

# Michael Hagopian Interviews

## The Chitjians

### Part 2

April 21, 1985

Bonaventure Hotel with Krikor Derderian<sup>1</sup>

[Tape 1]

**The beginning of the video is muted.**

**Mr. Chitjian** – How did you meet Dr. Michael?

**Mr. Avedis** – Oh! It was great! He was our doctor.

**Mr. Chitjian** – Yes, he was your doctor but he was also the doctor of other people. He was everyone's doctor.

**Mr. Avedis** – There was a stream behind the doctor's house. If you crossed it, you would see our house.

**Mr. Chitjian** – What did you do?

**Mr. Avedis** – I was engaged in cotton production. We separated cotton from seeds.

**Mr. Chitjian** – Who do you know in Mezreh?

**Mr. Avedis** – Who do I know?

**Mr. Chitjian** – Yes, who do you remember? Were you there when Kude Archbishop came?

**Mr. Avedis** – Yes.

**This part of the video is muted.**

[Tape 2]

**Mr. Chitjian** – What else do you remember?

**Mr. Avedis** – What else? I remember everything. I worked in villages.

**Mr. Chitjian** – Which one?

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<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of the video we see this text - "April 21, 1985, Bonaventure Hotel with Krikor Derderian." However, the person's name who Mr. Chitjian is talking to, seems to be Avedis and not Krikor. I don't know this man's surname, so I wrote "Mr. Avedis".

**Mr. Avedis** –All of them. We had cotton machines. The factories of these cotton machines were located in villages. That's why I would go to these villages and operate these machines. The machines were repaired in Mezreh.

**Mr. Chitjian** – Did you enjoy your life in Mezreh? Did you face any difficulties there? Were you starving there?

**Avedis** – No.

**Mr. Chitjian** – What was your name?

**Avedis** – Avedis.

**Mr. Chitjian** – No, I mean your Turkish name.

**Avedis** – What?

**Mr. Chitjian** – Didn't they give you a Turkish name?

[Tape 2]

**Mr. Chitjian** – Perri was full of Kurds. It was called Charsanjak, right?

**Avedis** – Perri? My mother was from Perri.

**Mr. Chitjian** – Your mother? That means we are relatives, right? **(laughing)**

**Avedis** – Yes. Her family had a very good reputation.

**This part of the video is muted.**

[Tape 3]

**Mr. Chitjian** – What political party did you support? Dashnags, Hnchagians...Have you ever been a member of any Armenian political party? Have you ever been a Dashnag?

**Avedis** – No, I have never been a member of any political party.

**Mr. Chitjian** – OK, so you have never been involved in any political party.

**Mr. Avedis** – You know why?

**Mr. Chitjian** – Why?

**Mr. Avedis** – Because our parties were always in conflict with each other.

**Mr. Chitjian** – That's right. That's exactly what I think.

**Mr. Avedis** – Yes, Dashnags and Hnchagians were always in conflict with each other. They never came to an agreement with each other. Armenians are not united.

**Mr. Chitjian** – Yes, they are not. So you have never been a member of any political party.

**Mr. Avedis** – No, I have never been a member of any political party.

**Mr. Chitjian** – But you helped the Armenians a lot...

**Avedis** – Yes, I helped them a lot.

**Mr. Chitjian** – More than seventy years have passed since that time but everything is the same.

[Tape 4]

**Mr. Chitjian** – I want to ask you something. How old are you? You are 109 years old now, right?

**Mr. Avedis** – Yeah.

**Mr. Chitjian** – When the massacre started...When they started slaughtering the Armenians...why do you think they did so? Who was guilty of so many tortures that the Armenians had to experience? What was the reason for that?

