

**100 Years...**  
**True Stories**



**1915**  
**2015**

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# **100 Years...** **True Stories**

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## 100 Years... True Stories

Among Armenians survivors of the Genocide there are people whose lives were saved by a Turkish neighbor, friend, a common witness Turk. This book shares 47 such stories. These are real stories presented as they were actually narrated, without any editing in the content. The stories were narrated by the descendants, relatives, close people of the survivors of the Great Genocide based on what the witnesses of the events had told. Some stories have been restored based on the recordings or written memoirs made while the witnesses were still alive.

The stories have been collated by joint efforts of "European Integration" Non-Governmental Organization and "Armedia" Information, Analytical Agency with the support of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom within the project "The Turk Who Saved Me". The partner in Turkey is "tursu.tv production".

The project aims to contribute to the development of dialogue and trust building between the Armenian and Turkish peoples.

The stories have been published in Armenian on the electronic web-page of "Armedia" Information, Analytical Agency and in Turkish in Taraf, Zaman, Radikal, Demokrat haber, Evrensel, Bianet, Yurt, T24 media.

The book is published in the Armenian, Turkish and English languages and is delivered free within this project.

***The materials, opinions and conclusions presented in the book introduce the views of the people witnessing the events and narrating the stories and do not reflect the position of the United Kingdom Government.***

## Opening Word

100 years... One could argue, try to imagine, understand and perceive whether 100 years is much or little. But there are cases when even time is powerless. I believe the topic of both this project and the book could be among them.

These stories, this book comprise the history of my family and families like mine. On the whole the idea of such a project, of collating such stories perhaps can be explained, first of all, by the state of mind that one has and lives with during a lifetime trying to get that subject to some logical end.

My paternal grandparents – my Father's both mother and father – are among the heroes of these stories. Turks saved them from Turks. If it hadn't been for those Turks, they wouldn't have survived; if they hadn't survived my Father wouldn't have been born; if my Father hadn't been born, I wouldn't exist. I believe these same expressions or words could be pronounced by many of the heroes of these stories. Thus, most of all, this book and these stories are to pay tribute to those Turks, those people. Many of them perhaps are no longer alive, but one thing is definite: we curtsy before their tombs as I and people like me owe our lives to them as well.

Today much is spoken about fair memory but there is a fear that these two words are deteriorated and subjected to certain interests. However, both fairness and memory are words and concepts that create and maintain values. I think they should be treated with care. And what is fair memory?

First of all, since Turks, their ancestors arrived in this region we have had quite rich experience of common life, collaboration, interaction, relation, giving and taking from each other. Haven't there been bright moments, periods that could be called friendship? Definitely, there have been. Weren't there any moments before 1915 when there were problems? Definitely, there were. All that time, including the last centennial, needs to be reassessed so that tribute is paid to justice and nothing is forgotten.

Second, the Genocide... Conducted with inexplicable violence and organized meticulously to the least detail. An attempt, a desire to eradicate ultimately a whole nation from its own cradle, its native land. Thanks God, that didn't succeed. It failed also thanks to those, including Turks, who opposed that very program, that violence at least with their disagreement and actions. Can there be fair memory without accepting the fact of the Genocide and dispossession of homeland? Another part of fair memory, definitely, is the fact that there were nations, states, families, individuals, among whom there were Turks, who were Humans and that saved lives. No element or factor of this can be forsworn.

I have already noted that if it hadn't been for those individuals I wouldn't exist. If it hadn't been for the organizers of the Genocide my Father, his parents would have had all their dynasty alive and creative and wouldn't have been the only shred of the whole family. Can that phenomenon called fair memory bypass any of these elements? Certainly, not. In that case it would cease being fair; in that case it would not be memory.

Perhaps a few words should be said about our present. There is much talk about the necessity to build confidence measures, to give our two nations an opportunity to reach out hands to each other and to implement that opportunity. Certainly I agree. Consequently, through remembering the positive, through not forswearing a single element an effort should be exerted to fulfill all that. These stories, this book and this very idea aim at that. They aim to show that we cannot forswear and, surely, we expect our interlocutor not to forswear either. We expect to see the generations of those Turks who saved and their generations can proudly loudly say, "We are proud to be Turks as our grandparents saved lives." We desire to face humanness, acceptance of values and not a situation when if somebody wants to voice all that they have to think about dangers, can feel fear for themselves and for members of their families or their children. This is one of the steps directed at trust, or at least it could be.

Our present also has its problems. We want to overcome them together, without denial by any party. But we have a present where demonstrations of enmity never stop. Human logic, reason and feeling should have noted perhaps that for both nations to overcome, to reassess and to look at the future the Armenian-Turkish border should ultimately be open and most active. But the enmity hasn't stopped, that border is close up to now. Closed by Turkey.

I want also to express gratitude to all those individuals, organizations that made it possible for this idea, this project and this book to become reality. Among them is the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom. This is tribute or an attempt to pay tribute to the innocent victims of the Genocide, to all those who gave a hand and, of course, to those Turks who, despite the danger for their own lives and lives of their family members, were unable to keep aside and gave a hand. This is also a project of hope to realize that denial can in no case defeat justice. Hope that in the end, 100 years after the Genocide we can try to look at our future together without denying anything and trying to trust each other...

**Karen Bekaryan,**  
**Chairman, "European Integration" NGO**



I was a second-year student when I realized history is written by victors. Since I was seven I had been learning what heroic, right people my ancestors were who had suffered so much injustice but had never given way. When I began to make out things, all those stories sounded more and more like exaggerations, however, in those years almost no "state" source written correctly was accessible.

In the huge mosaic of the so-called history, filtered government archives are as truthful as distorted memories of individuals are. And the main reason for distortion was the inexplicable fear of confronting.

The idea of confronting was so oppressed that, looking back at the events of the past, I could realize that we existed behind dirty glass distorted with prejudices and covered in stains. To confront, it was necessary, first, to get rid of all those prejudices and to jointly clean that glass. This project, into which I have had the honour to bring at least some input, fulfills this very function.

When publishing some stories of the project "The Turk Who Saved Me" I faced a kind of odd situation. After having read the stories a reader accused us of a change in the approach to the Armenian Genocide.

This criticism made me again weigh the stories we had already published in Turkey and think about the interview I had made with Aris Nalci.

To make it short, our reader was trying to explain that, with these stories we had directed Turks towards brain wash and were implementing a revisionist mechanism or were trying to alleviate the violence committed towards Armenians. The reader's judgments sounded like this as we were the first to evaluate the events of 1915 as the Armenian Genocide. And, if I am not mistaken, that reader was a Turk.

That was a reader who had overcome the revisionist phase and had confronted history. This was gratifying.

But was there any problem or mistake in this approach...

Perhaps he had overcome denial but wasn't he too much drifted in another direction now? Could he have achieved another biased and criticized view? Or, maybe, I, who had grown up hearing stories about our hero ancestors, had again become the prisoner of the old prejudices and was conducting propaganda of "there are good Turks as well" without realizing that.

I mused over all that again and again. I believe confronting works correctly as a mechanism as long as we follow the route of reality. Each of these reminiscences is an oral account, without any ulterior motive and is ultimately spotless. That is why the project "The Turk Who Saved Me" is a core initiative valuable especially because

it makes one of these mechanisms work.

After coming across the reaction of the above mentioned reader, a statement made by Aris Nalçı in the interview made by us became even more influential for me. Aris said, "If this project hadn't been initiated by an Armenian organization, no one, including me would believe this. Most people would think this is just another propaganda act carried out by Turkey. But the stories demonstrate how people survived the Genocide and don't reprove Turks."

In the end I came to the following conclusion: the positive steps of recent years directed at confronting constitute a gratifying fact. Nevertheless, we shouldn't forget we still have a long way to pass.

***Haluk Kalafat ,  
Editor-in-chief, Bianet***



This work presents to You the stories of the Armenian Genocide survivors recollected by their relatives.

These stories are unique as they tell how the hero/heroes survived the Armenian Genocide thanks to direct or indirect help of Turks.

Ahead of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in 2015, this book encourages viewing the events of 1915 in a way different from what has existed up to now.

On the one hand, the families saved by Turks speak about what they went through and what their relatives told, on the other hand, they speak about having no problem with the "Turkish" identity.

This life stories come to serve as an example that the problems between Turks and Armenians are not solely of ethnic character and that Armenians are able to break stereotypes in this matter. This should make us think and ask: is it possible to do the same in Turkey as the stories of Turkish families that saved Armenians from the massacres have not been collected yet?

Today those who believe collation of such stories is a threat to identity constitute a majority because most of the saved children were made to convert into Turks, Kurds or assimilated and vanished in families of some other ethnicity.

Each of these stories is true and reveals several topics worth of research.

Most of the Genocide survivors are no longer alive today but their grandchildren keep their reminiscences bright...

This book puts forward one more question: what do the Turks that saved Armenians feel... Let's hope there will be some non-governmental organization in Turkey in near future that will work in pursuit of this question and will share its results with the public.

***Aris Nalçı,  
IMC TV editor, T24 columnist***



We were walking along the streets of Diarbekir with a friend of mine for comfort of whose soul I pray now. As it was my first visit, he wanted to show and tell me everything. And I also wanted to see and learn everything. An old woman sitting in front of her house said something in Kurdish, my friend answered her. The elderly woman got up and walked up to me. First she took my hands into hers and held tight: she was speaking in Kurdish and I could understand nothing but she clenched my hands so hard, there was so much pain on her face, so much sorrow in her look and tears in her eyes that everything got mixed in my head. I was impatiently waiting for my friend to translate; his face had also gone pale. Then the elderly lady let my hands free and hugged me. She kissed my cheeks, eyes and then hugged again. She was unable to let me go. Then she took us into her house. When we entered she put her best mattress and seated me. She sat next to me, looked at me for some time and her eyes filled with tears. She moved aside and tried to dry her tears silently, without showing that to us. After the elderly woman and her husband had calmed down and she had gone to the kitchen as she intended to serve us tea by all means, my friend told what had been said.

The elderly lady likened me with her granddaughter. My eyes, face, hands looked just like hers. Her granddaughter was hardly 19 when she went to fight as a guerilla and was killed. The woman told, "We would have reconciled with her death if not for that." In Diyarbekir her granddaughter was tied to the back of a car and dragged until her body was wrangled. They had been unable even to organize a funeral for her.

She was that woman's beloved granddaughter, the only child of her son and daughter-in-law who had died young in a car accident and whom the grandmother had brought up. That is why when she saw me she thought it was her granddaughter so she hugged and smelled me. The detail added by the old woman's husband was even more tragic. Her husband said, "Well, suppose you killed her and dragged her body," Then he went on with the most awful part, "They dragged her so that all parts of my granddaughter's body thrust open, her legs, her breasts. As if they were showing to Diyarbekir. They took away her soul, what did they want from her honor?" "We wish you never have that destiny, but you look so much alike and you are so beautiful," this is what they said. That is why she was crying about her granddaughter before a stranger. I was stone frozen. No words could matter or heal her wound. The lady brought our tea but I was unable to drink even a drop. She brought the tea to my lips and said, "Drink, drink so that I think my Gyulay was drinking; as if I were giving a drop to my Gyulay. I didn't serve her even her last water."

It was 1999, my second year in journalism. It was my first business visit to Diyarbekir. Coming from Edirne, I had received "national" education in an environment of highest level of "sterility" in Tekirdağ and my introduction into the matter of Kurds and the Kurdish issue had started with my arrival in Istanbul intending to enter university. I mean I was one hundred percent sure I was aware of Kurds and the issue and

that it was merely a legal matter. But everything changed that day. All my theoretical ideas vanished. From Gyulay's grandparents' story I understood that it was a matter of being human: this is the essence of the case. My soul was stabbed. That story had more impact on me than any propaganda by a structure or a speech "instilling consciousness". One soul had embraced another. Gyulay's grandparents' souls had embraced mine and united: I was to view everything from that perspective from now on. Everything I said and all my approaches would be made not to cause pain to Gyulay. If I caused her soul pain I also felt pain.

A real story comes from a real person. Just like you and me. Even if your faces, eyes, hair or ideas are not similar, their joy, sadness, tears, smile will touch you to be like you. And if it is the soul then it will definitely embrace your soul; it will remind you of humanity, of being a human. Whatever you can believe and understand reading thousands of pages, the soul can summarize in five minutes. That is why when you hear a true story you think what you would do in that case, how you would behave. Would you imagine yourself a human? Would you be a human? When your heart and consciousness start to work, the soul comes closer to the soul. From that moment on, no matter what is done, they cannot part. Just like the case when one of my family members faced the Armenian Genocide.

After having read Fethiye Çetin's "My Grandmother" I gave the book to a family member who used to deny the Armenian Genocide saying that "well, something happened then..." Although that person didn't at first want to read it, when she started she read it in a wink. Then she said, "I was crying the whole night for Aunt Seher," then she corrected herself, "Aunt Heranush. What stories and lives did those people live? I don't know what I would do in their place. Let God forgive us all..."

So many years she had refused to believe but she realized that 90-year-old Aunt Heranush had no reason to lie. Moreover, she added her mother-in-law's words, who came from Erzincan-Egin, "My mother-in-law often said: My girl, the waters of the Euphrates were constantly red; we witnessed the Armenians' slaughter but could do nothing..."

This is the actually true story you know. No matter how hard you try to forget it, one day your sub-consciousness will find it, slap into your face and make you admit it. But that can by no means be admitted by force. That is possible only with your consent. Perhaps this is the genuine human admittance.

**Nazan Özcan,**  
**Editor, Yurt newspaper**



Just a few months later Armenians throughout the world will pay tribute to the victims of the Great Genocide...

100 years, undoubtedly, is a merely symbolic anniversary; it is clear that extermination of us – Armenians from our own cradle didn't begin and end in 1915. The sufferings of the Armenian nation were much harder than a calendar year could bear. Despite that even the lasting massacres meticulously elaborated at the highest level didn't allow to fulfill that outrageous idea at full scale. The reasons varied; however, one is the most crucial: help...

The names of individuals, charity organizations and states reaching a hand of assistance to our compatriot Armenians are constantly mentioned with gratitude in any evidence recollecting the horrors of the Genocide. Nevertheless, there is yet another speck of truth that has so far been doomed to silence or has merely been voiced in most innocent friendly circles: this regards the Turks who exerted help to us among all that horror.

The stories introduced in the series "100 Years... True Stories" come to witness this very fact that makes the following truth undeniable: compassion, conscious are values that recognize neither nationality, nor religion, nor any actual or virtual border.

This compilation of stories is an attempt to pay tribute to those who didn't eschew and helped us Armenians even at the cost of endangering their own lives. This is also an attempt to pay tribute to the actuality and to present reality as it is because that reality involves both those who initiated and conducted the crime, as well as those sons and daughters of Turkey whose efforts made it possible for some Armenians and their families to get protection and have a narrow escape from that great disaster.

***Anna Mkrtchyan,  
Editor-in-chief, "Armedia" Information, Analytical Agency***



## True Stories



*Muratchai village*

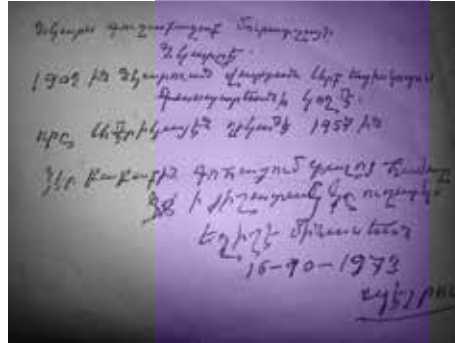
### **“The Turkish Baker Kept My Grandfather at His House, Then Gave to the American Orphanage in Istanbul”**

*Tells Grigor Avetisyan*

My fraternal Grandfather Avetis Avetisyan was born in 1915 in the village of Muratchay (Muradchay) in Eskişehir district. The name of the village has been changed; I don't know what it is called now. At that time the village had about ten thousand population who were mainly involved in cattle breeding. There were two churches in Muratchay: one was built before 1900, the second one was built and began to operate in 1900. My Father worked at that new church as a ringer, unlike Eastern Armenia, churches in Western Armenia didn't have belfries, instead teenagers from the village announced about the liturgy and Divine worship around the village by ringing a bell.



A certificate for working as a baker in Belgium



A handwriting on the backside of the picture of Murutchai

My Grandfather's grandfather (Grand-grand-grandfather) Avet of the Hajvetants had made friends with the family of a Turkish baker in Eskişehir when taking cattle to sell there. In 1914 Avet of the Hajvetants brought his grandson – my grandfather to the baker as a pupil.

When mass massacres and deportations of Armenians started my Grandfather was at that Turk's house. In 1915 that Turk actually saved my Grandfather from the carnage by keeping him at his house and hiding from everyone that he was an Armenian. Later my Grandfather was taken to an American orphanage. Grandfather said when that tense period had already passed and there was an opportunity to return he immediately decided to go back to their village and find his parents. Returning there Grandfather found his native Muratchay ultimately destroyed, plundered and his relatives – assassinated. Seeing all that, Grandfather went and joined the Greek army as a soldier. In his words mainly Armenian forces fought in the front lines of the Greek army and the Greeks followed them. After the Greek army was defeated my Grandfather moved to Bulgaria and settled in the town Stara Zagora where he met my Grandmother and they got married. During the years in Bulgaria Grandfather earned their living as a baker: he worked as a baker for a Turk. Later, grandfather was able to buy a house; he also bought that Turk's bakery. They lived in Bulgaria until 1933 and in 1933 they moved to Armenia with their two sons. Once I asked my Grandfather what that house and bakery he had left in Bulgaria and returned to Armenia would cost. Grandfather answered, "Oh, even if it cost one million." And in answer to my question why he left all that and returned to Armenia he said, "I came here and found nine million..." And he started counting his nine grandchildren who spoke Armenian in Armenia and grew up as Armenians.

Grandfather often told his story of surviving the Genocide, about the hard years following it and about the calamities. Talking about Turks he often repeated he had taken all his revenge. He used to say, "You have nothing to do." Now I can understand he said so because he didn't want me to live a life full of revenge; he wanted me to live a calm life. Keeping the past bright in his memory, overcoming so many difficulties my Grandfather passed away in 1977. ■



*Rima Petrosyan*

## **“I Remember the Good as Well as the Evil”**

### ***Tells Rima Petrosyan***

My Father Sirekan Pertosyan was from historical İğdir, Western Armenia. He deported in 1914.

My Father and aunts told me about the Genocide. My Aunt told that before fleeing they hid a jug full of gold in their yard, left it there and came. She used to say that upon hearing the news they hurried away and didn't have time to take anything with them. She said crying that they hid the jug in the hope they would return. My brother often asked her about whereabouts and shape of their house in the hope that he would manage to go there and find the gold and everything else.

