



# The Story Of My Life

By

Helen Kalpakian

(Haigouhi Koulaksezian)



Helen Kalpakian (nee Haigouhi Koulaksezian)



Christmas 1982 (when I was 81) at my daughter Harriett Donnell's house in Woodland Hills, California.

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**Riverside, California**

**April 28, 1983**

My daughter, Betty Bown, has been trying to convince me that I should write in this book—my life story—my early childhood in the Old Country. So here goes—I was born on February 5, 1901 (St. Laikis Day) – according to church regulations, St. Laikis Day was a special day for candy makers—especially taffy.

I was born in the city of Adana in Turkish Armenia. We lived in rented houses in the city.

Our family consisted of my parents and 4 children—two girls and two boys. When I was growing up my older brother and sister were gone to America, so there were only two of us—me and my younger brother. Two children in the family at home, my younger brother Haigaz and me.

Even though we were Armenians, it was mandatory that we spoke only the Turkish language at all times.

Our Family:

Father: Asdoor Koulaksezian

Mother: Yegtsabet Koulaksezian

Children:

Arthur Koulaksezian

Doodoo (girl) Koulaksezian

Haigouhi (me) Koulaksezian

Haigaz Koulaksezian

Note: When Arthur came to America in 1907, he changed his last name to Clark. When Haigaz came he changed his name to Harry Clark. So my maiden name is listed as Clark, too. Doodoo was married to John Boyd in America in 1907.



This picture of me and Haigaz (my brother) was taken at a photography studio in Adana about 1906. I was five years old and he was two.

### **Our House in Adana:**

As I remember it – I remember living in three houses in Adana. First one was a two story house, but the lower level was the laundry room, store room, and bath room (potty only – cesspool). This was the only potty and it was used by two families. The upper level was our living quarters—one room and a kitchen. We lived, ate and slept in the same room. (The other family lived next to us on the upper level). In the kitchen, we cooked on one wood burning burner. Later on when I was ten years old, we cooked on one burner (kerosene burner). We had no refrigerator. We had a hanging screen box for cooler out side or we would put our meat in the bucket and lower it in the well (half way) to keep it cool. Every house had a water well. Some had sweet water to drink, most of them had water you could not drink—you had to buy river water and keep it in large crocks, for

drinking and cooking. Water was delivered by water peddlers who had special saddles on donkeys for the water jars.

The other two houses were better and had more room, but drinking water situation was the same.

On the roof of the house we hung the laundry and in the hot summer we slept on the roof. (The roof was flat).

When I was ten or eleven years old, before the First World War, we were afraid there was political trouble coming with the Turks. So – My parents put all our family pictures in a box and buried them in the dirt under our house in Adana. They hid these pictures because they didn't want the Turks to know and identify family members.

We even put in there all the pictures of my sister and brother and their families who were in America. We didn't want the Turks to know where they lived for fear they would even harm them.

We never got the pictures out. My parents were sent to exile—where they died (were killed by Turks).

### **Our Food**

We made our own bread. I used to help my mother knead the bread dough (with yeast) Friday nights. (Once a week to last a whole week), cover it up with warm covers so it would rise over night. We would bake it on Saturday in a wood burning brick oven. One oven for a few families in one back yard, so we had to wait for our turn.

We also made (Parag Hatz) thin Armenian bread (cracker bread)—did not require leavening. We made that in our own yard on special round metal put between two stones—fire in between—camping out style.

### **In Summer**

We made our own bulgur (boiled wheat, then dried it on roof, then took it to the mill for cracking). Our own flour, vermicelli, tomato paste, and jam. We stored Jack Cheese in crocks (in salt water) for winter. Stored it in cool part of our house. That would last us the whole winter. We had rice pilav (pilaf) only on special occasions and for company.

### **My Father's Work**

He was a farmer--in the summer according to the amount of wheat he would pick--he would get paid for wheat. That's the wheat we used to make bulgur and flour.



The rest of the year he had a dye shop. He dyed yarns and material different colors for customers.

In the evenings we all sat on the floor and separated cotton from the shells. We got paid for this. We burned these cotton shells as wood in our outdoor brick oven to bake bread.

### **My Mother's Work**

She was a housewife and busy mostly with church work—visited sick people and helped if they needed it.

