

Nick Ghaphery

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Nicholas A. Ghaphery, Jr.

Nick Ghaphery, 73, is a member of Wheeling's Lebanese community. He is a retired hospital administrator. I was put in touch with him by Mary Monseur, my former Smithsonian Folklife colleague whose parents grew up in the Wheeling Lebanese community. In this interview, Ghaphery speaks about his parents' immigration to the United States from Lebanon, growing up in the Lebanese community in Wheeling, and Lebanese foodways, music, and dance.

EH: Emily Hilliard

NG: Nick Ghaphery

00:00

EH: ...hold this. Okay. So could you introduce yourself and tell me where you're from and when you were born?

NG: My name is Nick Ghaphery, I'm the 4th child of an immigrant Nicholas Ghaphery who came to Wheeling from Nebatieh, Lebanon. I was born on June 20, 1943. Lived in Wheeling all my life. Educated at St. Alphonsus grad school, Wheeling Central Catholic High School, Wheeling Jesuit University, and I attended the University of Ottawa, the school of hospital administration, and spent my working career at Wheeling Hospital as Human Resource director.

EH: Okay. Could you tell me about your family?

NG: My father came to this country in 1913. He was directed here because he had an uncle, Elias Ghaphery, who owned and operated a store on the corner of 22nd and Market St. that store become Meadow Vick's Meat Market. The community would recognize that. It was a meat market for many years. My dad was 17. He worked at Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel. He accumulated enough money at that time and wanted to own his own business so he bought a grocery store, which was later named Ghaphery Brothers Grocery, that sat on the corner of 23rd and Main Streets. Today it's Robinson's Collision Center.

EH: Okay.

NG: He worked in that store all his life. In 1920, he brought his brother David—brought him from Lebanon. And at that time the 2 brothers operated that store. In 1931, a Lebanese family here in Wheeling, by the name of John, Thomas John, my dad was then 30 years old, looking to marry, and this Tom John said there were young Lebanese girls—family-- in the state of Maine. So he took my father to Maine to meet, to meet a future wife. Back then it was a match made in heaven! (laughs)

EH: (laughs)

NG: So he traveled to Waterville, Maine and Tom John introduced my father to the George family.

EH: Okay.

NG: The Thomas John and the George family were from the same village in Lebanon—that's how he knew to go there.

EH: Wow.

NG: So... the intention was to meet and marry the 18-year-old, my dad preferred the then 12-year-old, and then married my mother at age 13. Brought my mother to West Virginia, and they raised their family here. Every August, my father would take my mother, who was actually a child at the time, he would take my mother home to Waterville, Maine for the month of August. They would spend the month of August there. She had several brothers and sisters. And that tradition of the month of August continues today to the 3rd and 4th generation. We now have a place there, we certainly have a lot of relatives there and my brother built a lodge to accommodate all of our family, which numbers maybe 30+, and we go there each August to spend time on the lake. The camp and the lodge is on the lake.

EH: Nice. In Waterville?

NG: In Waterville—Waterville, Maine. Which is maybe 20 miles, 25 miles outside of Augusta, Maine.

EH: Okay. Yeah, I think I've been through there.

NG: Augusta, yeah. So I have a brother Alfred, A.D. Ghaphery who is a retired surgeon, I have a sister Evelyn who manages the doctor's office, I have a sister Juliet who is living in Pittsburgh, has 2 sons. My brother Al has 4 sons, one is in Roanoke, VA as an insurance agent. He's got a son David Ghaphery who took his practice—David Ghaphery is a Wheeling hospital surgeon. He's got—the oldest son is Nick Ghaphery who is a physician working for an insurance company in Pittsburgh, and Brian Ghaphery who is a Wheeling prosecutor—he is an attorney in Wheeling.

EH: Okay. What are your memories of the grocery store and the Lebanese community in general?

5:43

NG: Vivid memories. We all worked in the store. We all worked in the store. The store serviced primarily the black community. There were several blocks of residents for the black community. My father was probably the only store in the valley or state that opened 7 days a week until midnight. I mean he was a business man. Spoke very little English, went only to the 6th or 7th grade, but was a smart business man. You know, his work ethic was very strong. He... We all worked for mostly anything that we wanted and needed. He... major emphasis on education. He ensured that we worked hard in school, that we were successful in school. We were very close to that community. In fact, even to this day, we see and know many of the people who lived in that area. In 1967, the West Virginia Urban Renewal Council took charge of that area and they destroyed the whole area to make way for businesses, which today is sorta... they're still making way. (laughs) They're still making way.