Both of my aunts, one of whom died in 1965 and the other in 1985, lived on the bank of the Araz River and their descendants still live there. When I was young and visited them I often asked why they had come and settled there after the Genocide if everyone else went to foreign countries. In answer my aunt used to stretch her hand in the direction of their garden and showing a bit farther she said they lived there so that they were able to return to their home as soon as the border opened.

Father told there were three sons and three daughters in the family...

At that time Armenians and Turks used to live side by side. They were very close with their neighbor. They were friends, shared food and worked together... [One day my Father got rather surprised when that very friend told him that a massacre of Armenians was to be organized and they had to escape. So my Father warned all Armenians he could. Going from one house to another my Father was able to save so many people. Together with his brother and sisters he crossed the Araz and settled there. My aunts lived there until they died and my Father came to Yerevan. When telling this story Father always noted that if it hadn't been for that Turkish friend of his they would have been assassinated just like others.

In Yerevan Father got married and had two children. Before that he had been married to another woman who died before the deportation. Father had two children from that woman also. They were raised and brought up by my Mother and we didn't know they were not my Mother's children for quite a long time.

Father always said that it is not the Turkish people to be blamed. Pashas should be tried...

I remember the good as well as the evil. ■

## “Turks Brought Gyulizar up as Their Own Child and Refused to Give Her to Americans”

*Tells Romela Gulyants*

I am Romela Gulyants and I have heard this story from my Godfather. During family gatherings he often told about his Grandmother Gyulizar Smbulyan who was born in 1899 in the village of Gemerek, Sebastia. Her father was a middle provincial official and there were three children in the family: the elder daughter, Gyulizar and her brother.

My Godfather told that during the slaughter horsemen came to the village, caught Gyulizar's father and took him away from home. A few days later her mother was killed. Thus the children became orphans with no one nearby. Some days later, when another attack occurred on the village, one of the Turkish horsemen kidnapped Gyulizar's brother whom she never saw again and another horseman kidnapped Gyulizar herself. She had no idea what happened to her elder sister.

In my Godfather's words the Turk kidnapping Gyulizar took her to his house and, as the family didn't have children for many years, Gyulizar was accepted and treated like their own child and the family even had no wish to give her to an orphanage.

A few years later a boy was born in that Turk's family and they often noted that the Armenian girl was a gift for the family and had brought Holy Spirit with her that was why they had a child.

“Gyulizar is a child with ghsmat [good luck, tr.],” my Godfather used to cite the Turk's words.

Five years after moving to the Turk's house people from the American embassy arrived searching for Armenian children surviving the Genocide. An Armenian woman who worked at a Turk's house and knew the Smbulyans' daughter informed the embassy officials about Gyulizar. A few days later they seized Gyulizar at night as the Turkish family refused to hand the child to the Americans' care.



*Gyulizar - first row,  
first on the right*

The next day the Turkish family went to the embassy and begged to return the child. The Americans sharply refused but gave them an opportunity to see Gyulizar for some few hours.

During that meeting the Turk gave the child some money and his address and asked her to return home whenever she wanted. Father told that Gyulizar kept that Turk's address for many years.

The American embassy moved the child from Turkey to Greece, to the orphanage of Edipsos where she studied and got married. Her mother-in-law was Andranik Ozanian's cousin, paternal aunt's daughter, who was looking for a bride for her younger son Hovsep. After getting married Gyulizar changed her name and took Armenian name Hasmik [Jasmine, tr.]. A year later Hasmik and Hovsep had their first child Grigor. In 1936 they moved to Yerevan where their second son Armenak was born. In



*Gyulizar – first row, first on the left*

Yerevan they lived quite a prosperous life but that period coincided with Stalin repressions and the family, fearing exile and persecutions, sold all their property and migrated to Tabriz. After her father-in-law's death they moved to Salonika, Greece. In Greece Hovsep suddenly died and all the burden of the care about the family lay on Hasmik.

Seeing that Hasmik was working too hard and was suffering her mother-in-law decided to marry Hasmik. Thus Hasmik married an Armenian gardener who had also survived the Genocide and lived in that same city but never wanted to talk about what had happened during those years. As my Godfather told the man had a scar on his face left by a Turk who did that to show the boy was dead so that he had an opportunity to take him away from the attacked village. Hasmik lived a life full of hardships with her second husband and had to move to the country after her third son Hakob's birth to be able to earn the living for the family. While she was pregnant Hasmik got blind and remained so for some 5-6 months. Fortunately, though, her eyesight restored after the child was born. Then her elder sons moved to Germany to work and support the family. A few months later Hasmik and her husband also moved to Germany to their children. However, this period coincided with the Second World War and they had to move to Greece again where they lived in rather hard conditions. At first they lived in the shattered hut of a neighbor of theirs. After some time they bought a sewing machine and her husband learnt to make ice-cream. So

they began to "rise". Then Hasmik's husband's brother who lived in Bulgaria decided to move to Armenia. Hasmik's family also decided to settle in Armenia with them (1947). In Armenia Hasmik's husband began to work at a furniture-making factory. The family lived in Arabkir district. Her sons and their descendants still live in Avan district, Yerevan.

Hasmik lived 107 years and died in 2006. ■

## “The Turkish Officer Said the Turkish Government Had Decided to Exterminate All Armenians Living in Turkey”

*Tells Levon Kaftaryan*

*(The recording was provided by his cousin Madlene Minasyan)*

My Father came from Agn. He did trade and had 4-5 shops. Father told that on an early morning, when he opened his shop, he saw a military officer who stopped his horse in front of the shop. It was a Turkish officer. He handed a damaged silver coin and said, “Chorbashi, [bashi means merchant in Turkish, tr.], could you change this coin?” father took a new silver coin out of the chest and gave to the officer as a gift, without taking his money. The officer thanked and went away.

Two years later, in 1892 massacres of Armenians started. One morning a signal was given from a minaret and slaughter began. Father told he suddenly saw a few military officers beside their door. The mob passed by smashing everything, robbing shops. When they got to our door the soldiers said, “We have no right to rob this place.” And the mob went by.

In the evening the attack ceased. My Father told that an officer came in and said, “Good morning, chorbashi. Do you know why you are free?” Father asked, “Why?” and he answered, “Do you remember you gave me a silver coin as a gift and I didn’t forget that? Two years later I came to free you and your family.”

The officer said that the Turkish government had decided to exterminate all Armenians living throughout the empire. He also said as my Father was a kind man and had done so much good for the city, they had made a decision with the intendant and the mayor to offer him to leave taking all his relatives with him.



*Madlene Minasyan*

My Father said his four brothers lived in different cities – Diarbekir, Malatia – and asked what would happen to them. The officer said they would be ordered to arrive there immediately.

Everybody gathered together. About ten gendarmes took the whole family on horses, on foot to the Black Sea. There they got aboard a ship and headed for Russia. That is how they got to the city of Sukhumi. There they were free.

During the Russian revolution my Father moved to Bulgaria. There again he was involved in trade: he was well-known Gyulbenkyan’s salesclerk. I was born in Varna, Bulgaria in 1905. ■



## “Until the End of His Life My Father Remembered Zabit Effendi”

*Tells Hakob Margaryan*

Our genuine family name is Malkhasyan, however, destiny made us Margaryan.

My Father Harutyun Margaryan was born in the town of Evciler, Van in 1899. His father Vardan was a superintendent when the construction of Berlin-Baghdad railway began. Employees of various nationalities were engaged there – Armenians, Greeks, Turks, Kurds, Arabs. When they received their wages they brought and gave the money to Grandmother Varduhý to hide it. She recorded everybody’s names in the list and put the money in a chest.

When the carnage of 1915 began my Grandfather Vardan was among the first. He was one of the first victims. But he had a good friend Zabit Effendi who collected the whole family and kept in his house for about 4-5 years. There were my Grandmother, my Father, his elder brother Mihran born in 1895, Hayk (1898) and their sister Aghavní.

They lived with the Turk’s family, worked with them. That man never put any difference between his sons and my Father or uncles... He always fed and dressed them the same way...

Elder brother Mihran worked at the casino in that town.

In 1918 Mihran was recruited to the army, there his Turkish commander said, “Take my wife and child to Polis. From there run away, go wherever you want, just never ever come back again.”

Mihran took the commander's family to Polis. In the harbour there stood a Bulgarian ship. He went up and said he was an Armenian and wanted to run away from there. He was taken aboard. This is how he appeared in Greece.

When the second wave of massacres began Zabit Effendi said, “I can no longer keep you here, you must leave this place.” He filled saddlebags with food and every-



*Srbuhi and Harutyun, 1979*

thing necessary for the journey and my Grandmother set off with her children.

The Turk’s son had argued with my Father. Well, perhaps he didn’t like his father treating Armenians so well. But, when saying farewell, he came up to my Father and said, “Don’t remember the bad about me.”

So they arrived in the town of Dersim in Cilicia (Kilikia). Various events happened on the way but they got there without any losses.

My uncle Mihran’s fiancée Yepraksia was with them. During the journey she caught smallpox, which was rather dangerous for the surroundings. She was isolated. But my Father gave the Italian doctor some money to get the girl out of the hospital. So she was taken out of the hospital, hidden among dead bodies and was brought home. Every day the doctor was given one gold coin to come and cure the girl at home. And Yepraksia survived.

After all they got to Dersim. The port was covered in dead bodies; people walked over them. They went to get aboard the ship. There were so many people that hot water was poured on them from the ship to keep them away. A thick rope was thrown from the ship into the crowd. Those who appeared on one side of it got on the ship;



Left to right – Harutyun and Hayk

those on the other side had to remain on the shore. Somehow, with great difficulty the family managed to get aboard the ship.

Suddenly among all that fuss they noticed their small wooden box was missing. You may remember, perhaps, shoe shiners used to have such boxes. The family had been earning money during the whole journey and saving it in the secret part of the box. Hayk noticed the box floating in the water. He jumped into the water and climbed back with the box in his hand.

At first they were on Zakynthos Island. After the slaughters, when Armenians were scattering they used to leave some information about themselves in Armenian churches saying “We are at a certain place”. This way many people managed to find each other.

Mihran’s fiancée Yepraksia left a message at the church saying, “We are on Zakynthos Island.” And on a nice day the door opened and Mihran entered the house.

There were many refugees there. One day my Father was told there were some very beautiful girls. Father went and saw my Grandmother Srбуhi who was 16 then. Father said, “Let’s go, I’ll show you some very interesting things.” He took her to his



Srбуhi and Harutyun,  
1926

house and didn’t allow her to go back. Soon they got married and moved to Athens. That was 1926. Here they started a shoemaking workshop, then a store. Once my Father got drunk at an inn and had an argument with a Greek. That man said, “Get lost, go to your country, what are you doing here?” Father hit the Greek. He spent about eight months in prison for that. When he got out he decided that it was really time to go to Armenia. By the way, my Father was a bearer of a Nansen’s passport.

They went to the port. There, names from a list were read out and only then people were allowed to get on the ship. The name “Margaryan” was read out, no one responded. It was read again. Again there was no answer. Then my Father said, “We are Margaryan”. Their whole family embarked the ship and came to the Caucasus. It was 1932. This is how our family name became Margaryan from Malkhasyan.

My Father remembered Zabit Effendi till the end of his life. He used to cross himself and say, “God bless him...” ■



## “Hair of Armenian Women and Girls Were Flying Like Seaweed on the Waves”

*Tells Naira Mkrtchyan*

I will tell you the story of my maternal Grandfather Sargis (Sergo) G(K)uyumjyan.

The name of my Sergo Grandfather's Father was Grigor (1876-1948), his Mother's name was Gayané (1877-1959) who was called Néné. Their children were Sargis, Manuk, Varduhý, and Srbuhý. They lived in the city of Izmir. Grigor and his father were famous engineers-mechanics, and his grandfather was a jeweler. And that is where their family name comes from: “kuinjý” means “jeweler” in Turkish. It is said that the famous painter of the 19th century Arhip Kuindzi was from their dynasty.

I was able to restore the story of the family salvation when I started to remember my Mother Gayané Guyumjyan's and Uncle Grigor Kuyumjyan's (Manuk's son) stories that they had heard from their Grandfather Grigor.

“That day our neighbor, who was half Turkish and half a Muslim Caucasian nationality, visited us. He was an officer of the Turkish army. He came and said that we had to pack and flee immediately as massacres were expected. We got ready very fast: we took blankets to cover ourselves, food, the money we had at home and fled. We had no time to get the hidden gold.

All members in our family, especially the girls were very beautiful and were white-skinned, red-haired and hazel-eyed. That Turkish neighbor said, “I can't allow such beautiful people to be killed.” Following his advice we put some soot on the girls' faces and left. That Turk took us to the Greek army on donkeys. There were gendarmes on every meter on the road leading to the harbour. I gave a gold coin to each of them; I had put gold coins in different pockets. Thus we managed to get to the ship and left for Greece. That is how our family found rescue.

The Genocide was raging in Izmir with planned and unspeakable violence but we were able to flee just in time thanks to that Turkish neighbor. Much later we were told that when that Turk returned and it was found out that he had helped us, he and all



*Grandfather Grigor*



*Sargis Guyumjyan*

his family were slaughtered.”

My Mother told that her Grandmother Néné remembered and blessed that Turk every evening before going to bed. Néné also told that from the Greek ship she had seen how Armenians were beheaded and had seen how too many bodies were floating in the sea, how “beautiful, long hair of Armenian women and girls were flying like seaweed on the waves”. She was very impressed by that scene and always wept when she remembered it.

The Guyumjyans lived in Athens until 1932. Grigor worked at the Central Bank doing something in the service of safety deposit boxes. He was famed not only for being a very good specialist with “golden hands”, but also as a kind and honest person. Once he saw a safe in the yard and asked why it wasn't in use. A bank employee answered it had been there for a long time as nobody was able to open its secret lock. Grigor assumed the task to try to open it. After cramming at it for a few days the safe opened. Grigor fell unconscious when he saw what was inside it: money,

jewelry and gems. Master Grigor handed all the findings to the bank. All newspapers of Athens wrote about that.

In 1932 the Guyumjyans moved to Yerevan, Armenia. Sargis Guyumjyan was an honored innovator of the Armenian SSR, the Chief Mechanic of the Confectionery and Candy Factory, a Hero of Socialist Labor, a member of the Association of Innovators and Inventors of the USSR. Granddad Sergo was called “chocolate grandfather” in the neighborhood as he always used to have sweets for kids.

The family lived not far from the railway station, by the river on Hoktemberyan avenue (currently Tigran Mets). There was a railway bridge nearby.

One day Sergo heard the sound of alarming siren of the locomotive. When he came out of the house he saw the train had stopped on the bridge and was blowing out black smoke. People were in panic and the machinist was running away leaving the train there. Sergo and his brother Manuk took their instruments and ran to the locomotive. They were hardly able to open the incandescent steam boiler and the steam blew out in a mighty stream. If they had been a little late it could have blown up causing several human losses. ■



*Anahit Partizpanyan*

## **“Realizing What Destiny Awaited Imprisoned Armenians, Turkish Neighbors Helped Them Run Away”**

*Tells Anahit Partizpanyan*

When I was born my Grandfather had already died, that is why, unfortunately, I didn't hear Grandfather's reminiscences. I saw only my Grandmother Arshaluys Qanqanyan. Grandmother often told about Western Armenia. She said they lived a convenient life, had nice houses, yet had to migrate.

Although she was very young during the deportation, only 14, she always spoke about their house, the beauty of the nature in their motherland with great affection and positive impressions. At that time my Grandfather Manvel Partizpanyan was 20. He came from the city of Van. As far as I can judge, Armenians lived quite well there, they even kept servants at home and were very wealthy. Yet, they were able to take hardly anything with them during the expatriation. When I was still at school, I remember, my Grandmother used to tell me that they hid quite a fortune in the walls of their house; no one thought they were leaving for ever; people hoped one day they were going to come back to their homes.



*Arshaluys Qanqanyan and Manvel Partizpanyan hugging their Grandchildren*

Grandmother told us that their Turkish neighbors had saved them; she said if it hadn't been for them perhaps we wouldn't be alive as well. During the deportation quite a big group became prisoners. All Armenians were collected and locked somewhere. It is interesting that local Turk neighbors came to their rescue. Seeing the destiny of captive Armenians and realizing none of the prisoners usually managed to survive, they helped not only my Grandmother's family but also the whole group to escape.

Grandmother told that they were in very good relations with their Turkish neighbors. She told that they lived side by side and treated each other very warmly.

She also told that Silva Kaputikyan's mother was among the captives of their group.

Meanwhile, there was another significant factor: the Turkish servants of Grandmother's family were so loyal that upon hearing about the planned massacre against Armenians came and warned them to run away.

However, my Grandmother also remembered the horrors of the massacre: how pregnant women were stabbed with swords before their eyes; how men were beheaded; how young girls were raped. She said Armenian girls jumped into the lake thus preferring to die than to get into the enemy's hands.

At those times girls got married quite young – at the age of 13-14. Grandmother also married at 14. She came to Armenia with my Grandfather and settled in Yerevan. With the money they had brought with them they managed to start their own business and lived in quite good conditions. They had three sons.

... They had that never-ending longing for their motherland and suffered. Grandmother was fond of gathering her grandchildren around and telling about Western Armenia. Although she was only 14 when they were deported and had been living in Yerevan since then, she spoke Western Armenian till the end of her life. I have heard about the herring of Lake Van, about the water, the air of the Van so often. And, although they lived quite well in Yerevan, she always spoke about their houses they had left with nostalgia. They had a big family but were never able to find out the fate of their relatives. Grandmother always said, "When the roads are open I'll go and find my house." But it was even hopeless to think about it at that time. She was a very intelligent woman and constantly read: she was 85 when she died but even at that age she used to read without glasses.

We are still trying to find our relatives. It is much easier to do that now thanks to modern technologies. Our family name is unique – Partizpanyan and we know that all bearers of that name come from Western Armenia. Many of them get in contact with us and we try to find out if we are relatives. ■

## "My Grandfather Hoped That One Day His Family Would Return Home Again"

*Tells Gayané Petrosyan*

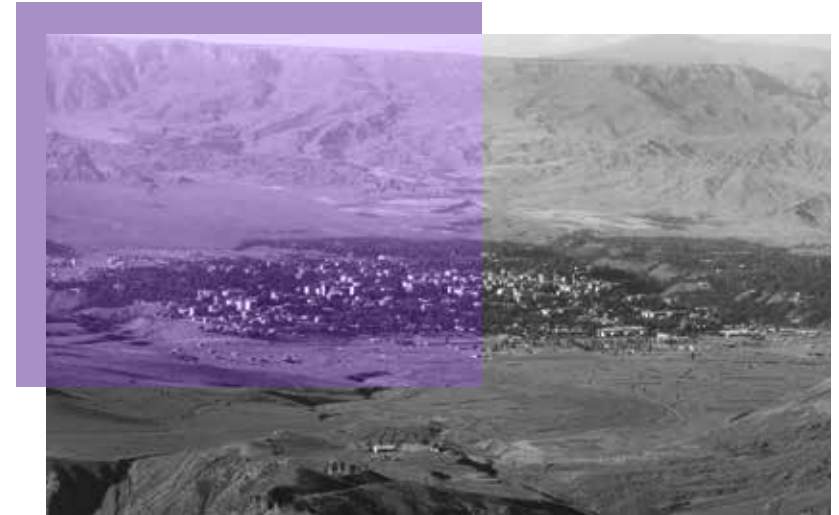
When I was young, I wondered, how my Grandmother Vardanush chose her sons' unusual names, but when I grew up, and my Grandmother, father and uncles told me Grandfather Samson's family story, I understood, that they were not names chosen randomly, moreover they had their sad story.

