

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**LOWELL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL**

**ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF LOWELL, MA:
MAKING, REMAKING, AND REMAKING AGAIN**

INFORMANT: LISA DAGDIGIAN [ARMENIA]

INTERVIEWER: CHRISTOPH STROBEL

DATE: MARCH 28, 2008

C = CHRISTOPH

L = LISA

Tape 08.32

C: If you could please first state your name.

L: My name is Lisa Dagdigian.

C: And you do not live in Lowell currently, but you did live in Lowell.

L: I lived in Lowell from 1968 to towards the end of '72.

C: Armenian is your background?

L: Yes, thoroughly. [Both laugh] 100%, yah.

C: Um, in what, which parts of Lowell did you live?

L: I lived on Windsor Street, which is part of the Highlands. Yah, it's off of Westford.

C: Yah. Um, you're first generation immigrant (L: Yes). Can you talk a little bit about your immigration story, where you came from?

L: Well I was, I was born in Iran actually, and I grew up there. I went to college there and I got a Fulbright Scholarship, to come to the United States to get my Masters. My major was English Literature. Apparently that year for that scholarship they did not have enough money and they eliminated some of the towns, and from our city I was the only one. So they eliminated my city completely. (C: Oh boy) And so I stayed in Iran one

more year and I worked. And I insisted that I was going to come to the United States to get my Masters, which I did. I came to Columbus, Ohio, because my brother was going to school there.

C: That was Ohio State, or?

L: Yah, Ohio State. And I hated it passionately. Um, I wasn't used to a big university environment. Um, so within a year I moved. I moved to Cleveland and went to John Carroll University, which was a catholic school, a small community. The students were, you know, more or less I could relate to them better. So I was very happy there and I got my Masters in English Literature. And at that time I met my husband who was from Lowell, and he was visiting his brother there. And we were, we knew that, something was going to happen sooner or later, and I just did not feel like going for a PhD in English Literature. And I knew with the Masters I wasn't ready to teach high school, because I really still don't understand the mentality of high school students. I was very much interested in Library Science. And the head of the English Department at John Carroll, his wife was also a professor at Case Western University, where they had the Library Science School. And he encouraged me, because he said that I enjoyed doing research and so forth.... So he encouraged me, and I ended up getting a Masters in Library Science from Case Western. And by the time I started at that school we were already engaged. And my husband's job was here, and there were quite a few opportunities for him to work here. So he didn't feel like moving there, and I did not have a family around.. So I moved here. And his mother, ah, he lived on Windsor Street. His mother's house was a duplex, and she lived on one side. So we rented the other side from her. That's how I ended up living in Lowell.

C: Is your husband also ethnically Armenian?

L: Yes he is... But his parents, both of them were born in the United States.... His mother was born in Rhode Island, and his father was born in Texas. [Chuckles] I always laugh about it. An Armenian from Texas. It's unusual...

C: Yah, that's a very unusual place for Armenians at the time. Um, when you um, when you came to Lowell, what was the...was there at that point still a strong Armenian community...

L: Oh yes, much, much stronger. Actually I don't know if from your interviews you realize that there is a division among the Armenians. There is the, you know, because of the church....

C: Can you talk a little bit about that division?

L: Well that division actually... it's both political and religious I would say. At one time the Armenian Church, the head of the church right now is in Armenia. And one faction of Armenians believed that he is the head of the church, even in Soviet times. The other group, which is very much anti-Soviet and so forth, their head of the church is in

Lebanon. They were anti-Soviet, and they did not believe that the head of their church should be in the Soviet Union. I really don't know what had transpired in the United States. One of the priests or Bishops had been killed.... I really am not thoroughly familiar with that. But that event caused this big division between the two groups throughout the United States. In Iran there wasn't that split. We knew that there were political divisions, but none of them, you know, had to do with the church. But here.... [The church with the head in Armenia] had the church in Lowell, which now has moved to Chelmsford.

C: And the one in North Andover, they're from the other faction, right?

L: Right, yah, I go to the North Andover Church. I'm not a church person myself. I go only occasionally, Easter and Christmas, and funerals and weddings. That's all.

C: It's a long drive too for you then.