**Mr. Avedis** – The Turks have always wanted to kill the Armenians.

**Mr. Chitjian** – Yes, the Turks always wanted to kill the Armenians. They have wanted to do that for 600 years but...

**Mr. Avedis** – They always wanted to kill the Armenians. The Armenians were more developed and...

**Mr. Chitjian** - They were more successful.

**Mr. Avedis** - Yes, they had schools, churches and factories. The Turks were jealous of the Armenians.

**Mr. Chitjian** – That's right.

**Mr. Avedis** – They were jealous of the Armenians, The Armenians had the things they didn't have. The Armenians were more developed and educated. They gave much importance to education.

**Mr. Chitjian** – But I have also heard that...when the Russians reached Erzincan, the Turks became afraid that the Armenians might join the Russians and create problems for them.

**Mr. Avedis** - Yes. The Russians were in Erzincan when I went there.

**Mr. Chitjian** – Didn't you join them?

**Mr. Avedis** - Yes, I did but...

**Mr. Chitjian** – Why did you come back then?

**Mr. Avedis** – I should tell you that there were more Armenians there...In the end, everyone withdrew and the Armenians had to carry everything on their shoulders. Mourad barely managed to get the people out of there...

**Mr. Chitjian** – Did you meet Mourad?

**Mr. Avedis** – Of course, I met him. When I went to Erzincan, I saw Mourad.

**[Tape 5]**

**Mr. Chitjian** – That was the Euphrates college. They opened an orphanage in Verin Mezreh (Upper Mezreh).

**Mr. Avedis** – In Verin Mezreh...Husenig, Keserig...They opened several orphanages.

**Mr. Chitjian** – Yes.

**[Tape 5]**

**Mr. Avedis** – I forgot the name of that American doctor.

**Mr. Chitjian** – Yes. What was his name? Let me remember. I also forgot the name of that American doctor. I knew several doctors.

**Mr. Avedis** – There were other doctors as well such as Dr. Krikor, Dr. Khoren. There was a prominent doctor...what was his name? Pier. Dr. Pier.

**Mr. Chitjian** – Yes, Dr. Pier. I want to ask you something else. Dr. Michael was the best doctor. I lived with him for some time. Do you remember the period when famine was everywhere? Everyone was suffering from cholera. A lot of people died. Were you there in the time of cholera? Dr. Michael cured many Armenians who were suffering from this disease.

**Mr. Avedis** – I remember that. A lot of Armenians died.

**Mr. Chitjian** – That's right.

**Mr. Avedis** – But it didn't last for too long.

**Mr. Chitjian** – What?

**Mr. Avedis** – That disease.

**Mr. Chitjian** – Yes, it didn't last for too long but it took a lot of lives.

**Mr. Avedis** – Yes, it took a lot of lives. That disease came from Malatia to Kharpert.

**Mr. Chitjian** – Yes, it came from Malatia. Many Armenian women and children were staying in Dr. Michael's house. The doctor helped all of them. Sometimes he would even give them money.

**Mr. Avedis** – Dr. Michael didn't take money from the poor.

**Mr. Chitjian** – He never took money from the poor. On the contrary, he would give them some. Besides, do you remember that many Armenians were put in jail for no reason?

**Mr. Avedis** – They killed Habet and Hagop. They took their heads off...

**Mr. Chitjian** – No, it's not what I'm saying. When I lived with Dr. Michael, the Turks would blame the Armenians for minor faults and put them in jail. If they couldn't find any reason, they would arrest them just because they were Armenians.

**Mr. Avedis** – Yes, they would arrest and kill them without any reason.

**Mr. Chitjian** – Dr. Michael would give me 40 para or 2 ghoroosh. I would give that money to the person who had arrested those Armenian boys so that they could be released. They didn't stay in jail for too long. They were tortured there. There is another thing I would like to tell you. There was a man from Keserig. His name was Simon. Have you ever heard his name?