Samson Petrosyan was my father Vardan's father, who lived in Kaghzvan town. My Grandfather's father, who was very often called Tiracu [Deacon, tr.] Petros, was a very respected, well-known and rich person in Kaghzvan.

It was 1915, the days of the Armenian Genocide. Grandfather Samson came home and not finding his family there, remembered his father's words: "If you come home from faraway and find the door of our house closed, you should go and dig under the nut tree. If you find our gold there, it means we have escaped and have left our village". My Grandfather dug under the nut tree and seeing the gold in a jug, started crying. After a while he again covered it with soil hoping that one day everyone would return home.

In the days of the Genocide Turkish janissaries organized a special muster as if to take Armenian young men to the army, but in reality they threw the boys into prison, so that they could not help their families during the massacres. In the prison Turks read out everyone's names and family names, called them out in turn and killed them. One day the commander of the janissaries ordered one of them to behead "that Gyavur", to imbrue his clothes into his own blood and give them to the commander.

The janissary took my Grandfather to a lonely place to kill. To say goodbye to his land for the last time my Grandfather bent and put some soil into his mouth. Just at the moment, when my Grandfather was bending, it seemed to the janissary that this person's back was very familiar to him. He asked my Grandfather where he came from and learning that he was Samson, Tiracu Petros' son from Kaghzvan, embraced my Grandfather and told him that he had served in my Grandfather's home and that



his father, Petros, had saved their family from hunger. The janissary reminded my Grandfather that his name was Ali, and he used to take my Grandfather for walks on his shoulders when the latter was still a little boy. Thus Ali didn't kill my Grandfather. He waited till it became dark, then he took my Grandfather to his house, killed a caw, imbrued my Grandfather's clothes into the blood and gave them to his commander.

The Turk janissary treated my Grandfather like his own son. He gave him his son's clothes who had died of an illness. Ali kept my Grandfather Samson for several months at his home in secret. However, all that time my Grandfather asked Ali to send him to Armenia.

Ali's dead son had been married and his widow was living in Ali's house. My Grandfather told my Father, that this woman was incredibly beautiful and Ali constantly tried to persuade Grandfather Samson to marry her and become his son, but my Grandfather refused his request every time.

When Ali tried to persuade him again, my Grandfather had enough courage to say: "If you want, you can kill me right here, but I will not marry a Turkish woman." Ali at last understood that it was useless to persuade Samson and at night helped him cross the border.

At last my Grandfather came to Ejmiatsin, where he came across his uncle Minas, with whom, wandering here and there passed his nights. Realizing that they could not go on like that, uncle Minas persuaded Samson to leave Ejmiatsin and to find some job in nearby villages. Grandfather Samson wandered for a long time and at last came to the village called Kosh (in the past called Kvashavan), where he settled down, built his house and formed his family. ■

## \*“When the Turkish Soldier was Ordered to Shoot at Armenian Refugees, He Fired into the Air”

*Tells Tatevik Grigoryan*

My Mother’s Grandmother Gayané Diatyan was the only long-liver in our family. She died in 2004 at the age of 93. Naturally, each of us deferred her. Unfortunately, I was only 14 when she died and couldn’t understand the depth of so many things. Now, when I look back, I can realize she wasn’t somebody ordinary; she was a person of a unique fate and upon whose fate the Genocide had left its impact.

My Mother’s Grandmother’s parents – Arusiak and Hmayak Daityan – lived in Kars with their two daughters. I have heard they were quite wealthy in Kars; I guess they were involved in trade. My Grandmother’s mother Gayané was rather young during the Genocide – only four, and her sister Nazik, as far as I have heard was very beautiful and was always hidden from Turks.

It is most interesting that, despite all the violence and ruthlessness known to us, this story has some emotional side... On the way of deportation from Kars (I don’t know the details or circumstances), when a Turkish soldier was ordered to shoot at the refugees he fired all the bullets into the air... I clearly remember my Grandmother Gayané always told about this with wet eyes.

Later, the family continued the way of deportation and settled in Javakhq (Javakheti). She became an Armenian language teacher and lived a life full of hardships.

Certainly, one cannot help remembering this story, the positive cannot be disguised. However, the consequences of the massacres are greater. A bright example of that is the story of my Grandfather Melik Hovhannisyan who came from Lower Karabkh. In 1918 Turks killed his parents before his eyes and he managed to cross the Alazan River with his blind Grandfather. Then he lost his Grandfather also and remained an orphan... The Genocide had changed the way of all his life.

I am the fourth generation of the witness survivors of the Genocide. I have known since childhood that my Grandmother’s both parents have some interesting stories



*The Diatyans in Kars*

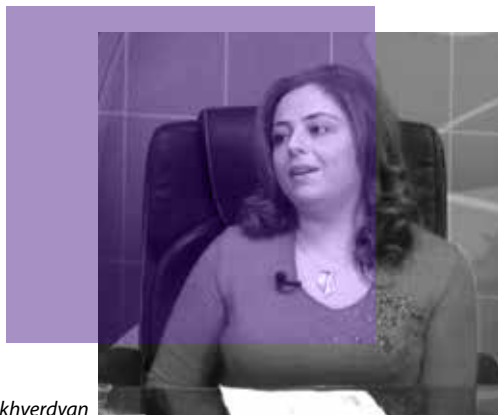


*Gayane Diatyan*

and the Genocide topic has always mattered to me. That is why I have been involved in collecting stories of the Genocide survivors as a journalist. Each story comprises certain emotiveness and great sorrow. And it is very interesting that the Genocide survivors always maintain their aspiration to return to their motherland; the house they left in Kars, Musaler is the best for them...

\* Tatevik Grigoryan’s story was also published on the website of “Armenpress” Information News Agency. ■





Anna Hakhverdyan

## “Warning by Turkish Servants Saved the Zrvandyan’s Lives”

*Tells Anna Hakhverdyan*

I will tell you the story of my Grand-grandfather’s family the Zrvandyan. They lived in Van and were active participants of the defense actions in the city. My Mother’s Grandfather Tigran Zrvandyan was married to Arshaluis Erjyan. The Zrvandyan were a revered family in Van; Tigran’s father was a rich merchant and also a councilor to the mayor. He usually accepted foreign delegations. The Zrvandyan had a three-storey mansion in one of central streets of Van and had servants among whom there were Turks.

And it were these Turkish servants that warned the Zrvandyan about upcoming massacres although there was already certain unrest in Van. Tigran migrated to Eastern Armenia in 1914 with his wife Arshaluis and three children. Tigran’s parents, who were already quite elderly people then, refused to leave Van. They remained in the city and participated in the defense of the city. They were killed during a self-defense battle.

Tigran and his family suffered many hardships on the roads of refuge. They had taken only things of first necessity and gold. They were able to live on that during the first period. They also lost their children on the way. My Mother’s Father was born in Eastern Armenia in 1918, four years after settling here. ■



Srubhy Baluzyan in the centre

## “A Fragment from My Grandmother’s Nostalgia Remained in Us”

*Tells Anahit Ghazaryan*

My Grandmother Srubhy was born in 1906 in the village of Alyur, Van situated on the eastern shore of Lake Van. My Grandfather Mampré was born in the same village. Their destinies were decided since early childhood: their parents had made “bashiky-artma” [a tradition when children were pre-engaged by their parents at young age, tr.]. I don’t know much about my Grandfather Mampré: he didn’t like to talk. Every time my Grandmother began talking about the Genocide he would smoke and sigh deeply. I have more information about my Grandmother Srubhy. She would often tell as if she couldn’t find relief. She felt endless nostalgia for her native village and kept repeating until the end of her life, “Some day I will go to my Father’s house.”

On the eve of those events Alyur village was living its routine life. A Turkish acquaintance of her Father’s, Grandfather Margar’s, visited them to warn about the anticipated attack. At that moment my Grandmother, her unmarried aunt Noyemzar and her mother Yengibar were at home. When that Turkish friend saw my Grandfa-



*The letters of Srбуhу's  
relatives from America*

ther wasn't at home, offered them to stay in his house. They went and hid for some time but the neighbors noticed there were Armenians in that house, which meant danger for the host. They had to leave that house. This coincided with the moment when awful massacres started in Alyur village. By the way, Alyur was considered the largest village in the district with most Armenian population and had two Armenian churches and a co-educational college. However, the village was burnt to ashes by dawn. Men who had managed to run away survived; others were slaughtered, burnt, killed... Women and children were dragged into the church, the doors were locked. They remained in the church for forty days without food and water. On the forty first day the doors were opened. Most of the captives had died of hunger. Those alive were made to take the road of exile. Passing by Lake Van two women crossed themselves and jumped from the rock...

The group of refugees was taken to Salmast. Here they stayed in tents for some time. On the way of exile, before getting to Salmast my Grandmother's mother was unable to resist the hardships of the journey; she caught fever. My Grandmother hugged her asking to get up; she tried to make her warm, but her mother died. Her aunt was hardly able to take the child away from her dead mother. Aunt Noyemzar sat under a wall. Soon the gate opened and a woman in a chadrah called them in and fed them. After having a little rest my Grandmother and her Aunt continued their

way with another group of refugees. This is how they got to Salmast. From there they went to Baghdad. Grandmother told that they slept under palm trees. From Baghdad they were moved to Batumi by ship. The worst thing is that my Grandmother and her Aunt Noyemzar lost each other in Batum. Meanwhile, my Grandfather Margar followed his family tracks and, perhaps it was destiny, their ships arrived in Batum almost simultaneously. Here he found Noyemzar. They were looking for my Grandmother Srбуhу for quite a long time, but all in vain. Absolutely desperate, he left for America with his sister. Meanwhile, Srбуhу joined another group of refugees. Among the refugees she met Grandfather Mampré. Together they looked for her Aunt but their roads didn't cross. Grandmother Srбуhу and Grandfather Mampré came to Eastern Armenia, Artashat. Next autumn, in 1921 they arrived in Davalu. My grandparents got married but continued the search. By some miracle my Great-grandfather managed to learn the whereabouts of my Grandmother. It is impossible to describe my Grandmother's joy of those days... But they were never to meet again. My Grandmother passed away with endless nostalgia in her heart, constantly telling, voicing her sorrow...

A fragment of that nostalgia remained in us, in our roots... ■

## Two “Faces” of Turkey

*Tells Ruzan Bekaryan*

Everybody in our family knows this story and still remembers it. My paternal grandfather Karapet was the only survivor of the Genocide from the huge dynasty. My Grandmother, my Father and Uncle knew though neither of them liked to talk about it. And when they did speak about it my Father Rafik Karapet Bekaryan and his brother Manuk Karapet Bekaryan used to cry like little children.

When atrocities began my Grandfather was in the village of Tokat (they had a summer house in Tokat but lived in Sebastia). His father and all the family was in the fields on the day they were attacked. The only thing the father had time to do was to catch his son's hand and throw him into the mow of grass and tell him not to make a sound whatever he saw. Actually all his family – his sisters, brothers, father, mother and others were slaughtered before my Grandfather's eyes... Perhaps Grandfather passed out as a result of what he saw and when he came to he found everybody slain. He found his father and others in an awful condition. At that time their Turkish neighbors, who had been counting the bodies and had noticed the youngest son of the family was missing, found him and hid in their basement.

The Turkish neighbors sheltered Grandfather for some time but, as my Grandfather said, appeared in a dangerous situation several times. Everything was so well elaborated by the Turkish authorities that even the houses of Turk neighbors were being searched from time to time to reveal Armenian kids hidden away. After being searched several times the Turkish family felt fear. The news spread that some Turks were punished for hiding Armenians, that some were even beheaded for assisting Armenians.

Thus, some days later the Turk took my Grandfather at night and brought to an American orphanage in Tokat from where he was transferred to Salonika. This is how he survived. Grandfather told when they were getting ready to board a ship some Turkish policemen came and said the boys should make up groups to be taken by them for medical examination. First boys of 10-15 were taken away, then another group. Grandfather was a very dexterous boy and climbed up a mast out of curiosity.



*Karapet Bekaryan*

From there he saw that the boys were put under a nearby wall and shot. He feared and made a noise and that is when everybody understood where the boys were taken. So the crew of the ship managed to prevent the death of the remaining boys.

From Tokat my Grandfather appeared in Salonika. He had lost everything – his relatives, all their belongings... Having seen assassination of his own family, their bodies he had no hope he would be able to find even one distant relative surviving the calamity. No wonder everything my Grandfather had seen and gone through left some traces on his psychology, demonstrations of which could be noticed occasionally till his death.

Every time he remembered the great calamity, Grandfather also felt sorrow as he had lost the Holy Book – the Bible of the family – in all that mess. At that time it was a custom in all Armenian families to have a Holy Book and to write down the history of the dynasty, the family, the origin, and the Family Tree at the end of it. My Grandfather felt distressed and pitied that he had lost their family Holy Book. He always hoped he would one day find it. But, in vain.



Yet, Grandfather could remember some oral stories that had been told by the elders of the family as it was common in Armenian families to introduce the history of the dynasty, of the family to children since the age of 5-6. From those reminiscences of my Grandfather it was obvious that their dynasty had gone through more than one calamities. He told that our dynasty originated from the family of the last King of Cilicia Levon: the branch came from the marriage of one of his daughters and a French duke. Centuries ago our ancestors had a narrow escape from Cilicia which they had to leave. In fact, they had appeared in Sebastia after migrating from Cilicia...

After the rescue, my Grandfather married my grandmother who was also transferred to Salonika by the same ship. He took part in Great Patriotic War as a volunteer, was wounded a couple of times and lived a life full of hardships. He died from the fragments remaining since war.

When telling this story my Father and Uncle constantly remembered their father's words who always remembered their Turkish neighbors in line with the calamities, he remembered their attitude and the fact that they had actually saved his life. Grandfather used to say Turkey had two faces for him: genocidal – in the face of the state and those who organized the Genocide; and Human Turks who saved lives amid all that carnage.

Grandfather would keep saying, "I envy those who have grandparents, a large family and no one takes away their family forcefully."

I wish God grants our generations the opportunity to communicate only with Turkey's other face and not the one that our grandparents witnessed in 1915, nor the one that still denies the Genocide." ■



*Harutyun Berberyan*



*Harutyun and Mariam*

## "It is Impossible to Describe How Great Grandfather Harutyun's Pain and Disappointment Were When He Found His Village in Ruins..."

### *Tells Harutyun Berberyan*

Harutyun Berberyan, whose name and surname I bear, was my Mother's Grandfather. His story is very tragic and exciting, too. They came from Van, but then they moved to Yozgat village in Ankara. I do not know why their surname changed and became Berberyan, but I have been told, that previously they used to bear the family name Ter-Gabrielyan [Ter is sometimes a form of address for deacons, vicars, etc., tr.] because Grandfather Harutyun and his Grandfather's Grandfather were priests. However, there is one option for the origin of the surname Berberyan. Harutyun's uncle had some period worked as a barber, which in Turkish is called "berber". Maybe it is from here that the surname Berberyan was created.

In his early years Harutyun Berberyan went to Istanbul to study there. He was a very educated person. He mastered several languages, was very good at Mathematics. After migrating to Armenia, he started to work at school and was a well-known and respected person.

During his studentship, in the years of the Genocide, a Turk (maybe someone, who had definite information), warned Grandfather Harutyun, that massacres would occur. Grandfather Harutyun, managing to avoid military recruitment, hurried to his village Yozgat, to find his brothers and parents and to warn them about the upcoming danger. Of course, he would not have been able to leave Istanbul, if it hadn't been for the Turks' help. They prepared fake documents for Grandfather Harutyun, thanks to which he was able to get back to his village.

It is impossible to describe how great Grandfather Harutyun's pain and disappointment were when he found his village in ruins. There was no one in the village, his family as well. Not knowing what to do, Grandfather Harutyun went to the village next to theirs, where his father's friend was living, hoping that he would find his family there. Reaching that village an awful scene opened in front of him – completely destroyed houses and corps in the streets. Near the pile of the corps of the women, Grandfather Harutyun found a girl (about 12-14 years old), who seemed to be alive.

Taking the girl into his hands, Grandfather Harutyun noticed, that she had no wounds and there were no traces of blood. Understanding that the girl had drunk some poison, he took her to a barn, gave her matcun [Armenian yogurt, tr.] to drink and hung her from the skylight and left her until the whole gal and the poison came out from her stomach. Saving that girl's life, Grandfather Harutyun took the responsibility of taking care of her. Thus, together they went to find my Grandfather's relatives. On their way Grandfather Harutyun learned that one of his brothers was in Erzurum. Full of expectations my Grandfather and that girl, Mariam, headed for Erzurum, but Grandfather Harutyun's efforts were in vain. It was only after many years, that he found his brother. It turned out that his brother had escaped to Nakhichevan, then from there to Lebanon.

Hopeless, Grandfather Harutyun and Mariam crossed the border and reached Yerevan, and then they went to Vardenis. Several years later, when Mariam grew up, Grandfather Harutyun married her. They had five girls. When I was born, in order to preserve the surname Berberyan and to continue their family's story, my parents were asked to call me Harutyun and give me the surname Berberyan. ■



*Azniv Chalymyan*

## **“Mehmed’s Relatives Attempted to Assassinate Him for Marrying my Aunt”**

*Tells Nubar Chalymyan*

My ancestors come from the city of Tigranakert in Western Armenia. They never had any contact with Eastern Armenia. I was born in Iraq. I was 11 when we immigrated to Eastern Armenia. I have no information about my Grandfather's mother or father as my Father was only 3 when the Genocide of 1915 occurred. He didn't remember his Father; he had never even seen his picture as bandits had seized all their possessions and one of the bundles with quite many things comprised also their family photos. Only my Aunt (Father's sister) had seen and remembered my Grandfather and I am going to tell about her. During the Genocide she was a girl of 12-13. I also saw and heard my Grandmother Solomé who had a narrow escape from the Genocide. She was half Armenian and half Assyrian.

