

## **ORAL HISTORY**

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I was born in Van. That was the main city of the vilayet or province known as Vaspurakan. It also was the capital of the kingdom of Urartu which started in the 9<sup>th</sup> century to about the 7<sup>th</sup> century before Christ, and represents some of the Armenians. We do not know how Armenians got established in Van. There are two theories: one, that they came from Greece, and the other is that they were local. But while there are two theories as to their origin, there is no dispute about the fact that they represent a mixture of different racial groups: Urartus, Armenians, people who lived in Van, Nairis, and many others that we don't know about.

### **What was the city like?**

The city where I lived had three sections: one was the old city, underneath the pert; pert is the place they can live in and defend themselves.

### **Fort?**

Fort. And that area was getting quite old. Most people who lived in Van in the earlier days lived in the City of Van, which was in the Kolkamerj, which was under the fort.

My own family came from Aghbak, which is a district near Persia, and they came and lived in Kolkamerj, first under the fort. But they moved into the newer area which was the Gardens, known as Aygestan. It was called Aygestan or the Gardens because each house had a back yard of several acres.

### **What was your house like?**

We had two – three acres of land. One acre (I am saying from memory) consisted of trees, fruits and vegetables that we cultivated, or my father cultivated, and grapes. We had a long, big area for development of grapes. And then we had two huge fields that had some fruit trees, but most of it was for preparation of hay, because we kept several animals: cows, that gave us milk; and horses, to be fed, and they fed on grass. During summer they would roam around in the field and eat, and in the winter we used to prepare hay, and feed them with hay.

### **Did you take care of the animals?**

Well, I was one of the men who took care of the animals. My father, my brother, the older sister did. As I grew older, I took care of the animals, yes.

**What was the house like?**

The house was well spread out. It had three bedrooms, and a big kitchen, and a place where the animals lived, separate from our own residence, and flat roofs, and several storing places. For example, we made bread once a month, but we stored the bread that we made by drying it up and putting it there and watering to make it soft to eat.

**Was this all on one floor, or two stories, or what?**

Two story house, flat roof, and on days when it snowed, we use to get out and throw the snow into the street or into the area where some of our houses were, in the open spaces.

**So you grew up and you went to school. Was there a local school there?**

Yes, I grew up and people went to school when 7 years old. I remember my first class, when I went to school. It was a parochial school, elementary grades up to 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> year. The teacher had the only chair in the room, and we sat on the floor. And the teacher had a long rod in his hands. He touched our heads when we went to sleep. That was a view of the rather primitive kind of education that we had there.

**How long did you go to school there?**

I went until the 4<sup>th</sup> grade; then my parents sent me to a well-known junior high school, Yeramjan Tabrutz.

**In Van?**

In Van. Yeramjan was blind in both eyes. He went blind when he was 11 years old, because they did not have enough doctors, they did not know how to prevent the (how do you call it?) certain kind of illness that attacks the face and irks the individual so he gets some of the ...

Anyway, he got blind, but he established that school which was at first in Garmergord, a monastery near Van, and then was taken to the city of Van, had its own building, was one of the best schools, if not the best school in Van.

**How long did you go there?**

I went in there for 3 – 4 years until 1915; we had to leave Van.

**The whole family left?**

Yes. The whole family left. Let me go back into that story. At the beginning of the century, when I lived in Van, religious people had the power and representation in Turkey. We went regularly to church, my father took me there, and I never questioned the sources of power or religion. I observed them.

**Did your sisters go to the church, too?**

Oh, yes. In the church itself, men were...

**Segregated?**

On the floor. Women were upstairs, in special area. Men and women were separated. In fact, the women did not go to work at all. Their job was at home, to prepare food, to clean the house, and prepare other things. They were constantly at work, but not for revenue. There were no offices, nothing. The government was in the hands of the Turks, and we were frightened by them.

**So even when you were a child, the government was run by the Turks?**

As a child, yes. We were frightened of the policemen. When the policemen went in the street, I ducked, not to be seen by them. In fact, after I came to the United States, I used to have dreams, where the policemen appeared, for the next 20 – 30 years, actually, we were so frightened by them.