**Mr. Avedis** – Simon? Yes, I have.

**Mr. Chitjian** – They took his head off and threw him away.

**Mr. Avedis** – Yes, they killed him in a very cruel way.

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**February 26, 1987**

**[Tape 1]**

**Interviewer** – I will tell you when to start.

**Mr. Chitjian** – Shall I start?

**Interviewer** – Start!

**Mr. Chitjian** – I must say everything in Armenian, right?

**Interviewer** – You must talk to Mrs. Chitjian.

**Mr. Chitjian** – OK, I must talk to Ovsanna. A year after the massacre we didn't know who was dead and who was alive. The Missionaries came from America. They told us we could send letters to America if we had relatives there. However, the letters were to be written in Turkish. My first letter was written to my twin brother who was with me during the massacre of the Armenians. His name was changed into Rasheed. My name was changed into Rooshdee.

**[Next tape]**

**Interviewer** - I will let you know when you can start.

**Mr. Chitjian** - Shall I start?

**Interviewer** - No...Start now!

**Mr. Chitjian** - This letter, that I'm holding in my hands now, was written seventy years ago and was addressed to my brother. I will read it for you, and you will understand what kinds of difficulties we had to face in those times. We started writing letters at the end of 1917. I had a twin brother who moved to America. He was with me during the massacre. His name was changed into Rasheed. I have received four letters from my brother; from Chicago and Los Angeles...There are two letters from Los-Angeles... Reading these letters, I can feel how pitiful I was then. I will read them for you now. That will be a bit difficult for me to read these letters but I will do it anyway. The first letter I wrote was addressed to Chicago. I wrote this letter to my brother in 1917. The next one was addressed to Southern Indiana. This is a very pitiful letter..Let me read it for you.

**(Reads a little fragment of the letter in Turkish)**

[Next tape]

**(Reads a little fragment of the letter in Turkish) (Letters seem to be Arabic)**

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – Start again.

**Mr. Chitjian** – Shall I read it now?

**Interviewer** – Yes.

**Mr. Chitjian** – The letters I'm holding in my hands now were written when I was with the Kurds. I was moving from one village to another. I was starving and I was unable to tolerate it anymore. I knew I would be killed if I was caught because I was Armenian. Everywhere I went, I always made sure to write a letter to my brother. He was my twin brother. He is in America.

**(Reads the same fragment of the letter in Turkish)**

[Next tape]

**Mr. Chitjian** – Ovsanna, this letter is from my twin brother Kaspar. He tells us about my father's imprisonment. He wrote this letter in 1919. He writes, [*Oh, my pen can't write about that day... On the one hand, we were happy that our father would be released...Our father, mother and sisters were crying... If only I went away with my father the same day.... My father was released from jail. He came home but he was very thin. He had been starving and being tortured for a month. He looked like he had died and just got out from the grave.*]<sup>2</sup>

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – I will let you know when you can start reading... Start reading now!

**Mr. Chitjian** – **(keeps reading the same letter)** [When my father was released from jail, he came home. He looked like he had died and just got out from the grave. We were four brothers. I had a twin brother. We were fifteen. The other brother of mine, Kerop, was nine, Nshan was six or seven. My father took us to the shoogah (market). I started crying and said, "Father, you will go to America and join my brother. I will come with you too." After I repeated the same thing for several times, my father said "My sons, we're not going to America. I'm taking you to the ravine." Upon hearing that we, four brothers, started crying. He took us to the Turkish school.]

**Interviewer** –OK, stop here.

[Next tape]

**Mr. Chitjian** – **(reading a letter)-** [*My handsome father was very thin. He was so thin and sick that he couldn't even speak. He was talking through gestures. He took us to the Turkish school.*

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<sup>2</sup> **Mr. Chitjian reads the letters with a little difficulty, and he seems to read only the sentences he can decipher. For me, it was also difficult to understand what Mr. Chitjian was saying, so if I didn't hear a sentence clearly I tried to convey the main message of it.**

*Oh! That was an unforgettable day. If only the sun went down that day! My father looked like an animal. We looked like animals too...The Turks tortured us... He left us with those barbarians. Without saying a word, or giving advice or kissing us or saying goodbye, he went away and didn't even look back. We were very young. We went to the Turks. We didn't understand what was happening. We entered the school. A Turkish man was preaching standing on the chair. We were Armenian boys gathered together.]*

**[Next tape]**

**Mr. Chitjian** – Shall I start reading?

**Interviewer** – Yes.

**Mr. Chitjian - (He reads a poem in Turkish and then he explains its meaning in Armenian).**  
This a very nice poem that I dedicated to my brother.

