

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

With
Ruben Amirian

Conducted By
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November 1996

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW OF RUBEN AMIRIAN

Today is November 6, 1996. My name is Shoghig Kalaydjian Yepremian. I'm conducting audio histories for the City of Glendale as a Planning Division staff member. It's about 3:15 in the afternoon and we are sitting here with Glendale businessman and resident, Ruben Amirian. This is one of the City's audio history program interviews and we will be talking to Ruben Amirian about his experiences in life here in Glendale.

Shoghig: Thank you Ruben for taking this opportunity to meet with me and um, speak to us about your experiences here in Glendale.

Ruben: My pleasure.

Shoghig: I sent you a couple of questions the other day.

Ruben: Yes.

Shoghig: Uh, and maybe we can just begin with uh, the first question, when and where uh, were you born?

Ruben: Uh, I was born in Tehran, Iran, in 1937?

Shoghig: OK. Um, when did you come to United States?

Ruben: I came to United States in 1962.

Shoghig: Um, where did you go to school or where did you come, specifically?

Ruben: Uh, I went to school in Washington D.C. I took courses in George Washington University and Howard University. I graduated from Howard in 1969, the Bachelors Degree in Architecture. Then I took courses again through Brown University then I got my masters in regional planning degree in 1973.

Shoghig: Wow! Uh, did you work at the time you were in school?

Ruben: Yes. Uh, when I came here, uh, I, at, at the beginning I worked in restaurants. And when I started my studies advanced, I think I was third year student when I found an office job...I kept working and after uh, I think in my last year I was working full time.

Shoghig: So you had your bachelor's and master's degree?

Ruben: Yes.

Shoghig: ...here in United States.

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Ruben: Yes.

Shoghig: ...and worked at the same time?

Ruben: Worked at the same time and I kept the hobby that I had from Iran. I was, uh before I came here I went to Tehran University for two years.

Shoghig: Hmm.

Ruben: Studied painting.

Shoghig: Oh!

Ruben: Over here I kept uh, taking, painting courses while I was doing my architecture...

Shoghig: Oh, how interesting, and did you go back or you came to Los Angeles, after the...?

Ruben: You know after the uh, after I got my master's degree which is in '73, then I worked in other couples of years uh in Septem-uh, February of '75, uh, with my family we returned to Iran and to work there at that time there were a lot of opportunities there.

Shoghig: Hmm. Before the revolution.

Ruben: Before the revolution. I joined the firm uh, uh...it was my friend's firm who I studied with. He was ahead of me, but uh we were at the same university. We established our office. I joined the firm and I worked until our return to the States after the revolution around 1979.

Shoghig: Hmm, right in the beginning.

Ruben: Yeah.

Shoghig: Um, what about family? Were you married uh at the time you were in Washington D.C.?

Ruben: Well, when I came to ,uh, states, 1962, I was in-love with a girl in Iran. She joined me after six months.

Shoghig: Oh!

Ruben: ...And uh, then we, we just got married in lived here...

Shoghig: In United States?

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Ruben: In United States, and after, a year my daughter was born so while I was going to school, college, I was married and uh...

Shoghig: Good! Everything at the same time.

Ruben: At the same time, yes.

Shoghig: You only had one girl, or...?

Ruben: One girl.

Shoghig: You only had one girl O.K.

Ruben: One girl then I now have uh two grandchildren.

Shoghig: Wow! O.k., and they lived in...

Ruben: They live in Glendale.

Shoghig: ...Glendale. Wow, O.K. So from Washington they went to Iran, she went with-to Iran with you...

Ruben: Yes.

Shoghig: ...and then she came back.

Ruben: She came.

Shoghig: To Los Angeles. And what about Glendale? Why did you come to Glendale specifically?

Ruben: With...uh.

Shoghig: Did you have relatives here, family, friends?

