

MICHAEL J. HAGOPIAN INTERVIEW

Part 1

March 23, 1975

[Tape 1 In the garden]

Interviewer – You can start digging and talking at the same time.

Mr. Chitjian – I feel privileged...

Interviewer – Please look at me while digging and talking.

Mr. Chitjian – Yeah. I feel so privileged...This is like a miracle for me. I think miracles do happen in our life. We had gardens in Yerger (referring to his motherland) planted by the Armenians.

Interviewer – Please look at me while talking.

Mr. Chitjian – My father and I would go to these gardens, yards and fields – all green and covered with grass. When the Armenians were killed by the Turks, all these gardens passed into the hands of the Turks. Everything got closed, broken and destroyed. The trees were all destroyed. Everything became deserted. The situation was so bad, that we couldn't even speak Armenian. We forgot the language, and two years later we didn't know even one word in Armenian. When it all started we were 14. At 16 or 17 we didn't know a word in Armenian. They tortured us, they killed us...until we went to Kharpert...

Interviewer – Can you describe the fields?

Mr. Chitjian – The fields were all green - full of trees and berries. Everything was green. Houses, rivers...We had two rivers – the Moorad River and the Euphrates, both were surrounded by large gardens and yards. Everything was great until all of these things got destroyed. It was like the black crow started calling over them.

[Tape 2 In the garden]

Interviewer - Please start talking again.

Mr. Chitjian - In the spring of 1915 my father and I went to the garden to cultivate the land. When we were halfway home, we encountered a villager who warned my father, "Mardiros, don't go to Perri. They are beating and killing everyone there". My father left me there and joined the Kurds. A week later he came home to take me and my brothers to the Turkish orphanage...magtab. He left us there and we haven't seen our father since then. I have a twin brother, Kaspar. I have also two brothers who are younger than me. We were all taken to the orphanage. After experiencing a lot of sufferings, me and my brothers were taken away by different Turks. Our youngest brother was killed but other brothers of mine were still alive. My twin brother also survived. But we had been sufficiently tortured before that...The sufferings we experienced because of the Tuks...I wouldn't wish that on my worst enemy.

[Tape 3 In the garden]

Interviewer – Root the plant out and continue talking.

Mr. Chitjian – My father was put to prison. A week later he was released. He came home and took his four sons to the Turks...to the Turkish magtab. He said, "Stay here for now. They will send me to America. I will let you know when I go there. I will send you money and letters. You will come to Kharpert and we will go to America together". That never happened. A week later we heard that everyone had been killed. The Turks changed our names. Though I was 14, I was taller than my peers. They started separating boys according to their age and I appeared in the group of the older boys who were designated to be killed on that day. I managed to escape. A blind Turkish man took me under his care. I lived with him a year until the Dersim people came and started killing the Turks. There were Armenians among them too. We managed to escape and reached a place near Itchme. After two-three years of sufferings I went to Mezreh. I was lucky enough to serve in Dr. Michael's house. I was happy there for some time. I made a living by repairing old shoes.

I had two brothers, one was six and the other one was nine. The brother that was nine was taken to a village called Pertak and he managed to survive. But the other brother of mine that was six was thrown into the water and killed. I found my brother in Dr. Michael's house.

One of my duties in Dr. Michael's house was to bring bread from the poorr (bakery), 40-50 loaves every day. I would cut the bread into four parts to distribute to the poor. In Mezreh I had a friend whose name was Hagop Holopigian. He repaired shoes in verin shoogah (upper marketplace). I told him to inform the Armenians to come to our house for bread.

One day I heard two loud knocks on the door. I assumed there must be two people waiting, so I went to the door with two pieces of bread to hand out. I opened the door. I saw Hagop and a small poor orphan standing next to him. I handed a piece of bread to the orphan but he refused to take it.

[Tape 4]

Interviewer – OK. Please start talking again.

Mr. Chitjian – The Turks changed our names and I was named Rooshdee. We were very scared because there were dead bodies of the Armenians all around us. The Turks threatened us saying that if we didn't forget that we were Armenians the same would happen to us. When we were 14 we still remembered our language. But we were so scared that two years later we completely forgot how to speak Armenian. When we went to a village called Itchme we met an Armenian boy who had come from Mezreh, Kharpert. He said, "I will teach you the Armenian language". He started speaking Armenian - "hats", (bread) "dzoor" (water). We became so emotional when we heard Armenian words. He told us that there were a lot of Armenians in Mezreh.