*I wrote you a letter on the mountains,*

*For the love of God, don't forget me,*

*I miss you like a bird of paradise,*

*May God grant a meeting for you and me.*

*Brother, I wrote this letter crying.*

I wrote this letter to Kaspar.

All these letters you see here are sent from different places, from different villages. They were written when I was in a miserable situation. I would love to read them all but it will take me much time to practice and read all these letters fluently.

**[Next tape]**

**Interviewer** – Please look at Mrs. Chitjian and tell her your story.

**Mr. Chitjian** – Shall I start now?

**Interviewer** – Yes.

**Mr. Chitjian (with a photo in his hands)** – Look here, Ovsanna. We were traveling from Baghdad to Haleb (Aleppo). We reached Mosul. We were told that if we had money on us we should give it to the bus driver, so that he hid it somewhere and returned it to us when we reached Haleb. We were afraid to do such a thing. I had sixteen Turkish gold coins with me. I had suspenders...I sewed my money on the inside of my suspenders. There were also two Vanetsee boys there. They sewed their money here... They sewed it into this part of their pants... Down here...

When we were halfway in Haleb, the Arab bandits robbed us. They started taking off the clothes of these boys from Van. Then they began cutting up their clothes into pieces to find the hidden money. I quickly dropped my suspenders and covered them with sand. I gave my clothes to the bandits with only a few coins left in my pockets.

When we got on the bus, one of these boys told me that if I didn't give him my suspenders he would reveal my secret to others. He knew the Arabic language. I said, "All right, I will give it to you". We reached a place somewhere near Der Zor to drink water. I took off my suspenders and gave them to that boy... He took them and put them on. We returned and got on the bus again. When we reached Der Zor, the Arabs reported to the government that we had been robbed. The government provided us with a hotel free of charge. The clothes, food...All free of charge...Because we had been robbed...These two boys and I were put in the same room.

**[Next tape]**

When we were put in our room, I told one of these boys to go and get us some water. As soon as that boy left I immediately locked the door and jumped on the other boy. We started fighting. We tore each other's clothes and scratched each other...The Arabs knocked on the door but we didn't open it. They entered the room through the window. They took us to the police station. The police-officer (judge) was an Arab. At that time, the British were in charge... The British controlled those places...He knew both Arabic and Turkish. He asked who the gold coins belonged to. I said that the money was mine and that boy said that the money was his. Then the officer said, "Don't worry, I know how to solve the problem. I will take you somewhere. Do you know what Der Zor means for the Armenians?" We replied that we had no news from Der Zor. The officer said he would take us somewhere, and that we would start helping each other once we saw that place.

Before we got on the bus I said to the judge, "Look...You hook up the suspenders using buttons... The money is mine because the buttons on my pants are bigger and the holes on the suspenders are also big. The buttons of the other boy are much smaller." Upon hearing this, the judge said, "I haven't thought about that. You're right. The money is yours. Anyway, I will show you a place and you will decide what to do."

The soldiers drove us to quite a distance away from the hotel. We saw two huge mounds of human bones. Small bones...big bones...heads, feet, hands...all gathered together...two huge piles.

The judge said, "You said that one of you is from Van and the other is from Kharpert. It makes no difference where you are from. These are all Armenian bones. Some may even belong to one of your relatives. Don't fight with each other. Life is more valuable than money. Help each other. Do you promise to help each other from this day on?" We said, "Yes, we do."

Anyhow, one of those two boys had a brother in Alexandria and the other one had a father or brother in France, Marseille. Their money came... They shared the money with me.

