



Yerevan, October 1963.

In the photograph, we see Vagharshak standing with a smile on his face. He seems to be preparing to perform a traditional Van song to regale his companions, as he often did. Near him stands Shoushanig, his wife. She was a living repository of traditional Van songs. With her beautiful voice, she would often sing along with Vagharshak, filling in when her husband forgot the lyrics. In the photograph, we see her filming the scene with her video camera.

The man sitting on the ground is Antranig/Andy Shahinian. He was the heir and keeper of his parents' legacy. He would play the dumbeg or the violin as his father sang, sometimes also singing along. Fortunately, he recorded many of these performances.

Sitting beside him is Vagharshak's sister, Dikranouhi, who lived in Sochi. She, too, had mastered an extensive repertoire of Van songs.

The young man sitting on the chair is Armen Shahinian, Antranig's son and Vagharshak's grandson. He did not speak or read Armenian. In the photograph, Armen seems more like a spectator than a participant. But he grew up in an atmosphere imbued with the songs and celebrations of Van, and he inherited the rich cultural and psychological legacy of his parents and grandparents.

Today, Armen is one of the stewards of his family's legacy. It was thanks to his assistance that Houshamadyan was able to publish this page dedicated to the traditional songs of Van. The promise of this page can almost be spotted in young Armen's gaze.



The second photograph captures a second scene from the same picnic, alongside members of the Khanoyan family. This was a noteworthy gathering of Van Armenians, as the attendees included both Vagharshak and his sister, Dikranouhi. The latter had traveled to Armenia from Sochi, where she lived, to see Antranig, Vagharshak's son. She had last seen him in 1918, in Yerevan, when he was only a baby.

1. Marusya Khanoyan, 2. Alla Haroutunian, 3. Dikranouhi, 4. Vagharshak Shahinian, 5. Asya Khanoyan, 6. Seta Khanoyan, 7. Alice Shahinian, 8. Ashot Haroutunian, 9. Shoushanig Shahinian, 10. Antranig Shahinian