So we moved to Mezre. I had an aunt living there who made her living by doing others' laundry. She used to do Dr. Michael's laundry too. She took me to Dr. Michael's house. His family accepted me and I was very happy there. He had two children – Hagopig and Mariam. One of my chores was to take them for a walk in their garden. Another chore of mine was to bring food for them from shops. Every

day I bought 40-50 loaves of bread. I would cut the bread into four parts to distribute to the poor. One of them was my lost brother, age 12-13, whom I hadn't seen since he was 9. One day I heard two loud knocks on the door. I assumed there must be two poor people waiting, so I went to the door with two pieces of bread to hand out. One of them was my classmate Hagop Holopigian. He asked, "Can you recognize this poor orphan?" When I lifted up the orphans face, I recognized my brother. This way I found one of my brothers but I didn't know where my other brothers were. In 1921 I heard that my twin brother Kaspar had also survived and moved to Constantinople.

We lived with the Turks until 1920-1921 when the Kurds, who had been occasionally working for us for a few cents, informed us that they were moving to Armenia. They asked if we would like to join the caravan. And we did. I had to give them 8 Turkish gold coins to bribe the caravan leader to allow me to travel with them. I walked with them until we reached Palu. There were two Armenian young men in our group, the cousins of Reverend Yeghoyan from Kharpert. Yeghoyan was a well-known man among people. One of his cousin's name was Nazaret and the other's name was Avedis. I soon found out that they had paid 5-10 gold pieces each to travel with the caravan to Armenia. We all reached Kughee. Soon the Kurds we we had bribed were caught by the leader. A couple of Kurds called us over and asked how much gold coins we had given to join the caravan. We answered, "10 gold coins".

[Tape 6 or 7 In the garden]

Mr. Chitjian - So the Kurds who had taken money from us were caught by the leader. This leader gathered us in one place. At first I thought that only me and Yeghoyan's cousins had paid money to the Kurds but...

[Next tape Lemon scene]

Interviewer - You can talk walking...

Mr. Chitjian - So at first I thought that only me and Yeghoyan's cousins had paid money to the Kurds but no...When we sat under a huge pureench tree, it turned out that there were 10-15 girls who had done the same. The Kurds gathered these girls

together. We were three boys and 10-15 Armenian girls and we all wanted to flee to Armenia. The Kurds started showing hostile attitude towards us. What they did to the girls was even worse. The Kurds took them away and disappeared. Yeghoyan's cousins and I stayed there. The Kurds told us, "We will kill you if you don't obey us. You must take care of our horses and donkeys so that people from adjacent villages don't come and steal them". We said "OK". In the evening Yeghoyan's cousin Avedis, who had served in the Turkish army, suggested, "Let's escape, boys". We asked, "Where should we go?" He said, "We have reached Khnus. We need to walk towards Mount Ararat". At night all three of us left that place and started walking. We were able to walk only one or two hours for the fear of being caught and killed. We were also desperate because we didn't know exactly what direction to follow. We walked for about two or three hours and only when it was dark. During the daytime, when we saw smoke or light from fireplaces, we didn't go that direction.

Two days later we reached Jahbaghchoor. We were walking over mountains. We tried to stay away from villages. Suddenly we noticed a Kurd walking with his cattle to the field. Avedis said, "He must have bread with him. Let's go and see if we can take it from him". We came up to the Kurd and asked if he had bread. We didn't tell him that we were Armenians. He thought we were soldiers. Out of fear this man took out his bread and gave it to us. When we asked him where we were at the moment, he said, "Can you see that white peak in the distance? That's Mount Ararat." So now we knew where we were going to. Every day, for two and a half months, we ate only grass and vegetable-like food that was not too bitter. There was no lack of water there. Finally, walking over mountains, we reached Bayazid. I looked at my friend - his face, hair and hands were distorted. I began crying. He asked, "Why are you crying". I replied, "Your face made me cry". He said, "If we had a mirror, you would be able to see *your* face".