L: I've always told my husband if I am...I'm not a believer to be honest, but I said, "If I were a believer and I wanted to go to church, I would go to the close one." I would go to this one, because if you believe in God it doesn't make any difference, where the head of the church is. You don't go for that purpose, but that was, that's my own personal... And I think my husband has come to understand that, and now very often if we want, we go to Chelmsford, to that church too. So it has ah, nothing to do with it. But um, that was the situation.... And at that time, when I met my husband, there were a lot of Armenians here in Lowell. I think as they became more affluent, the younger generation moved out, including us. You know, when we were looking for a house to buy we looked in Chelmsford first, and then I liked Westford. So we bought a house, had a house built in Westford. We moved there. And my brother-in-law, sister-in-law, they lived in Chelmsford. Then they moved to Westford. So little by little, we went to the suburbs rather than living in Lowell, just... when the influx of the other immigrants moved to Lowell.

C: Was that creating tension within the community at the time...or was it just people...

L: You want to move to get out of the city, and move into the suburbs. That was the inclination, better schools. And I mean we were younger, we wanted to have good schools for our kids. So, you look here and there. Chelmsford has good schools. Westford has good schools. So that's where we moved.

C: And gardening and all of that other stuff.

L: Yah, yah, yah.

C: Yah. Um, looking back in time, and when you look at that Highland neighborhood, which I think historically from what I'm learning, and reading, and researching... had a fairly sizeable Jewish, but also a very sizeable Armenian Community. Can you describe a

little bit what life, daily life of an Armenian person was like in terms of what kind of stores were there, cultural associations, churches....

L: As I said, there was the Armenian Church in Lowell. I never saw that. I never went there. At that time the North Andover Church wasn't in existence either, but we got married in Watertown. That was the only church. I know my mother-in-law, and my father-in-law, both of them are buried at Mt. Auburn on the Cambridge Watertown line. So our association is more toward that way.... We had our club at that time already. I think you're familiar with the club. You've been there. Um, and I think the first function they had there was, my husband at that time we weren't, we didn't even know each other, he had just finished college here and he was planning to go to Beirut to learn how to speak Armenian, read and write Armenian. And that was the first function they had there. They gave a party for him, goodbye party at the club. So this was, must have been in '63, or '64 when they bought the clubhouse, but there were a lot of Armenian families right around there. When I moved here I already had a job at the Worcester Public Library. And I didn't have a car at that time.... I would go by bus very early, go to work and come back. Didn't last too long.... About, two, two and a half months.... And my parents came for our wedding, and I decided to quit my job and spend a little bit of time with them. I hadn't seen them for over four years. I hadn't talked to them either. You see, at that time telephone lines were not that good. So, they stayed a couple of months here after our wedding, and then they left.... Then I started really looking for a job, a permanent job. And I started working in Burlington, as the Director of Burlington Public Library at the time. And ah, so I did not have that much contact with immediate neighbors. I would get up in the morning and go to work. And at that time, even worse than that, we had only one car. And my husband worked in Nashua. So we would get up in the morning, drive him to Nashua, and drop him off there. Take the car, drive all the way to Burlington, and then come back and pick him up, and come back to Lowell to Windsor Street. I don't know if you're familiar with that or not. It's a short street.

C: Yah, I live in the neighborhood too.

L: It's a very short street. Um, maybe about a handful of houses on that street. And I knew the neighbors to the left, and I knew the neighbors across, but we never associated with them, frequented their houses, or anything. We just knew them by face, and we would say, "Hello, how are you?" And that was it. However, the Armenians who lived on D Street, and lived on School Street, and all that area, I came to know them and frequent with them. And um, that's, that's how it was. You know, it was a small community.

C: Umhm...for your in-laws was their life based more in Lowell, and was the community there more important?

L: Um, I don't know. My father-in-law was not alive. When, when I met my husband he had already died, but my mother-in-law was a piano teacher. And she taught at Lowell Girl's Club. So she knew the community much better than I did. And then she had students who came to her house. She had students that she would go and teach them at their home, both in Lowell and Chelmsford. So I'm sure she had friends from this area.

Actually a couple of them were Jewish women that were interested in music. And they used to go to Tanglewood and so forth, together. You know, it was more on the, their interest like that they frequented.... But, just to socialize, I don't think they did. Most Armenians I think, they are just, they socialize with their own rather than with others.