The Chalymyans were quite a large dynasty. One part of the dynasty adhered to the Armenian Apostolic Church. Others were Protestants; as we know Evangelical Church also functioned in Tigranakert. Those who adjoined Protestants left Turkey for Europe a year before the Genocide, in 1914. I can't say whether they felt the danger sooner or not but the fact is that they suffered almost no losses. As to my grandfather and his brothers, they were killed during the events of 1915. Nobody touched them for quite a long time as they were craftsmen and were able to avoid atrocities



Azniv's son and daughter-in-law



Azniv's daughter

thanks to their craft.

Naturally, my Father's family had contacts with the Turks living in Tigranakert and knew the Turkish language perfectly. A Turk called Mehmed, whom I don't remember, hid my Father's family during the Genocide. His relatives persecuted that Turk as he had helped "gyavurs". Then he married the eldest of my aunts Azniv Chalymyan although he was 13-14 years older than my Aunt. They got married and decided to leave Tigranakert and settled in Iraq. Mehmed's relatives, namely his brothers couldn't reconcile with the idea that their brother had married an Armenian girl and decided to chase and kill him. They came to Iraq secretly and attempted an assassination, but they failed. Mehmed was only wounded.

Mehmed and my Aunt had two children – a boy and a girl. They all had Turkish citizenship. My Aunt's son knew Armenian perfectly and corresponded with my Father for a very long time. Aunt Azniv died in Turkey where their family had moved before the Iran-Iraqi war. Unfortunately I don't have that Turk's photograph that actually saved our family. ■

## "We Had to Bury My Sweet Armenian Mother in the Muslim Way"

*Tells Silva Kharchafchyan*

I will tell you the story of Shafiká Ramzí. That family was our neighbor in Aleppo and our families were very close. Shafiká had two daughters – Didar (1925) and Ulqyar (1930). Didar taught physics at university, she was a very smart girl. Her sister suffered from some illness and never worked. But she was also smart: sitting at home she graduated from college with high grades.

In 1974 our family migrated to Canada. I married and in 1978 came to Aleppo. I went to Shafiká's place with my husband. I introduced my husband and said, "This is Gevorg – my husband." And Shafiká said in pure Armenian, "Gevorg, do you know I am also Armenian?" This is how I first heard her talking Armenian. We had been interacting for so many years, yet I had never heard any Armenian from her, I didn't know her real name was Arusiak.

In 1999 I visited Aleppo again and learned Arusiak had died. Didar was bitterly crying. I felt there was something that made her unfortunate.

"Didar, what's the matter?"

"Well, you can't understand. We had to bury my Mother in the Muslim way. You should have been here and then we could have had a Christian funeral. We don't know any other Armenians besides you; everybody in my environment is Muslim. We had to have a Muslim funeral for my sweet Armenian Mother."

A little later Didar said, "But, you know, my Turkish father and Turkish grandmother were very nice people and they used to treat my Mom very well."

Then I said, "Please tell me. We have known each other so many years, yet you have never told me your Mother's story."

And Didar began telling. Her Mother was born in 1911 in Izmir. On August 6-9, 1915 some 4000 Armenians were forcefully deported from Izmir and the Armenian neighborhood was burnt down by Turks.



*Shafiká Ramzí*

Their Mother was 4 then. She remained absolutely alone standing on the river bank. Their Father Masud Ramzí was a commander in the army. He was passing by riding his horse and saw the girl and began talking to her. The young girl was able to tell that her mother and two-year-old brother were killed and she was absolutely alone. That man took her to his house and told his mother, "Mother, this child is Armenian. Let us keep it a secret as long as possible."

The Turkish mother agreed and changed the girl's name into "Shafiká" which means "compassion". That Turkish woman knew in whose house there was an Armenian. She visited those house holding the child by the hand, gave food and clothes to the Armenians until they were able to run away. But this girl remained in their house; she was brought up by them. That Turkish commander was married and had children. When Shafiká was already 14-15 years old he told his mother, "What are we going to do with this girl? Instead of marrying her to another Turk let me marry her. She has grown up in our home, she was brought up by us."

Well, according to Muslim tradition a man can have a second wife. So they got married.



*Didar*

Some time later the news spread around Izmir that this man Masud lived with an Armenian, that he had married an Armenian. Not to cause any problems for the family, he took them and moved to Aleppo. His first family remained in Izmir.

In 1930 their second daughter was born in Aleppo. She was 2-3 when their father died. He had worked as a teacher in Aleppo. When Masud died Arusiak was at a loss not knowing what to do. She took her children and went to an Armenian orphanage. The children were admitted there and Arusiak was hired to work as a housekeeper. My Grandmother was also a housekeeper there and they became friends. This is where our friendship started. Arusiak could understand Armenian very well.

Those girls were neither Islam, nor Turks. They greatly respected their mother but went neither to church nor to mosque. When we invited them to our events – Christening, wedding, they would always come. They never got married. Perhaps they had some psychological problems... ■

## "My Grandfather often Woke up and Cried at Nights Remembering His Brother's Cruel Murder"

*Tells Susanna Manukyan*

During the Genocide years my Grandfather, Armenak Mkrtchyan, together with his family lived in Sehrvanshekh village. He was an educated man and knew three foreign languages – English, Turkish and Kurdish. He worked in the village school, where he taught the Armenian language and literature to the pupils.

During the 1915 massacres Turks invaded villages separating women, men and children and expelling them in different directions. My Grandfather, realizing very well that on the roads of exile Turks would kill Armenian men, decided, as he often said "instead of going to the slaughterhouse like a sheep", to take his brother, Knyaz Mkrtchyan, who was ill with typhoid and was residing in the same village, and run to the neighboring village Simon to find shelter in the house of his Turkish friend - Osman Agha.

In spite of great difficulties they managed to reach and find shelter in the house of their Turkish friend. Due to the care of Osman Agha and his family my Grandfather's brother soon managed to overcome his illness. My Grandfather told that Turks often came and searched houses of the Turks in the village as they knew that local Turks being in good relations with Armenians often hid them in their places trying to save them from the Genocide organized against Armenians.

One day, when Turks as usual came to search the house of Osman Agha, my Grandfather and his brother hid themselves in the barn. After the Turks found them, Osman Agha stood in the middle of the door and tried to prevent the Turks from taking my Grandfather and his brother with them. When the Turks in the end managed to take my Grandfather's brother, Knyaz, Osman Agha followed the Turks, who were taking twelve Armenians to the slaughterhouse, begging to spare Knyaz's life. He even turned to the method, which usually worked with Turkish officials, offering them a bribe. However the Turks stayed irresistible threatening to kill him as well if he continued persisting.

Thus my Grandfather witnessed how the Turks executed his brother and eleven



*Susanna Manukyan*

more Armenians shooting them by the river Khnus. I remember my Grandfather often waking up and crying at nights. When we asked him what the cause of his grief was, he replied that he remembered cruel murder of his brother.

During the Genocide my Grandfather not only lost his brother but also his parents, who died of typhoid. He lost also his eight months' old daughter, who died not being able to stand the hardships of the exile.

Fortunately, Osman Agha's family helped my Grandfather to escape to Armenia. In Armenia my Grandfather found his wife – my grandmother Siranuysh Mkrtchyan. They continued to live together and had seven children. Thus, in spite of experienced hardships, my Grandfather in the end made true his mother's commandment: "My son, sit around a table with seven sons." ■





*Lusya Hovhannisyan's family*



*Lusya Hovhannisyan and  
Sona Chalgushyan*

## **“Mother, Mother Wake up, We Need to Work, Don’t We?” My Mother Simply Did Not Believe that Grandmother Would Never Wake up Again**

*Tells Sona Chalgushyan*

My Grandmother, Lusya Hovhannisyan continued to live in Adana, at her father’s place with her two-year-old daughter – Haykanush (my mother), and at that time still not born son – Napoleon after her husband left for war.

My Great Grandfather was a rich man and enjoyed the respect of his Turkish plebeians. My Mother often mentions that if her father had paid attention to the warnings of his Turkish plebeians that a conspiracy was being planned against the Armenians by the Turkish government everything might have had a better ending.

After the Armenian massacres had been planned in Adana, the Turks gathered all the Armenian males, who could wear weapons, irrespective of their age, and isolated them in a stud. My Mother remembers how one day her Grandfather took her in his arms and said that they were allowed to visit her uncles in the stud. After they took some sweets and visited them, my mother never again saw her uncles. The next day

the Turks set the stud to fire.

One day my Grandmother, to earn some money, decided to gather a group of Armenian women and go to take part in the railroad construction work organized by the Turks. Most Armenian women, after the Turks had got rid of almost all Armenian men, had no choice but do hard jobs for Turks like cutting stones.

Soon the job demanded that my Grandmother go even farther from her house in Adana, and she decided to take the children with her. But one day, hoping that her husband would return from war and look for his family, my Grandmother decided to go back. Her working group, which consisted of only women and children, also decided to go back because they trusted my Grandmother and were unwilling to leave her. It is interesting to mention that among the children in the working group there were also boys, whose hair their mothers didn’t cut because of the fear that the Turks would kill them as well.

On their way back a Turkish mob attacked the group and killed all of them. My mother remembers how a Turk put a weapon to her brother’s heart and tried to shoot. Fortunately, the weapon did not shoot and the child managed to run away. My mother, who at that time was only six years old, managed to survive miraculously – she lay motionless beside her dead mother. After the Turks had gone away she called her mother: “Mother, mother wake up, we need to work, don’t we?” My mother simply did not believe that Grandmother Lusya would never wake up again.

Fortunately at that time a brigade of Armenian volunteer fighters, among whom was also a son of my Mother’s uncle, Davit Tujaryan, was passing by. They buried all the dead and took with them the children who had managed to stay alive.

Uncle David, realizing that it was not safe to take the children with him, gave them to his Turkish friend, who swore in blood, to save the children from the criminals and take to an orphanage. My Mother tells that Uncle David’s Turkish friend treated them very well: he did not eat, instead gave bread to them. He managed to take the children across the border and hand them to the French, who took them to the orphanage. Thus my Mother and Uncle managed to survive the Genocide miraculously... ■



*Margarita  
Mkrtchyan*

## **“Turks Helped the Family of My Grandmother’s Father to Get to The Border of Eastern Armenia”**

### ***Tells Margarita Mkrtchyan***

I am Margarita Mkrtchyan and I have heard this story from my Grandmother. Her reminiscences about the Genocide are based on stories told by her Mother Gyulizar and paternal grandmother Aghavni.

My Grand-grandmother was born in 1908 in the village of Artamet, Van. Their family was large and quite wealthy.

A thought followed her all her life, “We should go back to our native village and return all that belonged to us.”

Our Grand-grandmother Gyulizar was one of those rare people surviving the Genocide who, to relieve her pain, often told about their village and about everything they left there. She also told about the hardships her family, her relatives had undergone...

And my Grand-grand-grandmother Aghavni always remembered with sorrow how during the years of massacres, as if a meeting was to be held to save the Arme-

nians, some 137 Armenians were brought together and burnt alive... None of them was able to survive.

That was followed by Armenians’ elemental banishment during which Armenian families were separated, many family members got lost forever.

Gyulizar also lost her family, but fortunately she managed to get to Eastern Armenia. Here she found herself in an American orphanage and began inquiring about her relatives. She was able to find out that her brother Afon had also been to that very orphanage but when she tried to find him she learned that Americans had taken the children to some foreign country. She never heard from her brother.

One of the employees at the orphanage was Tatul Altunyan’s sister Shushanik who had some liking for Gyulizar. And it was her that some years later advised my Grand-grandfather’s family to take Gyulizar as a wife for their son.

The family of my Grandmother’s father had also migrated from the same village Artamet, Van.

Grandmother told that unlike Gyulizar they avoided talking about the calamities of the Genocide. However, while talking about the years of carnage they told about cases when some Turks and Kurds helped Armenians. They had also got to Eastern Armenia with the help of Turks. Turks had helped Aghavni’s husband to get his family and their gold hidden in blankets to the border. Although the family of Grandmother’s father was able to reach Eastern Armenia safely, my Grandmother’s grandfather – Aghavni’s husband – soon had a heart stroke and died because of the sorrow of losing his native home.

Grandmother Aghavni also told about a case when a Turkish neighbor, in order to save an Armenian girl, dressed her in Turkish clothes and hid her in his house until it became convenient to take her across the border and send to Eastern Armenia. Grandmother Aghavni used to tell about how they were made to leave their native village. Apple gardens of Artamet the village was famous for, the unique scent of the apples always remained in her memories.

Grandmother Aghavni was in essence a simple woman. She lived 127 years. During all her life she also dreamt of going back to their native village. Once she asked a relative, “How much red money should I give to be taken to my village to get back my dried fruit?” ■

*Davit Avetisyan*

## **“In One Day My Great Grandfather’s Family Lost Everything”**

### ***Tells Davit Avetisyan***

This story was told by my Grandmother, Tereza Nalbandyan, about her Grandfather. When she was telling me this story, I was listening to her very attentively and was feeling sad. Now, my emotions are different. Every time I tell this story, I tremble with my whole body, as if I were present there and saw that disaster – the Genocide, with my own eyes.

My Great Grandfather, Martiros Abajyan, was from the family of intelligentsia. He was born and grew in the city of Kars. He was married and had 6 children. In Kars my Great Grandfather was the editor of “The Mshak” newspaper. He was a very joyful and kind person. Everyone liked him.

It was 1915... A Turkish woman called Gyulizar lived next to my Great Grandfather. She was a Turkish Pasha’s sister. One day, she happened to overhear her brother saying that Armenians were going to be massacred that night. Gyulizar hurried to the Abajyans, whom she respected very much, to warn them about this. My Great Grandfather in his turn warned anyone he could. Fearing that he would not be able to protect his family and his relatives from the Turks, he offered them to run away.

*Abajyan Martiros and his wife*

They were very rich and had a lot of gold, which they kept in jars inside the walls of the house. However, the desire to survive and to live was greater. Thus, without losing any time, Grandfather Martiros left everything they had, took his family and his relatives and set out.

On their way they witnessed an awful scene. The streets were full of corps of children and adults. Awestruck, they were going ahead, not knowing what was waiting for them. At that time my Grandmother’s mother and father were already married, and my Grandmother’s elder sister and brother were born. On their way my grandmother’s mother tied the children with rope to each other – one on her back and the other on her chest, so that they did not lose each other. However, on their way, in that turmoil, both kids got lost and no one was able to find them. Only after several years it became possible to find out, that some Americans had found them and had taken with them to America.

Thus, after several hours of walk they found themselves surrounded by Turks. Grandfather Martiros and his family did not know what to do. If they went right, they would be drawn in the river, if they went left, they would be killed by Turks. Not





The backside of Abajyan's picture with Turkish seals

knowing what to do, Grandfather Martiros stood on his knees in panic and begged the Turks to take everything they had, but not to touch his children. The Turkish soldiers' answer was the following: "No, everyone is going to die".

At that moment, when one of the Turks raised his sword to decapitate Martiros, their neighbor Gyulizar appeared God knows from where, who, probably, realizing that the Abajyan family would not be able to run away safely, had hurried up for help. She stood in front of the Turk soldiers, took off her headscarf and threw it to the ground, in front of the soldiers. The Turks recognized her. Gyulizar ordered the soldiers not to touch the Armenians standing there and to give them a way to pass. The Turkish soldiers put their swords down and Grandfather Martiros and his family passed. Thus, due to this Turkish woman Abajyan Martiros' family was saved from the Turkish sword. They walked 4 days and 4 nights until they came to Georgia. After some time they left for Armenia and settled in Gyumri. From the Abajyan family Turks killed only Martiros' father, when he was in the field.

This is my story and every time I tell it I really feel the horror that the Abajyans experienced in those years. They had everything and lost everything in one day – their house, property, friends and relatives. It is awful just to think about it... ■

## "My Grandfather's Two Brothers and Parents Were Killed During the Massacres"

*Tells Lusine Mardeyan*

My Grandfather, Mukhan Mardeyan, the son of Khachatur, was born in 1902. In the year of 1915 he lived in Ghznchaghchagh village of Kars region. Turks killed his two brothers and parents during the massacres. His elder brother, Aghasi, managed to escape from the village and leave for Armenia. During the massacres the family members, who managed to survive, departed escaping in different directions.

After losing the connection with his family members, my Grandfather had to stay and work as a shepherd in the house of a Birdan Aghi pasha. It is worth mentioning, that my Grandfather's family and the family of Birdan Aghi pasha were in good relations before the massacres. Birdan Aghi persuaded my Grandfather to stay in their house because he considered him to be a good shepherd. Birdan Aghi pasha promised not to harm him claiming that in contrast to the Turkish government, his family had nothing against the Armenians. Thus they kept my Grandfather in their family without revealing his being an Armenian.

Unlike their father, the sons of Birdan Aghi pasha did not want my Grandfather to stay in their place, just because he was an Armenian. They often plotted against my Grandfather- stole and killed their own sheep later on putting the blame on him. They treated my Grandfather as an enemy. He often witnessed how they were praising themselves in the presence of their father for killing an Armenian or harming an Armenian family.

After living in Birdan Aghi pasha's house for ten years, once my Grandfather heard a conversation, during which the family members were discussing how to behead him for betraying their confidence and stealing their sheep. After that incident my Grandfather was in a real confusion and did not know what to do. At that time Birdan Aghi's mother, who was a kind woman, advised him to run away showing the way to Armenia.



Lusine Mardeyan

Having no other choice my Grandfather decided to run away. On his way to Armenia, my Grandfather came across a group of Turkish men, who were sitting around a fire. It is interesting to notice that although they realized that he was an Armenian, they did not harm him. On the contrary they helped him and accompanied him half his way.

Unfortunately, my Grandfather's trip to Armenia was not so easy. Having covered half his way he noticed horsemen following him. Fortunately, he managed to hide himself in a cave and stay there for a few days. Birdan Aghi pasha's mother was so generous that not only helped my Grandfather to run away but also provided him with food knowing that he had several days' trip to pass. Thanks to her my Grandfather managed to survive in that cave for several days.

Thus, the Turks, who followed my Grandfather did not manage to find him and came to the conclusion that he had managed to cross the border and escape to Armenia. My Grandfather came to Armenia, found his elder brother, who resided in Bajoghli (present day Haykavan) village and in this way managed to survive the massacres. ■

## **"Grandfather's Two Brothers Were Recruited to the Turkish Army; No More News Came from Them"**

*Tells Avetis Khachatryan*

I am Avetis Saribek Khachatryan. I was called in honour of my Grandfather whose name was Avé (perhaps it was short for Avetis).