Ruben: After revolution, when we returned to states, uh my wife and I, we had in mind to, to return, not necessarily to Washington D.C. We loved the city, uh...actually it was the second city...after Tehran. My wife and I had good time over there. But we decided that for our daughter we wanted her to, to, uh, have an Armenian, uh to be in an Armenian community. So, at that time we didn't know about Glendale, we knew as Los Angeles.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: So we came to Los Angeles and we had some relatives in Glendale so, we stayed in a, uh in a, uh motel. It was or is still on Colorado Blvd...

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Shoghig: Hmm.

Ruben: And we looked for a house...

Shoghig: They have several motels there, okay.

Ruben: And we stayed in a motel for a month until we found a place, a house, we rented a house to La Cañada.

Shoghig: Hmm.

Ruben: Because we found a school for them at La Cañada Elementary School.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: And then after a year again we came back to Glendale...and wanted her to learn the language.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: Mostly I wanted there to, because she was speaking only English.

Shoghig: How old was she at the time?

Ruben: Umm.

Shoghig: She must have been very young.

Ruben: She was very young, yeah, but uh, I wanted her to know...

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: ...other languages, especially, especially Armenian. That was, that was...one of the many reasons that she...And then uh, we liked the city when we came, quiet, uh less crime, uh.

Shoghig: It was a safe city, especially at the time.

Ruben: Yeah.

Shoghig: Yeah.

Ruben: Then it became our home.

Shoghig: So from La Cañada you came to Glendale?

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Ruben: To Glendale.

Shoghig: Okay. How long did you stay in La Cañada?

Ruben: About a year.

Shoghig: About a year.

Ruben: Until she finished her school.

Shoghig: Yeah. Where did you live in Glendale at the time?

Ruben: When we came to Glendale I think uh, we rented a house in Thompson Street.

Shoghig: Hmm. Western?

Ruben: Yeah. Then we rented-bought a house.

Shoghig: Oh. Okay. And what about job opportunities, did you establish a business now that you know you were graduated at the time. You had some work experience?

Ruben: Actually when we came here, at the beginning it was very, very bad.

Shoghig: Hmm.

Ruben: Uh, it was very much anti-Iranian feeling...

Shoghig: Hmm.

Ruben: And uh, at that time revolutionary guards have taken hostages...

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: ...in Iran. So for seven months I looked for a job. I couldn't find one. But after seven months I found a job in downtown.

Shoghig: Downtown L.A.?

Ruben: Downtown L.A. And uh, location of Glendale also was very good.

Shoghig: Close?

Ruben: Close. I just drive 15 minutes to get to work. And then I worked there, Albertson Martin and Associates. And I think it was 1985, or '86...I left that office and

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I opened my own business.

Shoghig: And your office was in Glendale?

Ruben: In Glendale.

Shoghig: Right. And you had a lot of clients at the time? Development was booming in the 80's in Glendale.

Ruben: Development was booming, in Glendale, I did have a lot of clients. I did not have as many clients as other colleagues of mine had.

Shoghig: Hmm.

Ruben: Because I always wanted to kind of select my clients.

Shoghig: Hmm.

Ruben: But of course that was not possible.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: I did some projects in Glendale that I'm not very proud of. But I did some nice ones too.

Shoghig: Right. Did you focus more on single family designs or multi-family commercial?

Ruben: I am a general practitioner. I did almost everything except specialty designs. I have not, I have not done hospitals...

Shoghig: Churches?

Ruben: Yeah. But I have done office buildings, condominiums.

Shoghig: O.k. So since 1979 you've been in Glendale?

Ruben: I've been in Glendale.

Shoghig: Yeah. And still. It's okay. Do, did you have any specific feelings about Glendale, you know you told me about what you liked about Glendale and why you came to Glendale for? What about any difficulties? Did you face any, as a newcomer we all face with difficulties, language barriers or you know it's a foreign city, uh for a new immigrant, um you know, they don't know the streets. They don't know other cities. Did you feel or did you face anything like that, as a newcomer?

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Ruben: I was a newcomer but I had been in states for 15 years.

Shoghig: O.K.

Ruben: So for me and for Annette and my wife, uh, the language was not a problem...