Anyway, in 1914 the Turks decided to go with Germany to fight: Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey were the powers together, and they were fighting against France and England. America came later on. America declared war on Germany, but not on Turkey. And it was in Russia that the armies first registered considerable victories. Later on the boundary came toward Russia more and more. And there was the revolution. At first the Geransky revolution. A man by the name of Geransky who was in the government took charge, and in six months was able to govern the country, but later the communists took over. They were a small group, but dedicated, and so they used power, and the country, Russia, became communist. Well, in Turkey itself, the Turks decided to massacre the Armenians, near the Russian boundary, because many of the Armenian young men had gone as volunteers into the Russian army, and they were fighting Turkey. But not all; there were many Armenians in the Turkish army also.

### **Why did they really want to massacre the Armenians?**

The Turks under the so-called Jeun Turk, the Young Turks, decided in 1911 to eliminate Armenians, so that after the war there will not be an Armenian question. And furthermore, there would be only Turks, to whom they could speak Turkish, a uniform Turkish-speaking population that they could rule upon. Armenians had become...

### **Inconvenient?**

Not to be trusted, because their sympathies actually were with the English and the French and the Russians, but not with the Turks. And they wanted independence, or they really did not wish to have independence, but they wanted to have self-government, in the province.

### **How long had the Turks been in power, anyway?**

Oh, Turks came originally in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and they were constantly fighting with the Persians for the possession of Vaspurakan, the district, the province, that I came from. Vaspurakan was at one time in the hands of the Persians, and at one time in the hands of the Turks. And there were several Turkish groups, Seljuks and Ottomans, and then Lengk Tamur and Genghis Khan came through in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and killed many, many people, and destroyed cities; in fact, these people came from open spaces; they had a suspicion that people living in cities could not be trusted, so they wanted to eliminate all the cities. They destroyed Bardat, which at one time was center of Arabic power, and they destroyed many Armenian cities, and killed many people and so on.

### **So Armenians had been an oppressed minority in their own country for many, many centuries?**

That's right. Vaspurakan was one of the provinces at the center of Armenia. The idea was that, it being the center, it was protected by other provinces; it was the heart of Armenia.

Anyway, let me say also about Van, which I did not explain earlier, that it had three parts, as I said, Kolkamerj, under the fort, then there was the Turkish population, and then there was the Armenian population in Aygestan, or the Gardens.

So there were three parts, actually. More of the modern Van was in Aygestan, in the Gardens, than in the old City. But I had some relatives in the old City, and I went to their home. One of the sisters of my mother was married to Aykaljan. They lived in the old City, and I used to visit them.

Anyway, in 1914 when Turkey decided to go against the Allied powers, and were taking Armenians from their cities or villages and were sending them south into Therzore and on the way they would die, of hunger, of illness, of not taking care, of sleeping outside, and in that way eliminating most of the Armenians. The people living in Van said, "Since we are going to die, we will die in our houses." So they defended Van against the Turks. And one of the men in charge of the fighting was Armenaky Yegerian, who later on was the man who took me to Istanbul.

**So you were 11 when this happened?**

When I went to Istanbul it was 1921. I am talking now about 1914. So we fought for a whole month. The Turks fled, and the Russian army came, and we had a wonderful time celebrating our victory, and ...

**The red Russians or the white Russians?**

Living under the Russian army aegis...

**Which Russian army?**

The Russian army that conquered Van and went farther than Van into Turkey. It was not communist army; it was czarist army. At that time I saw my first automobile. One of Tolstoy, I think it was Mrs. Tolstoy, was in the huge, big car, automobile, being driven in front of our house. I ran outside to see a car that was driven not by a horse.

Anyway, after 60 or 70 days, the order came for us to get ready and leave, to go to Russia, because the Russian army was retiring, and so we left Van taking with us only what we could carry on our backs, and all our houses and orchards and fields and animals and everything was left there, as it was. And that's the last time I have seen Van.

Actually, the Russian army went back for six times, and these six times the Russian army retreated, and the poor Armenians had to follow it, and so the city was destroyed, was burned for the most part, and I never saw it again.

**So that's why your birth records are lost, and that's why you don't know the exact date of your birth?**

That's right. My birth records are lost because in those days they kept the record in the Bible, in the church, and my father could read, but I don't think he had more than elementary school education. He could read and write, but I never saw him write. My mother did not read or

write, so the education was low. Literacy was not known generally, but they sent me to school because I did well in school, both in Norashen, which was the parochial school, and Yeramjan Tabrutz.

So we fled, and we walked for 11 days to get to Igdirdir.