We didn't know where exactly we were and who these people were - Armenians, Turks, Persians? We wanted to find someone who could give us a little food. We met a Turk who asked us, "Are you soldiers?" We replied, "Yes, we are". He said he could

find us a job cutting the grass and taking them to sell in Bayazid. We accepted his offer as we were very hungry and weak. He fed us for two or three days so that we were strong enough to cut the grass. We could already see Mount Ararat, the heart of the Armenian people.

[Next tape]

Interviewer – Please get some lemons and continue talking.

Mr. Chitjian – Shall I start talking or not yet?

Interviewer - OK. Continue.

[Next tape after dinner]

Interviewer - Now I would like you to say what Mount Ararat means to you.

Mr. Chitjian - Mount Ararat is the second door to paradise for the Armenians. When you are getting close to Ararat, you are getting close to paradise. Our biggest desire was to reach Mount Ararat. However, it was impossible for us to get there because there was one soldier on the one side and another soldier on the other. We hoped that one day or another we would somehow get there. But we couldn't do that so we moved towards Persia.

Interviewer – You said that Mount Ararat is the heart of the Armenians...can you please repeat that?

Mr. Chitjian – When you see Mount Ararat, you think you are right next to the Lord. Ararat is the heart of the Armenian people. Every time someone says "Ararat", you imagine yourself in Armenia and you feel saved. Ararat is the best place in the entire world for the Armenians. When you see the white pick of Ararat, you know that God will help all Armenians. Ararat has a special place in our hearts. It is very beautiful and it's covered with snow in summer and winter. I think Ararat will be ours one day. I hope so.

Interviewer – Did you see bodies...dead bodies on the road?

Mr. Chitjian – Walking in daylight we could see smoke in certain places so we tried not to come too close. It was a sign that there were people there. The village was almost ruined. There were only a few Kurds in the entire village. They cooked food with firewood and you could see the smoke. We had a Bible with us which we would open and read. We prayed to God asking him to grant us a chance to see Mount Ararat one day and help us get to the other side of it. Our hope and faith helped us to survive and see Mount Ararat. This seems to be a miracle. No one can believe that after so many sufferings one could have so many good days. This is truly a miracle.

Interviewer – Did you see any bodies on the road?

Mr. Chitjian – The houses we saw were all ruined. We entered two houses only. There was nothing left there except for a few plates and windows. Only piles of bones were thrown here and there - these were the bones of the Russians, Turks and Armenians. We saw only bones on the road...and also weapons left by the Russians or Turks. The entire area was deserted. We walked from Kughee to Bayazid and only a few places were covered with grass. The entire territory was deserted.

[Next tape]

Interviewer – Now please tell about the bodies you saw in Kharpert.

Mr. Chitjian – In Kharpert...First, in Perri there was a place called Kazandere. They said we could find money there. When we went to Kazandere, we saw a lot of bodies of the Armenians, heads of babies, heads of old people, clothes thrown into ravins and covered with land. The rain came and washed that all away. I had a friend whose name was Krikor. He was my classmate. He was also killed. That affected me most. They had crushed his head and I could barely recognize him. That was so scary and I was only a 14-year-old teenager. Then I spotted our priest Der Boghos. He was also killed. They had slit his mouth until his ears and his mouth fell open. All around the river bank there were bones and women hair thrown here and there. We saw a lot of swollen bodies because if you leave a dead body somewhere for a long time, it starts swelling. When you witness these kinds of atrocities, whether you want it or not, you start thinking that one day the same may happen to you. So two years later I just

forgot the Armenians language. Every time I heard an Armenian word I found it very hard to control my emotions...

Interviewer – Will you please tell about the priest and your friend one more time?

Mr. Chitjian – There was a ravine in Perri. When I went there I saw a lot of bodies thrown here and there. I recognized one of them. It was very difficult to recognize him because the body had stayed there for a week or more. That was my friend Krikor. He was killed. His head was crushed. I could hardly recognize him. Only his one eye seemed familiar. I was terrified. Our priest Der Boghos was killed on the river bank. There were other bodies there as well but I recognized only him. They had slit his mouth until his ears and his mouth fell open. Then I saw three headless men tied together at their ankles dangling from a tree. I was terrified. The Turk who was with me told me, "My son, don't look around". This is of course terrifying when you are a 14-year-old boy. There were so many bodies thrown on the river bank... this is of course terrifying.