EH: (laughs)

NG: But yeah, we all worked, I mean the area was a very poor community—my dad used to sell a nickel's worth of sugar and a dime's worth of flour and he would open packs of cigarettes and open you know, sell one cigarette at a time. This was the 40s, 50s, and in the 60s he did this. But he had a very good relationship with that community and he did very well with that. We learned. We learned how to interact and deal with people. It was a great experience for all of us who worked there.

EH: And what about the Lebanese community in general—did you live in a neighborhood with other Lebanese families, or was it very diverse?

NG: Most of the... at that time, the 30s, 40s and 50s, there were communities. Communities of Greek, communities of Polish, communities of Germans, and yes—they were centered around... they... Around... they were grouped in areas of residence. And this is why the church is situated where it is. Because the Lebanese community was all in that area. There were 3 parallel streets of Lebanese people, so yeah, we were all... And in the 40s, that was all the generation of immigrants. They were all immigrants at that time. And I'm the 1st born generation of an immigrant family.

EH: Okay. I had a question and...

NG: It was in I think 1906 that the community had grown so large with Lebanese people that they sent for a priest who came from Lebanon. His name was Father Paul K. Abraham. And he's the founder of the Maronite church. He first said mass across the street from the market house.

EH: Ah.

NG: Were you at the market house?

EH: Yes.

NG: Well at the far end of the market house and across the street there were antique shops.

EH: Yeah.

NG: He said mass up on the 2nd floor for many years until they had enough money to build a church.

EH: Okay.

NG: And then they built the church and the fire occurred, and then the Lebanese Maharajan picnic evolved—did Carol mention that?

EH: Oh, I didn't realize that.

NG: The church, the church burned down. They needed to rebuild, so that's when they began the Maharajan and it used to be 3 days—the Lebanese festival at Oglebay Park. And all the women would go to the church—they'd do everything from scratch and everything by hand and they would have a festival. That's how they garnered money to rebuild the church. The... the devotion to the blessed mother and the Feast of the Blessed Mother on August 15th was the center focal point of that festivity. And people used to come from everywhere.

10:55

They'd bring blankets and pillows and sleep in the church—I mean nobody could go to a hotel. They all would sleep in the church for those 3 days, just to be here for the festival.

EH: Wow.

NG: So that was in, like I said, in 1931 the church burned down. The picnic started in 1932 and it's been happening in August ever since. This year it's scheduled for August the 14th. If you come to Oglebay Park, it's something. It'd be something for you to see.

EH: I'm hoping to make it. Yeah.

NG: It would be something.

EH: What are some memories of Lebanese traditions that your family would practice? It could be food holidays...

NG: Well you know as immigrant families, immigrant parents, we had a very strong Lebanese heritage and practiced the culture in the home. My father would many times say to the 4 of us, there won't be any English today. (laughs) As the youngest I would struggle with that!

EH: (laughs)

NG: As the youngest... But! The four of us understood Lebanese well. Fluently. But my 3 siblings spoke it better than me. By the time I came, they were speaking, the parents were speaking English more and then when my father passed, my mother was primarily always, always speaking English. But all the food, you know, my mother cooked all the Lebanese food. She learned from the Wheeling elders because she was so young. She learned very skilled Lebanese cooking. Very intricate meals in cooking. And you know, we knew a lot about our grandparents and our history, and my father made an effort that we

developed cultural practices and maintained them. And we maintain them today! All of the men in our family have married non-Lebanese girls, and you know, it's an effort to maintain the culture. Consequently, you know, my mother was a widow at 35. She married at 13, he was 35. So she was a young widow. As a young widow, she was the rock of the family and kept the family together by way of meals. And as the family grew, she continued. I mean her home was the focal point of the family. So all the married couples would come for dinners on Sundays. At... she managed the picnic for many years. She learned and she chaired it and she cooked for it, you know, until she became ill. She had had a stroke. She recovered. She needed somebody to be with her. I was the closest in the Wheeling area to be with her and actually had to leave work to care for her. In doing that, I learned all of the cooking. I was force-trained to do all of the Lebanese cooking and even today, now, we do Sunday dinners and we have 18, 19 people each Sunday for the children, the grandchildren, and now the great-grandchildren. And actually we just met Sunday, all of us, for Father's Day dinner. So we try hard. We try hard. It's very difficult. There's a lot of young children. They schedule softball, baseball, there are so many activities going on on Sunday, it's very difficult to keep everybody together, but we try.

