Narrator: A. Andreas Matoesian

Interviewer: John W. Tedrick

Date and Place: November 10, 2001, at Mr. Matoesian's home, [redacted]

[redacted]

Mr. John W. Tedrick: I'm John Tedrick, this is the 10th of November 2001, I'm doing an interview with Andreas Matoesian in Edwardsville, Illinois. Mr. Matoesian, please state your full name and spell it please.

Mr. Andreas Matoesian: A. Andreas, A N D R E A S, Matoesian, M A T O E S I A N

Mr. Tedrick: Thank you. Mr. Matoesian, we've spoken a bit about Lincoln Place, could you tell me what it was like growing up there.

Mr. Matoesian: It was, of course I didn't know otherwise, but from talking to friends it was a great experience, because there were a lot of kids from every age group. It was a small neighborhood, there were always buddies to hang around with, there was the community center. It was a very close knit, it was actually a neighborhood is what it was, with different ethnic groups. It was a great experience.

Mr. Tedrick: When did you live there?

Mr. Matoesian: I was born in 1937 and I lived there till college, well I guess I was eighteen years old. And then, well even during college, then when I got married, so when I got married, I lived there for twenty-one years.

Mr. Tedrick: When did your parents move to Lincoln Place?

Mr. Matoesian: I believe that was 1920.

Mr. Tedrick: Ok, where did they come from?

Mr. Matoesian: Armenia. Both parents were from Armenia.

Mr. Tedrick: So they both immigrated about 1920.

Mr. Matoesian: I think my mother was a little earlier; my mother immigrated first to Davenport, then to Iowa. My father came to Granite City. He had two cousins that paid his way over in 1920. It could have been a little earlier than 1920, and then my mother was in Iowa. They got married when she coincidentally moved to Granite City.

Mr. Tedrick: You mentioned going to school. Could you tell me about going to school while you lived there, at Lincoln Place?

Mr. Matoesian: You mean grade school.

Mr. Tedrick: Sure, grade school or high school.

Mr. Matoesian: At the community center, there was a, I guess nowadays it would be called it pre-school. There was no Kindergarten as I recall. Most of the children in my generation, went to the community center, and they had like a, I don't know if you'd call it day school or what, I remember a little bit about it. Then we started first grade. I went to one through six at Washington School, which was actually at West Granite. Which, I guess is less than a mile away from where I lived. Then junior high was in downtown Granite City, and then, of course, the high school was out, high school was three miles from my house.

Mr. Tedrick: Any specific memories of grade school?

Mr. Matoesian: Oh sure, first through sixth grade, I remember it well. What about it exactly? I understand that I didn't speak much English when I started school, because my parents spoke Armenian in the home. I guess my English was not too good. I spoke pretty good Armenian, better than I do now. The teachers were all very, very nice at grade school. I understand, from later on, after I became an adult, they chose the teachers very carefully for Washington school. When I say carefully, I guess those who understood that the students came from all these varied backgrounds. The teachers were all very kind. There are still a few of them living that I occasionally meet. I know they always said that the students at Washington school were easy to control; there was no discipline problem, because it was just the threat of telling our parents that we were out of line. They said it was very easy to control the students.

Mr. Tedrick: Sounds like they made an intentional effort to pick teachers that would appreciate the diverse nature of the community.

Mr. Matoesian: That's my understanding of it.

Mr. Tedrick: Armenian being your first language spoken, about what time did English become more comfortable? How was it to work your way into that, in the school system?

Mr. Matoesian: Well, I think I always spoke English and Armenian at home, but I guess, I'm not sure, I thought I spoke English; it's a strange thing to try to remember. My, of course, older brothers and sisters, I was the youngest until, for about ten years. I have a younger brother who's eleven years younger than I am, but of course we learned English from them, and from your playmates. I don't have any problem with the language. There was a bit of a problem with pronouncing that and then, because I guess from my parents, that came out as *"dat"*, and those came out as *"Dose"*. The th sounds, but other than that [no significant problem existed]. We effected our parent's English I believe. As we grew up, our talking would teach our parents.

Mr. Tedrick: From our talk before, you mentioned that your father ran a barbershop there. I think I've got a small diagram here. [We are viewing the attached diagram/map if Lincoln Place.]