[March 25, 1984]

Mr. Chitjian – Two days later he told me, "My son, you seem to feel uncomfortable here...you felt the same way with the Turks...scared and anxious. Stop feeling that way. In our house you are a member of the family. If you are nice to us, we will take care of you". I looked at his face. I tried to kiss his hand but he stopped me saying, "No, don't do that. You are a member of our family, just like my children." Then he added, "Your job is to bring medications from the pharmacist." Mardiros Effendi...I don't know if you remember him or not..."You will visit the patients in advance to inform them about the doctor's upcoming visit. When you hear a knock on the door, you will open the door and invite the guests in." Gradually, I got used to this new life of mine. When he planned to visit a patient, I would go to their house in advance to remind the patient the time and day the doctor would arrive. We were in a very good relationship with the doctor.

[March 25, 1984, Hampartzoum Chitjian]

Interviewer – All right. Let's start.

Mr. Chitjian – My name is Hampartzoum Chitjian. I am from Kharpert, Perri. My father's name was Mardiros. We were six brothers and three sisters. We had a grandfather and paternal aunts. Before the massacre of 1915 we all lived together leading a life of true Christians. You could rarely encounter such a thing in other families. Every day both in the morning and in the evening we would go to church. Before we went to sleep we recited the verses of the "Havadov Khostovaneem" ("I Confess With Faith"), each of my brothers reciting one verse. Then we knelt on our knees and sang "Der Vorghormia" ("Lord Have Mercy") asking the Lord to grant us good health and save us from dangers.

Preoccupied with fear of the Turks, my father sent two of my brothers to America – one of my brothers was sent to America in 1909 and the other brother of mine was sent there in 1913. We were four brothers and three sisters now.

One day the Government announced that everyone, who had relatives in America, should inform them about that. My father informed the Government that he had two sons in America.

Before killing the Armenians, the Turks closed all schools. First, they gathered lawyers and rich people and then they took away other people as well. They demanded that all people gave away their weapons to the Government. I was barely fourteen at that time. The Armenians held a meeting in the church to address the issue. We had two priests. One of them said that it would be better if we handed over all our weapons to the Government to avoid being massacred. They still remembered the terrifying days of 1895. The other priest didn't want us to give away our weapons. He said that if we gave our weapons away, the Turks would kill us. One of the meeting attendants was a fedayee whose name was Avedo. He and all the teachers felt strongly that we should not turn in our guns. Der Boghos had a large sack (we call it "chooval"). He gave that chooval to the church custodian who started collecting all the weapons and knives of the villagers and handing them over to the Turks. With the same knives the Turks killed the Armenians...

[Next tape]

I am one of the survivors of the massacre. The story I'm going to tell you is true. One day in 1915 the Government made a decision to kill all Armenians. First, they closed the schools and took away all our teachers. Almost all teachers were Dashnags. We had two priests at that time. One of them supported the idea of obeying the Government's order and handing the weapons over to them in order to avoid being killed. They still remembered the fear they had experienced in 1895. The other priest was on the side of our teachers. He said, "No, we must not give away our weapons. If we do, they will kill the entire nation. We must use these weapons for defending ourselves. There are 300 villages in Kharpert and 90% of people are Armenians. We are also close to Derseem where our Kurdish keervas (friends) live. We can give a part of our weapons to them. Some of us have a chance to survive." Pointless. No one supported his idea. The church custodian took the sack and started collecting the weapons and knives of the Armenians. The entire nation was killed. I was 14 then and now I am 84. That's why I hated and I still hate disunity. Even today the priests don't come to agreement with each other. Though people are no longer afraid of the Turks, there is another danger called "Chermag Chart" (White Genocide) which is even worse.

One day, when the Turks just started killing the Armenians, my father took me to the garden. He hoped to survive because he was a chitji, painter. They promised not to kill him. So we went to the garden to cultivate the land. When we were halfway home, we encountered someone who warned my father, "Don't go to Perri. They are killing everyone they see on their way." My father left me there and went away. Soon the Government made a decision to arrest everyone. My father was also arrested. A week later he came back, held our hands and took us to the Turks. We haven't seen him since then. My father, mother, three sisters and father's sisters were all taken away. We haven't seen them since then.

My twin brother, Kaspar, my two younger brothers (one was 9 and the other one was 6) and I were all taken to the Turkish maktab where we were made to convert. They changed our names and started teaching the Turkish language. We had to learn and repeat everything.