EH: What are some of the recipes that you make still?

NG: Well, traditionally, the Lebanese menu is kibbeh, which is a ground lamb, ground beef mixed with a wheat, and then with a meat stuffing and pine nuts and onions. That's kibbeh. There's tabbouleh, which is the traditional Lebanese salad made of wheat and parsley and green onions. We do grape leaves, Lebanese style—not necessarily Greek style. We do cabbage rolls. Warak Arish—what it's called—is the grape leaves...

EH: How are those different than the Greek version?

NG: Uh, I think—when I compare the Greek to the Lebanese, the Greek grape leaves seem to be primarily rice and ours is either, typically lamb meat and rice, and/or beef. *Malfouf* is cabbage—cabbage rolls. We do cabbage rolls. We have a chicken soup called (?) that is mixed with *acini di pepe*—pasta seeds. We have a *shish barak*, which is a dumpling with garlic and parsley and onion. We have a number of odd things with vegetables and (youghni?), they call it (youghni?), which is a mixture of meat sauce and meat... tomato sauce. You can do that with peas on rice. Hummus you know, which you can do that with eggplant which is called baba ganoush, which is mixed with hummus, these are dips. The Lebanese people have a significant variety of meatless meals. Particularly when they, when we never ate meat on Friday there were a lot of things that you did with fish.

EH: Okay.

NG: And a lot of sauces that you made with fish. We're very heavy on garlic, you know, garlic—I don't have any garlic.

EH: (laughs) I don't mind

NG: But primarily that's our menu. (phone rings) I don't need to answer that.

EH: Okay. And what about desserts? Do you bake?

NG: Actually.... Speaking of baking, I'm scheduled today to do meat pies and spinach pies, which I didn't mention! We're heavy on meat pies and spinach pies. Baking, I don't do. Cookies, I do, only because my mother had a variety of Lebanese cookies. She made baklava or what we call *baklawwa* (?). There's *maamoul*—it's a nut-filled cookie—you can fill it with nuts and or dates. There's *maamoul*... there's *sambouski* (?), which is an orange-flavored cookie, there's macaron (?) which is a date/nut-filled

cookie, uh... and in the church, women of the church will do these and prepare these for the Lebanese picnic. They do that each year. So, but sweets-wise, I'm not that skilled other than like I said, cookies and baklava.

EH: Did your father's store carry Lebanese items as well?

NG: Yes. He not only carried Lebanese items, he and his brother, on Saturday at 4 in the morning, they would go to the meat cutter who provided lamb—live lamb. They used to slaughter them in South Wheeling. And he would be in the market house. If this is the market house, this very end of the market house is open—that's where his meat stall was. And he would sell meat to all the.... Lamb—only lamb. To all the Lebanese and the Greek people of the Valley. He did that most of their lives on Saturday. 'Cause everyone used to go to the market for vegetables and meat and cheese—big... heavy on cheese. He and his brother David would sell meat. That occurred until the 1960s as well.

20:58

And as a child, on Saturday night when he would come home, he would bring lamb heads, tongue... (laughs)

EH: (laughs)

NG: ...brains, and my mother would—and I mean, they were delicacies. And you know, in Lebanon, mind you, they ate all the greens and the growings and the—they ate everything because apparently they were poor. They ate everything! So we grew up on lamb, kidney—raw, kidney raw, tongue—boiled, and brains!

EH: Wow.

NG: Wow is right!

EH: (laughs)

NG: And we all ate it! When I think of it today, I mean, I have no idea how! And they would... you know, they would have a bowl of lemon and a bowl of salt, and a bowl of pepper, and a bowl of garlic, and then this big bowl of diced kidney, and you'd pick up the kidney and dip it in the salt, dip it in the pepper and dip it in the garlic and just...