C: Yah. So that it's more of a family oriented culture. (L: Yah, yah) Was it important for your husband to live in Lowell at the time when you did, because of the close ties to the mother, or was that just because it conveniently worked out that way?

L: It, it was convenient. To be honest the way I was brought up in Iran among the Armenians is that when you marry somebody, very often you went and lived with them, with your husband's family. Although my brother-in-law was younger than my husband, he got married a couple of months before we did to a very close friend of mine from Cleveland again, but anyways. So I knew my mother-in-law was alone. And I told my husband, I said, "You know, if you want for me to come and live with your mother it's okay with me." I think he misunderstood me, and he thought that I wanted to live next door to her. So he talked with mom and mom said, "Okay." So they got rid of their tenants there, and I moved there, we moved there. And that's how it worked. But for his work it was centrally located, because he was in electronics at the time. And as you know, both Southern New Hampshire and heading toward Burlington and that way, 128, it was convenient and central. So that's why we stayed here. And then when we moved to Westford it was still central.

C: Um, you lived in Iran. Did um, was your... If I remember my history lessons correctly, there was always a pretty strong Armenian Community in parts of Iran. Was your family forced to move to Iran because of the Armenian Genocide, (L: No) or was it always in that area?

L: No, no, no, no. My parents, actually my mother was born in what is now Turkmenistan, which used to be part of the Soviet Union, and on the Eastern side of the Caspian. Though her mother, my mother's brother was born in Baku, which is in Azerbaijan. And my father was born in Iran, but he grew up in Georgia. And, my mother's oldest brother went to Georgia to go to school. In the early 1900s Iran was really backwards when it came to education and so forth. So most Armenians sent their children out to Europe. Some went to France, Germany, and some went to Russia, Georgia, to go to school there, to Moscow and Tbilisi.

C: When you initially came here did you think about maybe going back to Iran, or?

L: Oh, the first year when I was at Ohio State, any minute if my parents had said, "We miss you, we want you to come back," I would have walked back. I disliked that university. I disliked that environment. Everything was so strange for me. It wasn't just not being fluent in English, but just everything, everything. I mean missing my family, friends and the lifestyle of people, and so forth, everything was very, very different for me. However, when I moved to Cleveland, if they paid me I wouldn't have gone back. [Both laugh] Things changed very much, and I mean I've never wanted to go back.

With the exception of the nine months that I was there, I have never wanted to go back to Iran.

C: So that's sort of your first experience in the United States, but before you arrived in the U.S. did you have certain preconceived notions about what America would be like?

L: Well you see my father, he had movie theaters. So I saw a lot of movies. And even now when I sometimes watch movies, I say, you know, they really don't show the life, the houses, how people live. You know, they have these props that they use, for apartments, and props they use for houses and so forth. They're very different from how actual people live in this country. And that was my view of the United States. Very different, you know. And I came in the 60s. I came in 1963, and at that time there was more of a family life... I think even among the Americans the lifestyle was different... There was more of a family life. More people getting together for dinner, the whole family sitting and having dinner together and so forth. But what I remember, what I thought of the United States was very different.

C: Do you...are you still...I mean obviously you were there for the Lenten Dinner when I was there about a year ago. (L: Umhm) Um, how many times do you come to the Armenian Club, and how frequently do you guys still meet a year? By the way, your food was very good. [Both laugh]

L: I belong to the Armenian Relief Society. Our organization, we have monthly meetings. So I would say about, not regularly monthly, but I would say about six meetings a year at least. And then summertime we participate at the Lowell Folk Festival. So the two weeks before the Lowell Folk Festival it becomes hectic. We are at the club almost everyday preparing things and so forth, depending how perishable they are, we time them and so forth and so on. So we come frequently for that. And then we have functions. We have the Armenian Christmas. On the closest weekend to the sixth of January. And sometimes Santa Claus comes, but always there are gifts for the young ones. Up to age ten we give them gifts. And then after that we have the Lenten Dinner, which this year got cancelled because of the snowstorm. And then we do an Anniversary Dinner for the Armenian Relief Society. Once a year we have a dinner, and that's one of our fundraising functions. The other two are not much of a fundraiser. And then there is the men's organization, and they have a couple of functions too. One they do is usually in February or early March. And one they have in May, and one they have in the fall. So there are three functions for them too. And at one time we had a Youth Organization that was based in Lowell, although it was from all over the Merrimack Valley. They came from all over. And they had their functions too. So for that we would come. But now they have moved to North Andover. A lot of parents don't want to bring their kids here to, you know, that area of Lowell.