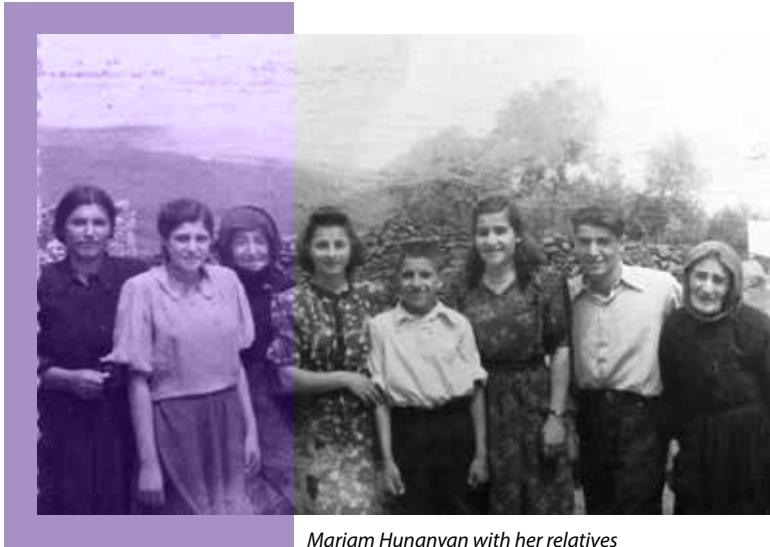
The family name of our dynasty was Jamharyan [jamhar in Armenian means bell ringer, tr.]. We come from the city of Bayazet in Western Armenia. My Grandmother Mariam's family also comes from Bayazet, their family name is Hunanyan.

Grandfather Avé was born in 1901. His family was mainly involved in farming and cattle breeding. His father Khachatur's first wife died and then he married Grandfather's Mother Makhmur. My Father took his Father's name as surname Khachatryan. Khachatur had 7 children – Arshak, Artashes, Sargis, Arsen, Vahan, Avé, and one daughter – Margarít. My Grandfather was the youngest in the family.

My Grandmother's family were tanners, who continued their craft even in Eastern Armenia. Grandmother Mariam was born in 1909. As she told they used to live nearby the Bayazet castle walls. She always said, "Even if I go now I can find where our house was."

They were in good relations with local Turkish officials. They were obedient citizens and paid taxes. Grandfather made trade with Kurds.

The situation was relatively calm in Bazyazet but the news gradually spread about massacres of Armenians in various regions of the country. A Turkish official soon came up to my Grandfather's Father and said, "There's going to be zulum [zulum in Turkish means cruelty, persecution and is sometimes used by Armenians, tr.]" and advised Grandfather to flee. He also said that Grandfather's eldest brother Arshak, who was physically the strongest, would be recruited to the army. My Great Grandfather was already an old man then. He said Arshak, as the eldest son, supported the family because the others were too young and if he was taken away the others would



*Mariam Hunanyan with her relatives*

not survive. The official proposed to leave Arshak and to take next two sons – Arsen and Vahan. We have heard that these boys were very handsome and had really good voices. The official insisted on this option as the only one. After long hesitations the family had to agree. So Arsen and Vahan were recruited to the army and no more news came from them.

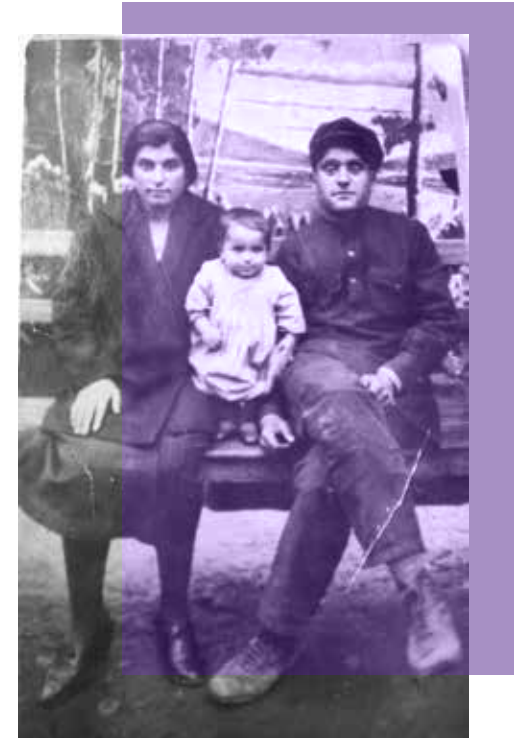
Grandfather's brother Artashes was a Fedayeen and fought in different self-defense groups. There is no information about him either.

Great Grandfather Khachatur died in Bayazet his natural death.

After these events and taking into account the Turkish official's warning, Armenians had nothing else to do but move to Eastern Armenia.

From the Jamharyans only my Grandfather's mother, Grandfather Avé, his brothers Arshak and Sargis, sister Margarit and their uncle Navo, who was blind, managed to cross the border. They brought movables with them and some cattle. They brought even some copper saucepans that are still preserved.

My Grandfather's and Grandmother's families settled in various places in Armenia after crossing the Araks River. Grandmother said they were looking for a place where "the climate would be similar to that of their native town". They were in Aparan, Bjni, Meghradzor, Nor [nor in Armenian means new, tr.] Bayazet. In the end they settled



*Khachatryans' family*

down in Tsakhkadzor.

In those times it was customary to go matchmaking only to families one knew. Grandfather's family knew well the Hovnanyans who had migrated from Bayazet. Thus, Grandfather Avé's brothers asked my Grandmother to marry their brother. They got married in 1929 and had four children – my Father Saribek Khachatryan, uncles Volodya Khachatryan and Aghvan Jamharyan, and aunt Lida Khachatryan.

My Grandfather Avé died in the Second World War. ■



*Hripsimé Khangelian*

## **“Grandmother Soon Learned Everyone Was Killed in Her Paternal House”**

### ***Tells Martha Simonyan***

My Grandmother Hripsimé Gevorg Khangelian's paternal family was quite rich. They lived in the village of Sharur, Nakhijevan district. Her Father Gevorg Khangelian was head of 12 village communities and had a large number of forests, lands under his authority. He had a very close Turkish friend who came and warned before the massacres that Turks were going to attack. He offered to help Khangelian's family escape to Armenia. But Gevorg refused saying he had to help all Armenians flee first, and only then he could move his own family. By that time my thirteen-year-old Grandmother was married to Ashot Melik-Arakelyan, the son of a wealthy family in that village. He had shoe factories and was involved in trade; he often took his production to sell in foreign countries. At that very time he and his servant were in the USA on business. And my Grandmother already had my elder aunt who was a baby then.



*Marta Simonyan on Hripsimé Khangelian's lap*

Soon Grandmother learned everybody was slain in her paternal house. She told us her father was cruelly killed by having put his head under the watermill stone, while Grandmother's two brothers were tied to the tails of horses and were dragged until they died. Grandmother also lost her sister. She must have managed to flee during the carnage but they didn't have any contact afterwards. However, Grandmother learnt all this after the Turk who had been close to her Father came to her house to warn her that Turks were going to visit her house that very night. He helped my Grandmother to cross the border secretly at night and reach Armenia.

My Grandmother hardly had time to wrap her baby in a carpet, take some jewelry in a small box, some trifles and to run away (that box has been handed down to us and we still preserve it). Grandmother also used to say that she put some of their gold in a jug and dropped it into the well nearby their house hoping they might return some day and pick it up. This is how Grandmother managed to flee and get to Yerevan. There were private houses near the square then and my Grandmother sold her gold to live in a rented house. She also did washing for some money to support herself and her child.

While in the USA, Grandmother's husband heard that all Armenians had been slaughtered and perhaps presumed his own family had been exterminated as well.



*Hripsime Khangeldyan with her family*

Thus he decided to remain in the USA. In a word, Grandmother never had any contact with him. Many years later, she made enquiries and applied to some intelligence services and found out that after learning about what had happened he hadn't returned from the USA where he died in the 1960s.

We were able to find only Grandmother's sister. Some years after the Genocide my Father went to Tbilisi and met Grandmother's sister at home of some acquaintance of his friend's. Until that we considered her missing but actually she had fled and settled in Georgia. ■

## **"My Reminiscences Are Undone Like a Ball of Wool..."**

*Tells Naira Mkrtchyan*

Veronika Gaspar Berberyan (1907-1999)

I will present the story of my paternal Grandmother Veronika Gaspar Berberyan. Her family was able to run away first to Nakhijevan, and then moved to Yerevan. I have heard her stories since childhood. She used to say, "When you ask me questions my reminiscences undo and open like a ball of wool."

My Grandmother Veron told in detail how they lived in Boğazlıyan, today's Turkey, what their family was like. My Grandmother Veron also told how Armenians were slayed; how they sheltered about 40 people in their house as gendarmes had no right to touch our family at the governor's order.

My Grandmother told her stories and the stories of her relatives, neighbors for everyone eager to listen. She told in detail, in sweet Western Armenian. The story usually started like this:

"Our family lived in Boğazlıyan, Yozgat province, Anatolia. Our neighborhood was called Kilse Mahal, i.e. the Church quarter. My Grandfather Priest Hakob was senior priest of St. Astvatsatsin [Mother of God, tr.]. I had two uncles – Harutyun (he was 20 in 1915) and Khacher (he was 15).

We lived well and were engaged in farming. One day, when my Father was a soldier in the Turkish army, my Grandmother, the Pastor's wife, had a dream as if my Father brought so many skulls and bones and filled the liukliki (a niche where bedding was shelved) with them. Granny asked, "Gaspar, why have you brought and put these here?" my Father answered, "One day a museum will be built, all this will be put there for the world to see."

And after this dream it started... Men were amassed from fields, homes, shops saying it was war and everybody had to go to the army. Then all the guns, knives were collected and taken away from houses...





Veronika Berberyan

Suddenly my Uncle (Father's brother) rushed in breathless, hitting his head over the walls, "They scraped a twenty-ghurush-worth (small change) bullet, they slaughtered everybody with axes." We hid my Uncle. For fifty days males were searched for to murder. After that we dug some place from the barn in the direction of the yard for my Uncle to hide during the day. At night we let him out to breathe a little.

Then, in March 1916 the kaymakam ordered, "Not a single kilo of an Armenian's meat should be spared, all Armenians must be slaughtered."

... My Uncle, Harutyun Berberyan, had taken out a stone from the wall of our house and crawled into it and hidden. None of the gendarmes that came could find him.

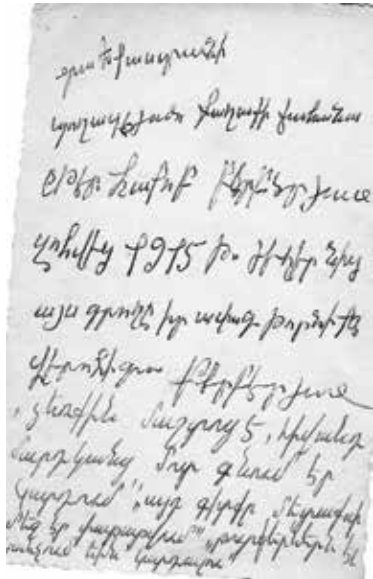
My Granny, the Pastor's wife, who had hidden Uncle Harutyun, one day went to hazarapet [governor, tr.] Selami Bek who was married to an Armenian we knew and said to hazarapet, "Selami Bek, Harutyun is at home, what is going to happen?" Hazarapet Selami Bek pulled a button off his uniform and said, "When I send this button with a gendarme, let Harutyun come." In the morning a gendarme came, knocked

at the door and said, "Let Harutyun come to Kaymakam with his instruments of a barber." My Uncle Harutyun took his barber instruments and went with the gendarme. At that very moment a Turk barber was shaving kaymakam. He put his razor to kaymakam's face and it started to bleed. Salami Bek said to the Kaymakam, "Let Harutyun shave you." Uncle Harutyun took his tools and solemnly shaved Kaymakam clearly. He left the building to get home and saw that whole families were being driven to exile, tied to each other. The Kaymakam ordered, "Let a gendarme take Harutyun home." Harutyun came home. He was twenty then but looked eighty. Uncle Harutyun saw no way out and said, "I won't trust the Turks any longer." He mixed poppy oil with blue copper sulfate and said, "I'll give this to my wife, then I'll drink some. You may do whatever you want." Uncle Harutyun gave the poison to his wife. Just three minutes later the family received an amnesty. Twenty five people got free thanks to my Uncle's sayiyen. Uncle immediately mixed fifteen egg yolks and made his wife drink it. His wife vomited, came to and survived.

Our family was very big. Many members of our family served the Turkish government and were officials. For example, my Father was a translator; Karapet Aga's elder brother was a lawyer.

... In 1918 the massacre had stopped already. There was a truce. Turks had come and filled Armenians' houses. One day some Turkish women came, knocked at our door and asked for water. My Mother told me, "Veronika jan [jan is a tender word, tr.], bring some water." One of those women in hijab came up to my Mom and secretly said, "Mayrik, [Mother, in Armenian], you are Armenians, for the sake of Armenians, save me from them. My name is Annik. I was kidnapped." Mom said, "You go today, I will talk to my brother-in-law and see what we can do." Her brother-in-law came home in the evening. Mother told him everything. He said, "Let us send a child to bring Annik here." We sent ten-year-old Hakob. He went and brought Annik. The Turks saw Annik was missing. They came, rushed into our house and said, "Give our girl to us." My Grandmother shouted. A gendarme, who was passing by, came in. My Granny said, "These Turks have come and want some girl. We have no idea." The gendarme drove the Turkish women out of our house and Annik stayed with us. She was rescued, in the end we sent Annik to an orphanage. From there orphans were taken to Beirut. In a word, Annik remained an Armenian.

I can still remember, it was the third day of manslaughter. Wearing a Turkish hijab my Mother went to her mother's place with my four-year-old sister. While mother and daughter were talking carts were brought; shouting and screaming filled outside. People were driven to exile. Mother said, "I won't live here." A gendarme said, "Go home by the road near the market." Mother got confused and lost my younger sister. Mother was hardly able to get home. Then we saw my younger sister, who had managed to find the way and get home alone. We were happy to find each other. But



A handwriting on the backside  
of Priest Hakob's picture



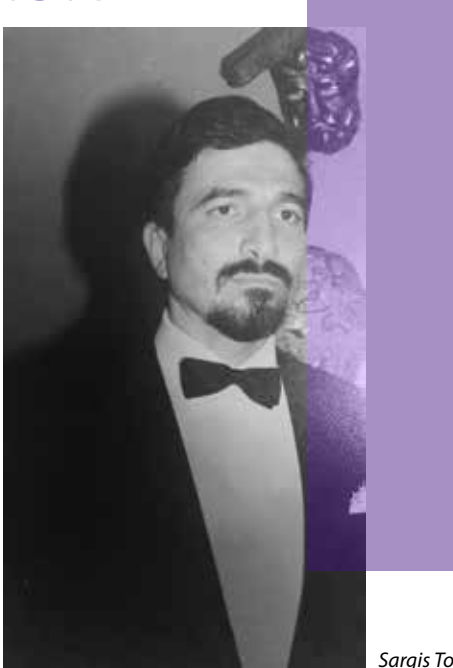
Priest Hakob

my Mom told how Grandmother was taken away in a cart. I ran out and rushed to Grandmother's house. I found the doors open and the house empty. Thus my Granny remained alone in exile. Actually gendarmes had come and slaughtered her. There was an Anna of Sardala. She got under corpses and remained breathless. When gendarmes went away Anna crawled out very cautiously and came to our village, but she was swollen and inflated, naked. Not even a handkerchief was left for her to cover her shame. Turkish brats saw her and shouted, "Oh, devil is here!" and ran away in fear. Anna came to her house. She saw the door open. She had given her only son to her Turkish neighbor and she went to that man. The Turk killed a sheep at home, took the skin, wrapped Anna in it, and healed Anna's wounds.

... After the ceasefire of 1924, when Kemal Atatürk came to lead the government, the Armenians complained saying, "Turks damaged us a lot, they slaughtered our relatives". Then the court trial followed: a lot of Turkish officials were punished.

There was an Armenian girl in a Turk's house. That man and his wife kept the Armenian girl to marry their son but the girl was in love with my Uncle Khacher. One

day she let us know that she wanted to marry Khacher. Armenians sent a telegram saying that the girl's uncle called her from a faraway country. The girl ran away from the Turk's house and came to us. The Turk who had kept that girl for his son said, "I wiped her nose. How could she betray us?" Their son graduated from officers' school and came to our house. He asked, begged. My Uncle thought some trouble might happen, the girl could be kidnapped again and told Yeprem the coachman, "At night feed your horses well. Take our sister-in law to Kayseri." We put a chador over her head and sent to Kayseri. But that Turk applied to the Turkish government and asked to find his fiancée. However, there was a Turkish centurion whose wife was Armenian. She went and told that the Armenian girl had already married an Armenian husband; she was pregnant and was almost to give birth. This is how those Turks became enemies with us. That one came to our house and said, "You have two hours to leave your house." So we had to leave our house. We went to a Turk's house that treated us well. That Turk took us in, fed us. In 1924 we moved to Polis. We stayed in the refugee camp of Polis for a year. Then a ship came from Russia and took the seven of us to Batumi. There were no men with us. We came to Batumi. Poverty ruled everywhere. My Uncle came to meet us. We took a train, the train ran on fuel oil. We were put off at Davallu station, under tents; some bread was distributed. My Uncle took us to Nakhijevan, to my Father. We lived together for some one and a half years; my Father died. Then we moved to Yerevan..." ■



Sargis Torosyan

## **“My Father’s Family Was Warned about the Expected Massacre by Their Turkish Friend”**

### ***Tells Sargis Torosyan***

Both of my parents were survivors of the Genocide. My Father was 8 or 9 when, escaping the massacres with his family, he managed to run away to Greece. And my Mother was only one year old.

My Father’s family first moved to Greece then, in 1927, to Armenia. My Father was 14 at that time. His surname initially was “Sulyan”. When getting a passport he asked to change his surname and took his Grand-Grand-Grandfather’s name as surname “Torosyan”. He didn’t like “Sulyan” surname as it came from the Turkish word “water”.

Before the massacres my Father’s family lived in the town of Bilejick nearby Constantinople. My Mother’s family, the Mutafyans also lived in the same town, in the same street. My two Grandfathers used to be friends. When escaping the carnages they happened to be on the same ship. My parents’ families were lucky to avoid the massacre. They left their town but remained in the country and some time later re-

turned to their native Bilejick.

However, during the second wave of the carnage my paternal Grandfather’s Turkish friend warned him that massacre was going to start again the following day and he had to flee the country. My Father didn’t tell me and I don’t know who that “friend of my Father’s” was – a neighbor, a partner or just a close acquaintance. It is only known that as soon as my Grandfather got the news he called a cart, seated my Father there and paid to take the boy to the port. My Grandfather and Grandmother were supposed to join my Father later. Just as the cart started Grandfather Sargis ran after it and shouted, “Torgom, catch this,” and threw a bundle in his direction. All the way my Father kept that bundle not knowing what was in it. Only after getting off the cart he was amazed to find out that it contained his one-year-old sister.