Yashasoon Hurriyet.

Ahdalat, Moosehfat.

Yashasoon meellat.

They cursed the Armenians. They taught us Turkish prayers.

We were all gathered in the Protestant Church, 150-200 boys. One day the Turks came and separated us according to age. They assumed that the older boys would never convert so they decided to kill them. They grouped me with the older boys and my twin brother was with the younger boys. I yelled out that I was the twin brother of that boy, we were the same age and I was just a little taller than him. Suddenly, a boy standing next to me, whose name was Mihran Mirakian, told me, "Quiet down. Let him go. He might survive." I stopped yelling. All of the larger boys were put in a small room. We were about 10-12 boys there. Mihran Mirakian had a pocket knife with him. He pulled the bars out of the window. I waited for my turn and I jumped out of the window. I met a blind Turk who helped me a lot. He said, "I will treat you like my son". He took me to his house. I lived with him for about a year.

Soon the Kurds (there were Armenians among them too) started killing the Turks and burning our village for 5 days. There was a river near our village. The Turks crossed the river and got to the other side of it. The blind man took me with him. I couldn't stay with the blind man any longer because he was starving and the soldiers were all starving too. So I ran away and joined the Kurds.

I have experienced so many sufferings...I don't know which one to talk about...

[Next tape]

Mr. Chitjian – I forgot to say that living with the blind Turk I couldn't stop crying for two nights. He asked why I was crying and I replied, "My brothers are in the Protestant Church. They put me in the group of older boys and my younger brother stayed there." Unable to watch me crying, he said, "Let's go and meet your

brothers." The next day, as soon as it got dark (so that no one could see us), he wrapped up some food in a bundle and took me to my brothers. My twin brother was not there. I noticed my younger brothers – one was nine and the other one was six. My youngest brother had his head on his older brother's lap. They were starving. My youngest brother's name was Nshan. He was sick. I asked where Kaspar was and my brother replied, "A Turk came and took him away." This blind man told me, "Tell your brothers where we live (near the Gol fountain). They can visit you." This is how kind that blind man was to me.

Interviewer – Tell us what you witnessed once.

Mr. Chitjian – That blind man was a thief. He was stealing from the abandoned Armenian houses. He would always take me with him. One day when we were walking from one village to another, I saw three men tied together at the waist and left hanging by their ankles from a tree, their stiff headless bodies dangled. I told the blind man, "Look here! There are three tied people but they don't have heads." The blind man told me, "My son, don't look around. Let's go."

One day we went to a small village called Khooshee. There was a brook there with a wooden bridge over it. It was filled with bodies, heads and bones of babies. We saw a lot of dead bodies strewn in the ravines. I barely recognized my classmate Krikor. One side of his face was eaten by birds and dogs. The only feature remaining on his face was one eye. Witness such a thing and then try to forget it... This is the only reason of my hatred. Armenians must rely only on their strength. They all must be united. Only weapons can help them. No help can be expected from other nations. So not only the Turks are to be blamed for this but also...Of course, the Turks are guilty. However, I think that all the sufferings I experienced in my life happened because of our disunity. Even in America, where we have freedom and are not killed, we are facing another danger called "white massacre". This is even more dangerous, because in case of the "red massacre" you can still sprout and grow whereas in case of the "white massacre" you have no chance to do that.

Interviewer – Please continue your story. Where did you stop?

Mr. Chitjian – When the Kurds came, the blind man and I got to the other side of the river. We were starving. One day my neighbor whose name was Hampartzoum, approached me and asked if I would like to escape and join a Kurdish man. He assured me that would be better than staying with the Turks. I left the blind man and went to that Kurd's house. It turned out a couple of Turkish women had noticed I had left the blind man and moved in with the Kurd with another boy. They immediately told the blind man of my whereabouts. The blind man, accompanied with two Turkish soldiers, came and knocked on the door. At that time, I felt my life was on the line. My life has been on the line several times but this was the first time. The Kurd opened the door. When he saw the soldiers, he quickly hid me under the covers in his wife's bed. His wife had just given birth to a baby. The wife and the baby were right next to me. There was only one room there, and half of the room served as a stable. The Kurd assumed they wouldn't look there because his wife and baby would cry. The blind man took out his knife (he was a good man; there were some good people among the Turks) and said, "My son, if you come out voluntarily from wherever you are hiding I will not kill you. If you don't, I will cut you into small pieces." I had no other choice, so I got out under the covers. When the baby started crying the blind man told me, "Aren't you ashamed for getting next to a woman who has just given birth? I know you were starving and that's why you came here but we can't receive food from the Government every time. I forgive you. Let's go."