Mr. Matoesian: He was a barber for a whole sixty years.

Mr. Tedrick: Is that the correct location [reference to diagram] there on what [street]?,

Mr. Matoesian: Right next to Gabby's Tavern, it was 938 Niedringhaus I believe. The Koleff's building, well I see how this map works now. Ok, you've got, well let's see, this is Niedringhaus, actually I think the Donjoian restaurant was on the corner, oh I see, ok there's the Donjoian's. Artis Cleaners, Gabby's Tavern, and later Artis Cleaners, this area here right next to the barbershop. Ok, there was the silent movie house, Donjoian restaurant that was on the corner, in between there was a very narrow building that was later Gabby's Tavern; Gabby's Tavern, the barbershop, Koleff Building. In between the Koleff Building and my dad's shop was a recessed area that was actually a garden type, and it was the coffee house. The [Duke's] I think owned that. That's pretty close.

Mr. Tedrick: Was the barbershop kind of a gathering spot for folks too, to share stories.

Mr. Matoesian: It was, of course there were business places, it was different than a restaurant or a tavern. When I was barbering, I worked my way through college and law school as a barber. Friends would drop in and chat. More of gathering places, there was a, with some of the taverns, there was a little confectionary poolroom where there was a lot of congregating for the younger folks. To some extent, though, the barbershops were.

Mr. Tedrick: As far as, you mentioned a pre-school in the community center or clubhouse, depending on how it was called. What were some of the type things they taught there as far as, for lack of better words, the Americanization Process?

Mr. Matoesian: I don't think it was that important for kids of my generation, I can remember, we had little cots to take naps on. I can remember some of the lunches that were served in the basement area. I think it was more like a games type thing, more of a recreational area. I guess they may have given us some lessons I don't recall that. I don't remember any writing, when I say pre-school I don't think it was a formalized. That could have possibly started and I'm not sure, you're going to have to talk to someone older. Possibly for the kids that were ten years older than I am, they may have had more difficulty with the English language, I'm not sure. It's a good point, and I'm going to have to find out myself. I'd like to know why the pre-school was started, because pre-school was, I don't think the school system had Kindergarten. That's a good point, I don't know.

Mr. Tedrick: For the older folks that were there, there's been talk about citizenship classes, that type thing, from talking to other folks. Any memories of talking to either your father or your mother about those type things?

Mr. Matoesian: I understand from talking to my mother and father that my mother used to help some of the people with taking their citizenship test. My mother had gone to school in the U. S. through possibly the eighth grade or so. My dad, I think it was who was older; he had gone to school in the old country that did not have any formal training in America. He actually self taught it; he used to love to read the dictionary of all things. My mother would help some of the older people, I could remember her having friends come over, they would drink Turkish coffee and have cakes and whatnot. She would write letters for them or read letters to them, that they got from the old country. My dad was, his whole life was work, work, work, family; had to take

care of the family. It's interesting that my mother had no accent, not much of an accent, very little. My father had a pretty heavy accent. I think it makes a difference on when he came to the country with [language]. My mother was younger when she came to the U. S. She could have been fourteen, thirteen, I'm not sure. My father was near twenty when he came to this country. Incidentally, when you ask about ages is, everyone relinquishes the same when you ask when someone would die or whatever, how old were they. [As if quoting another.] "His age is listed as eighty, but he was much older." I understand they lied about their age; it would help to come into the country when you were younger.

Mr. Tedrick: Mother spoke; mother and father both spoke Armenian, were there any other languages that they spoke.

Mr. Matoesian: Everybody knew a few words in other languages, such as Spanish, Hungarian, Macedonian, Bulgarian. My, I know my uncle spoke quite a bit of Turkish, because Armenia was taken over by Turkey. Any of the words spoken was listed as Armenian, when actually those were Turkish words. By the way, as a side [note], a friend of mine, who married someone from the old country, she came over later and she taught at this, he said to me one day, "What does donsalata mean?" I said, "Basement." He said, "No, there's no such word in Armenian." It was pigeon English; don salata is down in the cellar. My folks used that for years, donsalata, or sometimes dom, D O M cellar, domsalata. So the original question was about different languages, even growing up, I spoke a few words of Hungarian, Macedonian, but basically me and my folks knew a little bit of other languages. The butchers and the grocery owners, I made mention to you before, it seems like they spoke several languages. I can

