

Interview with Mr. Edward Asadorian

11-14-2001

Interviewer: Eric Bruder

Place of Interview: Residence of Mr. And Mrs. Asadorian

Eric Bruder: This is Eric Bruder, interviewing Mr. Asadorian. He's a former resident of Lincoln Place and he's being interviewed in conjunction with the history 447, Professor Anne Valk, study of Lincoln Place. Thank you for having me over Mr. Asadorian.

Edward Asadorian: Quite welcome.

Bruder: Well, for my first question, I'd like to ask you, when did your family come to the United States?

E. Asadorian: My father was born in 1988—1888. He must've come to this country, I guess in 1910. He was one of six boys. One was lost in Armenia. One went to France, and the other four came to America; my father, being the first of the four.

Bruder: What was his name?

E. Asadorian: Hagop.

Bruder: Spell that.

E. Asadorian: H-A-G-O-P

Bruder: H-A-G-O-P

E. Asadorian: Right. He was uneducated. I think, he got as far as the third or fourth grade and he decided not to go to school anymore. My great grandfather was a coppersmith. So, what they did is just make copper plates and stuff like that. But, uneducated as he was, when he decided to leave Armenia and come to—or go somewhere, thank God, the one place he chose was America. And I keep saying prayers all the time, of all the countries he chose, this is the place he came. They had difficulty with the trip. They couldn't speak a word of English. An example was, if they wanted to buy salt, they knew what sugar was. They would say, "Sugar, sugar, no sugar." Trying to impress upon them, it looks like sugar, but it's not sugar. Or if they wanted eggs, they couldn't see it, they'd have to probably cackle like a hen and pick something off of the ground to indicate that they were looking for some eggs. So, he got here, I think around 1908 or 1910.

Bruder: Where was his port of entry?

E. Asadorian: I really don't know. I keep trying to get it off the computer and I've tried all kinds of names like Asadorian, Astorian, but we can't find anything with Hagop Asadorian on it.

Bruder: And you were born roughly twelve years after your dad got here?

E. Asadorian: Well, he worked for the steel mill and he decided to go to Europe and travel around there after—during the war, and eventually ended up in Alexandria, Egypt where he met my mother.

Bruder: What branch did he serve in?

E. Asadorian: He wasn't in the military.

Bruder: Oh, he wasn't in the military.

E. Asadorian: No, he just traveled during the war and when he meant my mother, they got married in Alexandria and he brought her here. One of the things that—oh, incidentally, I had an uncle, his older brother, his name was Ashadur. He found a woman for his brother and the two women came here to America, and when they ended up in Granite City, it was a cold miserable day. And the two women, I imagine said over and over, they don't know what the hell they got into.

Bruder: So, you think it was a rough beginning, huh?

E. Asadorian: Oh, yes.

Bruder: And they came here, it was after the war.

E. Asadorian: Yes. Cause my sister was born in 1918. I was born in '21, my brother was born in '23.

Bruder: So, from 1910 to 1921—Hello(to Mrs. Mary Asadorian)good evening, thank you for having me in your house.

Mary Asadorian: No problem.

[Dialogue between Mr. And Mrs. Asadorian about the refrigerator]

[Tape is paused]

Bruder: Well, Mrs. Asadorian has come into the room and she is going to be a

passive participant. She says that she is listening. So, we'll see. But, now we're sitting down, all three of us together and we were talking about what your father did from 1910--

E. Asadorian: Oh, he worked at the steel mill.

Bruder: Did he work there until it closed or did he leave to travel before then?

E. Asadorian: He got injured. A couple of his fingers were damaged. But, he worked there until--

M.Asadorian: We got married in '47 and he was not working.

E. Asadorian: Must have been '42 or '43—oh, more than that '39 I guess it was when they laid off a bunch of them. Cause he worked for the Y.M.C.A. for a short period of time.

Bruder: What are your memories of the house, growing up? What do you recall? What sticks out in your mind as--

E. Asadorian: In our home, the law was that you spoke Armenian and nothing else. As a matter of fact, when I went to school, I didn't know a word of English. Fortunately, my sister was in the third grade and every time I'd go to open my mouth to say something, they'd have to haul her down from the third grade and say, what's he saying. I don't know, other than the fact that we spoke Armenian in the house.

Bruder: Did your mom and dad go to church? Take you guys to the Armenian church.

E. Asadorian: We didn't have a church there, but I do remember, whenever visiting priests would come in, there would be a whole slug of baptisms and all that kind of stuff there, because we didn't have a priest. And I remember the time when there were three or four men that got up there and sang in there choir and they had white shirts—long shirts with the red cross on the back. We'd sit up in the balcony and listen to the songs they sang. My father had a good voice.

Bruder: And he sang?

E. Asadorian: Oh, yes.

Bruder: So, the Bulgarian church wasn't a part of your families history at all?

E. Asadorian: No, we bought the church in '54.

Bruder: Right. But, you didn't go there before you bought the church.

E. Asadorian: Oh, no, no, no. That's the church they used to use or rent, whatever you want to call it, whenever the priest would come in.

Bruder: And, what were some of your memories about the neighborhood?

E. Asadorian: Well, I didn't move down there until 1936.

Bruder: Right.

E. Asadorian: My parents lived uptown and it was better for them, because there weren't too many Armenians around. So, to get along and converse, they had to speak English.

Bruder: What was your first job that you had?

E. Asadorian: My first job.

Bruder: Yes.

E. Asadorian: With General Steel Castings Corporation.

Bruder: How long did you stay with them?

E. Asadorian: I got the job, I guess in 1930--'41. I entered the service in '43.

Bruder: What branch?

E. Asadorian: Army.

Bruder: Army. And you did a tour for World War II.

E. Asadorian: Yes, 35 months.

Bruder: Anything you'd like to tell me about that?

E. Asadorian: No, not particularly.

Bruder: OK. And when did you find yourself back on American soil?

E. Asadorian: I guess, it was August of '45. Oh, no '44 I guess it was--'45.

Bruder: And, when did you meet Mary?

E. Asadorian: [Laughs] I've known her--

M.Asadorian: All our lives.

Bruder: All your lives. Well, tell me about that?

E. Asadorian: Parents would go visiting back and forth and like I say, we lived uptown and when they'd come visit us we'd talk to each other. They'd go back half the distance and they'd stop and they'd come back this way. So, their going home and coming back was a long, rather lengthy thing. We got married October 4, 1947. I had a job at the post office, delivering parcel post, temporary business. Then after I got out of the service I started working there temporarily, they'd hire me and fire me every thirty days. The purpose of that was so they wouldn't have to pay me any fringe benefits.

Bruder: How long did that go on?

E. Asadorian: That went on, I guess about a little over a year.

Bruder: You ever get hired on full-time?

E. Asadorian: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact I spent 37 years there with my military time and everything else. I'm a retired federal employee.

Bruder: Well, tell me some more. How did you know that it was—that Mary was the one for you? Cause whenever my wife and I get together, ultimately people will—How did you two meet? How did you know? So, maybe somebody will be interested in--

M.Asadorian: We didn't, it came out as a joke. We were—my dad had a tavern and we were standing in front of the tavern and a friend of ours came by and said, what were we up to and I said, oh nothing we are just planning our engagement party. He looked at me and said what engagement party. I said, well didn't you know, we're getting engaged. That was it.

Bruder: You didn't have much to say huh?

M.Asadorian: That was it, and of course he went home and told his parents, and I went in and told my mother and father. My dad was tickled to death and, cause he absolutely adored Ed. My father loved his daughters-in-law, and his sons-in-law, and it didn't make any difference to him whether they were Armenian or not. And out of both his family and my family, we're the only ones who married Armenian. But, it didn't make any difference.

Bruder: He didn't care?

M.Asadorian: Nope, nope.

E. Asadorian: So long as the kids were happy, he was alright.

M.Asadorian: That's all, as long as the kids were happy. But, there was no, will you marry me, none of that.

Bruder: Just planning the party right there.

M.Asadorian: That was it. I figured let's take the bull by the horns, enough is enough already.

Bruder: How many kids did you guys have?

E. Asadorian: Three.

Bruder: Three. What are there names?

E. Asadorian: Edward, Arthur, and Melanie.

Bruder: Do they live here?

E. Asadorian: Arthur lives right around the corner here. My daughter lives in Glen Carbon. And Eddie just got a job with the federal government.

Bruder: And just moved back to Lincoln Place, did he not?

E. Asadorian: No, no. He lived in Lincoln Place, but he moved to get that job. He had to move to Overland Park, Kansas.

M.Asadorian: No, he's in Lee Summit, Missouri. Kansas City, Missouri is where he really is OK. He loves his job. He loves the people he works with and for my son to leave Granite City, and to leave Lincoln Place and go somewhere else is a miracle.

Bruder: He's pretty much rooted in this community. So, the holidays are coming up, is everyone coming back? Is that a big deal for you guys?

M.Asadorian: I hope so, I hope so, cause normally Thanksgiving is our big one, we celebrate it with another dear family. But, I think that my daughters going to have it this year, because her in-laws are coming in.

Bruder: So, do you do the Armenian foods Thanksgiving, or have you come with the mashed potatoes and gravy?

M.Asadorian: Thanksgiving is—I mean Thanksgiving is Turkey

E. Asadorian: Turkey is what that is.

M.Asadorian: You know, I mean that's it, but we have a couple of Armenian dishes that we put out. Boy, talk about Armenian dishes, but anyway I promised I'd bake the turkey for my daughter; which is no problem what-so-ever. We'll get it going. They'll be twenty of us?

E. Asadorian: Twenty, yes...

Bruder: Well, are you a cook Mr. Asadorian, cause she kind of pointed to you and said tell him about Armenian dishes?

M.Asadorian: He is. Don't let him kid you.

E. Asadorian: I don't cook unless I have to.

Bruder: Well, what if one day, someone wants to know about an Armenian recipe? Can you give us one? What's your favorite thing that you like to cook, that's traditional Armenian?

E. Asadorian: I don't do the cooking. She does most of that. I help her whenever—I like stews, my wife is a meat and potatoes person, so.

