. Today's date is November 10th, 2001 and the time is 10:20 AM. Mary could you please state your full name, including your maiden name and spell it.

Mary Bogosian Carson: Uh, my name is Mary Bogosian, B-O-G-O-S-I-A-N, Carson; C-A-R-S-O-N,[chuckles].

Payton: And your maiden name is....

Carson: And my maiden name is Bogosian.

Payton: Okay. Could you also tell us your date of birth and place of birth?

Carson: I was born 7-17-25. At home,[pause] with the midwife.

Payton: In Lincoln Place?

Carson: In Lincoln Place. Yes.

Payton: Okay. Just to get us started Mary, could you give us some background information about yourself and your immediate family; being mother and father?

[pause]

Carson: Well, my mother and father, [pause] well first my father came to this country and he went to work [pause] and sent for my mother and the Red Cross helped her, [pause] found her and helped get over here. [pause] And, [long pause].

Payton: Okay. Can you tell me what your ethnic background is?

Carson: Oh, my ancestors were Armenian, both of them.

Payton: Okay, both sides?

Carson: Both of my parents.

Payton: Okay. Um, you talked about the Red Cross helping your father find your mother. Talking off tape we had discussed how your father came first.

Carson: Yes.

Payton: Okay. And how long was he here in America before he was able to find your mother and bring her over?

Carson: [pause] I'm not really sure.

Payton: Okay. But there was a time period where he was here alone?

Carson: Yes.

Payton: Okay. And then the Red Cross helped him find her?

Carson: Um-huh.

Payton: And bring her over to America. Okay. What brought your family to America?

Carson: [pause] Well, my father came because he wanted to escape the Turkish Army; they were drafting, you know, younger men.

Payton: Okay.

Carson: And he didn't want to, you know, kill Armenians. So he left the country. [Pause] And [pause] and he sent for my mother. [Pause] And, [pause] she didn't really work, but he worked at the Commonwealth. [pause] the steel foundry. And [pause] while she did go to work during World War II. She went, she found a job [chuckles] but, that was the only job she's ever had.

Payton: What was her job?

Carson: She worked in the stove factory somewhere.

Payton: Okay. Was it in Granite City?

Carson: I think it was in Madison.

Payton: Okay. And do you know approximately how long that time period was that she worked?

[pause]

Carson: I don't really remember.

Payton: Okay. But it was during World War II?

Carson: Oh, yes.

Payton: Okay. [pause] Now you talk about your father trying to escape the Turkish Army. Is that what I know of as the Turkish Genocide?

Carson: Yes.

Payton: Okay. Do you know how your family funded their trip to get here?

Carson: Well, I'm, [pause] I really don't know. [Long pause] That part of it.

Payton: Okay. Now we had talked off tape also. I'd asked you if your family had come in a large group or small group and you had said that they...your father came through Ellis Island.

Carson: Yes.

Payton: We could probably assume a large group?

Carson: Mother also.

Payton: Okay, but she had come later.

Carson: Yes.

Payton: Did your father come with any other family members?

Carson: Not that I know of...Like I said he didn't talk too much about it, but, [pause] we'd ask my mother questions and she gave us information although she cried tears...

Payton: Yeah.

Carson: in between. So we stopped because she was crying.

Payton: Right. Now you had mentioned something about the village coming? Was...

Carson: Yes, there were like, relatives and village people I think that trying to stick together.

Payton: Okay.

Carson: Through a massacre. Which is kind of hard, I guess.

Payton: Right. Do you happen to know what the name of the village was?

Carson: [long pause] I think, I hate to make a mistake. [chuckles]

Payton: That's fine.

Carson: I think its [clears throat] K-A-Z-I. Kazi.

Payton: Okay.

Carson: But, the town they were from was Erzerum. E-R-Z-E-R-U-M.

Payton: Say that once more.

Carson: E-R-Z-E-R-U-M.

Payton: Okay. And how do you pronounce that?

Carson: Ezerum.

Payton: Okay. [pause] Now that we have a little background information. What has kept your family here, including you?

Carson: Well the country obviously. But, you know all of this freedom and, [pause]

Payton: Stability?