remember going to the grocery store and there were like, five or six grocery stores at Lincoln Place. One was run by an Armenian family, and there were, I think, four run by Macedonians. I can remember standing at the butcher counter and the butcher would speak to one of the Mexican ladies in Spanish, and then would greet me in an Armenian word or two or greeting. He'd speak to different people now in there own language. I guess just enough to serve them you know, what kind of meat they wanted and what kind of groceries and stuff like that. I know from looking at old naturalization records, I don't know if you're interested in doing that sometime, but they were at the city hall in Granite City. They've now been moved to Edwardsville, and in fact Charlie Merzian who you said you interviewed, came up one time and we looked up some old records. These are naturalization records. I'm not quite sure if there was a petition for naturalization then there was a final order or what by the court, but on some of the papers, there would be someone who signed that person was a person of good character. I noticed a lot of the names as witnesses, witnesses are vouching for that person's credibility, were the grocery owners. I've seen the name Lovacheff and Mitseff, so I don't quite know how it worked. I've seen their name many times if someone was going to go get their naturalization papers, the final test would kind of sound pretty simple. A few questions were asked if in English, back then the state circuit judges, I guess, were helping out the federal immigration people. I don't know if someone told them they needed someone to vouch, a citizen to vouch for their character, but I noticed a lot of grocers signed as witnesses.

Mr. Tedrick: For the interaction in a grocery store, you'd have lots of different language and lots of different family backgrounds.

Mr. Matoesian: Incidentally, the grocery stores, the people would go to the grocery store, or you could call them on the phone and order over the phone. I think Schnuks may have started that recently for a fee; they'll deliver groceries to you. We had that for years, in fact, I, when I became fifteen and got a driver's license, I did deliver groceries in Lincoln Place. That was kind of a plush job. My mother did it many times; she would call the grocery store and say I want such and such and they would deliver it. I don't know if they made one or two, or any time of the day, they made deliveries. Each grocery store had a panel truck; a small panel truck in which they'd move the groceries.

Mr. Tedrick: Quite a difference now.

Mr. Matoesian: As far as a gathering place, I would say the grocery store was the gathering place and the community center, the clubhouse, and then the coffee house. Of course there were taverns, there were a lot of taverns too. Mainly men went to taverns back then. You didn't see women in taverns.

Mr. Tedrick: Seems like over the time the perception of what a tavern is now is a lot different from what it was there.

Mr. Matoesian: They were neighborhood taverns, I guess, they were local people who had them. We always went in to get the bottle caps or get a soda. I guess [kids] probably can't go in the taverns nowadays, unless with an adult. We played a game called bottle caps. We pitched the bottle cap and hit it with a broomstick, but we went in and out of taverns all the time. There

were a lot of [taverns]. There were several restaurants in Lincoln Place too, that served ethnic food.

Mr. Tedrick: Were the places like that, a way people could kind of hang on to their background and heritage.

Mr. Matoesian: In fact, there was one coffee house that catered mainly to Macedonians and, I guess, the Slavic nationalities. The Macedonian and Bulgarian Croatians there would go to the one coffee house; there were actually, at one time, two coffee houses that catered to Armenians. There may have been two, there may have been four, and it was kind of divided up two and two. The Mexicans did not have a coffee house. Now that I think back, there was what was called Hungarian Home; it is now owned by the, it was donated to the Mexican Honorary Society. The top sign says Magyar [Majar, Hungarian for Hungarian] House. There were plays put on there, I can remember. The Mexicans did not have a coffee house; there were a couple of coffee houses for, I guess, the Armenians. A couple that catered to the Slavic, same way with the taverns. Sociological studies should be done on that.

Mr. Tedrick: That'd be interesting, definitely, to see what background. You mentioned that you went through law school, and I know you're a retired judge.

Mr. Matoesian: No, I'm not retired.

Mr. Tedrick: Oh, I'm sorry, I had heard retired.

Mr. Matoesian: Who'd you talk to, Judge Delaurenti [A judge known to both Judge Matoesian and myself in Bond County] I've been a judge this month, thirty-six years.