EH: (laughs)

NG: ...devoured it! It was delicious. And the same with tongue.

EH: Oh, okay.

NG: I mean, they lived, they lived long and healthy lives. You never heard the word cholesterol. Never. We would never do that today. Never. We do eat raw kibbeh—that's a delicacy. If you get the right meat, quality, quality meat, you ground it four, five times. And it's puree—it's pasty. Then you mix that with a wheat. With the spices in it, you would never know it's raw meat. I mean it's delicious—it's very... it's delicious.

EH: Is there a place you can get—does the Lebanon Bakery make kibbeh?

NG: They will make baked kibbeh. I don't know that—you have to go to an upscale Lebanese restaurant to get it. When my mother ran the picnic, that's what she did all day long. She made raw kibbeh. And

naturally, that generation, they ate it up. If it was done today, it would be eaten up, because people love it. But there were people in our parish—physicians-- who were concerned about selling that.

EH: Ah, yeah.

NG: But if... we eat it still. We make it at home. But on the large scale, you'd have to go to an upscale restaurant to get that.

EH: Would your father also sell items for African American, the African American community specifically?

NG: Well there were certain—certain items, yeah, that they preferred to have. I can't name them for you, but I know...

EH: I just wondered of recipes maybe that...

NG: ...that called for certain things that he had.

EH: Mmhm—yeah.

NG: Yeah, he would try to do that. And if they had asked for something, he would try to get them for it. He—at that time there were several, well not several, there were 4 major distributors of wholesale, wholesale houses where they supplied. There were many grocery stores—there was a Greek one, there was an Italian one, there was a...

EH: Uh-huh. Do you remember music and dance being part of the community?

NG: My father's brother Dave—he was a party guy. And he was a dancer—the traditional Lebanese dance was a dabke—a line dance. And because he was a dancer, and because he had no children—I think his wife miscarried two or three times. He lived above us, he and his wife. We all lived in the same house as families did then—the relatives lived all together. He sort of adopted us as his children and taught us all to dance. My sisters did individual exotic Lebanese dancing and we, they guys did the dabke, we all did the dabke. So yes, we were very well-versed in doing the dabke. My uncle's wife was from Chicago. He met her at a Maharajan, which is a Lebanese festival. And he met her because he traveled to go to them because he was a dancer.

EH: Ah. Okay.

NG: He met her, they married, and you know, every year, he would take her to Chicago to her family and they would attend a Maharajan, or what they call a hafli-- H-A-F-L-I—which is a party. He was doing the dabke, he was leading the dabke, he—I remember, he used to have his handkerchief and he would tie 50 cents—a 50 cent piece in the corner of the handkerchief and use that as a—as... as the leader would use this handkerchief. And as he was doing the dabke at this Lebanese convention in Chicago, he had a heart attack and dropped dead on the dance floor. That's how he died.

EH: Oh. Wow. I guess that's not the worse way to go...

NG: Yeah (laughs). That's how he died.

EH: He was probably enjoying himself.

NG: It was—it was a shocking time.

EH: Aw—yeah.

NG: And I was just 10. I remember when my dad got that call and it was—it was... so...

EH: Yeah.

NG: But yes, we danced and we still dance. (laughs)

EH: Carol told me. She showed me her finger cymbals.

NG: She's excellent, by the way. Carol was—is an excellent single dancer. You know, her hand movement, her feet movement. And she had an aunt also, as I was a child, I remember she was an excellent dancer.

EH: I think she showed me her photo and pointed her out.

NG: Is that right?

EH: Yeah. Uh-huh. And what about now—do children learn to dance?

NG: The children? We try—it's harder. But when they come around, you know, they're familiar with Lebanese music and we try. The guys more so than the girls. There are more young men in the family who like, who love the food and the dancing. I mean a couple of these nephews actually, I'll digress for a moment. The second oldest great-nephew... 3, 4, weeks ago, was assigned to Orlando as a trainee for Siemens Corporation. He graduated from WVU, he's been job hunting, he got accepted to Siemens—in his first week, there was the killing of that girl. In the second week there was the gay bar, the third week was the alligator, and then the... I mean it's... and he's been there for all that. He's sort of beside himself.