Bruder: Right.

E. Asadorian: I like string beans, celery stew, cabbage, things like that. She likes pork chops, French fries, steak and potatoes, and--

M.Asadorian: Now, he did do the baking this past week. Cause I couldn't do it, I just sat and he did it all. I watched him, he did a beautiful job and then my daughter came Friday, spent the night and Saturday morning we baked the Armenian cookies. It was done so beautifully, it was finished in an hour and a half, everything.

Bruder: I'm looking around, I don't see those cookies.

M.Asadorian: It's over there Eddie, you want to get him—let him taste.

Bruder: Wow, my first taste of an Armenian cookie.

E. Asadorian: These are the--

M.Asadorian: No, those are the others. It should be there Ed. Ed, it should be there.

E. Asadorian: Oh, yes.

Bruder: You know, Norma cooked for the last class. She brought it some, some wonderful dishes really, except I didn't care for that yogurt drink.

M.Asadorian: Oh, vassunt. Yes, I know tonn. My daughter loves it, so does he.

E. Asadorian: I like it too.

Bruder: I don't want a whole one of these.

M.Asadorian: Why not?

Bruder: Well, you only have two left.

M.Asadorian: No, no ,no, I have more than that. I think she's supposed to bring some to school; Monday or--

Bruder: She brought these to school.

M.Asadorian: Yes, them, Monday—didn't she?

Bruder: Right.

M.Asadorian: Yes.

E. Asadorian: Those are called loosnag.

Bruder: Yes, loosnag, that's right. Those are good. Those are very good.

M.Asadorian: Time consuming, but very good.

Bruder: I'm glad I have some water to go with it. They look time consuming. Do you have raisins wrapped up in the middle of them?

E. Asadorian: No, those are nuts.

M.Asadorian: Nuts.

Bruder: Nuts.

M.Asadorian: Nuts, with egg white and sugar.

Bruder: And, the crust?

M.Asadorian: Is flour, egg yolk--

E. Asadorian: Dough,

Bruder: But, it's kind of like a croissant.

M.Asadorian: Oh, that—yes, cause we put egg over that, before you bake it. That gives it that golden color.

Bruder: Wow, that is good. I hope the tape is getting how good this cookie is
[laughter] Well, specifically, I wanted to ask you about how you, your family passed down to your sons and daughters; what have you brought with you from Armenia? How have you been able to hold on to your history, tradition, your culture, when you found yourself in the biggest melting pot in the history of mankind?

E. Asadorian: I...government...a lot of schools. I remember, one time one of our guest speakers saying that, "There isn't a thing a person sees, hears, or reads, that he doesn't remember. His ability to recall, that's our problem." Anyway, one day, after I got done listening to this guy; I came home and we had Armenian school. We used to take the kids to Armenian school. It's rough, when they go to school five days during the week, Saturday you haul them down to church for a two hour session of Armenian. Anyway, the kids after I took them and dropped them off, I came back and the kids next door where playing in the yard, up and down the swings, this way and that way. I thought to myself, I'm not being fair to my children, but I remembered what this man said—that you don't forget anything that you see, read, or hear and I thought, it's a little sacrifice. They're not having as much fun as the next door kids, but there's a lot of things that he's exposed to that he may remember. Out of our children, the oldest one can write and read Armenian and my daughter's the same way. My second son, Arthur, has more of a vocabulary, but he's not demonstrative. He don't talk and he doesn't read as much, but vocabulary wise; he's equal to the rest of them. My daughter and my oldest son speak pretty good and they read good.

Bruder: Did you speak Armenian around the house, both of you?

Both reply: Oh, yes.

Bruder: And no English in the house?

E. Asadorian: Even with the grandchildren, even with the grandchildren.

M.Asadorian: Yes, even with my grandchildren.

Bruder: To this day?

M.Asadorian: To this day. Matter of fact, they've gotten to the point now; they say I don't understand what you're saying. Oh, listen to what I'm saying (to the grandchildren). I'll repeat it again in Armenian and I'll repeat it in English and then I'll repeat it in Armenian again.

Bruder: Are your kids teaching their children Armenian, as well? Are they keeping that tradition alive?

M.Asadorian: Well, see that's not—Arthur has one son, Melanie has a daughter and Andy we see more of than we do Angela, because Andy lives right around the corner and he comes by here everyday. He's thirteen now, and he's kind of broken away from it, but every once in a while, I'll say something in Armenian and he'll say, "Grandma, I don't understand what you said." I say tough shitskee. Listen. I'm not going to repeat it. He is picking it back up, but the irony of this is—I know I'm butting in—I was talking Armenian. It's automatic with me, when I hold a baby in my arms, I talk Armenian. A dog is brought into my home, I talk Armenian. Why, I don't know. Those children, grandchildren of mine learned Armenian from infancy and I didn't realize that my daughter-in-law, wasn't that happy about it. Until, one day she told me, she said, "By the way mom, I asked my dad what he thought about Andy learning Armenian and he said he thinks it's absolutely wonderful, because he'll have a grandchild that speaks two languages. That's when I realized that she wasn't at ease, because of her parents. See, I automatically figured wait they're mine, but they're not. They belong to two separate families, but now they both want to learn. There getting at that age now, where they want to learn again and it's because that they had heard it from infancy; that they're not having that much of a hard time getting back to it. Now, our granddaughter has a habit. We want to sit at the table to eat. She doesn't know that, she wants that room.(Points to playroom) In there, OK, but when we force her to sit here, she's constantly on her legs. I have a saying in Armenian—turn that off for a minute [tape is paused]

[Interview resumes]

Bruder: OK, we're talking about the trip to Armenia four years ago.

E. Asadorian: Well, we made the papers and everything else when we left here. I guess, the latter part of August. We got to Armenia, all the members of my wife's two cousins. They have—she has two cousins, the oldest is Hagop. He's married and got a wife and three children and one of the children, a girl married to a Russian-Armenian, by the name of Nicholai. He has two children. She's done a real good job, because when she says something, those children stop what they are doing and they obey. Boghos, he's married. He's got three children. His oldest one, which is a boy is married and they have two children. The youngest one is a little boy by the name of Sarkis. He is a terror. I'm critical, because one raised her child and what she says is law. The other one, child got away with everything. If he screamed everything stopped, cause they didn't want him to scream anymore. It wasn't till later that I found out that she was pregnant twice. The first

child was born dead. The second one, she had a miscarriage. So, after two attempts and on the third one, they didn't want the child to hurt himself or anything like that. So, he got away with murder. Then, it wasn't till after we came back that we found out that she was pregnant the third time—the fourth time rather. They had a daughter, they named after my daughter, Melanie. Anyway, we got there. We thought we were going to have problems conversing. But, it got to be real good. What little I knew, what little I spoke, we got along pretty good. They really fell in love with my daughter. She's a little cutey pie anyway.

Bruder: It felt good to get back—huh?

E. Asadorian: Oh, yes. It was like a morning ritual. We'd get up in the morning, we stayed at the hotel, we didn't stay with them. The first thing my daughter would say, well let's go to the shoogah—market—and see what we can pick up. We had to make sure we had cigarettes for the men and what my daughter thought the women would need for the day, like flour, vegetable oil, so on and so forth. Then we head towards her cousins house. Then we'd plan trips everyday there. We'd visit various sites in Armenia. Then after supper, we'd sit there and tell stories, what we did here, and what they did there and everything else. We had some friends that came over. She taught them how to play various card games and those guys would deliberately cheat to aggravate my daughter [laughter] She'd get so aggravated and they used to laugh. We had a good time. Every night when they'd take us back to the hotel, my daughter and I would look at each other and say well, what will we talk about tomorrow now. Everyday it seemed like there was something cropping up.

Bruder: How long were you there?

E. Asadorian: We were there two weeks.

Bruder: It's a good time.

E. Asadorian: Yes. We went to the mother church, Etchmiadzin, two Sundays. We went to, I guess about, ten different sites that we saw.

M.Asadorian: Tell him how old that church is.

E. Asadorian: Well, it was built in 301.

Bruder: Right, 1700 years, right.

M.Asadorian: They're celebrating it.

Bruder: Right. Father Vartan said it was the oldest, even before Constantinople.

M.Asadorian: Yes.

Bruder: Yes, that's amazing. That's a real testimony. So, what was the services like there? Obviously, they were all in Armenian.

E. Asadorian: Well, I tell you, I didn't appreciate it one bit. It's the holiest of all our churches. It was just a mockery. People walk in and out and everything else all during services.

Bruder: What?

E. Asadorian: It was like a commercialized thing. You make that kind of noise in our church and Vartan will tell you to get out. I mean you don't--

M.Asadorian: He'll stop the service.

E. Asadorian: They don't have pews for people to sit in, you had to stand all during the service. It's articulate and they have a beautiful choir there, but--

Bruder: But, as far as a place of holiness--

E. Asadorian: That's lost, I mean there's constant motion and anytime the priest is up there in front of you and you are facing the priest; you don't make any noise and you don't make any motions. I mean, for the holiest of all churches, I thought it was sort of a mockery.

M.Asadorian: Yes, when he was telling me that, it was hard for me to believe that , but--

Bruder: You weren't there, you didn't go?

M.Asadorian: Oh no, no, no. I could never make that trip.

E. Asadorian: Just my daughter and I went up there, but we had a good time.

M.Asadorian: Matter of fact, had such a good time they'd like to go back.

E. Asadorian: I can't go back, but--. We have colon problems and you have to have access to bathroom facilities and they have outhouses there and if you've got the urge, you wouldn't make it.

Bruder: So, technology and Armenia haven't met yet as far as indoor plumbing?

E. Asadorian: Well, where they live their sewage system is all disrupted. They have no running water inside the house at all.

Bruder: Wow. Boy, what we take for granted.

M.Asadorian: Oh yeah.

E. Asadorian: Oh my, you don't know how many times my daughter and I would look at each other and say this by the grace of God goes us you know. And like I said earlier, I thank the good Lord how many times for my father deciding of all the places to go, he came to come to this country.