Mr. Tedrick: Goodness!

Mr. Matoesian: I started very early.

Mr. Tedrick: What led you into that career area?

Mr. Matoesian: Good Question. I went to law school because some of my friends went to law school, one of my older brothers was a lawyer and he didn't encourage me, but my friends went to law school so I went to law school. I was going to school; I started at U. of I. [University of Illinois], then I transferred to S.I.U [Southern Illinois University Carbondale]. I think I was trying to avoid taking some hard courses. I was about eight or ten hours shy of having my degree at S.I.U. Friends of mine went to law school so I went to law school, then when I started practicing law, I practiced a short time. I did not like the practice of law. There was an opening for associate judge, two openings, and I applied, and a friend of mine applied and we got it together. I think it's because, it was kind of based on geographics back then. There was two openings, he was twenty-six, I was twenty-eight, I was from Granite City and he was from Collinsville. We were chose, I guess they wanted someone fresh, I'm not sure.

Mr. Tedrick: You mentioned food, a lot of different places to eat there of ethnic type food. How did that impact holidays and such, are there any special foods for,

Mr. Matoesian: Not that I recall. You see, there were a lot of bachelors that lived in Lincoln Place. You've probably heard this story from the others, some of the railroads were, I guess, in these apartment houses or coal water flats whatever. Single rooms would be rented to three men and they would keep that bed warm twenty-four hours a day while one was sleeping and the other was working and so forth. There were a lot of bachelors in Lincoln Place, so restaurants were needed to feed the bachelors. That's, in my reasoning, why there were so many restaurants. Then you'd have the steel plants, the Army Depot. People would go out to grab a quick lunch. That's the only reason I can think there were so many restaurants in a small area.

Mr. Tedrick: Just to feed, to feed a large population. Some stats show it as much as ninety-five percent bachelors in the area at one point.

Mr. Matoesian: I'll bet at first it was, I'll bet at first it was.

Mr. Tedrick: How well was Lincoln Place accepted by, you know, there's the division even on the map that we talk about. Ok, this is this side of the tracks and this is the other.

Mr. Matoesian: One side was Niedringhaus and then the other was Pacific. I don't think there was as much prejudice when I was growing up, there was some, maybe I just didn't want to think there was prejudice. Earlier on, I think there was a lot of prejudice; the people on the

wrong side of the tracks. I hate to say this, but the Lincoln Place people looked down on the West Granite people. Now, I think it's unfortunate, but I think that was true. They talk about ten years before the fights between the West Granite and Lincoln Place kids. The downtown people did look down on the Lincoln Place kids. They tell the story, I'm sure everyone's mentioned Andy Philips, the basketball star, he died not long ago. The Granite City high school team won the state basketball tournament, state championship in 1940 or 41. Andy Philips and about five others from Lincoln Place were on that team. I think the whole team was made up of Lincoln Place players. That helped break the barrier. I think that did, although I understand that there's a picture I've seen three years ago, they were all in this picture of a big crowd was taken in Lincoln Place, in Lincoln Place and the state championship team. I understand the team would not accept the trophy unless it was presented in Lincoln Place. It's my understanding, also, that the coaches, that they wouldn't play the Lincoln Place kids, and one of the assistant coaches who was later mayor, Mayor Davidson arranged the game between the varsity and this pick-up team at the clubhouse, because, I guess he was forward looking and thought that everyone should be given a break. The Lincoln Place team beat the varsity and that's when we started playing.

Mr. Tedrick: Kind of an intro into, "Hey wait a minute, people are people."

Mr. Matoesian: I think, there was, there were prejudices of the downtown people. Of course, I had this friend; Rich Kelly [who]was Catholic, who lived at, downtown. He was told, by a girl he dated once or twice, by the father, that he could take her out if you came to the house to pick her up. [Statement made by the girl's father.] "Don't come back, you're Catholic." I

couldn't believe that Granite City had a pecking order, which was a shock to me. There was prejudice.

Mr. Tedrick: It's interesting to note that you notice that it definitely goes both ways. It's not one sided.

Mr. Matoesian: Seems like we were talking to the teachers, and we respected teachers, that was emphasized, that the teacher was always right. That they enjoyed teaching the ethnics, because there's no discipline problem and the ethnics group wanted to learn.