Look at this photo. One of these boys, the one in the middle, made me suffer a lot. Here he is. **(pointing to that boy on the photo)**

**Interviewer** – Now show yourself on the photo.

**Mr. Chitjian** – Here I am. **(pointing to himself)**

[Next tape]

**(with Ovsanna Chitjian)**

**Mrs. Chitjian** – Now I'll tell you what I witnessed. I was not exiled. My brother served as a translator for the Americans. He took me with him to the bones...

**Interviewer** – Please start again.

**Mrs. Chitjian** - From the beginning?

**Interviewer** - Yes, start again from the beginning.

**Mrs. Chitjian** - I was eight. My brother took me with him to the Americans...to the bones...

**Interviewer** – OK. We have to do that again.

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – OK, start!

**Mrs. Chitjian** - I'm from Malatya. Although I didn't experience the exile, I saw the bones of the Armenians. My brother and I joined the Americans and went to the place filled with those bones...All the Armenians were brought and killed there. There was an American woman with us. She spoke Armenian very well. She told me, "I will gather these bones, take them to America and display them in the museum". This is how I saw those bones. This is the only thing I saw but...Shall I say anything else?

**Interviewer** – No. Did you gather the bones yourself?

**Mrs. Chitjian** – Yes.

**Interviewer** – Tell about that.

**Mrs. Chitjian** – We gathered the bones... she was going to bring the bones here and put in the museum.

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – Start!

**Mrs. Chitjian** – Let me tell you my story. I wasn't exiled but I saw the bones of Armenians. A lot of them...My brother served the Americans. There were American women with us there. They took me to the place filled with bones. The place was called Tashtepe (in Malatya). Everyone was killed there. There were a lot of bones there... One of these American women spoke Armenian quite well. She said that she was going to gather all these bones and put them in the museum in America. I was crying...I was a little girl at that time....This was a puzzle for me. I didn't understand anything.

**Interviewer** – Now tell us about the Turk.

**Mrs. Chitjian** – Our entire family was saved thanks to a Turkish factory owner Mahmed Effendi. That man saved thousands of Armenians and not only us. He saved us because my father had helped him with his pension. He produced military uniforms. He gathered thousands of Armenians coming from different places and gave them work in his factory. He saved thousands of Armenians. He was a very kind man. He was a Turk but he was a kind man. He saved us as well... and thousands of other people.

**Interviewer** – And finally...?

**Mrs. Chitjian** – Finally, on our way to Haleb, all the passengers got robbed. We stopped at a village. We could neither move on nor go back. My father sent a telegram to Mahmed Effendi and informed him about our situation. He told him that we could neither move on nor go back. This man sent 200 soldiers to help us. When we reached Haleb, a lot of Armenians were telling each other that they had been saved by a man from Malatya. This man was very kind and he saved a lot of Armenians. Our whole family was saved thanks to him too.

**Interviewer** – And he was ordered to come to Constantinople. Tell about that.

**Mrs. Chitjian** – Later that Turk was sent to Constantinople to be killed there for being an Armenian-lover and for saving the lives of thousands of Armenians. My father helped him get out of this situation. The Turks were frustrated saying, "He is gavour-lover"..."He is Armenian-lover"...

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – Start!

**Mr. Chitjian** – Someone who has seen the bones in Der Zor or heard the song of Der Zor...I will sing that song as much as I can.

*Der Zor cholarheendeh gunash parlyor,*

*Osmahnly askehree goorshoon yaghleor,*

*Ermehnee moohageeree yahmahn aghleor,*

*Deenee beerr oghroonah geeden Ermehnee!<sup>3</sup>*

If you collected the bones thrown in the fields of Kharpert, the number of those bones would be more than the number of the bones thrown in Der Zor.

