

Interviewer: Amanda Frauenfelder

INTERVIEW AND TAPE SUMMARY

Name: Nevart Hagopian

Date and Place of Birth: Moush, Armenia, May 14, 1908.

Address: Century Drive, Granite City, IL 62040
* Colonnades Nursing Home *

Telephone Number: N/A

Interview Date, Time, and Place:

11/18/01, 1-2pm, Colonnades Nursing Home,
Granite City, IL

Interview Summary (attach additional sheets, as needed):

Nevart Hagopian resided in Granite City
for several years. She came to
Lincoln Place in 1920, at the age of 12.
She grew up there, and after marriage
continued to reside there. She
was born in 1908 & survived the Armenian
genocide during WWI. She lost eyesight in
one eye @ a very early age. She
was a hard worker. She described adjusting
to the US & life in Lincoln Place. She
recently lost one son. She lost her husband
several years ago.

Note any special circumstances involving the interview:

@ Nursing home. Nevart, 93, speaks
mostly Armenian. There was a
translator, Father Kassabian. Nevart can
only stay awake for a few hours.
She speaks another language & is elderly, but
she's pretty sharp & very attentive.
There was a heater making noise, a
phone ringing, & an elderly woman sleeping/snooring
in the next room -- some noise in background.

Amanda Frauenfelder
November 30, 2001
History 447
Biography #2

Biography of Nevart Hagopian

Thousands of immigrants came to Granite City and nearby towns for jobs at factories, meat packing plants, and the railroads. Immigrants coming to the US were hoping to achieve the American dream and make a better life for their families. The community of Lincoln Place in Granite City, Illinois, attracted many Mexican, Armenian, Macedonian, and Greek, to name a few, immigrants. The steel factories provided jobs in walking distance from Lincoln Place. Lincoln Place offered English and citizenship classes, which was attractive to those who just arrived on Ellis Island. The Commonwealth Steel Company built a Community Center for the residents of Lincoln Place. Lincoln Place had a diverse ethnic background that allowed ethnic groups to maintain their heritage while interacting with others.

Avedis Parsaghian came to the US from Moush, Armenia, before World War I began. He wanted a better life for his family, whom he temporarily left behind in Armenia. For a while he worked on building the railroads in the east, then settled in Lincoln Place after getting a job at the Commonwealth Steel factory. He sent money back to his wife, Avedis, and his baby girl, Nevart. During WWI, the Turks were responsible for the Armenian genocide, which resulted in around two million Armenian deaths. Ankeen sent his brother to Armenia to rescue Avedis and Nevart and bring them to America in 1920. Ankeen was anxious and went to New York at the same time his brother, wife, and daughter arrived in Lincoln Place. Ankeen, Avedis, and Nevart Parsaghian finally reunited after years of written correspondence. Nevart did not recognize her father since it was the first time she met him.

Nevart and her mother survived the Armenian genocide; however, the rest of their family did not. In order to survive, during the day they hid in the wheat fields, baskets, boxes, and under haystacks from the Turkish soldiers. Nevart recalled looking down into the bottom of the mountains and into the fields watching the soldiers smoke their pipes and search for Armenians. At night they would travel through the fields. At times they would lay very still in the fields, under the moon, and feel the Turkish horsemen pass by. It was a miracle she and her mother were not injured.

Nevart arrived at Lincoln Place in 1920 at the age of twelve. She led a very rich life and survived many hardships and losses. She lost all of her relatives, except her parents and uncle, during the genocide. As a child her left eye was severely injured and she lost sight in it. In her late eighties and early nineties she lost much sight in her right eye. She spoke and wrote Armenian when arriving to the US. She was mainstreamed into Washington public school and had to learn English. It was not as hard for her to learn English as it was for her parents and other adults. Nevart still prefers to speak in Armenian. She attended grade school and religion classes but did not attend high school (her sisters did) because she was needed to help at home. Around 1924, at the age of sixteen, Nevart married a much older man by the name of Kasper Hagopian; her father had arranged the marriage. Her husband died in 1983. They had three sons, two of whom are still alive. A couple of years ago one of her sons was murdered at the age of 71. The son who was killed was the one to whom she was the closest. His death was very hard on her and her health has deteriorated since. Nevart has been very depressed due to losing him. It is hard for mothers to lose their children; she feels she should have died before him. Nevart Hagopian, now 93 years old, has survived a great deal of tragedy in her lifetime.

Despite the trials in her life, Nevart bears many fond memories of Lincoln Place. She lived there for several years. She adored Miss Prather, who was active at the Community Center, and reminisced about dancing and socializing there. Her sisters, Isabella, 78, and Helen, 75, were very active there as well. She enjoyed the Community Center and the Armenian Club. Since Nevart is from the first generation that immigrated to Lincoln Place, almost all of the friends she made were Armenian. She had learned how to cook, dance, write, and speak in Armenia and held onto the traditions. She loved to go to the Armenian dances and other social events. Nevart remained active in the church and other organizations for years and years until she had to go to a nursing home a few years ago. Nevart was a good mother and very close to her sons. She values the strong relationships she has maintained with her sisters, Isabella and Helen, who visit her in the nursing home daily. Nevart Hagopian is a survivor and a fighter. She has lived through so much, the interview touches on some of the highlights of her life, but there is so much more, ninety-three years more!