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: We are all U.S.educated. My wife went to American University. But the language was not the problem. Actually the, in the streets. That was no problem, so. I, I, I didn't think we had any problems.

Shoghig: O.K.

Ruben: For it was just very complicated.

Shoghig: Yeah, because some families, you know they have to learn the language and...

Ruben: Absolutely.

Shoghig: ...they had to put their kids through school.

Ruben: Absolutely.

Shoghig: You know both language problems, financial problems you know so fort. Okay. Uhm, what about your current projects? What are you involve with right now?

Ruben: Right now mostly residential.

Shoghig: Mostly residential designs?

Ruben: Office market is slow, contrare apartments and condominiums. It is not that many right now.

Shoghig: And now you're focused in Glendale or you do other projects outside of Glendale?

Ruben: I do more outside of Glendale. And uh, I have two projects...in Glendale, but basically I do outside of Glendale.

Shoghig: Okay. What other cities?

Ruben: I have done projects in other cities, West Hollywood, L.A., Thousand Oaks.

Shoghig: Have you ever been back to Iran since you left in 1979?

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Ruben: No, no I haven't. I haven't. No I haven't and yeah I want to visit there. My mother is still there.

Shoghig: Oh! You still have family.

Ruben: Yes, I have family there. I like to go. But I am, I am advised at this time not to go.

Shoghig: Right, because of political...

Ruben: Yeah.

Shoghig: ...situation. We're all in the same position. Okay, um, being a local resident, what are your contributions to the City of Glendale and the Armenian community? What are, I know you're, uh, a member of Design Review Board, um, how long have you been a member?

Ruben: Um, I think it was January of 1991, when I was in an architect. I think after two years I became chairman.

Shoghig: Oh! O.k.

Ruben: Uh, I like that and I consider that as service department.

Shoghig: O.k.

Ruben: I, I, I feel very good. It's simply shaping. It's all by my input. Whatever that is...that makes the difference.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: I have also been a member of the Glendale Chamber of Commerce uh, when Hamo was president. I still am a member, but Hamo was very active as Vice President, we did a lot of work on multi-family zoning. And uh, we did some work with John Mckenna and we presented to him and the council. It was a major involvement...Uh, then I am, uh in, in Armenian community, I am very much involved with the Armenian Professional Society. I joined the Society in 1982.

Shoghig: Oh!

Ruben: ...And I sat in the board and in 1989 I was president...And then uh, five years after that, I said that...Then I am a member of uh, Armenian Society of Los Angeles. And also there is...

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Shoghig: Excuse me.

Ruben: Yes. Also there's an organization called Mayramian, Davidian and Narinian. You want some water?

Shoghig: Yes.

Shoghig: Okay we're back on. Tape recording.

Ruben: So what else? The uh, and um, what else, what else?

Shoghig: What's the purpose of the Armenian Professionals, organization?

Ruben: Armenian Professional Society, this is a society we transform more than 30 years ago by handful of Armenian students who had come from abroad and a few native American Armenians.

Shoghig: Uhm.

Ruben: Uh, their purpose was to just get together socially and uh, kind of...

Shoghig: Exchange ideas and expertise.

Ruben: Exchange ideas and feel good about themselves. But after a short while, they decided to make this more than a social thing and uh, they started collecting money just annual dues and giving scholarship to graduate students...

Shoghig: Oh!

Ruben: Armenians students from California, uh who need money. I think the first scholarship was two hundred dollars.

Shoghig: Oh.

Ruben: But now uh, our scholarship fund has grown and we are issuing about 20 thousand dollars worth of scholarships every year to students. Basically California students. But about two-three years ago, we changed our charter and we are splitting that money. Now this year is actually 24 thousand dollars. We are splitting that money, half of it goes to again graduate Armenian students. The other half we sent to Armenia and Karabagh and the money is divided between four universities.

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Shoghig: ...

Ruben: That's, our main mission is educational.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: We concentrate on education.

Shoghig: So you were involved in that organization...

Ruben: I'm very much involved.

Shoghig: Very heavily...