Carson: Stability as...

Payton: Okay.

Carson: Although it's being threatened now.

Payton: That is true.

[Mrs. Carson chuckles]

Carson: But my mother thought this was a great country. She didn't want to go back...and,...she just didn't want to leave.

Payton: Okay. Do you know how old your parents were when they came over? Approximately.

Carson: No. They lost their birth records of course...

Payton: Oh.

Carson: They didn't have birth record. I have no idea. They had no idea.

Payton: Okay.

Carson: They mostly guessed at their age I think.

Payton: Okay.

Carson: Um.

Payton: Now Bogosian, was that the family name....where you came from or was it changed when they got to America and that's just the name they gave them?

Carson: As far I as I know, it was the family name...

Payton: Okay.

Carson: where they came from.

Payton: Okay. Have...

Carson: Where my dad came from anyway.

Payton: Okay. Have any of your family members ever had the opportunity to visit your homeland?

Carson: No, they haven't. They couldn't afford it, I guess.

Payton: Yeah. Has it been something that you would be interested in doing if you had the opportunity?

Carson: I wouldn't mind seeing it, just to...see where my parents were born and all that.

Payton: Yeah. Okay. [pause] Now, what was Lincoln Place like when you lived there and can you give me a time period of when you did live there?

Carson: Well, I guess I lived there for like [long pause]

Payton: We know that you were born...

Carson: Basically, when I was born...

Payton: Right.

Carson: Until I was like around twenty years old I guess.

Payton: Okay.

Carson: And, It was great for, you know, childhood purposes. [coughs] We played everyday...we had the clubhouse basically to thank for that.

Payton: Yeah.

Carson: They'd furnished bats and balls and basketballs and...they had playground...and Miss Prather was the director. P-R-A-T-H-E-R. [pause] She was great. [chuckles]

Payton: Now, did you know Mrs. Prather personally?

Carson: Yes. Yes.

Payton: Was she ever your school teacher?

Carson: No.

Payton: No?

Carson: Not that I remember.

Payton: Okay. What kind of things did Mrs. Prather do for the children at the clubhouse?

Carson: Well, she did everything to help them. Whatever she could...uh, she settled scores and [chuckles] kept the place running basically.

[pause]

Payton: Now were you ever in any type of social club in the neighborhood? Maybe dealing with the clubhouse.

Carson: Well, we had like, you know, sewing. We did sewing there. She, Mrs. Prather taught us to sew, do embroidery work.

Payton: Okay.

Carson: And...I guess it kept us occupied mostly. [chuckles].

Payton: You mention brownies...

Carson: Yeah.

Payton: that you were in. Can you give me some information about that?

Carson: Well, I don't really recall too much about it, but, it was, you know, this basic comradeship, I guess, with all the other girls.

Payton: Okay. Now I know Lincoln Place is comprised of several different ethnic groups. How did those groups get along in the neighborhood when you were there?

Carson: We all got along fairly well there was no trouble and ...there were no, ...violence of any kind that I recall. There was one...murder the only one I recall in my childhood. Throughout the whole years. But, we kept our doors unlocked nobody bothered anything.

Payton: That was real safe.

Carson: It's hard to believe nowadays. [laughs]

Payton: Yeah.

[Long pause]

Payton: Mary could you tell me about where you lived at in the neighborhood?

Carson: Well, I lived like on Maple Street. You want the address?

Payton: That's fine. Sure.

Carson: 1647 Maple and the house is still standing. Unbelievably.

Payton: Okay. {Carson laughs} Its been around for a while then.

Carson: It's like three houses from the clubhouse which is, you know, made the clubhouse my number one hang-out.

Payton: Right. Can you tell me about some of the businesses that were around; when you lived in the neighborhood?

Carson: Well, they were mostly taverns of course, but...as far I remember there was no problems there. Then there was grocery stores...two or three grocery stores in a like two block area...and...there was an ice cream parlor the kids hang out there...but, you know, we didn't know any better. We thought it was great. [laugh].

Payton: I'm sure it probably was a wonderful place to live. What was your childhood like living in the neighborhood? Did you have really close friends that you stuck with or was everybody friends with everybody?