**Where is Igdirdir?**

Igdirdir is in Russian Armenia, in the east, northeast.

**How many of your family were there, that fled?**

My immediate family was mother and three sisters that were with us: Hripsime and Virginia and Varsenig, and two brothers, and father and mother. And Hripsime had...

**So there were two sisters missing?**

Had two sons and a daughter from an earlier marriage. She lived with us.

**Who were the other two sisters?**

They married, they went with their husbands, and they fled also.

**So everyone went to Igdirdir, and then what happened?**

Then we went to Igdirdir. We did not stay there, fortunately. We went to Etchmiadzin where my father had a friend. And that friend gave us the, underneath the house, how do you call?

**Cellar?**

The cellar, one room, to live in. So we were there for a while, and then we wanted our own place, so we hired a room, and the entire family lived in that room. And my sister Hripsime was working in a hospital, which was in the location of the school I went to later on, Karakathamara, and typhus was running wild, people were dying right and left. They were collecting them from the streets, from the houses every morning, and putting them together to bury them, in order not to spread the ...

**Contagion?**

Hamatzarak, you know, the pestilence. And I was out of mind, I had high fever, and my father also was sick with the same illness. He died, and they took him away, and I never knew what had happened. They gave me extreme unction, and I was to go, supposedly, but I came

back, and I lived through it. And then my brother got a job with Cyuz Garadolf, that is the Union of the Cities, in Eleskirt. At that time, the Russian army had gone forward, in Turkey, and they were opening hot meal, soup kitchens, along the way, and he was located in Karakose. And I passed the examination and went to Geragachemaran, and came down with malaria, and was in the hospital for two months.

**Was that the School in Etchmiadzin?**

Yes. One of the best schools.

**Does that school have anything to do with the Catholicos?**

Yes. It was under the supervision of the Catholicos? It was the so-called best school in all of Armenia. People who entered there would have to pass examination, would have to be bright people to enter there. I passed the examinations and entered, and the man who was responsible for preparing me to take the examinations was none other than Anastas Mikoyan, who had finished at that time the Nercissian school in Tiflis, and at that time was a member of the, we had three lessaron, three upper-level courses, or lectures given, and he was taking those, and he was who came to teach me Armenian literature and prepare to take the examination.

**For how long?**

I think for a couple months. And I used to go to this vartaped's house in Etchmiadzin, in the monastery, where Mikoyan came and prepared me for the examination. Later on I took the examination and passed it, so I was admitted. But I fell ill, for a couple months, and they were thinking of sending me home, when I came back and did well, and was top student in the class.

During the summer, my brother, who was working at Arakilise, said come over here, so I went to Eleskirt, and was waiter at the table, and helped them in many different ways, but I lived there. I don't know that I received any money for my services, but I had my keep. I ate well. And then the incident happened whereby my brother was accused of buying a gun from a Russian soldier. And the whole army walked over and wanted to kill those supposedly Kurds who had attacked the Russian army station and were taking the guns. And I nearly lost my life there, but I fled to a house where the water comes, you know, and turns the big wheels...

**A mill?**

Yes, and they prepare flour from wheat. Two others and myself, we hid ourselves at night under the water thing that comes in, that brings the water to turn the stone. And later on, walked

to the city to find that my brother was almost killed, and he was imprisoned and waiting to be tried in court. I had to leave, the opening of school had come, so I left him and later on, when they fled, they let him go.

And then I came back to Etchmiadzin, and went to school, but the school closed, in January, 1917, because many of the Armenians had to go into the army and fight, against the Turks. And I became the director of a soup kitchen, in a village near Etchmiadzin. I walked there, and walked home, at the weekends, or I stayed weekends over there, if I couldn't have gone home at the weekends, because we gave hot soup five days a week.

Well, that was the time I slept on the roof, where a man who slept in my place, when I was away at home, was wounded, and they were carrying him to hospital, when I came on the way, and heard our people bringing him to the hospital in Etchmiadzin.

**So if you hadn't gone home, if you'd been there, you would have died?**

Yeah, I would have been killed, probably, I'd have been wounded. Well, then...

**Who was attacking? Why was he wounded?**

The Turks who used to live in the house where the immigrants had come and taken over, and I had my soup kitchen there, you see. It used to be, I think, a former Kurdish or Turkish or Tartar village.

So we went to Erevan. In Erevan I lived three years.