Mr. Tedrick: You mentioned before that all you [teachers] had to do was say, "Hey, call your parents."

Mr. Matoesian: There was definitely prejudice. I don't know if I'm being objective while I say, I don't think there was as much prejudice when I was say, in junior high and high school. There may have been but I didn't see, I think the others paved the way, and I'll tell you a story in a few minutes about Mr. Dukeleff who I met in later years. There was no prejudice in grade school because we're all the same but we had the neighborhood schools, of course. I guess, the prejudice would have started possibly in high school, but, I was an athlete and I didn't... The athletics was the levelizer if you came from the wrong side of the tracks. I heard that said and now that I think about it; I believe that it's true. I believe it is true. If you were a jock, you got to run with the upper crust, if there is such a thing. Now, Mr. Dukeleff, I'll never forget, he ran a bakery in Alton, Duke's Bakery. I can remember him as a kid; he would come down to visit his

uncle, who had a little confectionary in Lincoln Place, and forty years later, when I met Mr. Dukeleff, the one that was from Alton, he was a twin of his uncle, you know, he aged twenty years. A friend of mine and I went into Duke's Bakery in Alton, and we were talking and I, I said we were from Lincoln Place, and that brightened him up because I think he was still in love with some women from Lincoln Place from fifty years before. Of course, he spent a lot of time at his uncle's from there, and he asked us what we each did, and my friend said he was a teacher and I said I was a judge. He says, "Ah, from Lincoln Place," he says, "You know, I'm a simple baker." I said, "Mr. Dukeleff, I'm from Lincoln Place, and when some says that, I'm a simple baker, that means you can buy and sell both of us many times over," and he could, by the way. He made a ton of money, working his tail off. He had a little glint in his eye and he kind of nodded that he had done alright, but he did say, "Young boys, when I was in high school," that surprised me that he went to high school, because he came over in maybe 19…I forget, 10. He lived to be ninety something. He went to the school, went to McKinley School, and I had heard that that was a high school at one time. He said, "They used to yell at us, Hunkey, you Hunkey." He says, " We paved the way for you young ones." Now he said something to the effect of, "You've got to persist and we paved the way and made it easier for you boys." I guess there was a heck of a lot more prejudice when he came over. Now, Granite City is not that old of a town, 19… I forget, I think it was started in 1900-1910, but he was in on the, he was there before most of the Armenians came over. There were some Armenians that were there that early, but most came a little later. He's a Macedonian man, Dukeleff, eff or whatever. Talking, I talked to some of the older people, I used to like talking to the old, I still do. They talked about prejudices; well I guess it always pulls around eventually. Of course, these older people had prejudices too, of course. They had, they looked down on people. I know one thing; they looked down on people

that were lazy. So, if someone was lazy; he spends too much time in taverns, drinks too much. It was, I'm sure there was a lot of prejudice, but don't think as much when I was young.

Mr. Tedrick: It's good to see that some of it's going away and being handled, be hopefully going away and being handled, rather than just [being ignored or denied]

Mr. Matoesian: A lot of your questions are good questions because you're making me rethink and think about matters and trying to sort it out. Who knows, next week I might have a different answer, but go ahead.

Mr. Tedrick: Well thank you, I appreciate it. You mentioned your father immigrated around; well early 1900's anyway, 1920 timeframe or so. Did he describe anything, any stories about emigration process, did he come through, what, Ellis Island.

Mr. Matoesian: Ellis Island, oh yeah, he came through Ellis Island and my mother came through San Francisco. I don't know if I told you this story in the preliminaries about my father came to Ellis Island twice.

Mr. Tedrick: No, would you expand on that, please.