C: [Both chuckle] It's not that bad. (L: I know!) I actually live right, two blocks down from the, from the [Relief], but...

L: I know. I'm one of the people who always says... I mean when we started at that club house, Hells Angels were right across.

C: [Laughs] Oh yes!

L: Right across there were Hells Angels. And that was the worse time, and we were all youth going there. I mean nothing happened. Now once in a while something happens in that big building there up, high rise building, and everybody is up in arms. They don't want to bring their kids.

C: Huh. Yah. How were you able to stay together with your family in Armenia? Just letter writing?

L: The first four years, yes, it was letter writing, because um, at the time...although we had a telephone at home in Iran, but to make an international call you had to go to the Post Telephone Telegraph Building there.... With the difference of nine, ten hours... it was just impossible to talk to each other by phone. So the first four years it was all letter writing. And I remember when they were coming to the United States. It was one of the most exciting days for me.... I left work early in Worcester, took the bus, came here and with my husband we drove to the airport. And I was just in tears. I couldn't... I was... four years I hadn't seen them. I hadn't talked to them. Um, it was, it was very exciting. Then after that we could make international phone calls, but we didn't do that often either, you know, it was expensive. Um, I mean we were just starting. As I said, we had only one car and no furniture. (Laughs) I had an oriental rug. My parents had brought me a rug. [Both laugh] My brother had bought us a color TV for a wedding present, but we didn't have any furniture. That's all we had. Um, but that's how it was. And then you know years later when the Iranian government was already in upheaval, before that actually, way before that, and as we became a little bit more affluent, my parents helped a lot, every other year I would go and visit them, every other year they would come and visit us. And all I had was at the time two weeks vacation, and then eventually three weeks' vacation. Sometimes I would take it without pay just to spend at least four weeks there, because it was a long flight. Um, so you know, it was back and forth till the Iranian government, they had their revolution. And one of the things that they did there, is they took all of the movie theaters away. (C: Oh boy) So my father lost those. It was a good source of income. So they took it away without any compensation. And so I talked them into coming to the United States. In the interim my other brother had come. So it was good for them to come here.

C: Yah. And do you have family that still lives in Iran at this point, or?

L: I have...my brother who was here before me, the one who was in Columbus, he actually, his business is in Iran, but his family lives in Switzerland.

C: Okay.

L: Um, his wife, even before they got married had moved to Switzerland. And so when he, they got married she still stayed in Switzerland. My brother goes back and forth. Summertime with their kids they come stay in Iran, but wintertime my brother goes to Switzerland.

C: Umhm. Where do they live in Switzerland?

L: Geneva.

C: Do you feel like you've changed. Has coming to the United States (L: Oh yes) changed you?

L: Oh yah, yes.

C: And in what ways if you don't mind?

L: I had been a very casual person. I won't call myself outspoken, but I call a spade a spade. I'm that kind of a person. And you can't be like that in Iran. (C: Umhm) You just can't. You know, you have to be very careful about what you say, your manners, and the way you dress. I mean they used to be, and they still are very conscious of what they wear. Ah, the latest styles, even right now women covering themselves completely, if they take that Chador off, underneath it they'll have probably Chanel, or I don't know what kind of stylish clothing, shoes and everything. I was never that type of person, but I had to. When I was there I had to. I remember when I came to the United States I had matching purses, gloves and shoes, high heels. And I had to walk from my dormitory all the way to go to my class room. If you're familiar with Ohio State, it was a long walk you end up doing with those high heels. It didn't last long. [Both laugh] Even now if I tell my mother that I came for this interview in my blue jeans, she'll be really upset with me. But in, in this country you can be yourself, and in Iran I couldn't. You have to live according to the norm of the country, and I had to do it that way. I couldn't say what I wanted to say, even politically, which is one of the most important things, for me here in this country. I could say, "I can't stand Mr. Bush," but you know, over there you couldn't say that about the Shah, or whoever.... And I remember in the 70s, in '73 when I was in Iran, and it was during you know Nixon's troubles and so forth, and my father was shocked. He says, "How could the newspapers write things like that about their president?" I said, "Dad that is democracy. That is the meaning of democracy. You can...." And he was shocked. And for the first time I thought I've always looked up to my father, as the man who knows everything. He doesn't. He really doesn't. I mean they cannot comprehend things like that. Um, for me it was very easy to understand that and accept it.