**Your whole family went to Erevan?**

Yes, my mother, and we lived in an old house, which I saw in 1963 when I went to Erevan, and I wondered how I had lived there, how had I lived in that old, dilapidated house.

**Well, it wasn't as dilapidated, then.**

It was old. Well, in Erevan I was reporter on two papers, and also went to school, and also became a bookkeeper in the Near East Relief, old clothing department. I still have a certificate from the old clothing department; Miss Paddock gave a statement to me saying "Seth Arsenian has been employed in this department, and he is a good worker." I still have the statement.

A young man called me one day; he said, "Would you want to become the bookkeeper of our old clothing department?" I said yes, I'd be delighted, but I didn't know anything about bookkeeping.



**Who sponsored the Near East Relief?**

The Americans. It was an American organization.

**The church?**

Most of the money came from the churches, but the Armenians were being massacred, were thrown out, lost their homes, and so there was an organization, Near East Relief Association, for Armenians and Syrians. It was organized in this country.

**Did you speak English at this point, or did they speak Armenian?**

No, I did not. We had an interpreter. The director was an American woman, but she spoke via the interpreter, who was an Armenian woman who knew English. But I did not know any English. I had learned Russian, and I had learned French, but never English.

And then later on they asked me to be the chief bookkeeper of a district, where they had taken 6 orphanages, in Dteratechek, and I went there, and very soon the order came that all the orphanages are to be centered in Alexandropol. Then I resigned, did not go there, and I am glad I did, because I would have...the Turks came and took Alexandropol at one time, when fighting against Armenia. So I went into the northeast, and saw the country, and took a railroad back, to ...

**You went by yourself?**

No, I asked my friends, who were about 3 – 4 young people like me, and we walked to Dilijan, to the monastery in Sevan, and to Alexandropol, and came on the rail back to Armenia.

At that time, the situation was getting bad enough, because the Turks were coming to Armenia, and we were being prepared to go and fight them. And my officer was Oliver Baldwin. I went into the regular Armenian Army, but apparently I did not walk right, so my captain Mousialian, who was to select about 18 people to go to Oliver Baldwin, and I was one of them. The other one was a friend of mine, Dunutian, who came from Van and whose father was a good fighter.

Anyway, so we went to Oliver Baldwin.

**Who was Oliver Baldwin? How did he come to Armenia?**

Oliver Baldwin was in the war with the British forces. At the end of the war, he lived in Egypt, and one day the premier of Armenia, Hadissian, was there, and they were having a big affair in a hotel, where he was to speak. So Oliver Baldwin lived in that hotel, and wondered

what it was all about. So he went to Hadissian, and heard him, and he got interested in Armenia. He says, "I want to come to Armenia and fight with you, or work for you."

So that's how he came to Armenia. And they put him in charge of the training for people to use machine guns. And, interestingly enough, Oliver Baldwin, who used to wear a uniform, spoke to an Armenian who knew only Russian, he did not know any Armenian, and so the Russian gave the order in Russian, to an Armenian group, and we learned how to use the machine gun, but we thought very highly of Oliver Baldwin.

When the Bolsheviks came, they imprisoned him first, and they took his guns away. And one day in the back parts of Erevan, I gave him a military greeting, and he smiled at me. He understood what I was doing, but he wouldn't dare, naturally, to greet back, so he just went by. And he fled to Turkey, and the Turks kicked him in prison, in Kars, and then eventually they let go. Now Baldwin, his father, was the Prime Minister of England.

**So why was this guy running around Armenia and Turkey?**

That was the day when, you know, Edward VII was resigned? He fell in love with this woman, Simpson, and Stanley Baldwin was the Prime Minister of England, and this was his son. He incidentally became a Labor M.P., Member of Parliament from the Labor Party. He did not agree with his father. And he came, back when we had Armenian government, under Tashnak party. And he was a good man; I liked him very much.

**So you had been learning how to use the machine gun. Then what happened?**

Later on, before we were taken to fight the Turks, the Bolsheviks came in, and so we fought against the Bolsheviks. At that time I had a French gun, 3 things, it shot 3 times, then you had to reload it constantly. Well, I fought against the Bolsheviks for 2 – 3 months, and then we had to flee, again, and we fled for 40 days before we got to Persia.

**Was this your whole family, or you and the army, or what?**

No, I fled, and my brother fled, but we were not together.