Carson: I think basically everybody was friendly with everybody, but I have like...two or three close friends there from the neighborhood....we kind of hung around together. [pause]

Payton: Do you still have contact with them or has everybody kind of spread their separate ways?

Carson: No, when I go to Granite City...well one's out of town [pause] in Florida I understand about it. I don't really have contact with her.

Payton: Okay. What are some of your fondest memories of growing up in Lincoln Place?

Carson: Oooh,...just...playing I guess that's number one priority for a kid.

Payton: Yeah. {Carson chuckles} Yeah.

Carson: We played I think everyday...either at the clubhouse or out in the street.

Payton: Were there any specific games that the kids played?

Carson: Oh, we played you know...[pause] mostly...bat and ball.

Payton: Okay.

Carson: Softball, baseball, whatever.

Payton: Now did the boys let the girls play with them or was it kind of...

Carson: Oh, yes...

Payton: Okay. So everybody...

Carson: They wouldn't have a team otherwise. {laughter}

Payton: That's good. Now what do you remember...about the basketball championship that took place...in 1940?

Carson: Yes. What I remember there was a lot of celebration, especially in Lincoln Place, because quite a few of the guys were from Lincoln Place.

Payton: Do you remember any of the names?

Carson: Yes, Andy Phillips and...uhhh,...Andy Hagopian.

Payton: Okay.

Carson: And John Markarian...I don't know if I left anybody out. {chuckles}

Payton: I think that's right. What all took place...like in the neighborhood once they won that championship? Did that change...

Carson: Oh, there was...there was...wild celebration in the streets...everybody was going crazy.

Payton: How did the people on the quote, unquote, “other side of the tracks” look at you after that championship had taken place?

Carson: I think they looked at us, you know, more favorably after that...because we were kind of...I think dominating of sports.

Payton: Sports arena at the time?

Carson: Yes.

Payton: Okay. And when I mentioned the tracks...What do you remember about like...was the track...the railroad tracks a dividing line? Did they think...you know, was one side of the tracks better...than the other? Was their that type of mentality in the neighborhood and in the town of Granite City?

Carson: I, am not really sure, I don't want to make a judgment, but

Payton: Okay.

Carson: Maybe it was all in our heads. We were kind of looked down on, I think.

Payton: Okay. Now having so many different ethnic groups and I know everybody was basically...they were people who had immigrated or children of immigrants at the time of your childhood, did everybody become like family to each other because there had been a separation from your natural family from coming over seas?

Carson: I think everybody seemed to get along from what I remember, we didn't have no problems like...everybody watched out for everybody else.

Payton: Yeah. Lot of people taking care of others and....

Carson: Yeah.

Payton: Okay. [long pause] Now, what happened to you once you...moved out of Lincoln Place?...What, what made you move from Lincoln Place I guess I should say?

Carson: Well, my father, went into partnership in a cleaners in St. Louis, and he wanted to move...over there to be closer to...work. {laughter}

Payton: Okay....alright. Where did...I guess, when, at what point did you get married?

Carson: Uh,...I guess four or five years after we moved to St. Louis. My husband found me. {laughter}

Payton: That's cute. Now where did he find you?

Carson: Oh, I'm sorry to say in a bar.

Payton: Alright. Lot of people find each other there. [pause] Now how many children did you and your husband have?

Carson: I have two girls and two boys.

Payton: Okay. And...where are they at now in life?

Carson: Well, they're all in the area more or less.

Payton: Okay. Do any of them live in Lincoln Place?

Carson: No.

Payton: No.

Carson: One, my youngest son lives in Granite City.

Payton: Okay.

Carson: And my youngest daughter is...from Imperial, Missouri.

Payton: Okay. You're still in the area, but they're spread out.

Carson: Yes, we visit regularly.

Payton: What about your two other children?

Carson: Oh, one's in Fairview, and one's in Caseyville.

Payton: Oh, okay.

Carson: So they're in the area.

Payton: So they're pretty close to you?

Carson: Um-huh.