Mr. Matoesian: Oh, a wonderful story. He told me this in later years, and I'm going to jump ahead, and that concern that he, with this became public, and I'll tell you that story later. Here's what he tells me, first of all, I would talk to my dad about the massacres and he was

reluctant to talk about it. I think he had a guilt feeling, since he'd seen his father killed right in front of him when twelve-fourteen, around that time. The Ellis Island experience I think is a wonderful story, and it made the papers and it worried him. Here's the story. He comes through the lines at Ellis Island and he meets these two guys that he was on the boat with. They did not speak the common language; they just kind of hung around, and kind of, I guess, were friends. They were different nationalities, when he gets through [the processing line] and meets these two guys; they're excited and animated. He knew something was wrong, and they couldn't communicate. Finally, they communicated by pointing to their papers, which were, I don't know, green, and his papers were pink or whatever. So he figured out he'd been rejected. He said he was very ill because the ship makes him seasick. He said he kept throwing up at the dock. So what he did, living by his wits, I mean, come from the massacres, he pitched those papers and worked his way back through the line somehow and came through a second time. He passed that time. That reminds me, I know during the celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of the country. There was someone from New York whose name was Ferguson [Mr. Matoesian spoke the name with a heavy German accent] he was an English sounding man, and his name was Ferguson and he had a heavy German accent and the person interviewing him said, the TV commentator said, "You have this heavy German accent, but you have this English name, Ferguson, how did that come about." He says, "Well, we came through the lines," he was from Germany. There was some clerk who was snotty, he was rude and he said to the clerk, the emigration clerk, in German, something about, "Vergeson, how soon we forget." The guy thought he was telling him his name so he put down Ferguson. I saw that interview on TV. Anyway, so my father tells me that story and ten years later, I was a judge at the time, and I went down for a haircut, and took in the newspaper article showed a picture of him in the old, I guess,

Metro-East Journal. A picture of him and an interview with several people, in Lincoln Place, by one of the reporters. My dad, I gave him the article, I said, "You probably have several of these, this is a nice article." He says, "Well," he was upset. I said, "What's the problem." He said, "Well there are some things that reporters put in the paper they shouldn't put in." I said, "What are you talking about." He said, "Well, that story about coming through the line twice." I said, "Welcome to the real world father, when you don't want a reporter to print something, you say this is off the record." He said, "Well they knew that shouldn't have been." I said, "Are you worried." He says, "Well," he had kind of a worried look, and I figured out what it was, he figured that since he came through twice, that he could be deported. I said, and it's the only time that I can recall that I actually got aggressive and rude with him and I said, in a strong voice, "Now look, if you paid a lawyer for this advise, pay them hundreds of dollars an hour, if you'd take that advice, but I'm your son, I'm a lawyer, I'm a judge, but you won't take my advise." He looked at me and I said, "They cannot deport you." He said, "Why?" I made up some, well I did use the theory of latches, and I said, "No." and I gave some legal maxims, and he's looking at me with the, I guess, the term is jaundiced eye, and I said, "See, you're not believing me." So I forced him to believe me that he could not be deported. No one's going to deport a person for having done that. I think he rested a little easier, but he was, no doubt, he was pretty shook up, you know. I think there are many, many stories left out; my friends and I have discussed how our parents and these old people, old, they were probably much younger than I am now, how they butchered the language and that type of thing; wonderful stories.

Mr. Tedrick: You know, you've mentioned the massacres and that. I've done some research on it, some reading; the numbers are amazing. What's amazing to me is most Americans have never heard of it.

Mr. Matoesian: Never heard of it. [He slowly shook his head in agreement.]

Mr. Tedrick: Any thoughts on why the lack of publicity?

Mr. Matoesian: Oh, several reasons. First of all, there aren't that many Armenians, well the Turks massacred a lot of people. My parents did not like the Turks, but they didn't rub it into us everyday, like some Armenian families. Some Armenian families, it was drummed into them everyday, and I'll tell you, it's good to know the history, but it shouldn't go to an extreme. My parents, I can definitely say, didn't like Turks, my father saw his father killed right in front of him, I can tell you if you want to know. Anyway, the [task fell to the] Armenians to put the publicity out. Each year there's a resolution offered, in the House or the Senate, to declare Martyr's Day [April 24th1915]. The Turkish government fights that. I, in law school, met about fifteen Turks that were in the military that were at Washington University on some kind of program, actually got into a conversation and I said something to the effect of, "I know most Armenians don't get along with the Turks because of the massacre." They said, "What massacre." They don't teach it in Turkey. But see, we had our missile bases in Turkey and so the Turkish government looks at it as kind of a civil uprising or something to that effect. [Speaking from the accepted Turkish point of view] "They weren't all massacred. It was civil war, a small civil war." But the statistics are a million and a half to two million Armenians were