EH: Wow, yeah. And also to be...

NG: His first... (unintelligible) about it...

EH: Yeah. Exactly. First time away.

NG: And they're more... though the wives are all not Lebanese—these guys, the family is more Lebanese-oriented. This boy will sit down and eat 10 or 20 grape leaves at one meal sitting. All of the food that we eat—there's always a side of luban—L-U-B-A-N, which is yogurt.

EH: Uh-huh. Okay.

NG: We've been heavy on yogurt all our lives between the American, before the American community was ever familiar with it!

EH: I know—even when I was young, I remember it being weird. I would bring it to school and other kids would say “what is that?”

NG: Really?

EH: It just wasn't as popular.

NG: Yeah.

EH: It was in health food stores.

NG: And we make our own.

EH: Uh-huh.

NG: We actually, when we go to Maine every August, or we go to Florida, wherever we go, and we're gonna be there for a while, we always take a container of the starter—you have to have a starter to make it, so we take our own because it's sour, it's bitter. We take it with us and then we make our own yogurt where we are.

EH: Right, okay. Yeah, I've made yogurt before. So basically you use the starter and then you heat it, and you let it ferment?

NG: Yes, yeah.

EH: Okay.

NG: Well good! Good for you.

EH: (laughs) Is yours strained? Do you strain out the liquid?

NG: Ah, we make it and as soon as it's made or it's gelled, then I top it with (clears throat) a dozen paper towels, and it absorbs all the liquid.

EH: Okay. Okay.

NG: So that's how we strain it. My mother used to put it in a bag and hang it on the spigot and it would drip out.

EH: Yeah, okay.

NG: But we eat it too quick, quickly for it to be like cheese. We put some aside and a couple of the people in the family—it will solidify and they'll use it as a spread—like a cheese spread.

EH: Oh, that sounds good.

NG: Yeah, it's very good.

31:18

EH: What is the Lebanese community like now?

NG: Well, there's probably a handful of...of immigrants... I can only think here, right here in the Valley—in the Valley is minimal, but I have (clears throat) my parents and I went to Lebanon in 1967. My mother met all of her aunts and uncles. She had 5 aunts and 2 uncles. A couple of the aunts and uncles were younger than her.

EH: Wow.

NG: In...in the early 1900s, in the early 1900s, now I'm gonna backtrack—a man brought his 2 daughters to the state of Maine to make a better life. He brought them to Maine because Portland was a port of entry as was Ellis Island. So many people, many Lebanese people immigrated to New England. It's a very, very heavy Lebanese population in New England because of Portland and because of the Scott paper mills and fabric—shirt factories. They have a lot of factories in New England. This man came, he left 2 daughters there. He came there because many, many years before, somebody from that village came to Maine. He left his two daughters there to work in the factory and he went back to Lebanon and never saw them again. That's the way they did it, only because they thought—a better life. So now here are 2 sisters in Maine from a village called Sabah (?). So now in Wheeling there's a man named Thomas John from Sabah. So Tom Sabah brings his sister and her family here to Wheeling. She had 5 children. They were

here for 3 months. She died of influenza, a week later, he died of influenza, and then within the same week, a child died. Now Tom has 4 children from his sister. So he goes to Maine because there's 2 women from his village. He marries this one, brings her back to Wheeling. She raises those 4 children and has 5.

EH: Wow.

NG: 15 years later, my dad comes to West Virginia, he's looking for a wife. Tom John says, oh I have a sister-in-law in Maine. She has 5 daughters—I'll take you there. That was my mother. That's how that happened.

EH: Okay.

NG: So—you asked me about New England. So they have a large community. So now we go to Lebanon, we meet all these relatives—my dad's brothers and sisters that he never met. Now we have an acquaintance with these people so over the years, they send my cousins here, they live with us, we educate them. Now they're in Boston and they're in Virginia, so we've got that connection. So here, there are no more immigrants—they have all passed. But you look at other cities—major cities—there are large communities still coming.

EH: Yeah, I see.

NG: ...still coming. Of my generation there are many. Of my generation speaking Lebanese, it's... it's minimal. Understanding it—probably much better. But there's not much of—you look at our church on Saturday—it's packed with non-Lebanese.