Payton: Alright. And...did they ever...get to know anything about Lincoln Place?

Carson: Yes,...two of them have at least. They've been there and you know, well of course now...a little different from what it was. {chuckles} It's a little run down.

Payton: Yeah. How do you think the neighborhood has changed since you were there and to the way it looks today? I mean is there a big difference in appearance to the neighborhood?

Carson: Well undoubtedly age has taken its toll.

Payton: Right.

Carson: Like in my case. {laughter}but, its, you know, a little run down just like most places I think.

Payton: Yeah. Now...

Carson: Everything is run down now.

Payton: Yeah. Some of the businesses that were there... when you grew up...do they exist any longer or have they changed hands or just totally been demolished?

Carson: I don't think they've...still exist.'

Payton: Okay.

Carson: Of course the people have aged and probably retired.

Payton: Right. Is there anybody that...you have a personal relationship that still lives in Lincoln Place?

Carson: No, not in...no I think they've all moved out as far as I know.

Payton: Okay [long pause]

Payton: Okay, Mary and I took a little break and ...we're back now. And...Mary could you tell me about the mode of transportation when you were growing up in Lincoln Place?

Carson: Well, not too many people had cars. I think there was one person on our whole block that had a car. And walking was the way to go. {chuckles} so we walked like...a mile to go downtown to shop for anything...and we started out like...an hour before school and we walked three miles to high school. From Lincoln Place to the high school. And uh,...it was little rough some days when it was snowing and cold. As a matter of fact, my older sister...she was late getting home and my dad was worried about her...and she had frozen fingers when we got her home....so...it wasn't all roses.

Payton: Yeah. Now,...what happened your senior year of high school that changed all that walking for you?

Carson: Ah, my senior year, we got bus service come down to Lincoln Place. That was a big day.

Payton: Yeah. So that made the trip to school...

Carson: lot easier for me.

Payton: Yeah.

Carson: One year out of four.

Payton: Yeah. {laughter} Now did you have any younger siblings that benefited from the bus service?

Carson: Well my brother, we had moved to St. Louis by then and ...

Payton: Okay.

Carson: his senior year was in St. Louis in the high school.

Payton: Okay. Now...did your parents ever own a vehicle or were they...

Carson: No, they never had a car. As a matter of fact, my dad never...knew how to drive.

Payton: Okay. So when did you get first vehicle?

Carson: Well, my brother and I bought a car together...and...and went to St. Louis...and we kind of shared it.

Payton: What type of car was it?

Carson: It was a Buick.

Payton: What year?

Carson: Gee, I don't remember. {laughter}

Payton: Alright. So was that like...a big moment in life when you got your first vehicle?

Carson: Oh, naturally. Yes.

Payton: Yeah...Something to be very proud of...

Carson: Of course.

Payton: Now did you...you mentioned a job that you had worked to save your money for the vehicle.

Carson: Yes, I found a job at the Jefferson Hotel as a reservations clerk...and...that helped with car payment.

Payton: Yeah. Now do you remember what a car payment was back then?

Carson: I don't really recall...[long pause] can't say for sure.

Payton: Okay. We can say that times have changed.

Carson: I'm sure it's not like it was now.

Payton: Yeah. I hope not.

Carson: I think the total price of the car was like eight hundred dollars.

Payton: Yeah, big difference.

Carson: Yeah.

Payton: Yeah. But back then I'm sure that was a lot of money.

Carson: Um-huh.

Payton: Yeah, so...

Carson: Sure was.

Payton: Yeah. Well we've talked a lot about a lot of things Mary. Is there anything that you'd like to add to the conversation here?

Carson: [Long pause] I can't recall.

Payton: Okay, Well I think we've gotten a good amount of information and a lot of history of you and your family and I appreciate...

Carson: I hope so.

Payton: I appreciate the time you've taken out of your schedule to allow me to come into your home and...interview you and like I said earlier if there's anything that you think of and you want to do a follow-up interview. I would be more than happy to come back and discuss some more Lincoln Place history and Miss Mary History.

Carson: Yes.

Payton: I do thank you and

Carson: Your quite welcome.

Payton: Alrighty.