Ruben: I'm very much involve.

Shoghig: And the City's Design Review Board, what was your initial interest in serving the City?

Ruben: Um, I was in Chamber of Commerce, working on that ordinance as I mentioned earlier. Uh, then, uh, well that ended and I just wanted to have more involvement, and uh, I, there are not too many things that I do well. I, I, I wanted to do something that I know something about it.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: So, I, I, I let people know that I was interested. I filled out an application and luckily one day, I don't recall a call. And I was called for an interview and uh, and also this kind of fits me well because while I was a graduate student studying for planning, I was also assistant teacher for design.

Shoghig: Oh!

Ruben: I did that for three years and I enjoyed it immensely. I liked talking about architecture design. I'm very passionate about it, as a matter of fact once in while my colleagues in the board kind of caution me...

Shoghig: Yeah.

Ruben: That it's time to move on to the other projects.

Shoghig: Yeah.

Ruben: I like to discuss it.

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Shoghig: You get into it so much.

Ruben: So I enjoyed that very much because you know practice especially for small offices, we do not have that opportunity of talking design.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: Uh, very shortly any project moves from design to production and...

Shoghig: Right, right.

Ruben: ...you do the work of going to City, checking code this and that.

Shoghig: But the, you know in that kind of situation the critical area.

Ruben: Yeah it becomes academic.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: And, and I like that.

Shoghig: Yeah.

Ruben: For me kind of keeps me sharp as well.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: I think I have become a better designer since I started serving the Board.

Shoghig: Because you look at different designs and you're able to critique them.

Ruben: Yeah, and I also, I have, I have also tried to read them, more than I usually do.

Shoghig: Good. And in your design, are you interested in any specific design? Would you classify yourself um, as a modern designer or traditional?

Ruben: Well you know in design today, when you're designing a, a, a habitable space...

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: An apartment, and a house or, basically you design modern because you are living at this time...

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Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: You cannot design which belongs to a different age.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: So therefor automatically your, your layout of design is modern. It's something. Then it's my reinterpreting of the outside, the exterior.

Shoghig: Yeah.

Ruben: The exterior I consider myself contextualist. I am a contextualist.

Shoghig: Explain that to me.

Ruben: Well what it is, is this, I tried to design the exterior of my buildings in a manner that it fits into the environment that, that there going to be put on.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: So if this house; if this street is all a special kind of a street. I do not want my design to be very austere and not fit.

Shoghig: Yeah.

Ruben: But by itself we have a "good piece of architecture".

Shoghig: The same elements that we lived in design reviews, sort of.

Ruben: Design review. Actually I have had that tendency before I, I-there are very, very good architects that do not care about it.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: They design like Richard Myer, they design the signature. I do not have a signature. I design for the place.

Shoghig: Right. That's what a true architect does in a way because they have to be sensitive to the surroundings as well.

Ruben: I, I wouldn't say true architect. This is a different kind of thinking.

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Shoghig: Hmm. Okay.

Ruben: Some people think that architecture is more important than let say, as I said Richard Myer or Frank Gehry.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: Uh, but I, I, I...

Shoghig: Yeah. Okay, um, do you study Islamic architecture at all? Uh, since you lived in Iran or what's, how do you compare your practice in Iran versus in United States?

Ruben: Uh fortunately I have not studied Islamic architecture. I have thousands of slides of mosques and buildings in Iran. But academic study, to read about it. I have not done that. But I can tell you one thing, I fell in-love with Islamic and Iranian architecture after my studies here in the states. When I went back in '75, with another friend of mine who is an architect and Tehran uh, uh, uh, uh, University graduate. We used to go to different cities and take slides and uh, and I can tell you the architecture of Muslim Mosques are incredible. Uh, there is a, there is for example a square in Asfahan called "Maydane Shah", King's square. Uh, there was an architecture historian by the name of Pop who died, he had written, I, I read that book that possibly that square is the most beautiful public square in the world. He was comparing it to Piazza San Marco.

Shoghig: Oh yeah, western, yeah.