**What happened to the rest of your family?**

The rest of the family stayed in Erevan.

**So it was the army that fled?**

The young people who were frightened by the Bolsheviks, and did not agree with them, did not want to live under them. They were the ones who revolted, and fought against the Bolsheviks.

**So you went to Persia?**

I went to Persia. And in Persia we were staying in the outside, in the open spaces of the Armenian school. And one day a Persian officer came and said, “Do you want a Persian passport? It will cost you one Turkish lira, gold lira,” and I had four of them at that time. That was all my wealth, everything I had, was those four. So I paid one of them to him, to give me a Persian passport. I got the Persian passport, and then, thanks to Lenin’s new economic policy, they permitted us, the small fry you know, to go back to Erevan.

**How old were you at this time?**

I must have been, this was in 1920 or 21, I must have been 18 or 19, around there.

**So you went back to Erevan.**

I went back to Erevan, but I couldn’t stay there, I would not stay there. I wanted to get out. And I made friends with an Armenian who was working in the passport office. He wanted to make a good communist out of me, and I wanted a passport from him. Neither of us succeeded. And Yegerian Armenak, who was a Romgavor, came from Istanbul, from Constantinople, to carry on some negotiations with the communists. And his son was a good friend of mine. And he knew that I wanted to get out. And he said, “If you come, my father will be willing to take you, except you will come as Aahasi Tarpinian, because he has permission to take Aahasi (who was the son of editor of our paper) but he is ill, he cannot go, so you will take his place.” And I said, “Yes, I will.” So that is how I came with him, to Tiflis.

**What did your family say? They knew they might never see you again.**

My family stayed there, stayed in Erevan, but they had to let me go, because I wanted to get out, and I was not working, I wasn’t doing anything. So they were glad to have one less eater in the house. I mean, I don’t say that unkindly, in an unkind way; mother and brother loved me, but circumstances were narrow. So when I wanted to go, they said, “If that’s your decision, go.” So I fled, by practically taking my life into my hands.

I told you the story about how the two men came to ask for the ticket, and I didn’t have any ticket, in the train, but this young man to whom I had been helpful, showed him some kindness,

said, "Never mind, let him go." They let me go. I came to Tiflis and stayed with my mother's sister's son, and then they gave us permission, that Yegerian has the permission to take with him six people. So with that permission, we left Tiflis, went to Batum, and in Batum, Yegerian had promised to take a woman, in addition to me, so he said, "Seth, you just go around, lose yourself if you can, until we get in the boat." So I got in the boat all right, and the Armenian representative, what was his name, he came, and the Tabriz Armenians, or the Teheran Armenians, had given a sword to Yegerian as the victor against the Turks, and they presented the sword to him, and in that way I was able to get lost in the boat.

So I came to Istanbul, and there I went to an old Turkish caravanserai, and there were six of us living in one room, Armenians, all looking for a job. Until one day I was at the Near East Relief center, and a young lady, Miss Paddock, who used to be my supervisor in Erevan, when I worked as a bookkeeper, you know, in the old clothing department, saw me and said, "Seth, what are you doing here?" I said I had just come here and I was out of a job and did not know what was going to happen to me. She said, "Why don't you go to Robert College?" I said, "Can I?" She said yes, she will arrange it, because Near East Relief was paying the tuition of 4 or 5 bright Armenian boys who were studying in Robert College, later on to go and teach in the orphanages, Armenian kids who were in orphanages in Greece.

### **Who ran Robert College?**

Robert College was an American enterprise. People who were running it at the time were missionaries, but had disconnected themselves from the missionary organization, and they were running this college. So I was admitted to Robert Academy in October, a month late. And my grades (there were monthly examinations,) my grades the first month were 0, 0, 4 in arithmetic, and the rest were 0's. But later on I became top of the class, and they jumped me from Special 4<sup>th</sup> class to Special 6<sup>th</sup>. I was very successful. They took me to freshman class, admitted me to freshman class, next year. And there I was again at the top of the class, and I finished college in three years, instead of four. So 1921-22-23 I was in the Academy, from '23 to '26 I was in college, and I graduated in 1926. And I was asked to stay on the faculty, and I stayed there four years, as Assistant Registrar. And then I gave my resignation to come to United States to study further. Because of the Turks, who had taken Constantinople, had their eye on my job, on my position. It was a very important position, that a native could take, you know. And I knew that eventually they would get that job from me. So in 1930 I left Constantinople and came to United States.