Bruder: Right.

E. Asadorian: Not that going to Germany or Canada or Australia would have been different but--

Bruder: It would have been different.

E. Asadorian: Being exposed to this--

Bruder: Right.

M.Asadorian: Yeah well how about when your my father and mother went in seventy, he went back to, he didn't go back to Armenia, he went to Armenia to see his sister whom he hadn't seen since 1918. And he was gone, what, two to three weeks?

E. Asadorian: Yes.

M.Asadorian: And when he got back, he had people come to ask him a lot of questions about what it was like. You got to remember it was still under Soviet rule in seventy. And one person turned around and asked him, he said, "Do you regret not going back and living there?" And my father looked at him and he said, "What? After living in this country? Who wants to go anywhere else? You have to be out of your mind?" He said, "I never wanted to go there. I only went to see my sister."

Bruder: And yet I read accounts that a lot of the Hungarian immigrants that came here before the Armenians and I think that that was common with the Armenians, you can correct me if I am wrong, but they intended on going back. They didn't--

E. Asadorian: Yes. Oh yes, yes--

Bruder: They didn't come here with the intention of staying here--

M.Asadorian: See, that was my mother and father.

E. Asadorian: But once they--

M.Asadorian: They came from Istanbul, Turkey.

Bruder: Right.

M.Asadorian: They didn't come from Armenian. They came from Istanbul, Turkey. And they only came so my father could meet his father. My dad didn't know his dad.

Bruder: Yes.

M.Asadorian: But my grandmother, my mothers' mother, told my mother, she said, "I'll never see you again because once you go you'll never come back." My mother said, "Yes we'll be back, we'll be back" but never did. That's when they came to this country.

E. Asadorian: There's a lot of students from like Persia that leave Persia and come to the United States to get educated. The countries would let them go here with the proviso that they would return. They would use the benefit of their education to update their state. But most these guys once they come over here and see all the freedom here and the liberties and everything else, the last thing they want to do is go back. And it's a crime because they made this pledge that this was what they were going to do.

Bruder: A far different-- you say that's mostly students? That was far different than from what the conditions were under, I guess, under the Turkish oppression when a lot of the Armenians decided to come here it wasn't so much, I'm coming for the schools and the education--

E. Asadorian: Oh no, no, no, no, no--

Bruder: --it was for the fleeing of their lives.

E. Asadorian: Oh yes. Oh yes.

Bruder: What do you guys want to tell me about that because that holocaust is something that very little people know anything about.

E. Asadorian: Well we know very little about it.

Bruder: Then to this day the Turkish government hasn't--

M.Asadorian: Oh no, they'll never admit it, cause it's never been written in their books.

E. Asadorian: It's being forced on them now.

M.Asadorian: Huh?

E. Asadorian: Their trying to get into the Euro dollars and everything else in Europe an their making provisos in there that they've got to own up to the fact that the genocide, it does exist and they know about it, otherwise their not going to permit them to get into the European market.

M.Asadorian: The only thing I know concerning the genocide is that my father was exiled and he was shot in his foot and the bullet came out this way through his toenail, the big toenail, ripped the heck out of the toenail. Our oldest son had ingrown toenails and he was in the hospital. They cut half of it away. My father stood there bold faced and lied to my son and told him, he had the same thing. That they removed his toenail, why didn't they remove his grandsons. I looked at my dad and didn't say a word, until we walked out of the hospital and I said, "Why did you lie to you grandson? Why didn't you tell him how you lost your toenail?" He said, " It's none of his business. He doesn't have to know what his grandfather went through." That's all I could ever tell you concerning the genocide, where my father was concerned.

Bruder: He don't want to talk about it?

M.Asadorian: Never did. Did your father ever talk about it?(To Eddie) My grandfather, my mother's father, was a janitor at their local school. He was up here, his home was up on a hill. Down here was the German embassy. He used his basement to get Armenians out of Turkey, underneath the nose of the Germans, and nobody suspected him, because he was such a good hearted man. That's all I could tell from my mother. My mother was Istanbul, Turkey. Nothing happened in Istanbul, Turkey. So, we know absolutely nothing. What we know, is what we hear from other people.

Bruder: Yes--[Phone rings, tape is paused]

E. Asadorian: Where were we?

Bruder: Well, we'll just pick it right back up from ground zero. I don't remember where we were. I'll remember when I listen to the tape, then it will be to late. [laughter] That's OK, this is not a formal thing. You know, you said something earlier. You said, you thank the Lord so many times about your father picking this nation to come to. I'm sure that he had a perception of the place that he was coming to, can you kind of tell me about yours. When you first realized what kind of country this was and what kind of freedoms it afforded you, what did you want from this country?

E. Asadorian: I remember if my salary went up I was feeding myself...If I could make a hundred dollars a week, just a hundred dollars a week--

Bruder: This is back when?

E. Asadorian: [laughter] Seventy years ago. Boy I'd be on easy street. Of course you'd make that hundred dollars and make two hundred dollars a week and make three hundred dollars a week, and you just kept going up and kept going up. I worked thirty-seven years for the federal government and when I retired I was making, this was December of seventy-nine, I was making just a few dollars less than thirty-five thousand a year. I remember my brother telling me one time, he was working for Curtis Wright, he said, "You're working for the government." He said, "That's such tight wages." And it was. At the time he was making two and a half dollars an hour, I was making three thousand two hundred eighty-seven dollars a year. Probably had good benefits. I had annual leave, I had sick leave that I could accumulate. You put all that in proper perspectives, sure, I'm not making as much money as he is but I'm getting social security. Not social security but retirement. I got annual leave and sick leave accumulated. Up until my retirement, if you had sick leave that you had not used, you lost it. I think a year or two before I retired, they said that instead of losing it, they would apply it to your retirement.

Bruder: So you could retire that much early?

E. Asadorian: Yes--no. You got sixty percent of your salary--

Bruder: Okay.

E. Asadorian: If you worked there thirty-five years. With my retirement, I had something like nineteen hundred hours of sick leave that I had not used by an accumulated of thirty some odd years. That almost gave me an additional year that they applied towards my retirement. So instead of thirty six years, I retired with thirty seven years. I have took my retirement as a cost of living we need every year. As we retire, the cost of living is not in there when we retire. Right now I know I made two times what my brother made with my retirement. It was easier, I mean, I didn't have to drive all the way to Crew, Macdonald. I just go to depot. Back then it took them forty five minutes to drive to where they were going. You need to figure that that's an hour and a half additional so plus your eight hours your working nine and a half hours for that salary. I'd get in the car and I go down there five minutes and be back out in five minutes. So I would work eight hours, or eight and a half hours, to earn my money. When he'd work nine and a half hours.

Bruder: So when you figured all that in--

E. Asadorian: Yes--

Bruder: It added up.

E. Asadorian: We couldn't strike. We couldn't do this, we couldn't do that but we had unions that would go up there and talk about salary increases and talk about this and about that. The first time we would try to strike, was when Ronald Reagan was in office.

When the--

M.Asadorian: controllers--

E. Asadorian: controllers struck. They fired every one of them. The first piece of paper I signed before I got hired was I would not strike against the federal government. [laughter] Once you signed that, you got to honor it. You can't--

Bruder: Right.

E. Asadorian: Since things have changed now and I want to back out of it. It's a comfortable life. There's prejudices and everything else. Back when I was working we had quite a situation. Then all of a sudden it got to the point where out of every three promotions, two had to be black.

Bruder: So you're talking back through the civil rights?

E. Asadorian: Oh yes. Then of course the black people. Then of course it went from the male gender to the female gender. You had to hire woman. It's hard for me to turn around and say I looked at three people, and of the three people, this guy in my opinion is the one to serve the government the best. But I got to hire him because he's black and they got to hire her because she's a woman. When you look at it this way, of all the people who Armenians are the least ones there, the Armenians should have preference. Of course it doesn't--

Bruder: Yes, you're the minority of the minorities--

E. Asadorian: Yes right. The minority of them all.

Bruder: Yes right. Well it just didn't work that way.

M.Asadorian: Let me tell you a little story. We were living in Vera Beach, Florida and had been there for seven years. I came for a visit. I'm staying at my son Arthur's house. But I want to talk to my oldest son, at work. So they had the number and I called and this girl answered the phone. Where did he work for?

E. Asadorian: Quality Insurance.

M.Asadorian: "This is Quality Insurance. Stephanie speaking." I said, "Stephanie, this is Mrs. Asadorian, Eddie's mother. Is Eddie there?" Stephanie says, "No he isn't but I'll give him the message. Does he know who you are?" M. Asadorian says, "What?" Stephanie said, "Does he know who you are?" I said yes I'm his mother. Stephanie said, "Does he know your name?" Well I knew he would never get the message.

Bruder: Right.

M.Asadorian: So I waited and I called back and sure enough he hadn't got the message. And he laughed. He said, "Did Stephanie answer the phone?" I said yes. Now my son fought to keep her because he knew once she got fired from that job she'd never be hired again. He felt sorry for her.

Bruder: Right.

M.Asadorian: And I said, "Ed, you're wrong. I don't care if she's black, white, purple, green. She doesn't know her job. Anybody that hears me say I am Eddie's mother, doesn't know who you are and doesn't even know your name, there's something wrong with that woman. He said I don't care Mom but I'm not firing her. She got laid off but not by him.

E. Asadorian: Well, there's all kinds of prudence for the federal government. There's people you take in that are uneducated but you got to give them a job.

Bruder: Well, you guys are bringing up an interesting point. A lot of people would argue that the federal government has served the well of that church in that area where there are people who for whatever reason aren't--

E. Asadorian: Qualified--

Bruder: Yes, qualified or able to provide for their families for whatever reason. We're not going to justify a bunch of different reasons but how did the...Specifically, how did the church and Lincoln Place neighborhood stand in the gap for those people? Was there a food program? Was there--

E. Asadorian: No. I'm ashamed to say but--

Bruder: Was there any type of assistance at all?

E. Asadorian: No. Our churches more or less operated give, give, give and to give very little in return. And I'm ashamed to say this but this is a fact.