Ruben: Yeah. I have been there. I have taken lots of slides. It's just wonderful. So, I don't have academic background, but I do have developed that taste for it.

Shoghig: ...Um, what was the Armenian population at the time you arrived here? Do you have an idea? Apparently the Armenian community is about 25 percent of the total Glendale population. Um, that tells us approximately 47-48 thousand Armenians. Do you remember how the community was at the time? The church was, there was a church that was on Carlton, was it there at the time you arrived here?

Ruben: I remember the Carlton church.

Shoghig: Okay. What about schools? Any Armenian schools at the time?

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Ruben: Uh, I think Chamlian was here, but I didn't, but I didn't think that Chamlian was here at the present location.

Shoghig: Hmm. O.K.

Ruben: The population of course after '79 or '78 grew rapidly.

Shoghig: Uhm.

Ruben: But I do not know if, what I know that considering less Armenians...,but when I came to state in '62, in Washington when my wife and I were walking and suddenly we could hear an Armenian, it was a little group there was an Armenian.

Shoghig: Yeah, yeah.

Ruben: But...

Shoghig: Yeah.

Ruben: I, I, I can't make any...comments about...

Shoghig: What about Armenians from Iran currently. Do you see or do you have knowledge of any recent immigrants coming in at this time, because after the revolution it was the high peak...

Ruben: Yes.

Shoghig: ...for Iran Armenians to come to United States. Uh do you know if that trend has continued or if there is a new trend in the '90s?

Ruben: I think that has subsided in substantial. I don't think that, that many people come here. But there are still people coming. I don't have a personal contact with them, unless they are relatives or something.

Shoghig: Right, right.

Ruben: But the, but the numbers are...of course a lot of people came from Lebanon as well.

Shoghig: Right, right.

Ruben: And or Armenia.

Shoghig: Right. It was all during the 80's.

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Ruben: 80's, yes. And mostly they would go to Hollywood. Somehow that shifted to Glendale.

Shoghig: Right. Or if they came to Hollywood, later they came to Glendale. Um for higher mobility, freedom. Um or Pasadena..., but Glendale has the most Armenians.

Ruben: Yes.

Shoghig: Compared to other cities. Um, I see you have a lot of art here. Can you describe just briefly tell me what you have here? Very interesting art.

Ruben: Well, art is a, is, is mine, my wife's and, it's our passion. As I said I went to Teheran University two years and then after that I have been painting. Uh, this actually is, is collection of other artists. There are very few, this is by me and that large piece is by Seta Manookian and so is this one.

Shoghig: Okay.

Ruben: She's a local artist and she's, she's very good.

Shoghig: Based in Glendale?

Ruben: Based in Glendale.

Shoghig: O.k.

Ruben: And that piece is by Sonia. This one right here.

Shoghig: Oh, this one.

Ruben: Yeah, she's a New York artist. And that little piece over there, uh, next to that mirror, the top one.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: That's a Picasso etching. And the one below that is a rock lithograph. And those statues are Thomas Holland. He's a San Francisco artist.

Shoghig: Quite a selection.

Ruben: These two are by Marco Gregorian. Uh, Marco has several pieces in Rockefeller Convention.

Shoghig: Oh.

Ruben: And also the other ones are Mark's or...

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Shoghig: The one in the hallway.

Ruben: Yeah that, that's all dogs. That's a self portrait of the, the one on left.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: It's my face and my wife's and I have, it's a collage and...

Shoghig: O.k.

Ruben: Yeah,...

Shoghig: And what about the one with the building?

Ruben: Now, that's also a collage.

Shoghig: O.k.

Ruben: That-those-that's, you know what collage is?

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: That you tear out something.

Shoghig: Right...

Ruben: The buildings, those three tall ones it's a work by a very, very good architect whose work I admire and his name is Aldo Rossey, Italian architect.

Shoghig: Oh, Italian.

Ruben: Yeah, that's all his sketches. I worked them and I changed the colors, uh I changed the configuration. And that's a collage, uh, inspired by and taken a sketch. I have done lots of collages in using Alto Rossey's work.