EH: Really?

NG: They love the priest. They love the priest, they love the 4:30, the 4:00 mass. It's mostly non-Lebanese, and they sort of like the tradition of the Maronite Arabic speaking mass. It's 50/50 on Saturday.

EH: Okay.

NG: There aren't that many unfortunately. There aren't that many.

EH: Who's coming if they're not Lebanese? Are they of another...

NG: Well maybe 15 years ago, the local bishop closed the Italian church, closed the Polish church... they got so angry. They felt that the bishop was closing the church because he wanted all these people to migrate to the cathedral. They didn't migrate to the cathedral, they migrated to South Wheeling—our church—which is a catholic—it's just like the Roman Catholic church.

EH: Yeah. So there aren't many young people here who are of Lebanese descent?

NG: Not many young—no.

EH: What about children coming from, you know to visit grandparents or to visit parents—well, mostly grandparents I guess.

NG: Yeah, I think many who have sought out an education have been forced to move out of the Valley. The jobs here are minimal. You know, the city was primarily steel and coal. There's not much professional positions for the college graduates—just like my nephew. Like all of my nephews and my great-nephews—they've all migrated elsewhere.

EH: Yeah.

NG: They've had to go elsewhere. So it's minimal.

EH: Yeah. What are the ways that you see the traditions carrying on? You know, not in the same way as maybe your generation, but ways do you think they will...

NG: I think probably, what's... encouraged is the food. Anybody of a mixed family, meaning a Lebanese and a non-, they try to incorporate the food somehow. Somehow, from somewhere. The Duffy and the Fadouh (?) family have that Lebanese restaurant and there are several Lebanese restaurants in Pittsburgh that are very, very, very popular. Pittsburgh has a heavy population.

EH: Yeah. So do you go there?

NG: Well, we don't usually eat out because we know how to make all the food. We do make the food.

EH: (laughs) Uh-huh.

NG: I myself, each year, I'll pick 3 or 4 thousand grape leaves and I have them for not only the year—today I'm using the leaves from 2012 that I picked.

EH: Wow.

NG: I pick them, I package them, and I freeze them and I have them. And when the church has a function, we have a volume of leaves.

EH: Where do you pick them from?

NG: We have our own vine in our, in our yard.

EH: Cool!

NG: Our backyard.

EH: How many leaves do they produce per year, would you say—that you can harvest?

NG: Oh, well, I mean—there's a fence like this and you know, the vines grow—cover the whole fence, so I could pick 2,300 in a day. You know. And what's really best is after a heavy rain, the leaves are clean, they're lush—that's when you pick them.

EH: Okay. Do you also make wine?

NG: No.

EH: So it's mostly for the—do you use the grapes?

NG: It's—according to my mother, the grape vine that doesn't produce grapes has a more tender leaf.

EH: That makes sense.

NG: And that's what we have. We have.

EH: Okay.

40:27

So they're putting more of their energy into the leaves rather than the grapes.

NG: That's right, that's right.

EH: Okay.

NG: And speaking of wine, my grandmother, you know what ouzo is?

EH: Mmhm.

NG: The Lebanese form of ouzo is called arak—A-R-A-K. Arak. Arak. It's, you know it looks like water, it's anise, anise-flavored. And my grandmother who had 8 children and she made arak, having learned it from Lebanon, and this was during the Depression. And when the inspectors would come, to inspect your house, she would hide the arak bottles in bed with the children who were sleeping! Because the police would never touch and bother the children! (laughs)

EH: (laughs) Right! Do you know how she made it?

NG: They had an apparatus where they crushed grapes and it dripped, and it was a very slow drip, and it was a very—I've seen it in pictures. It was gone in my day. But it was very intricate—like a conveyor, dripping and filtering. It was a major filtering system. But it ended up clear, clear anise-flavored liquid. And we drink it today.

EH: Wow.

NG: And we drink it today. We have arak today.

EH: Nice. And probably, probably imported, or does someone make it in the area?

NG: You can get it at a local liquor store.

EH: Okay.

NG: Yeah, you can. It's imported—yeah, it is imported from Lebanon.

EH: Well, I'm trying to think if I have any other questions. Is there anything you'd like to add?