We came back. One or two hours later, Hampartzoum approached me again. The blind man couldn't see him. He beckoned me with his hand and said, "Come here". I told the blind man that I was going out to fetch him some water. I left him carrying the jug. Hampartzoum took me to a Kurdish house. That Kurd took me somewhere near Itchme, a village called Akhoor. That Kurd had two wives – one was Armenian and the other one was Turkish. He loved his Armenian wife more than his Turkish wife. He was quite nice to me too. At least he gave me food so I was not starving. My job was to graze their cattle - 10-15 cows and sheep, all stolen from the Armenians.

One day some boys told me that there was a village called Itchme which was 1-1,5 hour away from our village. As they said there were a lot of Armenians living there. I left the cattle right

there and started walking towards Itchme. I don't know how I survived. God must have helped me. It was a straight road where even ants wouldn't stay unnoticed. I could be easily noticed by someone. I reached Itchme. I started living in the house of a man whose name was Youlash Effendi. 21 Armenian women and boys lived in that house. Youlash Effendi worked in the Government. Very often he would go to Mezreh. Itchme was 4 hours away from Kharpert.

One day, when Youlash Effendi was not at home, Bin Bahshee came to our house accompanied by soldiers. They planned to go to Van to fight against the Russians. He wanted to take an Armenian girl for that night. They decided to take a girl who was about 14 then. Her name was Juvo. The women told me and Juvo's cousin that we had to save her because that was the only way we could defend her honor. We were told to take Juvo to a village called Zantahrich. Youlash Effendi's friend lived there. He was a Kurd and could help us to save the girl. It was night. Just as we started off, a heavy snowfall began. Fortunately, the boy knew in which direction we should go. When we reached the village, we noticed dogs running towards us. At that moment we heard voices shouting to us to quickly lie down so the dogs wouldn't harm us. But we were too afraid to lie down. A few people shouted out the names of the dogs and we were saved. We told the villagers who we were looking for and they took us to that Kurdish man. The Kurd sent Juvo's cousin to Kharpert to inform Youlash Effendi what had happened and ask him to come back. He wanted me to return home and enter the stable from the back before daylight so that I was not caught by the soldiers. As I entered the stable I saw two Turkish soldiers waiting for me there. The soldiers and the villagers had already noticed our absence. The soldiers asked me where Juvo was. I told them I didn't know. There was fireplace and sticks in the stable to keep the stable warm. One of the soldiers grabbed me and struck me on my head with a half-burnt stick. I dropped unconscious - both from fear and pain. Thinking they had killed me, they left. I woke up in the morning. Youlash Effendi was already there. This is how I survived.

One day one of these women came up to me and said that an Armenian boy had died and we had to bury him. The boy was completely naked. With much difficulty we dragged his body over the snow-covered ground. We dug through the snow, dragged his body into the hole and covered it with snow. That boy was someone's son. I can still see his body in front me. This

story is told in different films and shows. People listen to the story and then they just forget about it. But for me it's different. It seems like that boy is still here and I am grabbing his arms to bury his body... So this is how we buried that boy.

Itchme had two parts – Veri Itchme and Vari Itchme. There was a church in Veri Itchme. This was a huge church with a fountain under it. The water was very cold. All around the place you could see bones, heads and other parts of human body. Imagine the emotions of the people who witnessed that all...We completely forgot the Armenian language. One day a boy came and said that he was going to teach us the Armenian language. He started saying these Armenian words "hats", (bread) "dzur" (water)...When I heard those words I could barely control my emotions. The same boy told me that my sister and brother were alive. As he said they were in Perri. We headed back to Perri. Neither my sister nor my brother was there. Only my aunt lived there. She had married a young man during the loot of 1895. When she saw me she burst into tears saying, "Why did you come now?". Instead of hugging me and saying that she was happy that I was alive after all these years, she started crying..."We are all starving. How are you going to survive here?"- she said. We boiled and ate a type of grass called "buhloreeg yonchah". They had a cow so they gave me a little milk too and then we all went to bed.