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<sup>3</sup> **"Der Zor" song in English**

*In the hot desert of Der Zor, the sun shines fiercely,*

*The Turkish soldier oils his bombarding guns savagely,*

*The Armenian refugees weeping profusely,*

*While tenaciously clinging on to his Armenian Christian faith!*

**Interviewer** – Sing one more time.

**Mr. Chitjian sings again.**

*Der Zor cholarheendeh gunash parlyor,  
Osmahnly askehree goorshoon yaghleeor,  
Ermehnee moohageeree yahmahn aghleeor,  
Deenee beerr oghroonah geeden Ermehnee!*

**Interviewer** – What is the song about?

**Mr. Chitjian** – It says, "The sun shines fiercely over Der Zor, the Turkish soldiers oil their guns and knives..."

**The video becomes muted. We can't hear the explanation until the end. However, you can see the lyrics of the song in the footnote.**

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**May 26, 1991**

**Interviewer** – Now start telling that story.

**Mr. Chitjian** – In Armenian?

**Interviewer** – Yes, tell it in Armenian.

**Mr. Chitjian** – After the massacre, when I was a slave of a blind Turk...a week or two weeks later he had to go to a village called Khooshee. Halfway there, in the Mahlaheen Tsor, I saw hundreds of Armenian dead bodies thrown here and there. I was very scared. The blind Turk told me, "Did you see the bones? Look at them and see if you can recognize any of your relatives." I started looking. All those bodies were disfigured and decayed. Suddenly I spotted a boy whose name was Krikor Noroian. He was my classmate. One half of his face was eaten by birds or dogs. Only the other half of his face and one eye were recognizable. I shouted out of fear. The Turk said, "Come here right now!" I went to the Turk.

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – Start telling the story.

**Mr. Chitjian** – In Armenian?

**Interviewer** – Yes. The same story.

**Mr. Chitjian** - I served a blind Turkish man.

**Interviewer** – Start again.

**Mr. Chitjian** – After the massacre...after my father was killed... I became a slave of a blind Turk. One or two weeks later he had to go to a village called Khooshee. Upon reaching the Mahlaheen Tsor, I noticed many bones thrown there. He couldn't see that as he was blind. I yelled out of fear. He asked, "You saw the bones, right?", I said, "Yes". He said, "Go and see if you can recognize anyone". I saw a lot of bones thrown here and there – all disfigured, distorted and decayed. I couldn't recognize anyone. Suddenly I spotted a boy, my classmate, whose name was Krikor Noroian. One half of his face was eaten by birds or dogs. The only feature remaining on his face was one eye. I couldn't recognize anyone else. Suddenly I heard the blind man calling me, "Come here, let's get out of here". We left the place.

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – Now tell it in English.

**Mr. Chitjian** – Yeah. After the massacre, when they killed my mother and father, I became a slave of a blind man. He was very nice with me. He took me everywhere he would go. One day he decided to go to a small village near Perri called Khooshee. There was a bridge...Mahlaheen Tsor... Before we reached the bridge, I saw a lot of skulls and bodies thrown all over the place. All of them were killed - 100 or 200 people or more than that. The blind man told me, "Look at them and see if you can find some of your friends". I spotted a friend of mine, my classmate, Krikor Noroian. I noticed that half of his face was eaten by dogs or birds. I saw the other half of his face and one of his eyes. I recognized Krikor Noroian. I started crying. The blind man said, "Come here, let's go". I went with him.

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – Well, start talking!

**Mr. Chitjian** – We were traveling from Baghdad to Haleb. On the way we stopped in Der Zor. I had some Armenian friends with me.

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – Start again.

**Mr. Chitjian** – We reached Der Zor.

**Interviewer** – The year?

**Mr. Chitjian** – 1922.

**Interviewer** – Start again.

**Mr. Chitjian** – In 1922 we were in Der Zor with other Armenians. We argued with each other because of money. We started fighting with each other. They took us to the court.

The judge was an Arab. He said to me and that boy, "Come with me. I'm going to take you to a place and show you something. After that you will come to an agreement." He took us to a place where we saw two big piles of bones, skeletons and heads. The judge said, "These are Armenian bones. They came from all over Turkey. Think it over. These may be your parents or friends. How can you fight with each other after witnessing so much trouble?" He took us back, and we became friends. We came to an agreement.