Bruder: When you say our church are you talking about the Armenian Apostolic Church?

M.Asadorian: Yes--

E. Asadorian: I'm just talking about our church here. It's not--

Bruder: You're talking about St. Gregory's as well?--

E. Asadorian: St. Gregory's. There's a K.C.'s. There's all kinds of organizations. They have baseball clubs. They got this, they got...they give something back. They get a lot from the community but their giving something back. They sponsor baseball teams and soccer teams and everything else. It seems to me like all we want to do is take, take, take and we don't want to give anything back.

Bruder: Even back then?

M.Asadorian: We're now doing something now.

E. Asadorian: Well yes. Now he's doing something.

Bruder: What about back in fifty four? Do you—Nothing sticks out in terms of the church serving the community?

M.Asadorian: No. We were very poor. We were very poor parish.

E. Asadorian: We're a small community but since nineteen fifty-four, once we got a priest we've been able to maintain the priest. Where cities like Walthege, Racine. They couldn't afford a full time clergy so they would share one. So one Sunday he'd be in this community and next Sunday he'd be someplace else. We've always maintained one here constantly. It's always been nip and tuck. I mean we've had to really tighten our belt in order to be able to afford a priest. Theoretically, we can't afford a priest now. If it wouldn't be for the bingo hall and the money the hall brings in, we can't afford a priest.

Bruder: Yes, I noticed how when I went over there to drop a transcript off, there was a lot of cars there. Is there a bingo on Wednesdays?

E. Asadorian: Bingo is on Wednesday and Thursday nights. Of course that's not doing to good now because of K.C.

Bruder: Are you talking about Knights of Columbus?

E. Asadorian: Yes. Knights of Columbus. They got a real good program. They just stuck the hell out of us. We can't afford to keep up with them. But when you get a total of tens in bingo, at a hundred of thirty seven or a hundred and sixty seven, you lose money. You got to have two hundred twenty five, two hundred and thirty people every...

(Tape ends in middle of conversation)

Conversation resumes....

E. Asadorian: They don't sell hard liquor there but they got beverages and stuff like that. And they got pull tabs--

M.Asadorian: and a lottery.

E. Asadorian: They got things coming in but the funeral had two hundred and thirty five people there every...

(Start of Tape one, side B)

Bruder: We are continuing to talk about various aspects of life here in America. What we were speaking about earlier was how the government had kind of served the role of the church and you were saying that you didn't feel like the Armenian church perhaps lived up to it's potential in the way it could have served the community. Is that accurate?

E. Asadorian: Right.

Bruder: Well, aside from programs and food pantries and financial assistance, which are a part of the churches existence, I'm interested in how you came into a relationship or how you were able to form the first thought in your mind that God is. Because that is so foreign to many people in this culture today. I feel like if you believe that the Lord is, then there was a first time that it struck you. Maybe you can't remember it exactly but tell me about your first impressions about who you are? Why you're here? You know those eternal questions that all of us ask. When did it first occur to you that you were a part of something much bigger than Ed Asadorian?

E. Asadorian: Well, serving in the church for eighteen-twenty years, after the church bought and the work we put into renovating it and everything else--

Bruder: Down on Maple Street?

E. Asadorian: Yes, Maple Street. The feeling you get when you go to church--

Bruder: You served as a what capacity there? Were you a deacon?

E. Asadorian: No, no, no. I was treasurer on the board of trustees--

Bruder: Oh, board of trustees?

E. Asadorian: Yes, I was treasurer. I was the treasurer for twelve years. And me being find out that the amount of money that's coming in was not adequate to maintain the church. You always look for interests outside to help in the outside in order to help financially. It just seemed like without a church, there was something lacking.

Bruder: For you and also for the entire community--

M.Asadorian: The family. The whole community.

Bruder: And it was like a family, wasn't it?

M.Asadorian: Oh yes.

E. Asadorian: Oh yes.

Bruder: What were some of your relationships like then, even, it doesn't have to be in the church but people that you hung around with?

M.Asadorian: Oh, like this.

Bruder: And on Sundays it was all day together?

M.Asadorian: And it spanned out even during the weekdays.

Bruder: Yes.

E. Asadorian: The older generation were the ones who really were close to the church. As we saw that, we were drawn into the church.

Bruder: You consider yourselves second generation?

E. Asadorian: Yes. Right. We had, when I was eighteen, twenty, twenty two years of age, twenty eight years age, they had older people that were the ones that were thought of the church community of not having a church. And they formed an organization to turn around and collect some money and then when a church was available, they purchased a church. I remember one time that when at one of the board meetings, I think our monthly payment was something like sixty two dollars a month to buy the church. Mindy, the older senior citizen, had had it difficult during the depression, to even maintain their home. Some of them were losing it. And they wanted to pay that church off real quick. We looked at it this way, it's only sixty three dollars you know. [laughing] What if you pay that—but they wanted to pay it off right away. Anyway, they bought the church in fifty four, or fifty three and then we updated it and it was ordained I think December the second or the December the fifth, nineteen forty five--

M.Asadorian: Fifty-four.

E. Asadorian: Oh, fifty-four.

Bruder: Do you remember what priest? Who was your first priest?

M. M. Asadorain: It was a visiting priest.

E. Asadorian: Yes, he was a visiting priest. We didn't have a priest, per se. Then we got an old man by the name of Verskez Casperian. He was our first permanent priest.

M.Asadorian: He lived with us.

Bruder: Lived in your house?

E. Asadorian: Yes. We tried to call people and say who's going to house him and know but nobody wanted to house the guy so I called my mother and told her prepare a room for a priest . He's staying at our house. She didn't appreciate it at the time.

M.Asadorian: We ended up having a nice time with him.

E. Asadorian: He was here a good year--

M.Asadorian: Ten months--

E. Asadorian: Ten months. And then they decided that he should be closer to the church so, we lived downtown. So they moved him to one of the relatives of the board members. Anyway, so he was there for I guess for about two years. More than that--

M.Asadorian: More than that.

E. Asadorian: Fifty five? Fifty-nine was when Anagorian came in.

M.Asadorian: Yes. Four years--

E. Asadorian: Four years. He was there four years.

M.Asadorian: Matter of fact--

E. Asadorian: And that offered problems too because we knew nothing about that church per se. And then he would do certain things and we would say why are we doing it this way and he'd say well this is the Armenian rule. Okay, so we were doing it that way so three months later we had a same situation where he would do a different way and I would say why are we doing it that way and he said Armenian rule. You can't have a situation that you do it one way three months ago now you're doing it another way and you tell me it's the same rule you know.

M.Asadorian: Well with him Eddie, he was semi-retired.

E. Asadorian: Well I know--

M.Asadorian: And they sent him from California to us. And he was with us, a matter of fact, he was there two weeks when Melanie was born. Our daughter. And for ten months, that was her grandfather. You know he would take her out of the crib and carry her because he had five children and I don't know how many grandchildren

living out in the east coast. And he missed them. So he turned all his love over to her. I'll never forget during service one day I was carrying her and I put her down and she yelled, she couldn't say dadheit, she yelled de-da-de and down the aisle she went. And her Godmother just grabbed her like this by the dress and caught her as he turned around to bless the congregation and he saw that. You could see him trying to keep from laughing. Afterwards he came and grabbed her and carried her and he said you spoiled de-da-de today. She was what, ten when he died? No younger than that when we got word that he had died. Or was she older than that?

E. Asadorian: Oh, older than that--

M.Asadorian: Yes because she cried. She remembered him.

Bruder: Yes. Strong bond.

M.Asadorian: Then one time we had visiting clergy. Who was his name honey? This last one we had? The visiting clergy that I didn't want and I left and went to visit my sister? [laughing] Left you and your sister with him. What was his name?

E. Asadorian: Arsha? Arsha?

M.Asadorian Arsha. And I said I've had it. I've had it with all the clergies coming. I'm tired of breaking in new clergies so I took off and went and visited my sister. And came back and I asked my sister-in-law, Rose, God rest her soul, I said, Well how'd the weekend go and she said oh Mary he wasn't that bad. Next thing you know next weekend he comes, he's staying with us again. After that he came every other weekend and he wouldn't go anywhere else but here. Finally, we, I fell in love with the man. He became the father of this home. I said to him one time, when are you going to someone else's home. He said no. I'm coming here. I got to the point that I always teased our clergy. Now, Father Vartan, you've met him?

Bruder: Yes.

M.Asadorian: Okay. We met him before he became a priest. all right? Our son Arthur picked him up at the airport--

Bruder: Are you talking ninety two?

M.Asadorian: Yes. I'm in a house dress cleaning with the front door open and my son yelled, oh, I've got company Mom. I said fine. Bring him in. Come to find out its Vartan. Whose name at the time was???? Mark. And his wife was Pauline. I said, oh yes. You're the new priest. Or going to be the new priest. He said yes. I said well I'm telling you right now, I'm answering the door but don't expect me to answer it again. I don't have time to answer doors. You open the door and you yell Mary. If Mary answers, you come in. If she doesn't, close the door and leave. And he's never forgotten

that. Well he does. He opens the door when he walks in. Mary? Yes. Come on in. We have been very, very close with every one of our clergy. We have.

Bruder: Right.

M.Asadorian: And he has done a lot of work for a lot of them. But not with Mark Glen have you.

E. Asadorian: No, no.

M.Asadorian: Because he does it all on his own.

E. Asadorian: He put out a monthly bulletin. He put one out now but I think its gonna be three months or something like that. He use to put one out every month. We'd sit down and we'd translate from the Armenian to the English. Then we'd type up and run them off stencils and everything else and put the package together. I use to when the paper first started out, was in sixty three?

M.Asadorian: Yes.

E. Asadorian: I spent the last two weeks in church working on the church bulletin. And Art Bedian, I don't know if your interviewing him or not--

Bruder: I'm going to interview Arthur Bedian on Sunday at twelve thirty.

