

Memories, written by Helen Hagopian Tashjian

There was a great deal of commotion going on in our home in New Village. There were quite a few of us living together-Ma and Pa, sister Mae and her husband Garabed, his brother Enoch Gamoian who had recently married a woman from Aleppo, Syria. Then our immediate family, sisters, Eva, Elizabeth, Helen(me), brother Jacob and our youngest sister Libby. We were moving and each of us was helping with packing and bringing our personal items downstairs, so that when the truck came, we would be ready.

We had been living in a company house, but now, my father, his son-in-law Garabed and his brother Enoch had purchased a home and property on Church Street in Whitinsville, MA. Each of them had picked which house they wanted to live in. Papa's house was a double cottage, and we lived on one side and sister Mae and her husband on the other side. Enoch and his wife Mary lived next door to us in the center apartment which had a lovely beaded lead glass door that led into the center apartment. After a few years Enoch decided to live behind the house in a small cottage with 2 apartments in it. Sister Mae and her husband moved into their apartment and Pa rented the other side of our cottage.

One by one we started school. We could not speak English but we learned fast. We tried to teach our mother, but she was sweet and told us her tongue just couldn't turn to form the words. On the other hand, Papa felt he had to learn because of his work in the foundry at the Whitin Machine Works. Many of his Armenian friends were there and it seemed like "hell on earth".

Every day mother would walk from our home with a hot dinner pail to the grammar school about half a mile away. One of us would then take it to Pa so he could have a hot meal. I remember one day I waited at the gate, but Papa didn't come. The guard let me go in and it was like walking into another world. I stood at the top of the stairs and saw rows and rows of molds where each man worked, and on the right side a huge open fire which reminded me of Hades. Papa was late because he had to pour the liquid fire into his molds. He finally came and warned us to never come that close to the stairs as it was very dangerous.

As I grew older I understood why Papa was so tired when he came home from work. When he walked into the house one of us would take his dinner pail, another would help with his jacket. My brother would guide him to his chair and Eva would take his shoes off. We sort of stood around until he breathed a deep sigh and had a half smile on his face. Of course, dinner was always ready, but as we sat around the dining room table with the beautiful crystal lamp above us, we never started to eat until Papa said Grace, then picked up his spoon.

We didn't speak at the table unless Papa asked a question about school and what we had done after school. I was quite active at school. I played basketball on the 2nd team and would be called as a sub to replace a guard. I loved my studies, especially ancient history, typing, shorthand and of course, my English class.

At 14 years old I went to the city hall with Mother and Eva who asked for a work permit for me. I went

to work at the 5&10 cent store for 10cents an hour. I could not play basketball anymore and that really hurt.

One Sunday our cousin Aaron Hanoian from Providence drove to our home, and he had another young man with him. His name was Arthur Tashjian. When he stopped across the street while Papa was on the porch, he just sat in his car. Pa said to bring his friend over and he met Arthur for the first time. I had met Arthur at a picnic and felt that this was the man I would marry.

We were married on October 25, 1936, in the St. Sahag-Mesrob church in Providence, RI. I had wanted to wait awhile since mother was ill, but she said, "Arthur is a nice boy and I want to see your marriage". She stood on the side of the church, as ill as she was, and witnessed our wedding. Less than a month later she had passed away. This was a great loss to all of us.

My mother was a woman who gave of herself to all of us and to all others who would stop by to tell her their problems. I remember one day 2 young women stopped by and their faces were pocked with blue marks. We asked them why and they said the Turks had marked them as their property. When World War I broke out, they were released because they didn't want the allies to know they were holding them in their homes.

My sister Mary assumed our mother's role in always being available to help any newcomers who needed her assistance with papers, etc. for she could speak fluent English