killed. Of course, you may have had someone tell that Hitler has often said, or had said in the past, when he was creating the Holocaust, "Who remembers the massacre of the Armenians." This was before modern technology and there's some pictures, but you don't have the moving pictures and whatnot. We don't have as strong of a lobby as the Jews do; there just aren't that many Armenians. With our missile bases in Turkey, well right now with the Taliban deal with Turkey has made their bases open for our airplanes. It's something that shouldn't be talked about everyday, but it shouldn't be forgotten. Now, it's interesting that I've met people who were raised in Turkey, what used to be Armenia. Some of them are less angry at the Turks than we first generation Armenians. I think it's, it depends in the family, of how much anti-Turkish propaganda we have over there.

Mr. Tedrick: It could possibly be comparable in the United States to how much a family talks about African-Americans being this or that, you know negative tone, as apposed to hey people are different. [Referencing the poor treatment of African-Americans in U. S. history and backlash created by harping versus historical reference] People do things that, people make mistakes. People do things that are wrong. Any other thoughts about Lincoln Place experience or, it seems like the sense of community there was very strong.

Mr. Matoesian: Very strong, sure.

Mr. Tedrick: How well do you think that served people there?

Mr. Matoesian: Well, I think it was important. I know there was some prejudice and at least we, we could, I guess the original groups that came over could speak with one another like any community. Growing up in America, there'll never be another Lincoln Place ever in the world. I don't see how there could be this influx of different nationalities in such a small area, but it was a great experience. Now there was rivalry amongst the groups in Lincoln Place, even amongst Armenians. You've got your big city Armenians versus your country folk. When I say rivalry, it's kind of a pecking order. I think the Armenians have a good sense of humor and it's been said to get through some of the misery, you had to have a sense of humor. By the way, one thing I remember is, you've heard of tea leaves, reading tea leaves, well I can remember very well as a youngster, my mother would have her friends over and they would drink Turkish coffee in those little cups. They would turn the cups over and spit in them and then they'd have a reader or someone. The stories they would tell and laugh, I think a sense of humor helped carry many of these people through, there are certain Armenian jokes that lose in the translation, but I think the Armenians have a good sense of humor.

Tape 1 of 1 side B

Mr. Tedrick: We're on side two of the tape now, we had just been, I'd just been listening to how humor is used to deal with certain issue. Go ahead sir.

Mr. Matoesian: I think that's true with any ethnic group, that humor can help carry you through. Different groups of Lincoln Place were stereotyped; Hungarians were known to be very tight-fisted. Armenians were tight-fisted too. Those from, like the Mexicans, they drank more than most groups. The Hungarians were hard working, duchy clean; I guess you'd say, always

cleaning and taking beautiful care of their property. Did I tell you the joke about when Hungarians commit suicide, why do they commit suicide by hanging rather than shooting.

Mr. Tedrick: No, go ahead.

Mr. Matoesian: Well you save the price of a bullet and you get to use the rope over. I mentioned that to the court psychologist, Dr. Taleana who one time I was telling about the Hungarian joke, and he said, "Well, the literatures show that there was a higher incidence of suicide among Hungarians," you know. I don't have enough knowledge on that to [say], there were a few Hungarians who committed suicide.

Mr. Tedrick: Seems like, again, being able to laugh at a situation, but still take it serious.

Mr. Matoesian: You got to be able to laugh at a situation. Amongst Armenians, there's a joke, my wife's folks came from the big city, Van [Turkey], and they're known to be tight-fisted, although I'll tell you the stereotype doesn't work with my wife, she's not tight-fisted when it comes to furniture and all that type. A person, a Vanitzy they're called, of this particular group from the big city meet, the husband and wife meet someone from, another Armenian couple. As they're leaving, the big city couple, the husband says, "And a thousand good lucks to you," and as they leave the wife says to her husband, "Well why did you say a thousand, why didn't you say a hundred good lucks." It loses in the translation. I don't know if you've ever heard this story, someone may have told you. Twenty-five years ago, there was an article in one of the Chicago papers that the next, the world language [he laughs], I hadn't thought of it this way, the