E. Asadorian: He was on the group to put the church bulletin together. And he came all the way from St. Louis. Well we had types sit down there and type these stencils and you're not paying them anything so you can't say, "Hey, I want you to come in at seven o'clock and I don't want no talking with them. Type the bulletins out and let's get them all out so we can get out of here. Well they'd sit there and they'd talk and Art would get pretty perturbed because he came all the way from St. Louis. He wants to get the thing done and get back home. Anyway, we use to work that. Father Minudo use to run the papers. They'd call us and we'd turn around and send them out every month. This was every month. I don't know how many times I got told you ought to get a cot and just stay in the church basement because that's where you belong. [laughter]

Bruder: That's kind of a lot of hours.

E. Asadorian: Yes.

Bruder: Well, with the scripture. There's a man who owns store houses and barns. He was so prosperous and one day the Lord told him this very night I require of you your soul. I think it was Jesus you said store up your treasures in heaven where they will not rust and the lost don't get to it. So maybe that's what you were doing.

E. Asadorian: Yes.

Bruder: Helping the Lord.

M.Asadorian: Not because he's my husband, but he is a good hearted man. He walks in that church and he is lost. Because he sits here on this side, I'm back here. I could see he is completely gone. I keep saying, "Eddie. It's time for the collection. Eddie, you got your money ready?" To myself hoping he could, mental telepathy. He's the one that goes up and kisses the book. He's the one that passes the peace sign. If he's not there, Art Bedian will do it. If Arts' not there I don't know who does it. Because I'm not there. Nobody takes that job away from him. It should be the board of trustee members that does it and neither one of them are on the board now. But they do it because they know what things to do. Our young kids of today don't know

Bruder: The young kids even in the church?

M.Asadorian: Yes.

E. Asadorian: Well they got little girls now who go pass the collection plate around--

M.Asadorian: Yes.

E. Asadorian: And once or twice a year, they'll have the young kids do that. Accept the kiss of peace and go up there and kiss the Bible. I forget sometimes when [pauses and laughs] I give them ...try and compete with the children.

Bruder: What has the Bible meant to you throughout the years? Cause Father Vartan and I talked about how St. Mesrob translated the Bible, reasons why he translated the Bible, and how important it was to the Armenian people at the time to have the scripture in their own language. Perhaps, that's something else that I am guilty of taking for granted, that here we have so many Bibles. Everywhere you look there's holy scripture and I read about churches in China where they memorize one page out in the woods, for fear of their life; you know, where scripture is just so precious to these Christians. I was interested in how the Lord's word has impacted your life?

E. Asadorian: Well, I'm ashamed to say, I got a Bible, but I don't read the Bible much. What Bible reading I'm exposed to is primarily on Sundays when we go to church.

Bruder: Something from the new and something from the old?

E. Asadorian: Yes. He gives good lectures and he gets his points across.

M.Asadorian: Now, you got to remember, our whole service was done in

Armenian, until recently.

Bruder: Till Father Vartan.

M.Asadorian: Yes. Till Father Vartan. He's gotten permission to use, because we do have a lot of marriages that are non-Armenians. He thinks it's only fair for them, but what our—Catholicos had come in. He called me over to the head table. He's got to pull my leg. He said, "By the way, Catholicos just gave me permission that I could turn the whole service into English." I said, "Over my dead body." Just like that in English to him and I turned to the Catholicos and I said, "He's teasing you, isn't he?" And he said, "Yes." I said, "He better be, because if someday that whole thing is turned to English, you'll never see my face in church again."

Bruder: Why is that so important to you?

M.Asadorian: Because it's an Armenian church. Now, the choir definitely will be Armenian. The whole—what is the word I'm looking for, chant—no

E. Asadorian: Chant, songs

M.Asadorian: The songs have to be Armenian, that's all there is to it.

E. Asadorian: The Bulgarian church, everything is done in English now; not that we were exposed much to the Bulgarian chants or singing, but everything is rush, rush, rush. They sing the song so fast you, a lot of times you don't understand it. Where ours is a—I don't know if you've been to our church or not, but it's altogether a different association. The chants are, seem like they are purer and there not one that's rushing, so that you can get it all over with. Although, many of the people that come to church think that the services are too long anyway.

Bruder: How long are they?

M.Asadorian: Hour and a half.

E. Asadorian: No, more than that really.

M.Asadorian: Starts at 10:00 and he's usually through by 11:30 unless he has requiem services.

E. Asadorian: But, there's other things; there cutting out the solo.

M.Asadorian: Yes. You mean the one that...

E. Asadorian: The duet, the duet...

M.Asadorian: Oh, between Eddie and Melanie, no.

E. Asadorian: And there is certain ones, like the Nicene creed. If it said in English, even though it's the same thing, word, it's different when it's said in Armenian; to me, because I'm American, but Armenian descent. It's different than just having it read in English. Like the Catholics, when they had all their things in Latin. The moment they went to the English version, you seemed like they lost something.

M.Asadorian: You did.

E. Asadorian: No, it didn't lose it. It's the same words Mary...

M.Asadorian: I know, but it became cold, it became cold

E. Asadorian: Only because they were exposed to the—they learned the Latin portion of it.

M.Asadorian: Well, the way I feel honey. That choir songs have to be sung in Armenian, that's all there is to it.

E. Asadorian: In twenty years or thirty years, all of it will be in English anyway.

M.Asadorian: Yes.

E. Asadorian: Because the youngsters today are not pursuing the Armenian portion of it. In order for them to understand anything, it's all got to be done in English.

Bruder: So, there is no Armenian school that is an off-shoot of the church?

E. Asadorian: Well, there is, but it's like I say, it's sort of a pathetic thing. They have at the church anniversary, they had the Catholicos here. They had the Arch-bishop. They had the Prelate, and they had a little program. They had a little program for the Armenian school portion of it. It was pathetic. The teacher got up there, said four or five words and the children repeated it. It just got to the point where, it wasn't anything presentable. My daughter teaches Armenian school to a certain portion of—She has the singing and the dancing portion. When she takes the class over; when they learn something, they learn it completely. When the children present their oral presentation, you're not ashamed of the product that's produced. But, they had a woman by the name of Svetlana, they had my cousin Roxy, and they put on a program that was totally unacceptable. If it was that bad, you shouldn't have even presented it. Because our Catholicos thinks the whole issue rises and sets with the children, because that's the future. But, it was a pathological performance.

Bruder: Less to do with the children, more to do with the instructors?

E. Asadorian: No, more the instructors. The children learn. The children learn, because my daughter --

Bruder: Melanie teaches them, right.

E. Asadorian: She's not an exceptional teacher, I mean she just insists on them learning.

M. Asadorian: Matter of fact, I'll never forget, when they got through, she got down on her knees and she applauded them. There were what? Three of them.

E. Asadorian: Yes.

M. Asadorian: And a fourth girl came running up and hugged her, you now. Mary Parsigian's granddaughter. Melanie accepted her. She wasn't in her class, but because she saw what happened, she ran to Melanie. Melanie said, "What was I going to do, mom, turn her away?" The kids remembered that their teacher got down and applauded for them. That's how proud she was of them.

Bruder: Right.

M. Asadorian: And that means a lot to the kids.

Bruder: They don't, they don't forget this.

M. Asadorian: No.

E. Asadorian: It's difficult. We have a lot of mixed marriages. We have Armenian males married to American speaking women. We don't have too many where the male is English speaking and the wife is Armenian. Everything hinges on the mother. If the mother speaks Armenian, the child will speak Armenian, but because the child is with the mother all day long and she speaks English to them, the father comes home after work. What little Armenian he speaks is not going to register with the child. But, the mother speaks Armenian to the child from the day the child is born, that child is going to learn Armenian, because she is exposed to it. You take a child born in China, if all that child learns is Chinese, that's the language she is speaking, not English or Russian.

Bruder: Right.

M. Asadorian: You know I could never understand our son Arthur, like you said, has a wide vocabulary in the Armenian language. He didn't talk Armenian to his son. He talked Armenian to his niece.

E. Asadorian: Does that make sense?

M.Asadorian: Does that make sense to you?

Bruder: I'm on the outside—[laughter]

M.Asadorian: He use to come here and play with her and talk Armenian to her and I would sit there and look at him and I'd say, "I know you need to do that with Andy."

E. Asadorian: Now all of a sudden Andy wants to learn Armenian, well--

M.Asadorian: Well, we tried. We tried. He'll pick it up.

Bruder: He's the thirteen year old?

E. Asadorian: Yes thirteen.

Bruder: Right. Well, you know you guys. Language is important I can hear that from what you're telling me. When I was talking to Father Vartan, he was kind of comparing contrasting the need for people to understand the message versus the desire to perpetuate the culture through the hearers of the word as well. He leaned more towards the side of understanding instead of perpetuating tradition. I guess what I'm hearing from you, Mrs. Asadorian, is that you would just rather stick with the Armenian because that's what's comfortable to you. Why not do both?

M.Asadorian: I do. I try. I really do try. There's something I can't do and it's me. No body else. Devorma in English is Lord have mercy--

E. Asadorian: Yes.

M.Asadorian: We use to say it Devorma. Now he's changed it to Lord have mercy. I'm sorry but I cannot. I've tried. I cannot say Lord have mercy. I'm so use to after nineteen fifty-five until now saying Devorma that all of a sudden I'm to change and say Lord have mercy. Everybody in church says it but me. I just don't say anything.

E. Asadorian: You know we have clergymen, real good friends of ours, Der Gorian, who's the retired priest in Detroit, Michigan. We had Father--

M.Asadorian: Habeshian.

E. Asadorian: Habeshian, who's pastor in Washington, D.C. To help them, they went to school and got educated to the point they could speak better English. Both these gentlemen, as much as I loved them, they all would try to impress upon you their knowledge of the English language. They would use words that were out of this world.

Yet, the Catholicos or the Archbishop of the prelate, when they come down here, they got a message they want to get across to and they want you to understand it. No fancy Armenian. No fancy big words or anything like that. But they spoke Armenian. Kurken--

M.Asadorian: God rest his soul.