Shoghig: What about your wife, is she, is she an artist too or have you influenced her in any way?

Ruben: She, she's not an artist. Uh, I don't think I have influenced her. She's very, very intelligent.

Shoghig: Hmm.

Ruben: Uh, we have become kind of "bodies" in judging art and talking about art. So whatever I do before I show to anyone, I ask her to come and comment on it. And she's

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very quick. She either says I like it or I don't like it...

Shoghig: Yeah.

Ruben: ...then I have to beg for a reason...

Shoghig: Yeah.

Ruben: ...why?, Um, It has just become a passion of ours.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: We both like art. We have, we bought, we have bought a lot of art work.

Shoghig: What about your daughter, what is her interest or professional background?

Ruben: My daughter is studying psychology and business at uh, UCLA, and then she, now she's uh, going to graduate school, Calstate Northridge, working for her master's degree in Business Administration.

Shoghig: It's more business or...

Ruben: Yes, yes, yes. And would you believe these things kind of go from generation to generation. Now she and her husband have started.

Shoghig: Yeah, yeah, of course, of course, because you know when you see around you all the time that has you know, some influence.

Ruben: Um, if you like after the interview I can give a tour...

Shoghig: Yeah, sure.

Ruben: ...of the house, there's lots of.

Shoghig: Lot of, I would love to.

Ruben: Excuse me.

Shoghig: Okay.

Shoghig: Back to recording. Okay. Mr Amirian, since you were involved with art, who's your famous artist or favorite artist I see Picasso's book, Matis' book?

Ruben: Oh, those guys are nice artists. Well you know, it's

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difficult to pin point and say who is the best everyone has. I think Picasso, in my mind is in direct enterer into the 20th century, but when I say that, when I make that statement, immediately I say, "What about Matis?" I'm not sure. I regret of saying that but I question that. That and there are some local artist who's work I like very much even Richard Evinco he died. Uh, who else? Edward Hopper. Wonderful artist, wonderful. Yes, there's so many...

Shoghig: What about architects? What do you think about Frank Lloyd Wright or Frank Gehry, some of them, more modern ones?

Ruben: Yeah...you know, I'm too smart to know to comment like that. You are God, so...

Shoghig: Hmm

Ruben: Well, but I mean one can make a comment about Frank Gehry.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: Everybody comments on him so I can be that too. Well, I tell you, last Sunday, my wife and I went to see models of the concert hall. You know that he designed that building...

Shoghig: O.k.

Ruben: But the project is stopped because of funding. The models are being exhibited at MOCA you have to see. Building is incredible. It's just highly unusual you know, but when you look at it, it looks like, it looks like, the forms look like waves of sounds of the waves that's coming out of the ground.

Shoghig: Yeah, yeah.

Ruben: It immediately reminds me of Sydney Opera House. Entire continent of Australia is recognized by those shadows, forms.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: Uh, hopefully if this is building Los Angeles, this will be, uh building that people all over the world will. The minute they see this.

Shoghig: Where are they proposing to build this?

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Ruben: Right on the other side, across the street uh, from Dorothy Chandler Pavilion.

Shoghig: O.K.

Ruben: Actually they love the whole compartment.

Shoghig: Oh!

Ruben: But the...You know, he is an interesting architect.

Shoghig: Yeah, yeah. His school is still in Santa Monica now...somewhere.

Ruben: His office is in Santa Monica.

Shoghig: He heads his own, yeah, his own school as well.

Ruben: Oh, he does. SAIARC

Shoghig: SAIARC, right.

Ruben: ...

Shoghig: He teaches there still, yeah.

Ruben: I have been to his office. Very, very nice.

Shoghig: Yeah.

Ruben: I have a few friends who works in his office.

Shoghig: Oh, good, good. Um, do you have a lot of architect friends, Armenians specifically, that practice in Los Angeles or Glendale area?

Ruben: I have some here, I have some.

Shoghig: So we have in our community good, professional architects, practicing architects?