**How?**

How? On my Persian passport.

**The one you had gotten all those years before, for one lira?**

That's right.

**Did you have any trouble?**

Well, while I was in Erevan, I did not show it to anybody, because they knew me. So when I came to Constantinople, I went to the Iranian Embassy, and I said, "I am an Iranian citizen, this is my passport. Could you verify and stamp it?" And they looked at it, and said, "How did you come here? Did you fly?" In those days you could not fly. Well, I told them a story, and showed them a \$20 bill I had in my pocket, and they said, "We'll keep it in committee; you come next Tuesday, we'll give you the answer." Next Tuesday I went there, they certified me as a Persian subject, and I gave them \$20.

I had to take that to the Turkish police, to get permission as a foreigner to stay in Istanbul. And sure enough, a Turkish officer gave to me. So on the strength of that I stayed in my position as a Persian subject, you see, and later on came to this country as a Persian subject.

**But how did you get on the boat? You just went up and bought a ticket?**

Yeah, I bought a ticket, and I came in here. It took three weeks for me to come to Providence, Rhode Island. I was a student; I went to Columbia, and worked there in Dr. Hager's office.

**When you came to this country, did you know you were going to Columbia?**

Yes. I had been accepted, and they gave me a scholarship. So I visited my friends, my cousins, in Boston and in New Hampshire; and went to Columbia University and entered there, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Of course, I'm not telling you everything. Why did I decide to go to Columbia? One year a man, Dr. Kilpatrick, came to Robert College, and he lectured to the student body. And I was so impressed by what he said, and the way he said it, I said I want to become a student of his. And so when I went to Columbia, he was a professor there. I wanted to become his student. So I did.

Another thing was, he was interpreting John Dewey. John Dewey was a famous educational philosopher in United States. When I was at Robert College, I used my way through by working in the telephone office. And one day, in 1925, a young-looking fellow stopped in

front of the office, which was on the lowest floor, and said he wanted to see the president of the institution. So I put in a call to Dr. Gates, who was the president. I said, "There is a man here called John Dewey, who wants to see you." He said, "Bring him up immediately; I will see him." So I took John Dewey upstairs to see Dr. Gates, but I didn't know who John Dewey was.

A year later, after Kilpatrick gave that talk, I learned about John Dewey. So I read his book Democracy and Education, and wrote an article, by request of the Armenian woman. They had a journal there, Haikin, Armenian Women, and expressed some of advanced ideas of John Dewey, and her husband was publishing another paper, Armenian paper, and he took me apart, ad hominum, you know, his arguments were ad hominum. In other words, he said, "Who is this young fellow, dreamer, who is talking about this? You cannot carry that out in Turkey! Forget about it!" And he criticized me right and left.

Well, I went to Polish village which was 16 miles away from Constantinople one day, I had good food there, and wrote a reply, but I did not touch the man. I touched the ideas only, ad rem. So I sent that, and \_\_\_\_\_, who was the editor of that paper, published it. I wrote it in Armenian, naturally. And she said, in her additional notes she said, "This man knows how to debate. Learn from him." And it was her husband who had taken me apart. I did not know that at that time.

So I wrote a second article there, which was published in the same paper, and became well known in Istanbul as a good writer.

So anyway, you asked the question, did I know where I was going. I was going to Columbia University. So I went there, and I worked in the office there, and the first job that Hager gave to me was keeping clean the catalog area. And I put everything in order, and gradually my responsibilities increased until I came to be the evaluator of doctoral students. At that time I knew all the American institutions, colleges and universities throughout America, how many Ph.D.'s they had on the faculty, and who was the president, and what the rating was, etc. etc.

### **What was Hager's position?**

Hager was Assistant Secretary, that is, in charge of Admissions. I used to write letters and sign Walter E. Hager, underneath SA, so I must have sent thousands of letters outside. And eventually the Republicans got into the government, and they wanted to stop refugees having jobs. So Mr. Doke, who was the Secretary of Commerce or something, wrote to Hager saying, there is a man there, Arsenian there, he should be out of a job; you have to give that to an American citizen. And Hager got mad. He said, if I decide to use Arsenian, I am going to use him. Who are you? So he kept me.