E. Asadorian: Yes. The first priest we had here, second, or third? That really became the Catholicos of all Armenian churches. He died. He's speak in Armenian and English at the same time. It would be to the point where if he spoke Armenian and went to English, it'd just went in there where you wouldn't lose the train of thought.

M.Asadorian: Just as even as you could get.

E. Asadorian: Yet they had Der Khoren Habeshian...and they're talking to children, children in Sunday school. Now, if they want to impress me with big words, I can understand it, but the children couldn't.

Bruder: There is a word for that, iconoclastic. Where you try to inflate--

M.Asadorian: Ego[laughter]

Bruder: I guess your own ego, yes.

M.Asadorian: But, I'll tell you, this one that he was referring to was a Rhodes Scholar.

Bruder: Rhodes Scholar?

M.Asadorian: Where did he go? He went to--

E. Asadorian: ?????

M.Asadorian: That English school.

Bruder: Oxford?

Both: Oxford

M.Asadorian: He was--

E. Asadorian: He was a Rhode Scholar.

M.Asadorian: He was walking through and he comes across somebody, and he asks him where the hall is. The guy said he didn't know. And he said I'm looking for the

Armenian whatever. And he said I don't know what you're talking about.

E. Asadorian: His first words were, what's an Armenian.

M.Asadorian: Oh, yes. And then, he walks through this huge hall and there are two pictures. One end is an Armenian Catholicos and the other is a--

E. Asadorian: English king

M.Asadorian: Whatever, OK. So, now he's upset. He goes looking for this guy, and he finds him, and he grabs him by the ear and pulls him into the hall. He said you want to know what an Armenian is, there are two pictures in this hall. One's a king and the other is an Armenian Catholicos; and you're asking me what an Armenian is. When he said that these kids, who were about this high, roared with laughter. Now, when he was talking, and I am not lying. He was talking Armenian, next thing you know it's English, next thing you know it's Armenian and like Ed says he didn't lose a train of thought. Absolutely fabulous.

Bruder: That was a gift. That was a gift he had.

E. Asadorian: Even Der Vartan, the Bible was written in what they call the classical Armenian, they call ??????. The word that we and I speak, or Armenian Americans speak are what is called--

M.Asadorian: Slang

E. Asadorian: No, no. World renown. But, the Bible is written in //// Armenian, and he reads this Karapar Armenian mentally, but what comes out of his mouth is what, is the oshhorapar words.

M.Asadorian: Which are the everyday--

E. Asadorian: Yes, that's quite a talent.

M.Asadorian: He's good, and he gives good sermons.

Bruder: So what were your typical Sundays like, back in the day, in Lincoln Place?

E. Asadorian: Back in the day, when the church first started out it was a lot of people coming to church. Youngsters that had cameras would take films on Easter Sunday or on renown holidays and there would be a whole flock of people coming out of that church. Today you go to church now, there's thirty, thirty-five people. There would be hundreds coming out of our church back in those days.

M.Asadorian: Our Sunday started—Our church started at 10:30 then and it would be over, say by 12:00. Invariably, we'd hang around, hoping and praying there'd be

some luncheon or something, you know so that we could all be together and if there wasn't we'd just hang around for a while and chit chat and make plans with our other couples to get together--

E. Asadorian: Weather providing of course, if it's winter time, you didn't do it, but summer time, spring, fall, when the suns out there real bright and everybody's all dressed up real cute and everything else. Quite a feeling, you know.

M.Asadorian: But, now what we do-- Our church is over no later than quarter to 12:00. That's really stretching it. And then we go to the hall for coffee and doughnuts and just hang around there for awhile and chit chat with everybody, then come on home.

Bruder: So you're still kind of connected through that—through the church?

M.Asadorian: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Bruder: Always has been. That's one thing Father Vartan really emphasized is, he'd pound on his, wherever you see an Armenian, the first thing he does is open up a phone book and look for an Armenian church. He went into the history of the church.

E. Asadorian: We went into Las Vegas when my mom passed away in '66.

M.Asadorian: Yes.

E. Asadorian: The latter part of '66 we were in Las Vegas and had nothing to do. So I picked up the telephone book, we looked through it and ... There was a guy that played the flute, and I said we ought to call this guy and talk to him. No, no, no. He'll think you're looking for a free meal or this and that. We didn't call, anyway, he played, him and his little group played in the side portion of the--

M.Asadorian: The lounge

E. Asadorian: Lounge. Well, when we found out he was playing there we went to go see him and then after they had their intermission we started to him. I mentioned the fact that I looked up in the telephone directory and I was going to call him. Oh, you should of called him, he had Charles Oznovor, yes Charles Oznovar was one of his guests up there and she said you would have had a good time. There was a bunch of people over at the house. You kick yourself in the pants for not calling him, but it's too late then.

Bruder: Who is Charles Oznovor?

M.Asadorian: A French singer.

E. Asadorian: Oh, he's a French Armenian singer.

Bruder: Ohhhh.

M.Asadorian: Oh, yes. He's good.

E. Asadorian: He's world renown, but he's got a following. He sings more classical songs than more popular songs.

M.Asadorian: He writes it when he's out of love [laughter]

E. Asadorian: He's always in love and out of love. When he's out of love, he writes a lot of lyrics.

Bruder: Sounds like a blues singer. [Laughter] He's just got the blues maybe.

E. Asadorian: We talked to him, we set up a little interview with him. Yes, we had a good time.

M.Asadorian: And then of course you get older and things change. You don't go out as much. Sometimes you become a stick in the mud. He's (pointing to Eddie) gotten to the point, he really doesn't care to go anywhere anymore, but he's going out Saturday.

E. Asadorian: We got a big dance Saturday. I don't dance. The music's real loud. [Laughter]

Bruder: Yes, November 17th. I have a flyer on that.

M.Asadorian: Good, I hope you come.

Bruder: I won't be there. I'm sorry. You don't go—you say you don't go out much. You also don't go out much when you have little children.

M.Asadorian: Yes, that's true.

Bruder: Maybe, twice that happens in life.

M.Asadorian: Unless, you've got a built in baby-sitter, like a mother or a mother.

Bruder: No, don't have that luxury.

M.Asadorian: Well, see we lived nineteen years with his mother, but she refused to watch the kids because they were there with her, twenty-fours hours a day, seven days a week. So my mother watched them and she was happy to. Then my mother-in-

law would yell at me for taking my kids to my mothers. I said well make up your mind. She said well she's busy all day, she doesn't need them. I said, she enjoys them.

Bruder: Well, what did the kids do? I mean, you're bringing up a good point. Nowadays, it seems like kids are dropped off at the daycare and whatnot, but I'm sure back in the day at Lincoln Place, that wasn't going on.

M.Asadorian: We were lucky. No, we were lucky. We had a community house.

E. Asadorian: Part of the church--

Bruder: The Wall Center???

M.Asadorian: The what?

Bruder: What was the name of that?

M.Asadorian: The community house, the clubhouse.

Bruder: Yes, I know, it's got a name now.

M.Asadorian: It has?

Bruder: Yes, unless I'm mistaken. Anyway, it's the one on Niedringhaus.

M.Asadorian: Yes, it's right on the corner there. On Maple and Niedringhaus. We spent our days there. We had better be there or we would've gotten our legs switched by Miss. Prather. I did one time. She figured that, that club was for the kids in Lincoln Place and they had better be there. Their parents had enough to do, they didn't need to put up with the kids. So, we were very lucky. We had that place to go to.

E. Asadorian: During a lot of the services they'd read scriptures, scrolls. When they'd give them out to us, we'd turn around and learn what was actually on the scrolls. You really didn't have to memorize it but you didn't know what you were memorizing. One time they gave them to my father-in-law and my mother-in-law. My father-in-law asked my oldest son, "Do you know what you are reading?" Ed said, "No." He was just memorizing it and that's it. He'd get up there and read the scroll. So my father-in-law then explained to him what the scroll meant. And this is the first time anybody explained to my oldest son what he was reading. That way you learn. Where as if you just get something like this and read it and memorize it, you don't know what the word assurance means, you really haven't really learned anything.

Bruder: Yes. Kind of like the eunuch that was reading the scroll of Isaiah and Phillip was translated right next to this eunuch and he says, do you understand what you are reading? Well, I can read it but I don't understand it. I don't have anybody to explain

it to me. I don't understand.

E. Asadorian: It was the first time anybody explained it to him.

Bruder: Right.

E. Asadorian: And of course two-thirds of the words that were in those scrolls, a person of my education, wouldn't understand anyway.

M.Asadorian: The only thing is, we heard it so...Now my mother was an educated woman. She graduated from a high school in Istanbul, Turkey equivalent to two years of college here. She spoke beautiful Armenian and this was my mother. Okay? I picked up my mother's Armenian not my father's because my father was only a fourth grader. He finished self teaching himself by reading good books and everything in Armenian. My daughter to this very day always says, "Mom, when you talk Armenian it's beautiful." I said, "Thanks to grandma Kambarian because of her education, we were able to learn her Armenian." There are words that I hear today that I heard many years ago, I don't use it, but I know what it means. I say oh my God, I haven't heard that word in years. And then it falls into place. But who am I gonna speak it to? My kids? Okay, so I talk Armenian to them. I do. But I don't talk back big Armenian to them.

E. Asadorian: Her cousins we went to visit in ninety-seven, since the earthquake I think in eighty-eight--

M.Asadorian: Eighty-eight.

E. Asadorian: We found out they were lacking financial assistance so on and so forth. Although we didn't know how to get the money to them, we would find people who were going to Armenian, we'd give them whatever money we could afford at the time. They would get it.

M.Asadorian: We support them though honey.

E. Asadorian: I know, but—oh, one of the things that we did when we were there. We set up an account for them at the Midland bank. So, I send the money, three times a year from my credit union to the Marine Midland Bank in New York which is ultimately transferred to the account in Midland bank in Yestovah. The cousins use that money for whatever purpose they can....[pause]

M.Asadorian: If it wasn't for you honey I don't know what their condition would be.

E. Asadorian: But, that wasn't what I was trying to get across. I was trying to get

a point across, but it slipped my mind.