The next morning my aunt said that my brother's Effendi had an important government position. She said he might be able to help me or find me a job. I went to his house and announced that I was Rasheed's (my brother's name was changed to Rasheed) brother. With a sad facial expression, my brother's Effendi invited me in and showed me some photos of Kaspar. He gave me a piece of bread and a little boiled bulgur. He told me, "You can't take it with you, you must eat it all here." He realized I would take it to my aunt. I ate the bulgur but I kept the bread for my aunt.

One or two days passed. Another boy suggested going to Mezreh, Kharpert. Hoping to see my sisters and brothers, I headed towards Kharpert. In Kharpert I met my aunt (uncle's wife) Zarouhi who was the washerwoman of a doctor. She told me the doctor might help me because she was taking good care of him She took me to the doctor. I was barefoot, my hair

was filthy and unruly. The doctor and his wife looked at me. The doctor's wife said that they couldn't accept me with the way I looked. She said, "Clean him up and bring him back. He can't live here with that look. This is a house of a doctor". The next day two or three women helped me take a bath and gave me some new clothes. This time the doctor accepted me.

The doctor had a son named Hagopig who is here now. Hagopig had a little sister. There was also one white sheep with us. The first two days the doctor didn't talk to me at all. He didn't ask me who I was or why I came here. I just did my job, and that's all. But one day he called me in and said, "You are not our servant. I can see that you are suffering. You are a member of our family. You must be loyal to us and you must be clean. Your job will be taking the children for a walk and buying products from the shop". I was so happy. My life changed from dark into light. There was a shoemaker with the name Hampartzoum. They ordered a new pair shoes for me. My clothes looked good too. I stayed there for about 1,5 years.

Famine had spread everywhere. It was impossible to find bread regardless of how much money you were ready to pay for it. There was a poorr (bakery) there. Everyday I would go to the poorr and bring as many loaves of bread as they would give me – anywhere from ten or twenty to fifty loaves. Once I got home, I would cut each loaf into four quarters and distribute to the poor people.

Interviewer – And one day your brother came...

[Next tape]

Mr. Chitjian – I knew a boy who repaired old shoes. His name was Hagop. When we went to Armenia, we met that boy. I told Hagop that one of my chores in the doctor's house was to cut the loaf of bread into quarters and give away to the poor. To make certain mostly the Armenians got the bread, I asked Hagop to inform the Armenians to come for bread early in the morning.

One day I heard two knocks on the door. Assuming there must be two poor people waiting, I took two pieces of bread to hand out. I opened the door and saw Hagop

standing with one poor orphan. I reminded Hagop not to knock on the door so loudly because the noise bothered Aghavni Khanum (the doctor's wife). I handed a piece of bread to the orphan but he didn't take it. I offered him both pieces, but he still refused and didn't lift his head. I asked Hagop why the orphan wasn't accepting the bread. Hagop asked, "Why don't you lift his head and see if you can recognize him?" As I lifted his face I recognized my brother Kerop whom I hadn't seen for 2,5 years. I didn't know that my brother Kerop was alive. I invited him in. That was a very happy moment. The doctor came too. They all were happy for me.

10-15 days later the government official informed the doctor that he could have only one servant. So the doctor told me that we had to take my brother to the orphanage in Veri Kaghak (Upper City). That was an orphanage opened by the Yeprad College. He took him to the orphanage. Once a week, Doodoo prepared a nice dinner...bread or anything else we had...I took that food to Kerop. My brother's name was Kerop. Each time I left him, Kerop would blame me and ask, "Brother, why do I stay here while you return to that nice family?" I couldn't tolerate that any longer. I told the doctor that I wanted to leave his house and join my brother. He said that I would regret my decision in future. He promised to occasionally give money to my brother so that he didn't stay hungry there. Doodoo was also taking very good care of my brother. There was enough food for him but...

I took my brother and we headed towards Parchanj. I started working for a Turkish woman. I was repairing old shoes. One day this woman told me that she had heard the government's announcement, "Anyone harboring an Armenian will be jailed with a chain around his neck for five years." The brother-in-law of that woman suggested taking me to the Turkish Government. The woman refused to do that. She saved me.