Ruben: Nowadays the number is less than it was in 1980s. Many people left because of the economy. You have to support families...

Shoghig: Right, right.

Ruben: There was some local architects.

Shoghig: What's the future of um, the architecture field, uh in

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universities? Do you have any, um idea? Is it advancing specially for Armenian students that are graduating from high school? Are they being encouraged to pursue architecture?

Ruben: You know what, architecture is one of this, this uh, professions. But at school, at least when I was growing up I had followed little bit. Nobody talks about architecture.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: Nobody talks about architecture, nobody talks about urbanism, nobody talks about cities, nobody talks about space. So somehow, I, I studied architecture, I wanted to be a painter. My parents told me that you will not make money. But the architecture then you will paint. But that's, that's...

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: But there was no deep understanding that I want to be an architect.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: I suspect a lot of people are like that. So therefore, even many of us becomes architects. We do not have their mess of urbanism. It is just designed it needs and you have to remember that I think education is missing form this.

Shoghig: Hmm, hmm.

Ruben: Because the more they know about their living environment, possibly better cities are build.

Shoghig: Right, that's true.

Ruben: So commenting in the future, it's hard. In the '60s when I was starting professionally, architectures for us was service jobs.

Shoghig: Hmm.

Ruben: Then either before that or after that it was an art work.

Shoghig: Hmm.

Ruben: And we architects tried to do the stranger than the

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other ones.

Shoghig: Yeah.

Ruben: I suspect now we architects.

Shoghig: Hmm, right.

Ruben: Clients are becoming more and more traditional.

Shoghig: Hmm, hmm.

Ruben: And I tell you, small firms are having more and more traditional designs.

Shoghig: Yeah, yeah.

Ruben: Of getting good jobs. And they survive with crummy jobs.

Shoghig: And they survive, yeah.

Ruben: But good jobs, because of their demands, you go to offices that can provide that service.

Shoghig: What's your opinion about computerized, now that you've mentioned it versus you know, having an architect or draftsman sitting behind the drafting table and drawing versus you know, you have someone on the computer quickly putting things together?

Ruben: I think that there are things we put together quickly there are mundane and confused. The thinkings we have in design and computer assists you to put that thinking together.

Shoghig: Hmm. Hmm.

Ruben: Which is a very good thing.

Shoghig: Yeah.

Ruben: I don't think drawing forever on the board is necessary.

Shoghig: Hmm.

Ruben: Computer is a wonderful tool.

Shoghig: Yeah.

Ruben: And you'll be glad. And, I'm still not very much into

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computers.

Shoghig: Program?

Ruben: I still like the smell of sharpening the pencils.

Shoghig: Hmm.

Ruben: I still like the smell...

Shoghig: Hmm. And using the ruler.

Ruben: Yes.

Shoghig: And, you know...

Ruben: But I suspected computers...

Shoghig: Because I remember when I studied architecture for two years, um, that was very fun for me. It's the thing, I mean to me that was it, even in planning school. The whole flavor of designing something, sitting behind the drafting table and spending hours and hours. Nowadays it's just, you know, even in the City we look at the plans it's all computerized. For, for somehow it, for me at least it loses the flavor, a little bit. You know it's the same product, but in terms of the work, the amount of work that you put into it, you know that kind of, it changes.

Ruben: I didn't know you studied architecture.

Shoghig: I studied architecture for two years and then urban planning.

Ruben: Where?

Shoghig: Architecture just community school, here in Glendale, Glendale Community College, and then I went to Cal Poly Pomona for urban planning for three years. Because we had to have some design back on before you got into planning. A lot of people that didn't, they couldn't understand planning. So they had to go back into the beginning and learn about design.

Ruben: It is good to work on...

Shoghig: Right. Definitely, definitely. Of course it helps even working for local government. You always have to review...

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Ruben: Absolutely.

Shoghig: ...plans, and you have to have that concept of how it works. How things are put together and you know is it functional, its not functional and, yeah. Okay, anything else you want to add to our interview today? What's the future for Mr. Amirian? How long do you anticipate staying with the Design Review Board? And, what are your other intentions?