Bruder: Did it have anything to do with the earthquake?

E. Asadorian: Well, that's when it started, the earthquake. We didn't send very much money at the outset, cause we didn't have ways to get money to them. It's only if a clergy was going from America to the Yetovan...that we would send money. They would gladly take it up there.

M.Asadorian: Matter of fact at one of the clergy meetings, the Archbishop, cause they were going to vote for a new Archbishop and he had to leave the meeting. So he goes to the ladies guild meeting and while there, he tells the story of this couple from Granite City who's supporting two families in Armenia, Yetovan. One of the women was dying, cause she wanted to know who it was. She never did find out. But, I never denied it. My husband takes care of my family and if it wasn't for Ed, I don't know what their condition would be today. Every time we call to let them know that the money is there, if we get...--

E. Asadorian: That's what I was leading up to. Whenever we'd call, the one's they want to talk to is of course their cousin, which is Mary. In the course of the conversation, she speaks better Armenian than anybody else does. So she doesn't want to talk because when she talks to her cousin Hagop, tells him something, then all of the sudden, his wife Asa gets on the phone. She asks the same questions Hagop does. Like says tomy cousin you know.

M.Asadorian: So I repeat. If I talk to five of them I repeat everything, you know. Really, they would rather talk to Melanie, than anybody else. That's how much they love her. Well, we call at five, six in the morning you know, Melanie's not going to be here.

E. Asadorian: We call normally twelve noon or twelve midnight which is about nine o'clock, their time. Nine o'clock in the morning or nine o'clock at night.

M.Asadorian: Matter of fact, don't we owe them a phone call? Cause the last two calls were not clear. We couldn't get through real good, I don't know why, what happened. I haven't called six weeks.

E. Asadorian: I have trouble getting across to your cousins. [Laughter] You sit there, you're tolerant.

M.Asadorian: You have trouble talking to your aunt in California, honey.

Bruder: that's see that—and not to heap praise on you, cause I know that's not what you're going after, but I see that as—I see anything good that we are as being a direct result of God pouring His love through us and that love then in turn flows out and

changes peoples lives--

M.Asadorian: Yes, I believe it. I believe it.

Bruder: That's kind of the sense that I'm getting, is that's the testimony that you have. Maybe you didn't see the church providing in a way that you would have liked to have seen them been able to provide for in the past, but here in your personal life--

M.Asadorian: He's doing it.

Bruder: --the church is providing. Cause the church is not the building, the church is the people in the building. So I see that as kind of a fulfillment of what you were saying earlier that your heart's desire was to serve.

E. Asadorian: Once you see the conditions in which they live in, they just got to be helped.

Bruder: Right.

E. Asadorian: You just wish you could do more.

Bruder: That's the best way you can do it.

M.Asadorian: I always said, if there's a place up there, it's for Ed [Laughter] I've been sick for six weeks, guess who's been doing the work.

Bruder: Our husbands and wives are our true blessings.

[Tape 1, ends]

[Tape 2, side A begins]

M.Asadorian: Now this is going to concern a woman who was not my mother, but became my mother. Art Bedian's sister Corky and I were good friends and somehow or another, I convinced Corky to go to their home and get something to eat. Well, the front door and back door was locked. Corky, let's check the basement windows. So sure enough, one of the basement windows was unlocked so we crawled in and emptied the icebox out and we ate. Instead of cleaning up the mess, we left the mess and came back out through the window. The mother came home and she saw it [Phone rings, tape paused]--She doesn't say a word to her daughter, turns around walks out the house, comes straight to my mother's home, comes down the basement, picks me up and gives me a licking like you would not believe.

Bruder: She knew it was you?

M.Asadorian: My mother took one look at her, didn't open her mouth and

wouldn't say what are you doing to my daughter. It wasn't until after she got through that she turned to my mother and said, did your daughter tell you what she did. My mother said no. She said what did you do? I said we didn't do anything, just went over there and ate. She said eat, eat. Why didn't you clean it up? Why did you go through the window? My mother said, that's all you spanked her for. That was backing Cork's mother, not me. That's how we were raised, we had more than one mother and one father and nobody said a word. I got a licking from her, believe me I got a licking from her.

Bruder: And you survived?

M.Asadorian: Oh, sure. Sure.

E. Asadorian: She also learned her lesson. [Laughter]

M.Asadorian: But, I'll tell you, we—I enjoyed being raised in Lincoln Place.

Bruder: What about you Mr. Asadorian? Any lickings put on you in Lincoln Place?

E. Asadorian: No

Bruder: You never had to be disciplined? [Laughter]

M.Asadorian: All I know is every time they'd come, my mother would say the Asadorian boys are coming again.

E. Asadorian: We used to be rowdy, but we weren't rowdy in Lincoln Place. We were rowdy when we lived uptown.

Bruder: What was the atmosphere? Cause there was a real perception that the Lincoln Place people were down here and that's where they stayed. There was a real tension there.

E. Asadorian: Well, before it was called Lincoln Place, it was called Hungry Hollow.

Bruder: Right.

E. Asadorian: They just figured everybody down there was poor and hungry all the time. I really don't know how it changed from Hungry Hollow to Lincoln Place.

M.Asadorian: I have no idea.

E. Asadorian: They had it bad. It's like anything else. I remember when I lived in

Lincoln Place, there was an animosity between us and West Granite. I didn't know anybody in West Granite to be---to dislike them. They were from West Granite and we were from Lincoln Place.

M.Asadorian: We just had one street separating us.

Bruder: Was that in high school you're talking about?

M.Asadorian: No, elementary. It started in elementary.

E. Asadorian: I wasn't in elementary school.

M.Asadorian: No, but we were honey.

E. Asadorian: We moved there in '36.

M.Asadorian: I know, but we were.

E. Asadorian: In '39 I was in high school. '40 I graduated high school.

M.Asadorian: All we had to do was cross on that 20th Street and that's when it started. Hunkies ride on monkeys.

Bruder: Say that again.

M.Asadorian: They called us hunkies.

Bruder: Hunkies?

M.Asadorian: So we came back with, that's all right, hunkies ride on monkeys. So, we called them monkeys. We ended up—Butch Cartell became what of Madison County?

E. Asadorian: County executive.

M.Asadorian: He and I were bitter enemies at elementary school. One time I saw him when our daughter was singing the national anthem at Busch Stadium and he turned around and he saw me sitting there and he said oh for my God, Mary Kambarian. I said no, Asadorian. If you're going to be correct, learn it. I said you haven't changed one bit from West Granite. He said that's your daughter, how come she sings like that and you're like this. I said, keep it up Butch, I mean that continued, you know what I'm saying. We eventually became good friends, but we were this in elementary. Now we're grown adults with kids. Then my daughter got what, a speeding ticket. She had to go to get that taken care of and she wanted to see him. The girl says

he's busy. She says well, I want to see Mr. Portell. She said he's busy. Well, he hears voices and he comes out. He looks at her and says you're Melanie and she said yes, and he said how's your mom, and she said fine, and he said what are you doing here, she said about the ticket, he said oh give me that and get out of here. She knew that was going to happen because of me. She didn't want to take advantage of it. But she said mom, I was not speeding. That's what upset me and if I can get away with it I was going to get away with it. It worked out. I have no idea if he's still living or if he died or what became of him, but what I'm trying to get across was. Here we were, here's this street, elementary school was here, this was Lincoln Place, this was West Granite. We didn't mingle, no shape or form. Why, I'll never know.

Bruder: I'm sure it wasn't much different that experience with you guys wasn't unique to you. I mean, I'm sure there was pockets of immigrants and people who came here and they were just looked on as lower than low.

E. Asadorian: Today, if a person speaks a foreign language you look to him with a little more respect. Back in those days, if you spoke a foreign language, they looked at you like--

M.Asadorian: What are you doing here?

E. Asadorian: Well, like a lower level.

Bruder: Yes, or you are coming to take what they got.

M.Asadorian: Matter of fact, I was standing at Grahams Bookstore one day and some guy says, Mary Kambarian and I just stood there. I thought OK, Mary Kambarian, that would have to be before '47, who in the world do I know before '47, who knows me as Mary Kambarian? I turned around and this guy was standing behind me with this silly grin on his face and I said I know you. He said you should, we went to Washington school together, I said oh, you're from West Granite. [Laughter] He said, yes I'm so and so. It didn't ring a bell. I said I'm sorry, I don't remember you, he said why should you, we were bitter enemies. It got to the point where we were even joking about it. I still can't remember who the guy was, but he said you haven't changed not one bit. Not one bit. Well. Later on many years later when I did see him with glasses and my hair was white and like this. He said, you know Mary you still haven't changed, your eyes and your voice will give you away all the time. I said, well, I still don't know who you are. [laughing]

Bruder: But he remembered you.

M.Asadorian: Yes. Oh I left an impression on everybody.

Bruder: I'm starting to grasp that. That's funny. What else guys? Is there anything else you want to tell me about? Want to tell me about Miss Prather?

E. Asadorian: Oh. I didn't like Miss Prather.

Bruder: She was a strict disciplinarian was she not?

E. Asadorian: My cousin lived in Lincoln Place. Art Bedian.

Bruder: Right.

E. Asadorian: We'd go for a visit and we'd always end up at the clubhouse. She didn't recognize me being a Lincoln Place resident. It was always, out of here. You don't belong down here. This isn't for you. I didn't care for her. Later on we found out you couldn't get on the basketball court without shoes. If you didn't have the money to buy them, she'd work you to death. Then she'd give you the money to buy you your shoes.

M.Asadorian: Tennis shoes.

E. Asadorian: Yes. Which gives you all again different impression. You may not like her because the way she treats you but she had a good heart and everything else.

Bruder: Right.

M.Asadorian: How about when she'd tell you time was up in the shower?
[laughing]

E. Asadorian: Your allowed to go into the shower but she'd give you three minutes.

Bruder: Military shower?

E. Asadorian: Yes, well like an open shower for the kids. But if you weren't out in three minutes, she'd come in with that little switch...

M.Asadorian: You'd be stark naked and she'd walk right in on you. Out, out!