NG: I don't... I don't think so. I think that's... I have to tell you, they're great, great memories. Great... I always... when we're all together with the children, I always impress on them how fortunate they are to have some heritage. They have a Mediterranean background. We try very—my brothers, my brother and I primarily try to impose on them their roots and who everybody is and to familiarize yourself. And we share all this information. These are the documents that... all of the nephews of the next generation have this information.

EH: That's good.

NG: They have it. At some point in their lives, they're gonna want to do a family tree, and I mean, this is the document from the ship.

EH: Wow.

NG: ...that my dad came over in. And when we searched this out, we found that his aunt and cousin came with him. And the aunt had to go back because she had something wrong with her eyes—they sent her back.

EH: What could that even be—something that they thought was infectious?

NG: Something that they thought was infectious. They'd mark you with a white X at Ellis Island, and I mean she had to turn around and go back, and leave—and leave the child and my dad, age 17! She had to leave them at Ellis Island! She was the sister of the Elias who had the market. I mean, they were coming to Wheeling because Elias was here.

EH: okay.

NG: But they had to send her back.

EH: Wow.

NG: And those are the things we discovered from all of this—that the...

EH: And I think Mary (Mary Monseur, Emily's former colleague at Smithsonian Folkways) said either her grandfather signed your father's papers or something?

NG: Yes, yes, yes! Uh... let me see if I have that. (looks through papers) I have it somewhere here. She knew that!

EH: Yeah, she said—yeah, she said that you were a great person to talk to and that...

NG: When you say Mary Monseur...

EH: I think her father was—I'll have to pull up the email. I'm not sure if Monseur is her... she was married.

NG: Where does she live?

EH: She lives... well, I think she lives just outside of D.C. in Virginia, and her father—I think her father's name is Mike.

NG: Oh—Mike and my brother are... Mike is the son of the man... Mike is the son of the Man who signed my father's naturalization. (laughs)

EH: Oh there it is—yeah! Wow. That's amazing! So Monseur is her family name.

NG: Could you imagine?

EH: Wow! That's amazing!

NG: I mean to look at the documents... I mean look at this. This is from Lebanon. And it's because my dad needed proof of his age and this was done in 1960.

EH: okay.

NG: And when my dad got it—he needed a birth certificate for some reason or other. Now my father was 70 something. He left Lebanon at 16. He saw on here the signature of the bishop who taught him when he was in the 4th grade.

EH: Wow.

NG: This is the signature, you know, and I remember when my dad saw this, he started to cry.

EH: Aw. Wow. That's amazing.

46:56

Wow.

NG: I mean isn't that something!

EH: That's amazing. It's so great you have these.

NG: These are documents of my dad's naturalization, naturalization papers you see.

EH: Uh-huh. We have those for my great-grandparents.

NG: And these are the petitions for my father and my uncle.

EH: Okay.

NG: And Joe Monseur was the witness for petitioning my dad.

EH: Wow.

NG: And these are, these are named names. When I say named, not that they were rich politicians, merchants. But they were all immigrants and these two people were from my dad's village but were here before him, so they were witnesses when my uncle Dave came over in 1920.

EH: And... I just met a Haddad—the son of the owner of Later Alligator?

NG: Yeah. Is he really? I never really knew if they were Lebanese... Haddad...

EH: I'm not sure—I didn't ask his heritage, but...

NG: How did you hook up with him?

EH: Well, I was sitting—do you know Ginger Kabala—she does South Wheeling Neighborhood Association? So I was meeting with her and someone who does the Celtic Society, and he was there—I think he's a cook or chef, and he said "I've read about you," and he sat with us at dinner.

NG: Really?

EH: He's a little bit older than me. But he said his last name was Mitch Haddad.

NG: But you...

EH: I know a Haddad from Michigan who I think is—her dad's from Iraq, but...

NG: Yeah, it's an Arabic name.

EH: So I wasn't sure if he was Lebanese or...

NG: I know the Mrs. Haddad—I know her because—she's the owner, I see her all the time.

EH: Yeah, mmhm.

NG: But I really never knew—maybe her husband is of an Arabic background.

EH: Yeah, maybe. Are there also Syrians here?

NG: There were Syrians in Ohio.

EH: Okay.

NG: Probably, way back when, everybody was Syrian.