[Next tape]

**Mr. Chitjian** – Shall I start telling about Der Zor again?

**Interviewer** – Yes, tell us about Der Zor in English.

**Mr. Chitjian** – All these bones came from all over Turkey.

**Interviewer** – OK, one minute.

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – Start now!

**Mr. Chitjian** – After we saw all these bones, the judge said, "All these bones came from all over Turkey – Kharpert, Van, Bitliis. The name of the river is Euphrates."

**Interviewer** – Say it again.

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – All right. You can begin.

**Mr. Chitjian** – The Arab judge told us, "All these bones came from Turkey...Kharpert, Van, Bitlis, Diyarbakir...to Der Zor". These bones can be those of your friends or parents. Don't fight with each other. Become friends instead."

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – Now tell me...

**Mr. Chitjian** – Shall I start?

**Interviewer** – Yes.

**Mr. Chitjian** – In Der Zor the Arab judge showed us two big piles of Armenian bones. He said, "The name of the river is Tigris. All these Armenian bones came from Turkey".

**Interviewer** – Say it again.

**Mr. Chitjian** - In Der Zor the Arab judge showed us two big piles of Armenian bones. Then he said, "Don't forget that these bones came from Turkey. The name of the river is Tigris".

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – Tell the story again.

**Mr. Chitjian** – In Der Zor the Arab judge showed us the Armenian bones. Two big piles. He said, "These bones came from Turkey...the river Euphrates".

**Interviewer** – Say that again...In Der Zor...

**Mr. Chitjian** – In Der Zor the Arab judge showed us two big piles of Armenian bones. Then he said, "These bones came from all over Turkey. The river Euphrates brought all these bones here".

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – Sing.

**Mr. Chitjian** – You want me to sing?

**Interviewer** – Yes.

**Mr. Chitjian starts singing.**

*Der Zor cholarheendeh gunash parlyor,*

*Osmahnly askehree goorshoon yaghleeor,*

*Ermehnee moohageeree yahmahn aghleeor,*

*Deenee beerr oghroonah geeden Ermehnee!*

**Interviewer** – That's all?

**Mr. Chitjian** – That's all.

**Interviewer** – Do you know another song?

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – Now explain it please.

**Mr. Chitjian** – Let me explain that in English. People were on the way to Der Zor desert – a lot of kids, ladies. They were all going to Der Zor desert and they were singing this song. Shall I sing now?

**Interviewer** – No. Something went wrong. Everything was great but...

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – Start.

**Mr. Chitjian** – The Armenian people... kids and ladies...were all going to Der Zor desert. They were singing this song.

*Der Zor cholarheendeh gunash parlyor,*

*Osmahnly askehree goorshoon yaghleeor,*

*Ermehnee moohageeree yahmahn aghleeor,*

*Deenee beerr oghroonah geeden Ermehnee!*

**Interviewer** – What does that mean?

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – Not say it...in English.

**Mr. Chitjian** – In April of 1915 the Turks ordered the Armenians to give their guns to the Government. We had two priests. One of them said, "No, we don't want to give away our guns, because if we do, they will kill us anyway." The other priest said, "If we don't give away our guns, they will kill our families." They started fighting with each other.

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – Tell the story.

**Mr. Chitjian** – In April of 1915 the Turkish people ordered the Armenians to turn in all their guns. We had two priests. One of the priests said, "We shouldn't give them our guns, because if we do, we will have nothing to defend ourselves. They will kill us". The other priest said, "If we don't give them our guns, they will come and burn our houses." That took place during a meeting held at a church. I was hired by them for bringing and taking water, food...So I heard everything they said...Every night I went home, my father asked me, "What did this priest say?" And I replied, "One of the priests didn't want to give away our guns but the other one did". My father shook his head and said, "These are our last days. They are going to kill us anyway. One way or another. They are going to kill us". That's what they did. So the priest who supported the idea of giving the guns away, started visiting the Armenian houses. He would say with a cross in his hands, "For the sake of the cross, for the sake of God, please give me your guns. If you don't have guns, give me your knives. I will take them all to the Government." Two or three days later they took away all the Armenians and put them in jail. That priest became a Turkish mullah (priest). He lived for another year but soon he was also killed.