E. Asadorian: She provided a lot of the things for the kids sometimes

M. Asadorian: She had a pattern shop going for the boys. She had a sewing classes for the girls.

E. Asadorian: They had Bible school there during the summer months.

M.Asadorian: We had Bible school two weeks out of the summer months, yes and every Sunday, we had Sunday school. That's the best Sunday school. In the

gymnasium, which was an oddity, because she didn't allow any running of any kind in that gymnasium without tenners on or just stocking feet. We were there every Sunday for Sunday school. She allowed like Rose Begosian played the piano and she would let Rose play the piano. Let the kids gather around the piano to sing. She was a spinster, that when the community house was built, they hired her to oversee it. They paid her twenty-five a week. She paid room and board and lived with someone down the street from us and she was at that club from nine in the morning till nine at night. She would take a little sandwich to eat during lunch, then she would go home at nine and have her supper, but she paid for everything, everything.

Bruder: She probably paid for a lot of things out of her own pocket too.

M.Asadorian: Yes she did. Yes she did.

Bruder: She just had a heart for those kids.

M.Asadorian: We were very lucky. She died, well she was sixty-five, but at the time--

E. Asadorian: She died in '39 didn't she

M.Asadorian: No, '36, '37. She died right after you moved out of there. She never did see the basketball team. When she died, they held the service at the community house for her and it was overflowing. Our parents cried like babies, because they knew what she had done for the kids. Then they brought in a couple of other women to take over for her and--

E. Asadorian: Did they have citizenship classes then too?

M.Asadorian: Oh, yes. With her? Oh, yes. That's where my father got his 1928.

Bruder: Citizenship classes?

M.Asadorian: She taught them the English language. She was very good to everybody in Lincoln Place. There was no partiality.

E. Asadorian: If you we from Lincoln Place, if you weren't

M.Asadorian: She showed no partiality, she didn't have any one favorite. Now she did like Rose Begosian, cause Rose Begosian played the piano and kept the younger kids entertained. She would let Rose play as long as she wanted. There were things about her that the more you talk about her the more it comes out. The biggest of course, was keeping points for these kids that didn't have the money to buy tennis shoes and they had to earn so many points and then if they couldn't take their parents to buy shoes, she would take them downtown, uptown here and buy them their tenners.

They were only allowed to wear them in the gym, they couldn't wear it outside. They had their names written on it, that no one else could use it. I mean different little things, and every August we had a--

E. Asadorian: Exhibition

M.Asadorian: --exhibition of all the patterns the shop that the boys did, the electrical work that they did. Us girls and our embroidery, our crochet, our whatever we had. We would make quilts and they would be on display you know and if anyone wanted to buy anything, they could buy it. The money went to her for the use of the kids. It was, she was something else. She died, well like I said, she was 65 or 66 when she died, which was old, back then. She could have lived another ten or fifteen years.

E. Asadorian: She looked a lot older than 65.

M.Asadorian: No she wasn't.

E. Asadorian: I say, she looked a lot older than 65.

M.Asadorian: Yes, yes. She would have enjoyed—if she had lived to see the high school basketball team.

Bruder: She would have relished that?

M.Asadorian: Ohhh.

Bruder: Those same little kids were playing in her gym.

M.Asadorian: Yes, that's right. The first five on the team were from Lincoln Place, first seven, no Eddie Mueller was and who was the other one--

E. Asadorian: I'll bet it was Farmer.

M.Asadorian: Yes, that tall, big guy. But the first five were from Lincoln Place.

Bruder: Wow

M.Asadorian: Two Armenians, one Bulgarian, one Hungarian, and one Czechoslovakian. That was your order.

Bruder: That was your state champions.

M.Asadorian: Matter of fact, I understand they just honored Andy Phillip and the boys, the championship team and we missed it. Now, I haven't been to the hall and seen

what they've done, I've never been their and it's down the street.

E. Asadorian: When they won the state championship in Chicago, no--

M.Asadorian: Urban, Champaign

E. Asadorian: The principal of our high-school, Mr. Grigsby, sent them a telegram to congratulate them and then the meat of the telegram was something like, if the foreign countries could get along like these five on the championship team, there would be no wars and this and that. Really nice the way he presented it.

M.Asadorian: When they came in, they didn't stop at the high-school. They had two or three bus loads and they came straight to Lincoln Place. That's when the gates opened for Lincoln Place. Then we were allowed.

Bruder: Anywhere you wanted to go.

M.Asadorian: Up until then, the kids could not come and visit with us.

E. Asadorian: It was a misconception on the part of their parents.

M.Asadorian: Of course, the parents didn't know what we were like. My sister and I did have two sisters who were friends. They wanted us to spend the night at their home. I asked my father and he said you gotta bed, you sleep in it, let them come sleep with you. So, I asked Evelyn and her sister—I forgot the sisters name, anyway—she said, let me ask my mother and her mother said if it's all right with them, it's all right with me. The only family I knew, they liked my sister and I so much that they thought I had come from a good family so the girls were able to spend the weekend with us. My father fell in love with those sisters and my mother couldn't feed them enough. Then when the gates opened up they used—we've been in Lincoln Place, you haven't, hahaha

Bruder: Now, all of the sudden there is this mystique about Lincoln Place
[Laughter]

M.Asadorian: Oh, yes now we were accepted, we were good people, clean people.

E. Asadorian: Just like today, after the terrorist attacks in New York. People of the Islamic faith, who have been in this country seven, eight years and own their own business. They are even being looked upon now like they're different. Yet, these are people, they're American citizens, they got all kinds of money, but now they are spit on and everything else, not because they change overnight, but because they're Islamic.

Bruder: Sadly, that's true.

M.Asadorian: But, you know there is good and bad in everybody, in every race, in every race.

Bruder: I'll share something with you. You know how there's so much study now about the human genome that we are trying to take apart our DNA to isolate every genetic code or every factor in each code. What they found was that as human beings are separated into four general races according to how your eye is shaped and your skin color; the similarities between human beings far outweigh the differences. We are 99.88% identical and the only thing that separates us is .02%--

M.Asadorian: Color?

Bruder: Which is a little more melanin in your system or whatever, but we've been so brainwashed to look at each other differently--

Both: Yes, yes.

Bruder: In fact we all are basically the same, basically the same

E. Asadorian: 99% the same

Bruder: Right, right, and hearing it quantified like that statistically really kind of brought it home for me was how ridiculous and how divided that people are. I mean, for people to look at Lincoln Place residents and then because you win a state championship, all of a sudden you've changed? Isn't that something?

E. Asadorian: I worked for the federal government and they teach you train different.....between blacks and whites.

Bruder: Right.

E. Asadorian: So we had black friends and we had white friends. All of a sudden they bring you pictures they took at home. And there was a black guy, I remember was Highland Delatchment. Man, he had his paintings on his walls and everything else and you'd look at that guy and you'd figure how can he afford this on the salary that he makes? Well you don't stop to realize that his wife is a teacher and their making twice the salary that you're bringing home. It sure didn't look like the home of a black individual. It looked like a mansion.

Bruder: Well, Mr. Asadorian, it's getting kind of late. Do you want to add anything to the transcript?

E. Asadorian: No.

Bruder: I can't think of anything that...we spoke about the church. We talked about

Miss Prather. I guess I'll do, go ahead--

E. Asadorian: We've got young kids today that belong to the Armenian organizations. There's one that is called the...it use to be called the Sahagwyns. They would call themselves A.Y.F.-Armenian Youth Federations. At one time the A.Y.F. And the A.R.F. were so hell bent to take the lands that were taken from us given to Turkey away from Turkey even by force. Many of these people had relatives that lived in Armenia. They worked and they got money and everything else and even though they talked about the fatherlands and everything else, many of them that had the financial capabilities to go visit that country have not gone. It seems real funny to me that all during your youth you talk about freed and independent Armenia and once it's established, you forget about it. You haven't gone to visit. Not that everybody has to go but this is the thing today that is seems like it was a drive for them. It was one of the things in the organization that once it materialized, they didn't go to visit them. And surprisingly, because many of these people are capable of doing that. I keep thinking to myself...you think one way but when the time comes you don't pursue that.

Bruder: Yes, for whatever reason. Father Vartan was talking about how even though they call part of Turkey, Western Turkey, but he said no. It's Eastern Armenia.

E. Asadorian: Yes.

Bruder: The physical, the geographical boundary, sometimes isn't representative of the true nation.

E. Asadorian: I don't know if you went into details or not but they ruined a lot of Armenian churches. The Turkish Government did.

Bruder: Right. They used them for mortar practice, target practice. Yes, yes.

E. Asadorian: The humiliation that the girls took from the Turkish soldiers. Many, many of the Armenians lost their faith. They figured that things like that happened to us, the good Lord sure isn't looking at us. But the people lie. Because then if he gave his own Son, for us.

Bruder: So how do you explain--

E. Asadorian: Yes--

Bruder: How do you explain it?

E. Asadorian: It's difficult.

Bruder: How do you come to terms with that? With what happened to your ancestors?

E. Asadorian: I had a friend of mine whose telling me that when your going to the garden, the one you plucked. The flower you plucked most is the one that's the most beautiful. Yes, so we can turn around and say well in order for that flower to become beautiful, you pluck out all of the other weeds and you nurture that flower. You're not suppose to think that way, You're suppose to except the fact that the good Lord wants to take somebody he takes the one that's most beautiful. Otherwise, why should young kids die through an accident or something like this, and yet you have dope dealers and all kinds of guys that have immoral morals and everything else, but it still didn't.

Bruder: I guess it is the age old question, why do bad things happen to good people?

E. Asadorian: Yes. There's got to be a reason for it. It's difficult sometimes to understand it, but--

Bruder: Yes, I guess if we understood it, what would that make us? Says in scripture, that the Lord's ways are higher than ours and His thoughts are not our thoughts. So if we could understand it all, there wouldn't be that separation. Well, thank you for your generosity, your food, your water--

E. Asadorian: OK

Bruder: I appreciate it. All right.

[Interview ends]