EH: Right, yeah.

NG: Everybody was, but after the war in the 40s and when the French took over Lebanon, then the Lebanese wanted to be Lebanese.

EH: Yeah, okay.

NG: And then the Syrians—Lebanese... the people who call themselves Lebanese are Christian. Syrians are orthodox Christian, primarily. I think that's the difference. We don't even like to say Syrian-bred anymore.

EH: Okay.

NG: We like to say Lebanese-bred.

EH: Yeah. Well...

NG: This I'd like to show you. This is the 1920 census and I found Elias Ghaphery who had that store on 23rd street and his son Najib (?). What happened was, we learned, Elias was here by himself. His wife died in Lebanon and had a son, so his sister brought the son over.

EH: Why.

NG: That's why she brought the son over, because the mother died. And he was just a child of... he was a young boy, a little boy. So she had to go back and he had the boy. And then he got married. And then he died of a heart attack at age 32.

EH: Oh my gosh.

NG: And he had 2 children who are now in—one is in Roanoke and one is in Cincinnati.

EH: Okay, and is Ghaph—is that how your name was spelled before?

NG: It was spelled—when my dad—the correct Lebanon spelling is G-H-A-F-A-R-I. When my dad came to Ellis Island, it was G-H-A-P-H-E-R-Y.

EH: (laughs) It sounds MORE foreign! Usually they...

NG: It sounds Irish! I mean many people think that's Irish.

EH: Well, maybe that's what it was.

NG: It's G-H-A-F-A-R-I and you can imagine how difficult it was to find stuff about the Ghapherys and going into the records. Let me look and show you this. Ghaphery. This is 1920 and it's David. I can't see it... Oh, here. G-A-F-A-R-I.

EH: Oh yeah.

NG: Ibrahim. Every son's—it's David—my father is Nicholas Ibrahim, and David Ibrahim... they all have to take the name of their father. That's Ibrahim or Abraham. He was 20, he was a workman, he came from Nebatieh, his, his father is Habib, he's coming to Wheeling, he's the brother of Nick Ghaphery, Nicholas Ghaphery...

EH: And they spell it...

NG: You know, you have to have somebody here...

EH: As your sponsor.

NG: In order to come here. And he had 100... he had 80 dollars in his pocket when he was on the ship. He should—they show you the money. That he was going to his brother's at 2300 Main St—that was my dad's store.

EH: Wow, yeah, okay.

NG: And... this is the picture of the ship that he came over on.

EH: Wow. S.S. France. So did they go to France first?

NG: They had to go from Beirut to Le Havre, Le Havre, France to the docking place, that's where the ships docked, and then from Le Havre to either Portland, Maine on the East Coast or New York City on the East Coast.

EH: Okay. Wow. That's a long journey, especially to have those people sent back. Um, well thank you...

NG: I want to show you...

EH: Oh, please do!

NG: I didn't bring these for you, I brought these for...

EH: (laughs) okay!

NG: But here is the picture of Sunday dinner.

EH: Oh, wow.

NG: That's the gang.

EH: Is that your house?

NG: That's my brother's home.

EH: Okay.

NG: But all of them are not there on... on the usual Sunday dinners. The usual Sunday dinners are at my house or my mother's house.

EH: Uh-huh. That looks fun.

NG: This is my sister, this is Juliet and her two sons. He's in Washington, D.C., he's in Wilmington, DE—they're both civil engineers. He rebuilt the Pentagon after 9-11.

EH: Wow.

NG: He did the Pentagon. That's he and his little baby. That's his wife and his little baby. This is my brother. He's great with history. He's great with Lebanese tradition. He's great with the stories that my dad embedded in us about future and family and future and future and family.

EH: And where does he live—your brother?

NG: My brother lives in Wheeling, he's a retired surgeon. That's... these are... I just happened to pick these up to distribute them. These are the Nailers (Wheeling's minor league hockey team) that just won the trophy.

EH: Oh cool.

NG: Wheeling Nailers. This is at Later Gator. So that's...

EH: Well thank you so much for your time!

NG: Yeah, it was a pleasure. Pleasure.

EH: Yeah.

NG: Makes you feel good to talk about this stuff!

EH: Good! (laughs)

56:00

END OF TAPE