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – Start now!

**Mr. Chitjian** - In April of 1915 the Turkish people ordered the Armenians to turn in all their guns. We had two priests. One was against the idea of turning in our guns. The other one said, "Yes, we must give our guns away". Every night when I went home, my father asked me, "What did that priest say?" I said, "One of the priests didn't want to give away the guns but the other priest did." My father said, "These are our last days. They are going to kill us anyway. One way or another. Whether we give them our guns or not." Our teachers didn't want to give away our guns. They said, "This time they are going to kill all of us. We'd rather not give the guns to the Government...The Russians will come here soon... We better give our weapons to the Kurds and stay with them." That priest changed his religion and became a Turkish mullah but one year later he was killed anyway.

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – Ok, tell the story.

**Mr. Chitjian** – The priest, who said that we had better give our guns to the Government, was saved. He changed his religion, became a Turkish mullah. He converted to Islam. However, a year later, he was also killed.

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[Next tape]

**Mrs. Chitjian** – Up until now I haven't really realized that this daily reminiscence has affected my life. As a child growing up I was aware of the impact of the atrocities and the sadness of the people. And I was always wondering why all the people weren't there to help! The helpless children, women...And the world just watched as this was happening. I always felt that when I grew older I would have to do something to help people in this similar situation and to make people aware that when other people are in need you have to listen to their cries. That was only one part. As I grew older I realized my identity just as an Armenian was involved...

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – Can you tell me what it was like growing up with your father's story?

**Mrs. Chitjian** – Every day I would hear some kind of a story related to something that happened in that house. Each of these stories had a little impact on me without realizing it. It could be...

**Interviewer** – We just want to know what it was like growing up with his story in your house.

**Mrs. Chitjian** – I'm just blanking out.

**Interviewer** – Tell me about your father's story, how he would come home and talk to you...

**Mrs. Chitjian** – OK. You know what happened? I knew what I was going to say, and then all of a sudden I forgot. I'm blanking out. Wait... You wanted me to say...

**Interviewer** – How Genocide affected you...? Did you feel different?

**Mrs. Chitjian** – I was trying to realize which one was my identity...You want me to say inside the home and outside the home?

**Interviewer** – Sure. Let's start.

**Mrs. Chitjian** – OK.

**Interviewer** - Start from "Up until now that I have realized..."

**Mrs. Chitjian** – OK. You want me to tell about the impact of the Genocide...OK.

**Interviewer** – My second question would be how this affected your life... What things you did differently?

[Next tape]

**Interviewer** – All right, start!

**Mrs. Chitjian** – Up until now I haven't really realized the impact of the daily reminiscences that my dad was having. Now I can look back and see...I could see there was a constant struggle of trying to unite my expectations at school and expectations at home.

**Interviewer** – So you had two different expectations?

**Mrs. Chitjian** – I had two different sets of expectations - at school I behaved like an American and at home I was to behave like an Armenian. I always knew there was a difference. I valued both of them. I have always been trying to understand what it's like to be an Armenian. I knew this is what I was. I was an Armenian. And I know in the years ahead I'm going to find out what isn't Armenian.

**Interviewer** – How did it affect you as far as your feelings towards the people, your feelings what is happening in the world?

**Mrs. Chitjian** – I'm just blanking out. I'm blanking out.

**Interviewer** – When you heard the stories of the children in Armenia...what it was like to be with these children and their mothers? What came to your mind?

**Mrs. Chitjian** - Let me just start.

**Interviewer** - OK.

**Video ends**