A gendarme lived across the street from the kind Turkish woman for whom I was working. His wife was Armenian and they had two children. This woman didn't like me at all. She would always taunt me by calling me "Gavour Boghee". That made me very upset. We always slept in the stable. One night I thought I saw a big woman dressed in white yelling at me "I will kill you!" Out of fear I started yelling too. The

Turkish woman I worked for asked me why I was yelling. I told her that a big woman in white wanted to kill me. She told me that I was just scared and that voice was from the outside where people were shouting " Anyone harboring an Armenian will be killed..."

[Next tape]

Mr. Chitjian - For the whole period of the massacre... For about six years that I have lived among the Turks...I would like to mention the names of the kindest people who have a special place in my heart.

One of them is Dr. Michael Hagopian, who not only took care of his patients but... Very often the Armenians were arrested without any reason, just because they were Armenians. Dr. Michael would give me several kooroosh and say, "Go and give this money to the Turkish warder. Tell him you are from Dr. Michael." This way many Armenian boys were released from prison. I wish you could see the faces of those boys after they were released...We must express our appreciation to this man. I would describe him with the word I have learnt recently – "rahvira" (meaning - pioneer, leader). If a patient was so sick that he was unable to come to Dr. Michael's house, the doctor would order me to visit the patient in advance and inform him about his upcoming visit...because people wanted to prepare for the doctor's arrival - cleaning and organizing the house, etc...There were 4-5 people living in the same house. Upon hearing the doctor's name, the patient immediately felt better. He would cure the sick like Jesus. I lived with him for about 1,5 years. I have never met a man like him. Today people donate 10.000, 20.000, 100.000 to build churches, houses and schools. It is commendable. But no one can be compared with a person who saves lives. This man released 10-150 people from prison. This is a man who saved thousands of sick people. We can't forget these kinds of people. We must express our appreciation to them as we would do to Jesus.

The second person whose name I would like to mention is Archbishop Kude Mkhitarian. In 1918 a lot of children left the Turkish orphanage...He took care of these children.

The third person is Archbishop Melik Tankian. I fled to the town of Tabriz. There were two Armenian districts in Tabriz – Khalata and Kiliseh. Armenians lived only in those two districts. There were Dashnag soldiers there who had escaped from the Turks. The Armenians in Tabriz and this man supported us with their prayers. He is one of best clergymen I know. And of course, Vazgen I. Although other clergymen are also nice, especially Karekin Catholicos in Antelias...He is known as a very brave and patriotic man. If he catches a Turk, it will go hard with him. But there are disagreements among some clergymen. A good example is the disagreement between the two priests of our village which had tragic consequences. The whole Armenian nation was exterminated because of this disagreement.

[Next tape]

Interviewer – Let's start, Mr. Chitjian.

Mr. Chitjian - (reading out loud) I had only one desire. I wished God granted me a chance to tell about my life because I'm one of the survivors of the Turkish atrocities in 1915.

My memories of the most appreciable man who can best described as the First Rahvira.

A respectable Christian man - merciful and patriotic.

Dr. Michael Hagopian was like Jesus Christ, just tangible. In 1918 thanks to a woman I started working as a servant in Dr. Michael's house. Although I was just a servant, I lived with them as one of the members of their family.

It's not only me who the doctor saved. Every day he accepted 5-8 patients. His patients were waiting for him outside, sometimes even unable to speak because of hunger and thirst. He would invite them in, give them medications and money. I'm sure that the Government didn't pay the doctor a lot of money but he always helped the sick. Apart from helping people with money and medications, he released many Armenians from prison who had been put there without any reason...just because they were Armenians. The doctor would give me a few khoroosh saying, "Take this money and go to prison. Give the money to this or that person and tell him it's from Dr. Michael. They know you have money with you. Give the money to them and save the boys." If only you could see the faces of those boys after they were released.

There was no single person in Kharpert who would not treat Dr. Michael like Jesus. All the things he did are worthy of appreciation. He never talked about the things he had done, he never boasted...He just did what he felt was right.

Today there are people who build schools, churches and donate a lot of money. That's also appreciable but they do that because they can afford it. This person helped others when he needed help himself. He helped others putting his own life at risk. He did everything secretly from the Turks. I want everyone to always remember his name.

I think that's all. I have already talked about others.