My Aunt isn’t alive now but she used to repeat, “Had it not been for my brother, God knows what would have happened to me...”

My Father was 8-9 then...

Father said that they paid the captain in gold to take them to Salonika, Greece. But “hunt for Armenians” had already started in Turkey and men of Armenian nationality would be detained even from ships.

My Mother’s Father and brother were caught, but my Grandfather Sargis used his wits and managed to avoid captivity.

But another incident happened before getting to Greece. The Turkish captain tried to turn the ship back to take the Armenians to the Turkish coast again. My Father told that turbulence started then and it became impossible to sail in the opposite direction. And the captain said, “In any case, you have God...” Father always remembered those words.

With God’s blessings the ship reached Greece. My Mother’s family settled in Serres. Meanwhile, my Grandfather and uncle were able to flee captivity and joined their family in Serres where they lived until 1947. Then they moved to Armenia.

My Father’s family came to Armenia earlier, in 1927. My parents met in Yerevan and married here. ■





*Eleonora Yazichyan*

## **“During the Massacres my Grandfather's Brother Was Butchered Right before Their House”**

### ***Tells Eleonora Yazichyan***

My Mother's family comes from Van. My Grandfather was born in the 1850-60s, unfortunately, I can't remember the exact date of his birth. Grandfather's family, the Melikians were much respected. My Grandfather's father was the head of the village community. Their village lay on the road leading to Ktuts Island of Lake Van (at that time Ktuts was a peninsula). My Grandfather's brother was a member of Mejlis and had his own ship, which he later gave to my Grandfather. Grandfather's family was able to save the lives of several Armenians with that very ship.

My Grandfather was an ally of Aghbyur Serob [a famed Armenian military commander who organized a guerrilla network that fought against the Ottoman Empire during the later part of the 19th century, tr.]. My Grandmother also took part in the

self-defense of their village. Our relatives told so many stories about her heroism. They told that one day, when men were in the mountains and there were only women in the village, Kurds attacked the village. Without hesitation, Grandmother put on masculine clothes, got on a horseback, took arms and began to follow the attackers. As a result, the killers were horrified: they left their trophy and ran away. Hearing this story, the Sheikh of Kurds came to my Grandfather's Father Melik to see “who that bravest was to dare to frighten his heroes”. My Grand-grandfather asked to bring some tea. My Grandmother brought the tea, served it, and then stood in the doorway to pick up the cups. After having some tea the Kurdish Sheikh again demanded to see “the one who frightened his heroes” and my grandfather said, “That bravest has been standing before you for already 15 minutes.” And the Kurdish Sheikh left amazed. My Aunt told that everybody in Van fought like my Granny and everybody knew how to fight, whether woman or child.

During the massacres my Grandfather's brother, who was a member of Mejlis, was butchered right before their house. Relatives were unable to save also two daughters of my Grandfather's sister who were kidnapped although during the escape Armenian women usually put soot on their faces to look ugly and to avoid being captured.

■



*Seno Vahradyan*

## **“A Turk They Knew Warned My Father and Grandfather the Church Would Soon Be On Fire”**

*Tells Darikó Melkonyan*

When in 2000 I went to Kars and looked around from the fortress of Kars the lines of the deportees appeared before my eyes... I have been crying since that day: I realized what sufferings my parents had gone through...

My Mother was a Genocide witness but she told about what she had seen and lived through so little that I did not understand much until I visited Kars... She was from Sarıkamış (Sarighamish). During the Genocide, like many other children, she also appeared in an American orphanage. My Mother's uncle (Mother's brother) was a translator and it was him that found her. When reading the list of the children's names he came across "Tirun Torosyan" he realized that was his nephew.

My Mother moved to her uncle while her sister Margarit had already been transported to the USA. There is, unfortunately, no information about my Mother's brothers...

My Father Seno Vahradyan was born in 1907 in the village of Noraber – then Qyalalı, on the territory of which a reservoir has been built. My Father was also a Genocide witness. Turks attacked and deported all the residents of the village without taking into account their age or sex. At that time Father was ill. When one of the soldiers wanted to fire at him another soldier said, "Do not waste a bullet, can't you see that gyavur (giaour) is dying?" that is how Father remained alive. He always remembered with astonishment that the whole village was deported by some seven-eight janissaries but the Armenians, although their number was much bigger, didn't protect themselves.

On the roads of deportation my Father's mother got lost and we never had any information about her. My Father and Grandfather, along with other Armenians who had survived were locked in a church. Here, a Turk they knew, warned them that that the church would soon be burnt down. They managed to run away and survived... ■



Gevorg Hovhannisyan

## "Commanders Had Planned to Slaughter All Armenian Soldiers at Dawn"

### *Tells Sona Chalgushyan*

Before the start of Turkish-Russian war the whole family of my Mother's Grandfather was living in Adana. When the war started, my Grandfather, Gevorg Hovhannisyan left his pregnant wife Lyusya and his daughter (my mother Haykanush) and went to war.

In the Turkish army my Grandfather was taken as a second class soldier. Second class soldiers could only be, for example, in the army kitchen and were not allowed to wear weapons. Later, however, being skilled and mastering different military techniques, my Grandfather, as an exception, was given a weapon and was taken for full military service.

One night, when my Grandfather was sleeping in the military unit, a Turkish soldier sleeping beside him, known as Ali in the army, awakened him and urged him to run away with another Armenian friend. He informed him that the Turkish commanders had decided to slaughter all the Armenian soldiers at dawn. Ali told my



Sona Chalgushyan

Grandfather that he warned them because he could not stand there and see them being stabbed. He could neither bear to be given a bayonet and be made to kill his friends himself.

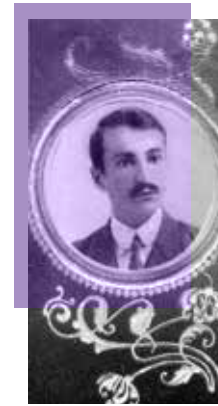
Trusting his Turkish friend my Grandfather awakened another Armenian soldier and they decided to run away together. Before running away my Grandfather asked Ali to inform also his other Armenian friends. In response Ali stated that that he couldn't do that as he had arranged the escape of only two Armenian soldiers beforehand. Later it turned out that not only Ali had undertaken the task of saving Armenian soldiers, many other Turkish soldiers had also joined him and had warned as many of their Armenian friends as possible.

Ali managed to take my Grandfather and his friend safely out of the military unit. After that he told them that he would not be able to help them any longer because he feared that the Turkish commanders would kill him as well, in case they learnt he had helped the Armenians. Thus my Grandfather, together with his friend, started his way having nothing but his gun with him.

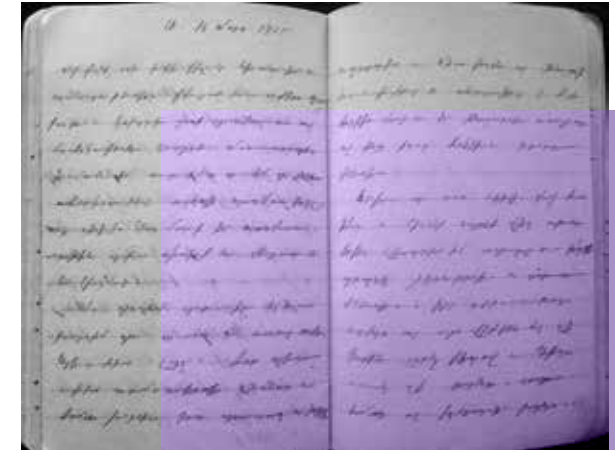
After walking some 10-15 kilometers, they noticed a military unit approaching them. They hid themselves behind a rock. But the soldiers noticed them. Fortunately, it turned out that they were one of the military units of Zoravar [Commander, tr.] Andranik.

Because there was a weapon with my Grandfather, the Armenian soldiers, at first, did not realize that my Grandfather and his friend were also Armenians, thus they took them as captives. After they questioned them and realized their being Armenians, they took my Grandfather and his friend with them. Afterwards, they fought together in a number of volunteer battles. After Zoravar Andranik decided to dissolve his military unit he took his soldiers to Eastern Armenia and set them free.

Thus my Grandfather moved to Tbilisi. In Georgia, after losing connection with his family and having no hope to find them, my Grandfather got married to an Armenian girl for the second time. Later my mother managed to find her father and they met in Armenia. I remember that afterwards my Grandfather kept contact with our family and often visited us. ■



Aram Safrastyan



A page from Safrastyan's diary

## "In 1915 my Grandfather's Hair Turned Grey In a Day..."

### *Tells Ruben Safrastyan*

My Grandfather Aram Safrastyan was from the city of Van. In 1909 he left Van and worked as a teacher at various schools in Western Armenia. Later he moved to Constantinople and entered the University of Polis. At that time he was also engaged in public activities and published a number of articles in periodicals. Since his student years Grandfather began to publish the first journal on pedagogics in Constantinople. He was also a member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation- Dashnaksutyun (ARF).

In April 1915 Armenian students at the University of Polis were arrested. They were taken to the police station. But one of their lecturers Zaqi Bey managed somehow to release the arrested Armenians students.

I can remember Grandfather said that besides this case an attempt was made to poison Armenian students studying at the University of Polis. They were the first Armenian students as Armenians were not allowed to study in Polis until 1911.

Later my Grandfather became the leader of the Dashnaktsutyun Party functioning underground in Polis. In 1919 he moved to Armenia and became a Member of Parliament of the first Republic of Armenia. Then he took up science. He was a Turkologist, published several works; during the Soviet period he was persecuted, arrested and exiled.

Grandfather's brother Albert Safrastyan and sister Araksý Safrastyan participated in the defense of Van, then moved to Armenia. Their parents also moved to Armenia but died during the epidemic of 1915.

Aram Safrastyan's diaries have preserved. One of the notebooks comprises events of 1913-1916 and it is symbolic that some pages related to 1915 are written in red ink.

I can still remember they told that when the news of mass killings of Armenians spread, my Grandfather's hair turned grey instantly.

And my Grandmother was from Trabzon and most of her relatives were exterminated. Armenians were mainly drowned in the sea in Trabzon.

My Grandfather published works related to the hard conditions of Armenians in Turkey. And, actually, Zeqí Bey saved somebody who published "Turkish Sources about Armenia and Armenians" in four volumes. ■



*Haykanush Bzekyan*

## **"The Mystery of Tokat Golden Wells"**

### ***Tells Nune Bekaryan***

My Father's family, as it is said in Armenia, is a family of refugees/migrants. They came to Eastern Armenia in 1924. Before that they used to live in Western Armenia. After the massacres in Cilicia they migrated to Sebastia and settled there. I heard all those stories from my Grandmother. She became a Genocide witness at the age of seven.

My Grandmother's family was a respected one in Sebastia. They had houses both in Sebastia and Polis. They also had a summer house in a small village – Tokat – near-by Sebastia. My Grandmother's paternal Grandfather was a famous person among the church community of Sebastia; he was called Ter (Master) Bzek for his family name Bzekyan. Naturally, as a respected person he had several Turkish friends. Prior to the massacre the whole family was in Tokat when one of the high-ranking officials of the vilayet, as my Grandmother called him "the second person" came to Tokat and called upon my Grandmother's Grandfather. My Granny told the elderly people sat and talked for quite a long time. The hosts offered the Turkish official coffee, sweets but he refused. As my Grandma told, after talking to the Turk, her Grandfather came out too gloomy, sad, called all the family members into the big room, brought all the jewelry in the house on tenekes [big copper trays, tr.] and said: "Everyone should put as much as they can on themselves."

My Granny used to say: "That was something we had never been allowed before. Fist-large golden spherical earrings had been made for us; those earrings were hung on our ears." In my Grandmother's words, she had heard the Turk official say: "Master Bzek, carnage is expected, big carnage. You have an opportunity, you are a rich man, you can take your family and get off."

My Grandmother said: "My Grandfather dropped all the remaining gold into the well in the house, ordered us all to stand near the well and said that the survivors should come and find the gold."

My Grandmother told us that in Tokat wells were built inside houses so that people didn't have to leave homes during attacks but could have water.

"In the morning everybody went to their homes, some to Sebastia and others to Polis," my Grandmother told.

My Granny's family went to Polis; her father was a police officer in Polis. My Grandma told that the tension was great; various rumors circulated... the grown-ups sat in the room, spoke, cried and the children weren't allowed in. "One day one of my Father's policemen friends called on us secretly. My sister Satenik was two years younger than me. In all that fuss we were forgotten and I managed to eavesdrop. I heard the policeman say that it was going to start here also within a week... "The massacre is coming up, take your wife and run away. You are still young, you can have children. Is there anyone who doesn't know these aren't your children? I will organize everything for you to leave Polis," my grandma remembered the Turkish policeman's words. Until that my Grandmother didn't know that they were their mother's children from her first marriage and their father was somebody whom they didn't even know. Too shocked by what they had heard, my grandmother and her sister decided to run away from home.

"There was an American orphanage at the end of our street, so in the morning I got dressed, took my sister and went to the orphanage. Some time later we were found. My father was awfully angry, but soon they realized that the idea of giving us to the orphanage was the best option, which hadn't occurred to anyone so far. From the orphanage my parents learned where we would be taken and promised to find us by all means. My Mother hung as much gold as possible on us and told us not to spare it but to exchange for bread, clothes... everything we needed. So, on a French ship we were transported from Polis to Salonika where we stayed until 1924. I can still remember that, when getting aboard the ship, a policeman pulled the golden earring from my sister's ear and tore her ear with it. She was bandaged somehow and put aboard the ship still bleeding.

My Father, as he had promised, found us and brought us up like his own children.



*Haykanush Bzekyan with her small son, daughter-in-law and granddaughter*

The reminiscences of the Genocide years never left him," my Grandmother used to tell.

My Grandmother knew French and Turkish very well. She was in Tokat in her thoughts. She said one day she would go and find their house in Tokat. Before death she had even got permission to go to Turkey but didn't have time to make her dream come true. She always told me she could draw the plan of their house and point the place of the well so that I could go and find their gold... ■





*Sona Poghosyan*

## **“My Grand-Grandmother Was Forced to Leave Her House”**

### ***Tells Sona Poghosyan***

My Grand-grandfather Khachik Partev and Grand-grandmother Aghavní Meyisyan lived in the city of Erzurum during the years of the Genocide. Grand-grandfather worked as a military doctor in the Turkish army and was revered by Turkish soldiers. He had to be away from home on business quite often.

When the Turkish government began mass displacement of Armenians from Erzurum, soon it was the turn of my grand-grandparents' family. One day, when Grand-grandfather was again away on business, Turks broke into their house and forced the family to leave. Grand-grandmother took her only daughter in panic and left, abandoning her sick mother-in-law who, despite the pressure by the Turks and her daughter-in-law's appeals, refused to leave her house unable to take up the road of exile. Unfortunately, my Grand-grandfather was never able to find his parent.

In all that mess Grand-grandmother wasn't even able to contact her husband and to ask for help. Thus, under the Turks' pressure, my Grand-grandmother and her daughter had to take up the road of exile without her husband's knowledge and with no idea what was ahead.

Luckily, on the way she met a Turkish woman who knew my Grand-grandfather and advised my Grandmother to use her husband's authority and avoid forceful displacement. So, following that kind woman's advice, my Grand-grandmother told the Turkish soldiers who her husband was and asked them to help her find her husband.

The Turkish soldiers, knowing my Grand-grandfather and for the respect they felt for him, helped my Grand-grandmother to avoid forceful displacement and to find her husband. Thus, my Grand-grandfather's family was able to run away with the help of Turkish soldiers and find shelter in the village of Orjonikidze in the district of Imeret, Georgia.

After living in Georgia for a few years, their family moved to Eastern Armenia and settled in Gyumri. Grand-grandfather continued to practice his profession here also. They had two more children. ■



Sargis Suvaryan

## **“A Group of Young Armenians Sentenced to Death Was Taken by a Turk to Work for Him”**

### ***Tells Sargis Suvaryan***

My Father Avetis Suvaryan was born in 1901 in the town of Arabkir. When the rampage began his father – my Grandfather – was recruited and taken away like many others to serve in the army. That is how my Grandfather was killed. Father remained alone with his younger brother who was sent to an American orphanage some time later. Father told that people were brought together on the banks of the Euphrates. Their hands and feet were tied; they were seated in boats, brought to the middle of the river and then the boats were drowned together with the people in them. My Father was in one of these groups “waiting for death”. At that moment a not very rich Turk approached the group on the bank and said he wanted a few teenagers and youngsters to work for him, to help in cattle breeding. My Father, who was 14-15 years old then, appeared among the selected young people. Thus, the Turk took 4-5 boys who worked for him a few weeks and soon decided to break out.

Avetis Suvaryan,  
on the left

Father remembered they walked at night and moved to the south. In the daytime they hid in cemeteries. Sometimes they were noticed by Turkish peers with whom they occasionally had arguments. So, overcoming a lot of various hardships, they arrived in Aleppo, Syria where the situation was comparatively calmer. From Syria Father moved to Lebanon. He started to work in Beirut and some time later he found his brother who had also got to Beirut along with the pupils of the orphanage. Father collected his brother from the orphanage and took care of him.

My Mother was also from an orphanage, again from Arabkir and had appeared in Beirut the same way. Mother's family used to have a big leather processing factory in Arabkir. My Mother's father Karapet was a rich and influential person and his brothers were tortured to make them disclose his hiding place. That is how my Grandfather and his brothers were killed and my Mother remained alone at home with her 3-4 year-old brother and forty-day old sister. The children's mother – my Grandmother got ill and died because there wasn't a doctor available. Some of their relatives even wanted to bury the baby with the mother but my Grandmother's sister didn't allow that. Mother used to tell that they remained hungry for days although later they heard from their relatives who survived that in the walls of the first floor there was



Arabkir Union

gold hidden about which the children had no idea. Trying to survive the children cooked soup with peas and, without realizing the danger, fed also their two-month-old baby sister. The latter, unfortunately, got choked and died...

I was born on February 6, 1937 in Beirut. In 1946 we came to Armenia with the sixth caravan and settled in Kirovakan. Later we moved to Yerevan with certain difficulties. We started to live in the house of my Father's uncle's son. After living there for a year we got some land and started to build a house. We moved there when it wasn't ready yet. Father was a constructor and a good professional. He managed to build up his house and raise his three children. ■



Haykanush Dodozian's family

## **“My Mother Used to Say It Was Thanks to a Turk She Had Mother and Father”**

*Tells Elizabeth Katrijyan*

Our family both suffered and was rescued by Turks.

My Father, Khachik Katrijyan was from the village of Chirakh. He was an orphan; his parents were exterminated during the Genocide and his sister, Elizabeth, whose name I have, was kidnapped. My Father was taken care of by his mother's brother and his other sister was taken care of by his father's brother.