world language, when we eventually have a world language, is going to be Armenian or it should be Armenian, and you wonder why. Well, you have Armenians all over the world, Armenians are everywhere, South America, my mother and her family lived in Japan for a while. It's not a national power, so you couldn't have French, or Russian, or English, because these are world powers, they'd all be jealous. The Armenian language, and my Armenian is not that good, it was better when I was a kid, is a language that is adaptable and you don't have to make new words, and it's something about that there are thirty-six letters in the alphabet versus twenty-six. Anyway, it's supposed to be the perfect language, so I've had fun with my Armenian friends and non-Armenian friends about the world language. It's amazing, you meet an Armenian almost anywhere. You see the "ian" or "yan" [at the end of a sir name] and it's such a small group that as soon as you see that name, it's recognizable.

Mr. Tedrick: Thinking of any, anything else, how would you, if you had to just some up your experience of what it did for you or how it impacted your life living at Lincoln Place.

Mr. Matoesian: Wonderful experience. We weren't raised with just Armenians, we were raised, like I said with Macedonians, Bulgarians, Mexicans, Doverites, when I say Doverites, there were a lot of people in Lincoln Place from Dover, Dover, Tennessee.

Mr. Tedrick: Ok.

Mr. Matoesian: And, Mexicans, we all learned from each other's culture, each other, we were in each other's homes. I think it made me less prejudice. When I went to Texas, or

California, they talked about this, this prejudice towards the Mexicans, I couldn't understand it, because I grew up with Mexicans and I hate the old cliché about they were some of my best friends, but I was in their homes and I appreciated the Mexicans, Macedonians, Bulgarians. I think it made me and most of us more tolerant, I really do. We learned each other's, a little bit of each other's cultures, I don't know how best to put it, I guess it made me and most of my friends more tolerant.

Mr. Tedrick: I think that's true of any culture that we live with, the more we get exposed to it, the more we go, "Wait a minute, we got more alike than more different."

Mr. Matoesian: Yes, I do think [so], Professor Kimball once said this, I had a history course with Professor Kimball, he said, I think I had world history with him at S.I.U, [S.I.U.E.] and I know his specialty is the Slavic area, and I think he had one of these study groups, I think at Lincoln Place. He said, "You know, we Americans are naïve, we don't understand the European mind. When our ambassadors and whatnot, go over and talk to someone from Europe or Japan, we are not skeptical enough." Now, I guess this is a paradox. I think growing up made me skeptical yet more understanding. I don't know how to explain that. You don't take something at face value, you show respect. Well someone said one time, that the Japanese have ten ways to say no. I don't quite understand that. He said when we're dealing with the Russians, now he may have been anti-Russian; I'm not sure about that. Professor Kimball, he says, "They'll look you in the face and say yes or no." [The implication was that the responses may have been less than honest or direct.] My father, when I was growing up, and I guess they still do it in school, we youngsters all were patriotic, America, America. As you get older, I guess

you realize that George Washington wasn't a saint, and that type of thing. My father was, at times, very skeptical of big government, yet respectful. I think, you've heard the story, the older you get, the more you realize how much you, or when you get older you find out your parents learned a lot. It makes you more tolerant, yet more skeptical, there's got to be a word for that.

Mr. Tedrick: I think joining the two of them together works pretty well. Skeptical, not just taking everything at face value, but taking a look at it, but yet being tolerant and respectful.

Mr. Matoesian: My folks, and most of them, always taught, treat your elders with respect. It was always, "Baron" [Armenian word], which is mister. You'd never call someone by their first name. They told us we should, and boy respect for teachers. I mean a teacher was god, and someday you could be a teacher. Now, a friend of mine, who was a retired teacher, said his father, the way he did, he was a Macedonian, they would go take a ride over to St. Louis, and they'd see these beautiful mansions. They'd say, someday, when you're a teacher, you can have a house like that. He became a teacher, and he found out he's not going to afford a beautiful house like this one, this mansion. Respect, it didn't matter if a person was a factory worker or, it was always, mister and show respect. Of course, not all Armenians are that way, or Macedonians for example, but the respect …

Mr. Tedrick: I think that really sums it up.

Mr. Matoesian: Yes, ok.

Mr. Tedrick: Thank you very much.

Mr. Matoesian: Sure.