

with my father and then a heavenly vacation such as I had never experienced ever since his disappearance. By the time my dad was released, I had already started eleventh grade. Now, despite the bumpy road ahead, I felt a special bond with him. I was ready to embrace his presence, take refuge under his fatherly wings and make up for the lost years.

My mother had done her best to provide for our education but I had to work hard too, harder than any other student in class, and always be the best in order to earn my exemption from paying tuition fees. I was well adjusted and active in school and in the Armenian Primary School Alumni Cultural Society.³ At home, I helped my mother with household chores and also served as her soul mate, discussing all the problems she faced. Together, we tacitly assumed the task of protecting Roozan who was very sensitive, the real orphan in the family. I was three years older than her and felt I had to share my mom's burden by helping my little sister grow up free of tribulation.

In such circumstances, it came as no shock to me when during one of our *tête-à-têtes*, before we heard the news of my father's release, my mother suggested that I consider going to work after graduating from high school and forget about a university education, in order to ease

³ This was another instance of special treatment. I did not attend Armenian school but Mr. Yervand Hayrapetian, a well-respected, long-time Armenian language teacher and advisor to the Cultural Society, made an exception for me. The society had been established when there was no Armenian high school, in order to give Armenian primary school alumni a chance to continue in an Armenian environment.