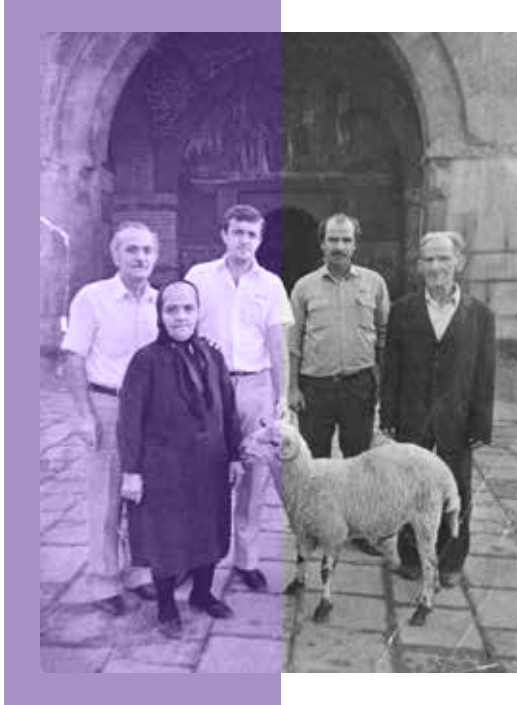
His childhood had left a heavy impact on my Father's memory: he didn't want to have anything during all his lifetime.

When we had grown up he used to say, “My girl, we need nothing. We just need a pit to sleep in because Turks will come... and we'll run away again.”

Later, when we were older, we found out that his family used to be quite wealthy. When we had to cook something at home he said, “My girl, such things were done by servants at our home.” He told they had a beautiful, large house in their Motherland... And we got surprised.

When there was some talk at our place Father always said, “Those Turks...” and my Mother said, “It was thanks to a Turk that I had a mother and father.”

My Mother's family was from Khazkal. They were called Khazkaltsiner [Khazkal residents, tr.]. My Grandfather and Grandmother – Harutyun and Satenik – were



*Khachik Katrjyan's sister  
and his nephew*

Dodozyans: Dodozyan is not a surname, but the name of the neighborhood Dodozlar. Once they were registered in that way and became Dodozyans.

My Mother, Haikanush was born in 1914. During the carnages of 1915 they were constantly exiled from one village to another.

In one of such villages the Khoja's sixteen-year-old son was stabbed and my Grandfather's name was given, as if he had done that. When the boy's relatives came with fire and swords to exterminate my Grandfather's whole family their Turkish neighbor, who was one of the rich people of the village, came up and said, "No, Harutyun was here at that time." This is how my Mother's family had a narrow escape.

Covering the roads of exile they appeared in Salonika. My Grandfather used to tell that the road of exile was so hard they even thought of leaving their child – my Mother – under a tree and going away. However, they decided to carry her till the end. So, in 1915-1916 they ran to Greece. In Salonika my Mother studied at the school established by Gyulbenkian and in 1932 they moved to Armenia.

My Mother was lucky to be brought up by her parents thanks to that Turk and always remembered about this.

My Father also migrated to Athens, Greece. His family moved to Armenia later. My parents met here, in Armenia. ■



*Manuk Avetikyan and Armanush Melkonyan*

## "My Father Lived 13 Years in the Turk's house Who Saved Him"

### *Tells Ohannes Kulak Avetikyan*

My Father's name is Manuk, Manuk Grigor Avetikyan: he was a respectable person in Cesaria in modern Yozghat province. There was an Armenian school, a church and a college in the village of Hyurnej, currently Konuklar (Turkish – the Hospitable people).

My Father's ancestors came from Ani. But when in 1021 King Senekerim moved to Sebastia, my ancestors migrated with everybody.

My Father's village was called Hyurnej meaning "the guest descended in the forest". A meadow opened in that place and a village was built in that meadow. There is still a forest in those places until now. Mount Akta stands nearby, where Armenian Fedayeens from both my Mother's and Father's dynasties fought.

My Father's dynasty was Avetikyan, Grand Father's name was Avetik. Avetik was "a daredevil" person, just like daredevils of Sassoun. Once tax collectors came to my Grand Father for tithe and he paid. But when they came again to collect taxes, he didn't pay saying he had already paid once. The tax collector said he had to pay again;



*Manuk Avetikyan and Armanush Melkonyan*

Grandfather got angry and beat the bailiff. The incident was reconciled as my Grandfather knew some people. However, some time later the same bailiff again came to Grand Father, now under Pasha's auspices. Avetik refused to pay again and beat the tax collector. Grandfather was punished: his ear was cut as he refused to obey. From then our family nickname was Kulakszyzyan, meaning without an ear.

In 1915 my Father was only 12 when his Father, Mother, sister and elder brother were killed before his eyes.

... Father had nightmares every night with scenes of his family's assassination.

A Turk called Sherket, wishing to save the children, took my Father, Manuk, and his younger sister, Dalita. That man, however, said the children could live in his family only if they were Turkified. Manuk had to change his name and become Sherket. That Turk kept my Father and his sister for some time. Then Father gave Dalita to an orphanage. But he didn't go there himself.

He thought the lands left by his Father belonged to him and wanted to own them. His sister was moved to Beirut along with other children where she grew up and married a Russian soldier.

My Father, Manuk lived 13 years with the Turk who sheltered him. He spent sum-

mers in the fields, winters in the stable. He said the Turk had a daughter of his age with whom he grew up. That Turk also advised him to take care of his Father's land.

One day Manuk went to his paternal house where he met a stranger who insisted those were his lands. The Turk who brought Manuk up talked to that stranger and said the child's whole family was killed and asked if it was possible to leave the land to him. They came to an agreement and Manuk went to get the certificate of the owner of the land. There he was told as his Father hadn't obeyed the authorities those lands no longer belonged to him but were already state property. So my Father burnt the papers with his own hands saying that as everything was taken away from him, then they could have that just as well...

Manuk's other sister called Tsiatsan [Rainbow, tr.] had married a Turkish cleric but they often met. One day my Aunt's Turkish husband told my Father that there was a converted Armenian girl who offered to marry him. That girl was my Mother – Armanush, who was "a daredevil" Melkonyan. As part of the Turkish army her Father took part in Chanakale war that is why he was exiled later. My Mother Armanush was saved by Circassians who spoke in the Ivonese language. I know the Ivons are a part of Circassians but they were Turkified. When my Grandfather returned from the war, he found the village empty. My mother Armanush was renamed to Anishe and Grandmother Hripsime was renamed Gyulsima. So my Grandfather joined them under the name Yakub. Later their two younger daughters were born. After her husband's death Hripsime returned to the village of Hyurnej, where my Father, Manuk Avetikyan – Sherket married Anishé.

My Father cautioned me never ever to go to Hyurnej as he had witnessed such painful events there.

Then Father moved to Cesaria with his family. Some years later they migrated to the USA where I was born. Our village Hyurnej is called Konuklar today and is included within the province of Yozgat. ■





*Siranush Hakobyan and her husband*

## “The Story of How My Mother Survived the Genocide Reminds of a Miracle”

*Tells Donara Tarjumanyan*

The story of how my Mother survived the Genocide reminds of a miracle, a real miracle...

It was certainly a miracle to stay alive, to survive in those almost inhuman circumstances, to avoid the yataghan and later to set a family, to live happily...

I don't even know if my Mother's life could be called a happy one. The disaster she went through during her childhood, the violence she witnessed were always in her eyes... My Mother was a survivor of the Genocide...

My Mother Siranush Hakobyan was born in 1912 in Kars. She didn't remember the date of her birth, she told only that it was the day of Vardavar festival [festival, when people drench each other with water, tr.] in July. She was still a young child when Yeghern [Genocide, tr.] started in Western Armenia. Turkish massacres reached Kars

a little later. As you know until 1918 Kars was a Russian subject and in 1918 the most inaccessible city-fortress was handed to Turks... It was handed and the nightmare that was in my Mother's eyes until the end of her life began.

Vast majority of the Armenians in Kars became victims of the carnage, others took the road of migration. Mother and her two brothers Mnatsakan and Hambartzum were among the numerous Armenian refugees. She told that they were all taken into a mews. Mother was very young but every detail was printed into her memory. She told there was no room to move in the mews, no air to breathe... She remembered that every day soldiers came, read out names of some people and took them away... Everybody knew they were taken to be killed. One day the soldiers came and asked who were Siranuish, Mnatsakan and Hambartzum... “We looked at each other and realized our turn had come,” Mother told.

All the three of them were taken away but they didn't know where. It was only some time later that the orphans realized they had been saved. Finding themselves in a large palace they met their uncle's daughter Aghavni.

Agahvni's story is also interesting. A Turkish Pasha had seen her during the massacre years and fallen in love. Agahvni had married that Turk, moved to his fortress. However, the girl was always sad... The Turkish Pasha wanted to do something for her to feel happy. So Agahvni asked to save her cousins from the carnage. The Turk Pasha, as you see, fulfilled his wife's wish and saved the Armenian orphans.

My Mother and uncles were received very well in that Turk's house; they were given new clothes and fed. Mother couldn't remember definitely but she said they stayed quite long there, about a year they lived in that house until Turks learnt about Pasha's action and started persecuting him. Pasha took his wife Agahvni and left the place, thus leaving the orphans alone again.

I don't remember where my Mother and her brothers went from there but in the end they found their uncle's [father's brother, tr.] wife – Agahvni's mother. With her help they moved to Gyumry.

Mother told that after living in Gyumry for some time the news spread that Turks had left Kars and all refugees could return (perhaps it happened in 1919 when the Armenian army liberated Kars for a short period).

Hearing the news about the liberation of Kars, a large number of refugees who had found asylum in Armenia, and my Mother and her brothers among them, headed for their native town. This time they stayed in Kars for a very short time. Soon, when the town finally passed to Turkey according to the Russian-Turkish agreement,



they again headed for Armenia. This time the orphans remained alone as their uncle's wife died on the way. On the way my Mother also lost her younger brother who caught some unknown illness and died.

My Mother and her elder brother were brought to Yerevan. In Yerevan they were given to an orphanage; at that time an orphanage functioned nearby where Sundukyan Theatre is now. A new life began for them there... ■



*Alik Sargsyan*

## **“My Great Grandfather Had Two Hours to Leave Van”**

***Tells Alik Sargsyan***

I have heard this story from my Mother. However it was only recently that I learned more details about the life of her Grandfather's family in Van and how they were miraculously saved from the massacres. My ancestors migrated from the city of Van during the years of the Genocide. Some of them have settled in Eastern Armenia.

This story is about my Mother's Grandfather, who was born and lived in Van till the carnage of 1915.

Nikoghos Grigor Charkhchyan was born in 1884. After finishing school, he became a barber. He had one daughter. Although he was fond of his profession, he was also engaged in many other business activities. Due to his hard work and great will, he became the owner of big hotels, hair salons and teahouses.

He had very tight connections with many Turks because of the nature of his work and was in very good relations with many of them. Grandfather Nikoghos and his family were in very close relations with the Turks in their neighborhood. Nevertheless, even these relations changed when the massacres by Turks began.

In April 1915 Nikoghos was in one of his hotels, when a Turk officer in military clothing approached him and warned that he had 20 minutes to leave his house and 2 hours to leave Van. My Mother told me, that it was very strange, that a stranger, whom my great Grandfather did not know at all, warned him about this. However, this kind of news terrified my Grand-grandfather and he hurried to leave Van with his family as soon as possible. Grandfather Nikoghos took with him what he was able to take in 20 minutes – some first necessity things and gold. Nikoghos with his wife, his 2-year-old child and parents escaped leaving all his property to Turks.

Unfortunately, they were not lucky enough to escape without losses. On their way the Charkhchyan family was not only robbed, but they were also persecuted and Nikoghos' parents died of cholera. My Great Grandfather was able to get to Eastern Armenia with his family, settle and continue his life here. Later on it turned out, that the Turk neighbors, who had always been warmly received by Nokoghos' family, had long been aware of the Turks' plans. However, they had kept that information in secret. Despite a lot of difficulties and sufferings that Nikoghos had come across during his lifetime, he lived long enough, 96 years, and died in 1980. ■



Gevorg Qendikyan

## "Turkish Friends Accompanied My Aunt's Family to Armenia's Border..."

*Tells Hamestuhy Qendikyan*

My parents used to live in the city of Arabkir, Western Armenia. In 1896, during the first wave of the massacres my Grandmother's uncle [father's brother, tr.] was killed and hanged on the tree before her eyes. That caused my Grandmother a serious mental disorder and she got a long treatment. However, she had some mental problems during all her life. Then my Grandfather, my two uncles and my uncle's relatives were taken away. Only my Father, who was very young, remained. He was born in 1904 and was named after his dead brother Gevorg.

My grandmother used to tell that after the war was over all Armenians from Arabkir went to Aleppo, and then moved to Beirut.

My Father used to tell about the circle of his friends. He said he had several Turkish friends who, as he used to say, always gave a hand when needed; they didn't let anyone harm us. I can still remember the name of one of his friends was Mstatevik. I



Qendikyans' family

asked him: "What name is that?" and he used to answer, "A Turk's name".

And my aunt [Father's sister, tr.] Tigranuhi's husband Sargis Suryan said that during the massacres their family were in the mountains and made horseshoes. Among all that turmoil they were forgotten and weren't exiled. They returned to Arabkir when the situation eased in 1924, then they migrated to Armenia.

Some Turks helped them run away. My Aunt's husband used to remember how their Turkish friends took all the jewelry they had, hid it in their pockets, tied their carpets and belongings to the mules and accompanied them to the border with Eastern Armenia. These Turks kept the jewelry and said, "If there is an attack it will be taken away from you, it will be safer with us." Thus, these Turks brought our relatives to the border, gave back their jewelry and belongings, and saw them off to Armenia.

In Yerevan, they bought a big house near the Cinema House and lived there with all their big family – 14 people.

My Aunt's husband always remembered these Turks with gratitude. He said they had very good Turkish neighbors who "took care, didn't allow marauding". But there were also cruel people who took advantage to assassinate and rob. In any case I have often heard that among Turks there were so many people who were helpful. ■

## "When the Great Massacre Began a Turk Neighbor Sheltered my Grandmother's Family"

*Tells Suren Avetisyan*

My Grandmother Siranush Hambartzumyan was born in 1905. She was from the village of Artamet, Van. When the Great Armenian Massacre began their Turkish neighbor sheltered their family for some time.

Grandmother used to say, "Certainly, they were Turks but they were very nice people. Our families were so close. They were people of bread and salt [this expression means "hospitable", tr.]."

However their Turkish neighbors couldn't hide Grandmother's family too long. Thus, like thousands of other Armenians they also had to leave Artamet.

On the road of exile two soldiers approached my Grandmother's younger sister and tried to take the silver ring off her finger. As it was tight and wouldn't come out one of them raised his dagger and wanted to cut off the finger. At that very moment another Turkish soldier came up and didn't allow. In the end, they put some water on the ring and were able to take it off the finger.

But later, getting too exhausted from hunger and tiredness Grandmother's sister and mother died on the way of migration.

Grandmother told that walking on the road some people fell down exhausted and everyone knew that the fallen one would never get up again.

The group of Armenian refugees, and my Grandmother among them, was able to cross the Araks River and get to what is now the village of Shairar, Armavir. After staying there for some time Grandmother was sent to an American orphanage in Ejmiatsin. Some years later Grandmother met my Grandfather who came from Mush. They had moved to the village of Kuchak, Aparan long before. In 1929 they moved to Yerevan together.



*Siranush Hambartzumyan*

*Siranush with her daughter-in-law and grandchildren*

I can still remember when our family came together and Grandmother started to speak about her childhood she always told about their lost house and village with a feeling of yearning. She would talk about the apples of Artamet with special admiration. She said that young women in Artamet always kept apples in chests: when they opened the chest the scent of apples would spread around the room...

She wanted so much to visit her native Artamt at least once. She had left that place when she was only nine but she looked confident when she would say, "If my feet get to our village again I will instantly find our house." Unfortunately, that big wish of my Grandmother never came true.

People from Van are usually considered greedy but Grandmother was really very generous. Everyone who knew her used to ask, "You come from Van, how can you be so hospitable?" in answer to which she would say, "People from Van are not greedy, simply they always have their stock for tomorrow." ■

## **"My Grandmother's Father Was Saved by His Commander"**

*Tells Grigor Avetisyan*

My Grandmother Aghavný Martirosyan, born in 1907, was one of those who miraculously survived the Armenian Genocide. Grandmother and her family lived in the village of Charakh, Bursa. It was about 100 kilometers away from Bursa and was famous for its warm and cool baths. Villagers were mainly involved in silk manufacturing. In 1915 my Grandmother's father was recruited to the army and only women remained in the family. Grandmother told that during the deportation the Turkish government gave them as a family who had given a soldier, carts to transport their belongings, while other families didn't have such "an advantage". During the transportation, along with others, they came to the railway leading to the Der Zor Desert, put up tents and started waiting for their turn. Grandmother said it seemed salvage to them: no one knew that in those trains they would be taken to be assassinated.

Soon their turn came. The four women – Grandmother, her mother, grandmother and aunt – took their seats on the train. Grandmother told they put ash on their faces to look ugly as beautiful girls were taken away by Turks. When Grandmother and her family were already in the train a young man got on the train and asked if there was anybody from Bursa. My Grandmother's grandmother replied saying they came from Charakh. The young man advised them to get off the train immediately. At first the old woman could not understand why they should get off: their turn had finally arrived. But, fortunately, that young man managed somehow to take them off the train and, perhaps, they were the only survivors of the people on that train...

They started to work at the market. They did trivial jobs to earn at least some living. And it was at the market they came across my Grandmother's father Grigor. They met absolutely by chance as everyone knew that Turks killed Armenian men



*Aghavni Martirosyan's document issued in Belgium*

recruited to the army. But it turned out Grandmother's father was rescued by his Turkish commander. The latter, knowing well that Grigor was a professional farmer, took him to his estate to work as a gardener. Actually, my grand-grandfather's salvation became possible thanks to a Turk. After the reunion the family moved to live in their native Charakh. They lived there for about two years and in 1922 during the retreat of the Greek army moved to Bursa. From there they went to Bulgaria by ship and escaped from the second wave of the Genocide. In Bulgaria Grandmother met Grandfather and in 1933 they moved to Armenia with their two sons. ■



*Anahit Ghazaryan*

## **“Run, Go, Keep My Light Burning”**

*Tells Anahit Ghazaryan*

When I learnt about the project “100 Years... Real Stories” one of my ex-students, Susanna Stepanyan, was at my place. During the conversation I told her about the project and found out that Turks had saved her Grandfather during the Genocide. She told me the story of her paternal Grandfather.