Well, at that time I had gone to Ellis Island, finally, for examination. And I told them the entire truth, that I was from Van, that my Persian passport was secured by paying, etc. I told the whole story. And, by Jove, they came through. They gave me my first papers in 1937 after I got my doctorate.

**So is that when you became an American citizen, in 1937?**

I did not become American citizen right away. They made me eligible without going outside, changing my status; they took my student classification into a regular classification, admitted as a person, and I had to wait I think three years or so before I got my second papers, which I did.

After I got my second papers I was invited to Springfield College to teach, so I went there and on a rather low salary. You know what my salary was the first year? \$1600.

At the end of the first year, University of Wisconsin, where a friend of mine had gone, had written to Columbia, they wanted me to go to University of Wisconsin. So I went to the president, and said, I am going. He said why do you want to go? I'll raise your salary; you stay here because you are a good teacher and you are also advertising this school; you are writing to papers. At that time, I wrote to School and Society, to Educational Psychology Journal, to a number of places. I wrote articles for publication, and besides my book on bilingualism and mental development, I published quite a few articles also. He said, this is first time anyone from Springfield College has appeared in those papers. You stay here, I'll increase your salary. So he jumped \$2000, \$2400, \$2800, went up to \$4000 per year. And that was quite a lot of money in those days, you know. So I stayed there.

And then during the war, they wanted me from Washington. So I went to Washington. Worked there for two years. First with FCC, Federal Communications Commission, and then later on with Office of War Information, in charge of examining the broadcasts going to the Middle East. I was in charge of all Middle East, what propoganda went there during the second world war.

And when I finished it, I published an article in the Middle East Journal, "War Propaganda in the Middle East," which historian took it over and refers to my publication there at that time.

Well, then President Best wanted me to come back to Springfield, but the president of Clark University came to see me in Washington, wanted me to go to Clark in Worcester. But I finally decided to go to Springfield rather than Clark. So I went back to Springfield as Acting Dean, Director of Admissions, and later on head of Guidance and Personnel Services, and also Psychology, and then when Glenn Olds came, he wanted me at the Graduate School, I became

director of the graduate program for six years, and then they voted to make me the first Distinguished Professor of Humanities. So I had my own office, and the Dean said you teach what you want, and don't teach anything you don't want. So I chose what I taught, and I became the first Professor of Humanities.

**And you retired in 1969?**

I retired when I was 67 years old, in 1969. But before that I had been the Academic Dean of the University of the Seven Seas. On a sabbatical. The way I became the dean there, actually, the man came to Springfield, and wanted Springfield to support the program, and they invited me to go as a professor, research professor. So I said OK, I'll go as a research professor. But by the time we went to Athens, Greece, the dean of the ship, Whitten, asked me to become the Academic Dean, because the Academic Dean had left. He couldn't take it anymore, so he and his wife left, in Athens, and came back. So I said give me one day, I'll think it over. I was not anxious to become administrator, you know. And so I spoke to Giras at that time. He came to the boat and took me over, to entertain me for one day.

**He'd been your classmate where – at Robert College?**

At Robert College, yes. So I came back and I said OK, I'll become the Academic Dean. And I became Academic Dean of that university. We went around the world and saw the world. And at every port I was given wonderful reception by graduates of Springfield College and by others, you know. In India a man came because I had been in Washington government and knew John Kennedy; he brought me envelope with the dark colors all around, giving me the news that had appeared in the Indian papers about our visit there. And at every port we went to, the American ambassador came first, to see me, to give me the news about what had happened, in the local papers, about our visit. Because the local papers wrote about us, you know, in the East.

When I came back to San Diego, the boat stopped here, they offered me a job to stay here, at that time. I said I cannot stop here because I am under obligation to the school to teach there at least one year after I get back from sabbatical.

So I came to Springfield and then they were after me, and I said no I cannot come, until 1969. President Rust came to New York and asked me to come to New York to see him. So I went and saw him. He said the offer is still open to you if you want to come to us. So I worked there until August 31. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of September I came here. I didn't lose one day.

So I came here, I taught for 10 years, and I went to the dean and said look here, I'm retiring. He said no, I cannot hear that, you had better stay. So I stayed two more years, and now



I resigned. I gave my resignation last June, and the dean still kept it on his desk. He said I am not sharing this with the president; I don't want you to go.

Well, I have gone, and I have not gone; that's the way it is now.

**And anyway, you're happy in San Diego.**

Anyway, that's as far as we can go.