C: And probably also for them it's sort of a mode of survival that you just get molded into that kind of presence.

L: Yup. When he grew one of the common things that we said is that "the walls have mice and mice have ears." "So be careful." Even at home you could not talk freely. You

could never say anything against any member of the government, whether it was the Shah, his brothers, his sisters, or anybody like that. So, that's, that's how it was. And things like that ... And I've always felt that you get used to good things very easily. It's the bad things that you can't. And I saw a lot of good things in this country that I got used to.

C: And it would have been hard at that point to go back.

L: Yah, yah.

C: I understand.

L: If I had gone back, number one, I had to live with my family. I couldn't live by myself. And having lived here four years all by myself. Do what I want to do, go where I want to go, eat what I want to eat, dress the way I want to dress, and then go back and make sure that you know, Mom says, or Dad says, "I want you home at ten o'clock." "Dad, you know, my God, I'm a college student already," or whatever. "This is my house, this is the rule." You know, you had to follow it. And things like that you couldn't....

C: It sounds very much like my dad, "As long as you put your feet under my table."
[Both Laugh]

L: I was in college and one evening a friend of mine called and said, "Come over." And I said, "Okay." I went there and, we were sitting and chitchatting. Ten o'clock the doorbell rang. And we looked at each other, and I said, "Probably my father." And sure enough it was him. He came to pick me up. I said, "Dad." And I just couldn't stand it. I cried all the way home. I just could not stand it. I said, "These are a married couple. We were just sitting and talking with them. I'm not flirting with anybody. I'm not dating anybody. I'm not sneaking behind you going in..." And my mother said, "Well he came home from work and he was wondering where you were. He wanted to see you. That's why he came and picked you up." I said, "Okay." But it really hurt me. I said, I was twenty-one, twenty-two years old, but that's how it is.

C: Yah. I'd like to switch over to the issue of language. You and your husband, you speak English right?

L: Armenian.

C: Armenian? Okay. Yah. So he went back, learned it and then?

L: He went, learned, came back. And believe it or not, up to the time he went to Beirut, he used to speak English with his mother. Changed it completely. He spoke Armenian to his mother.

C: Oh that's interesting.

L: Yup.

C: Do you ever talk about that? What caused him to that switch?

L: Ah, he just, he didn't want to forget it. And so that was you know, the person he lived with was his mother. So he wanted to speak Armenian so he would remember and he would do it. And I sometimes joke. I said, "That's why you married me. That you can speak Armenian and that I organize your books? [Both laugh] Because he buys books like crazy. And uh, he wanted... actually he asked me if I would catalogue his books. I said, "No way." Because I'm not a cataloger.... And we speak Armenian at home. Sometimes we speak English, but primarily it's Armenian.

C: That's awesome. Do you have children?

L: I have one daughter. And she speaks fluent Armenian. We speak Armenian with her. She is married to a 100% Irishman. [Laughs] And they have a little daughter who is ten months old now, and I take care of her like three, four days a week. And I speak Armenian to her.

C: Oh good. Very good.

L: I don't know how to speak English to a child. I'm sorry. [Laughs]

C: Now do they go to the Center as well? (L: Oh yah they do) Because I think I remember...it was commented often that one of the newest member was 100% Irish. So that's great.

L: Yah, she's a mutt. [Both laugh]

C: But as long as the language is there. That's important.

L: Well you know, for me it's very difficult to switch. If I speak always English to you, and then I find out that you know, oh, you're Armenian, I cannot speak Armenian with you, because that's how I'm used to. Even with my mother-in-law, I always spoke English with her, because before even we were engaged to marry and so forth, and I met her, we spoke English. And my husband insisted that I speak Armenian to her. I just could not. Also there's one other difference. My Armenian is the Eastern Armenian. His is the Western Armenian. There is a little bit of difference there. And my mother-in-law's was definitely western.