They came from Shatakhy. Her Grandfather was 13-14 years old during the Genocide years. Turks gathered all residents of Shatakhy and locked in the church intending to burn them. As Susanna said her Grandfather's family was quite large. Her Grand-grandfather Stepan, feeling what destiny his family, including his son Hakob, would have, tried to find a way out. But what could he do when everybody's hands were tied behind? Suddenly he noted that one of the church walls had a crack and the stone could be removed. Hakob's father started hitting the wall with his back and hands. Even at that moment he didn't forget his religion and didn't hit with his legs: it is a sin to hit a church wall with one's leg. His wife was crying asking him to do something and save their son, her Hakob.



In the end, he managed to remove a stone from that church that had been standing for centuries and told his son, "Run, go, keep my light burning." [in Armenian that expression means to continue the family, tr.] Hakob was a thin boy and, prowling through that hole in the church wall, he began running. Suddenly he heard a Turk yelling, "The giaour's son ran away." Then a shot followed... Hakob felt his hands tied behind his back get warmer but he kept running frantically. He ran without knowing where he had got. Then he suddenly fell unconscious.

Waking up Hakob found himself in a Turk's house. A pregnant Turkish woman stood beside him and his hands were tied with some rags. At that moment he realized he was wounded but the first thought he had was that he was free, that he had run away. The Turkish woman fed him and made him hide as the boy was searched for everywhere. The woman offered Hakob to lie under the bedding. Soon he could hear Turks yelling and the woman's answer who assured them the boy wasn't in her house. In the end the soldiers went away. Then the Turkish woman gave the boy some food, showed him a safe way to take. This is how Hakob, the son of Stepan from Shatakhy survived and years later told his grandchildren, "When I was going away I smelt something burning. I turned back... The church was burning..."

He ran and got to the village of Avshar, Ararat region, got married and had children. As his granddaughter said he always wished to cross the Araz River and go and see his native house again... ■



*Tavrik city, Sebastia*

## **"Two Offshoot Survivors of Exterminated Dynasties Vowed to Weave Together and Become a Thick Oak"**

*Tells Elizabeth Baltayan*

My Mother Azniv Baltayan was from the city of Tavrik, Sebastia. She was the only survivor of the dynasty that was exterminated during the Genocide.

Mother told they had a Turkish neighbor who was very close to them. One evening, when men were away, that Turk Pasha visited them. Mother used to say he was like a family member. That Pasha's mother had died during childbirth and Azniv's grandmother Nazik had taken care of and brought him up like her own son. The Turk used to call Nazik "Great Mom".

My Mother Azniv was six then. She and her two sisters went out to meet the guest and heard the conversation. When the Turk came in and seated himself by the table he told "Great Mom" Nazik that "the Turkish government had made a decision to displace the Armenian population, to assassinate and exterminate the Armenian nation". He offered Nazik shelter in his house and even promised a corner for icons where Nazik Mom could pray. He said he would be able to protect all their family



as he had certain advantages. Everybody was anxiously waiting for Nazik's respond. And she refused saying her dynasty and family would be wherever the Armenian nation was; if Armenians were to be exterminated let their family be killed out either. Upon hearing this, the Turkish Pasha went away and never returned; and a few days later happened what he had spoken about.

In April Baltayan dynasty set off on the road of exile in line with other Armenian families. As my Mother was too young she was carried. She easily got tired and asked her Grandmother to stop to eat or drink water. During an incident on the road one of her sisters was killed right before her eyes: she was beheaded and thrown into the water, which was really awful for my Mother.

At some point the caravan of migrants stopped. Everybody noticed certain change in the Turkish soldiers' attitude towards them: they did nothing violent, just, on the contrary, urged Armenians to walk slowly and without haste as they had a long way to cover.

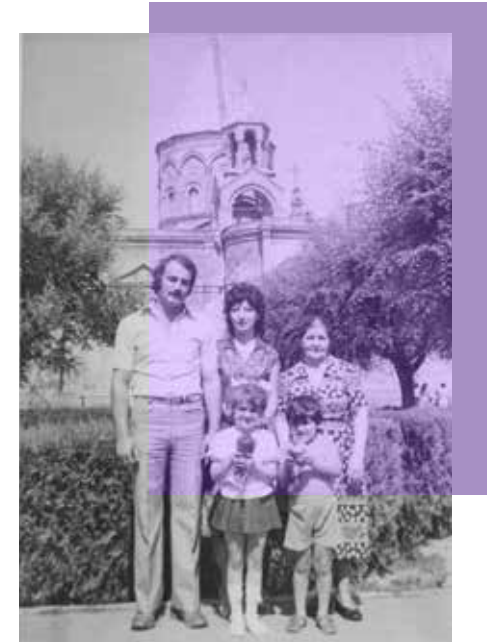
However, everybody understood the reason for the Turks' cunning steps when they saw employees of an American orphanage.

The Americans collected children under age and my Mother Azniv appeared among them. After seeing her sister's death with her own eyes, Mother could hardly depart with her grandmother and other sister. "Set your own family and never forget your dynasty," said Grandmother Nazik hugging Azniv dearly. "Always keep in mind the road of your sufferings."

From the truck moving away my Mother was watching the long-long caravan trying to find her sister and grandmother.

Mother married Azaria Patrakchyan who was also from Sebastia, from the village of Patrin. They met at the orphanage. After living in Salonika, Greece for twenty years, they moved to Armenia in 1946. Dynasties of both of them went through that tragedy. They used to say, "We were two offshoot survivors of exterminated dynasties and had vowed to weave together and become a thick oak"...

*This story was published also in The Khariskh [Anchor, tr.] magazine, March/April, 2005, under the title "The Fresh Oak Offshoot". ■*



*Yelizaveta Galukyan's family*

## **"After Kars Was Handed to Turkey by Lenin, Even More Violent Massacres Raged against Armenians..."**

***Tells Julieta Abajyan***

My Mother's family was from Kars. My Mother Yelizaveta Galukyan was born in 1914. They were a very rich family and had countless gold and carpets... My Grandfather had a shop in Kars and was able to provide his family's well-being. Mother told that their house was next to a Turkish Effendi's house who was a revered person. Grandfather supplied him with meat every day. That Turk often asked my Grandmother to cook something with that meat for him. And my Grandmother met his request as she respected him a lot. Because there was usually too much meat the Turkish Effendi asked my Grandmother to distribute the dinner among Armenians in need, to the poor.

But one night an attack occurred in Kars and Mother's whole family was captured and led to be killed. Some time later the grown-up members of the family returned. As Mother told, her Grandmother said at that moment their two Turkish neighbors had come and had drawn the killers away. Those Turks had said that my Mother's



*Yelizaveta Galukyan,  
in the center*

family would have to flee not to be in danger. Fleeing at night, they were hardly able to get on the train for Tiflis and thought they would settle there. But when they got to Kirovakan the train stopped and an announcement was made saying that Russians had occupied Kars. Mother's family returned to Kars. After coming back they were able to live there for a few years. They kept their fortune in pitchers and jugs.

But after Kars was handed to Turkey by Lenin, even more violent massacres raged against Armenians. This time my Mother's family fled and settled in Gyumri. Mother told that during the killings, before her eyes, a pregnant woman's abdomen was cut open and the baby fell out... The attitude to Armenians was generally rather rude, which had made a great impression on my Mother who was still a little child then.

During the escape my grandmother managed to put only a few pieces of jewelry on the children or tie on their bodies. They were able to bring with them to Armenia only that and it turned out to be very helpful for them further. They settled in Gyumri and managed to support themselves through selling it until my Mother got married and then already my Father started to support the family. My Father was from Alaskert, Mush and was 14 years older than my Mother. Father fought in Andranik's battalion. His brother fought in the Turkish army and was a respected person. My Father started to work for an international humanitarian foundation and settled in Hoktemberyan taking the whole family with him. And that is where I was born. They had five sons and one daughter but three of the sons died. My Mother said if she had an opportunity to go back she would be able to find the gold hidden in pitchers in the ground as she remembered its place... ■



*Ruben Sargsyan*

## **"I Dream to Go to Kars at Least Once, to See my House and Then Die..."**

### ***Tells Ruben Sargsyan***

My Grandfather, Melik Sargsyan, was from Kars. He was born in 1895; at least that was written in his documents, although he insisted that he was born in 1888. I was 13 when I heard his story from my Grandfather. I was so much interested that even recorded my Grandmother's and Grandfather's stories. They used to tell their stories and, full of nostalgia, sometimes sang passages from national songs in their own dialects. Unfortunately, those recordings have disappeared from our family archives.

My Grandfather's ancestors came from Sasun, and then they migrated to Mush, from there to Kars. My Grandfathers migrated from Sasun because of an argument with Kurds. One day a Kurd came to our house in Sasun, stopped his horse in our yard and began to put the overspread wheat into the saddlebags on the horse. In answer to the owners' indignation he said, "Armenians must work so that Kurds eat". The furious landlords hit the uninvited guest with a stick for yoking oxen and he

died. Fearing revenge of the killed Kurd, my ancestors paid to other Kurds to take them away from Sasun secretly. Thus, they migrated to territories under the Russian government.

My Grandfather told that one day in 1921 he noticed a Soviet train arriving in Kars. As he said, he recognized the Russian train by the “comunalka” [communal, tr.] caps of the Russian soldiers. My Grandfather recognized the Russian commandant of the train. As they found out they had served in the 5th regiment of the Bolshevik army together. My Grandfather told the Russian commandant that he wanted to run away and get to Gyumri by train. The commandant promised to transport him secretly. But somebody overheard their conversation and told the Turk Pasha that Melik was going to escape by the Russian train. When Turk gendarmes brought my Grandfather to Pasha my Grandfather didn’t hide anything and confessed that he wanted to go away to his survived relatives. My Grandfather even tried to take an Armenian young woman he didn’t know but introduced her to Pasha as his wife.

Amazingly, though, instead of punishing my Grandfather Pasha gave him money and let free. This is how my Grandfather came to the Caucasus, lived in Tiflis for some time, then settled in Gyumri where he found his brothers. Then they all moved to Yerevan. Here my Grandfather married my Grandmother Jaghut, who had also run away from Western Armenia and had had a narrow escape.

My Grandmother told that Turk soldiers had gathered all the inhabitants of their village in a building, if I am not mistaken in the church, put haycocks around and set fire. But, fortunately, local Pasha happened to be passing by that very place and ordered the soldiers to free the people. This is how my Grandmother was rescued.

My Grandfather was a carpenter and continued his work here. My Grandfather’s Father Khachatur, who was killed during the Genocide, also used to have the same craft. He disappeared in winter and was found only months later in the gorge after the thaw. My Great Grandfather was identified by his coat.

My Grandfather made the decision to move to Eastern Armenia quite late. I know he had earlier been also to Russia. He made the decision to migrate from Kars and move to the Soviet Armenia only after he had understood that Kars was yielding. All his relatives, including his Mother and two brothers had left Kars earlier, moving to Tiflis, others to Gyumri. Noteworthy to say, that many people had moved to Gyumri in the hope that it was close and as soon as Kars was released, they would return to their town, their homes.

Every time he remembered his story my Grandfather would say, “I dream to go to Kars at least once, to see my house and then die.” ■



*Alis Manukyan-Minasyan with her grandchildren*

## “My Grandfather Had Several Turk Friends, Thanks to One of Whom He Survived the Great Massacre”

### *Tells Alis Manukyan-Minasyan*

My Grandfather – my Mother’s Father – whose name was Martiros Kavtaryan, was from the town of Akn. The location of this town is very interesting. It is surrounded by mountains. A large number of Armenians lived in Akn. My Grandfather had a shoe-making factory where several Turks worked. Besides the staff, my Grandfather also had quite many Turkish friends, some of whom were his partners.

During the years of the massacre my Grandfather was already married. My uncles were already born. It was due to his work that my Grandfather had good acquaintances among Turks. One day a Turkish friend of his came and said, “Martiros, you had better leave this place. Take your family and go away.”

Fortunately, my Grandfather listened to his Turkish friend and left Akn with his family. They went to Bulgaria. Some time later after he had left Akn with his family, Grandfather heard the news that all the Armenians in Akn were assassinated.

So my Grandfather’s family managed to avoid the massacres thanks to a Turkish friend.

My Mother was born in Bulgaria, in Varna. ■



*Naringyul Gharagyozyan  
with her sister*

## **“A Number of Armenian Children Owe Their Salvation to the Turkish Commander”**

*Tells Manvel Ghumashyan*

I have heard this story from my Grandmother Naringyul Gharagyozyan, whose father Yesayi Gharagyozyan lived in a village nearby Turkish settlement Yozghat. He was an officer in the Turkish army. In the days of the massacres his Turkish commander, who was also his fellow village resident (unfortunately, I can't remember his name), called Yesayi and advised to convert his religion so that he could save his family. Yesayi refused the offer but asked the commander to save his family. The commander, because he respected Yesayi greatly, promised to rescue the children but promised nothing concerning the adults making it clear that it was beyond his powers.

So, before the manslaughter began my Grandmother, as well as her sister and brother were moved to the commander's house.

Unfortunately, other members of the family weren't able to stay alive.

After taking care of the children for a few months, the Turkish commander took them to an American orphanage. Later they appeared in Greece where my Grandmother got married and tried to start a new life.

It is very interesting that about 20 years ago, when my Grandmother was no longer alive, at an event organized in the Armenian community in Buenos Aires a man came up to me. He had learned that I am Naringyul Gharagyozyan's grandson and, approaching me, said with a trembling voice that he owed his salvation to my Grandmother. Of course, I didn't understand what he meant but everything became clear soon when he told me the following story.

During the attack on the village a group of children (some 4-5 of them) managed to run away and hide in a cave in the nearby gorge. Some time later, my Grandmother, Naringyul Gharagyozyan, learnt about the hiding place of those children and began to provide the starving and exhausted children with food at nights, thus rescuing them from death of famine. Naturally, my Grandmother couldn't have done that without the consent of her Turkish host. ■

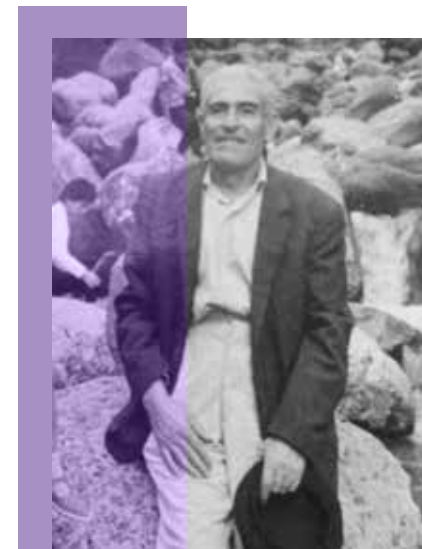


*The small girl is Izabella Chplakhyan*

## **“It was Dangerous to Live in a Turkish Friend’s House Long”**

### ***Tells Izabella Chplakhyan***

That little girl in the photo is me – with my Grandmother and Grandfather. My reminiscences of my Grandfather are rather vivid. I can still remember also that he never liked talking about his youth. The reminiscences of that time of his life were the most painful. My Grandmother, who was also, unfortunately, a witness of the Genocide, told us about what had happened to him. Unlike my Grandfather, she found strength to talk about that.



*Izabella Chplakhyan's grandfather*

My Grandfather was born in the province of Yohat in 1900 and had six brothers and one sister. During the Genocide his brothers and parents were cruelly assassinated. My Grandfather was saved by a Turk friend of his father's and was kept at his house for some time. However, it was impossible to stay in that house permanently; there was a huge danger for that family as well. Some time later my Grandfather escaped to Armenia – Yeraskh village, Ararat region. My Grandfather's sister also survived the Genocide, but I don't know the details of her story. I just know that she somehow managed to go to Beirut. We learnt about that only many years later, when both my Grandfather and his sister were very old. Unfortunately, they never had a chance to meet.

Our original family name was Baljyan. During the move my Grandfather was asked his surname and he, looking at his half-naked body, said, “I am naked [chplakh, tr.], so write Chplakhyan”. And he got to Armenia with that very surname. ■





*Yeghish Ghpeyants with his son and grandchildren*

The story how my Grand-grandfather and his family survived is rather interesting because, as you know, many Armenians were slaughtered in Bitlis. My Grand-grandfather, being a man of great opportunities, had several friends among Turks and Kurds. A Turkish acquaintance of his warned him about all that before the massacres of 1915, thanks to which my Father's Grandfather was able to survive bringing all his family and his dead brother's sons to Armenia. Grand-grandfather had three sons and five daughters. My Grandfather Nikol was the second son of the family and the eldest son Ashot fell off the cart during the exile and was lost.

As Grand-grandfather had been warned about the danger he had enough time to take some of his possessions and to set off on the road of refuge. Thus, he was able to bring certain things to Armenia. Coming to Yerevan their family settled here and started a new life. ■

## **“Many Armenians Were Slaughtered in Bitlis but My Grand-Grandfather’s Family Managed to Survive the Massacres”**

*Tells Harutyun Berberyan*

In my family both my Mother's and Father's families migrated during the Genocide. I can still remember how during our childhood besides fairy tales our grandparents told us also about their migration, their salvation and stories of their past. We heard those stories so many times but every time they sounded differently with new and interesting details and reminiscences. The main aim of that was to make us remember these stories and never to forget.

My Father's Grandfather Yeghish migrated from Bitlis with all his family if I am not mistaken right before the massacres of 1915. He was involved in shoemaking in Bitlis. Our original family name used to be Yeghiazaryan (or Ter-Yeghiazaryan) but everybody called them Ghpeyants. When crossing the border during the escape that name Ghpeyants was made into Kpeyants because of the pronunciation of Russian border guards.





*Armen Varderesyan*

## **“My Mother’s Grandfather Loved a Turkish Girl and Running away from the Army Went to Their House”**

*Tells Anjela Khachatryan*

My Mother’s Grandfather was from Erzurum. After the Genocide he changed his name Kamer Varderesyan into Armen Varderesyan.

Before the Genocide he served in the Turkish army. They had a big family consisting of 31 members. They all lived next to each other, in one yard.

During the atrocities of 1914, when still in the army, he learned that all members of his family were killed. My Mother’s Grandfather ran from the Turkish army simply in a Turkish uniform.

He loved a Turkish girl and went to their house. That girl’s parents didn’t let him go as they knew he was an Armenian and could be killed. They kept him in their house hiding under the sofa. After it got dark they helped him reach the border and he ran to Russia.

Ten years later, when he learned that in Tiflis he had relatives who had run away from Turkey, Mother’s Grandfather moved to Georgia.

My Aunt tells that her Grandfather loved Turkish music and spoke the language fluently. He considered Western Armenia his country and used to say, “If the border is open I will go there on my knees, I will see my house.” ■

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*Photos of people who survived, their families or descendants are depicted on the first page of the cover.*

*The last page depicts the ruins of Ani, one of the most famous cities of medieval Armenia (first references about Ani date back to the 5th century; it was Armenia's capital 961-1045).*

*Photo taken by Lika Khachatryan*