Ruben: To tell you the truth, I think I'll stay with Design Review Board until they tell me enough is enough. I like doing that.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: It's time consuming. I visit all the projects site that we have on Design Review Board before I go to the meeting.

Shoghig: Oh, okay.

Ruben: What I would like to do then is try to be helpful in developing and understanding and encouraging some artists, visual artists, fine artists, to come in Glendale and that possibly might trigger some galleries there because we really lack. We have Brand Library which is subsidized but commercial gallery...there is one gallery which has recently opened on California which is remarkable.

Shoghig: Yeah.

Ruben: Uh, there are some artists, but the actors are not here.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: We do have Alex Theater and people are very much into going there which is wonderful. But arts, the reason it has an "s" at the end...

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: ...at the end of it, it's not art, it's arts.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: It's combination of...

Shoghig: Right. And the appreciation of, the art, yeah.

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Ruben: And it doesn't come if there is no leadership. It has to start from top.

Shoghig: Yeah.

Ruben: And I think I have some ideas of those kinds of...There's an area called Vergemont Station in Santa Monica.

Shoghig: Hmm.

Ruben: I am familiar with that from day one...This City is making an effort for arts and crafts.

Shoghig: Hmm. Hmm.

Ruben: One conflict.

Shoghig: Wow.

Ruben: It is incredible.

Shoghig: What's the name of it again?

Ruben: Vergemont Station.

Shoghig: Okay.

Ruben: Twenty five-25 Michigan Avenue.

Shoghig: Okay.

Ruben: Uh, there's some good artists. It's culture...

Shoghig: Yeah.

Ruben: ...is not there.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: I called a few days, I don't know whether it should be recorded or not, but I will tell you...I called News Press...

Shoghig: Hmm.

Ruben: ...I found out about the art department...for personal experience...

Shoghig: Hmm, hmm.

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Ruben: I inform about this guy and I also informed about an artist who has converted his reading space into a gallery...

Shoghig: Wow.

Ruben: That's where he sleeps. That's where he paints. He has a student.

Shoghig: Hmm.

Ruben: And the art is a manner, it's like a gallery.

Shoghig: Yeah.

Ruben: To have such a thing here in Glendale, in my way of thinking, it's something that, if I was a reporter, I would immediately loved.

Shoghig: Right.

Ruben: ...and write about this thing, because I'm proud that there is such a thing in Glendale. I called News Press, and the lady told me that, "Why don't you send me some slides and also some news clippings". I said, "Look, I'm a person and informing me, of these things happening in Glendale.

Shoghig: They should be jumping.

Ruben: I am, I am not an agent. I don't get commission. I'm just so excited that there is such a thing in my neighborhood.

Shoghig: Yeah, yeah.

Ruben: Yet, the conversation ended and this will never be reported. What I'm trying to say is, is culture is not there.

Shoghig: Yeah, yeah.

Ruben: In Santa Monica, this would have been printed in the paper the following day. Possibly, some council members have, would go and visit the places. So, uh, but it can be done.

Shoghig: Yeah.

Ruben: It can make a...

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Shoghig: Yeah.

Ruben: I intend to do that. I understand there was a meeting that they...I think Mayor Baker is interested.

Shoghig: Hmm.

Ruben: Uh, let's see what happens.

Shoghig: Okay, okay. Anything else?

Ruben: Not much.

Shoghig: Have you enjoyed this interview?

Ruben: Very much so.

Shoghig: Okay.

Ruben: I appreciate that and...

Shoghig: I did to.

Ruben: And if you didn't tell me if there is anything else, I might have spoken until Tonight, I'm glad you've caught me that. Thank you very much.

Shoghig: Yeah, sure. Thank you very much, uh, Ruben and um. This completes our interview and we were sitting here um, at Ruben's residence at 1240, 1234?

Ruben: Twenty four, thirty three.

Shoghig: Twenty four, thirty three, Sylvan Lane in Glendale. Thank you. The time is 4:05.