C: So did they originally come from the area, the Ottoman Empire, or?

L: Yah, his side of the family, both mother's and father's came here in the late 1800s because at that time too, there were pogroms.

C: Yah, no the 1890s had pogroms and so on, yes.

L: Yah, yah, yah, that's when they came. Both sides of the family. But fortunately, I mean in my case, my parents were not involved in that at all, you know, in that situation.

C: Yah. No, that's a horrendous episode in history.

L: Yah, yah.

C: Is there, is there much activism in the community on this issue, because I

L: There is. Right now there is very... My husband is very much involved in that, and we are working very, very hard for recognition of this genocide, by United States. A lot of European countries have accepted it.

C: Yah, France recognized it, yes.

L: But somehow the United States is afraid of Turkey, or needs Turkey and doesn't want to offend them. Though you know when France recognized it Turkey immediately called the ambassador back to Turkey. And then within a week or two he went back again. Nothing happened. So, I don't know. The thing is that once genocide is accepted, if Turkey accepts it, that it is genocide, then it's going to be reparation. And that is what Turkey doesn't want probably.

C: Is that what they're worried about?

L: Yah.

C: Were you happy with your career as a librarian?

L: Yah, very much so. I worked in Burlington for five years. Then I had my daughter and I left. At that time you wanted to be a full-time mom. Then you know, for oh, about, until '83. She was born in '73. So for about ten years, I knew most of the directors in the area. I knew the Chelmsford director, the Lowell director, Wilmington director, you know, quite a few directors I knew, I was familiar with. And if they needed somebody, I would accept the job. I would go for a part-time position. I would tell them that I'm going to take a part-time temporary until you find the employee you need. And so I did that for ten years. I worked twice in Chelmsford; once as an Assistant Director, once as a Reference Librarian. I worked in Lowell as Reference Librarian. I worked in Westford as Library Director, and finally I accepted the position of Assistant Reference Librarian in Wilmington. Permanent, but very, very part-time. I worked one or two evenings a weekend, and some Saturdays. Then the job in Harvard became available for a very, very low pay, but it was a Director's position. That is what I wanted. And so I accepted that and took it as a part-time position originally, and then built it up to full-time.

C: Obviously you're involved with the Armenian Community and involved with the National Park with the Folk Festival. Are there any other festivals that you come to town for? Maybe the Water Festival, or?

L: No, I haven't done that. I know the Chelmsford Church is involved with something happening with Chelmsford Center. They do it. So they are involved with that. But, so we have drawn the line. We'll do this, you do that. Besides ours is a Lowell organization. So that's why we are involved with the Folk Festival. Originally, actually the...the way it started it used to be the Regatta. That was on the Merrimack. And we started participating in that originally. So we've been, you know, with them from its inception.

C: Yah, that was in '91, '92, '93?

L: Something like that. I think so.... We have, we have a small apartment in Armenia. So we go there frequently.

C: That's interesting. You go there during the summer?

L: Originally we bought it so that when we retired we could spend half the year there, half the year here. But with the grandchild now, it's difficult. And besides, both my daughter and son-in-law, both of them are teachers. So during the year we can't go there. We're taking care of the baby. And so it stays until summer. And with the Lowell Folk Festival, it's right in the middle of the summer. We can't do it. So we have to wait for right after that.

C: Your daughter is a teacher, and her husband a teacher? Where do they...?

L: My daughter teaches in New Hampshire, Mt. Vernon Elementary School. And her husband teaches in Tyngsboro Junior High.

C: Okay. Do they live in, up in New Hampshire?

L: Nashua. They live in Nashua.

C: Um, and so they're still involved with the Armenian...

L: Oh yah.

C: Do they go to an Armenian Church, or is that basically...

L: They're not much church people either,, they come once in a while.

C: And do they go to the one in Chelmsford, or in North Andover?

L: North Andover. North Andover, or Watertown, depending what the occasion is.

C: Do you go much into Watertown's for meals and grocery shopping?

L: I do. My mother lives in Cambridge. I go and take her shopping and do her errands and so forth and so on. And her butcher is in Watertown, there are a lot of places in Watertown that she stops to buy bread, and cheese and this and that, and so forth. Myself too.

C: Yah. No, it's a great place.... Thank you so much for agreeing to speak with us.