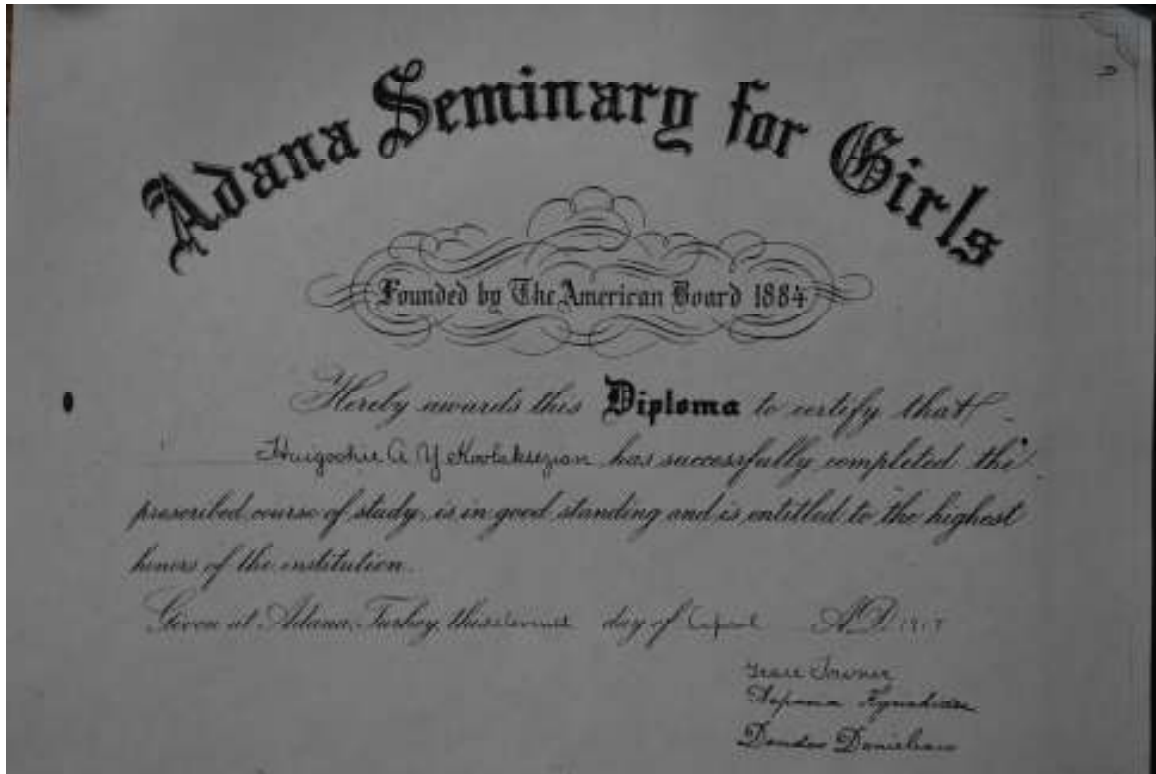
### **My Work**

I went to school in winter. Before I was 13 years old, I sometimes worked in summer. One summer I worked in tobacco factory—one summer I went to embroidery school.

### **My School**

There were no public schools. I went to Church School for elementary school. We played in the church yard for recess. This was an Armenian Congregational Church.

Then I went to American School – “Adana Seminary For Girls”—an American Congregational Missionary School. At first I was a day student. When the first World War broke out in 1914 (I was 13 years old), Miss Towner, Principal of the American School asked me to stay in that school as a boarding student.



We didn't have any money so I had to work for my room and board. In fact, even as a day student I had to clean a classroom after school for my tuition.

To earn my room and board and tuition as a boarding student, I had to make Miss Borel's bed every day—the French teacher) and every Saturday I had to clean her room. I also had to wait on tables in the American teacher's dining room and I tutored students in English when I was a senior as well as teaching classes.

After I graduated, I taught English grammar as a regular teacher. I graduated April 11, 1917. I taught school until October 18, 1917. That's when I got married.

### **Re – Miss Towner**

Finley Bown, my son-in-law, read in a Congregational Church magazine that she had retired to Pilgrim Place in Claremont (Retirement Home for Missionaries and Ministers). He asked me if this was the same Miss Towner (Miss Grace Towner). I said "yes". I went and found her at Pilgrim Place. This picture shows her first visit to our house in Los Angeles. (Picture is below)

All the Armenian Churches were confiscated by the Turks (This was war time) so an Armenian Priest came to my fiancé's house to marry us in the presence of his family and

Miss Towner and Miss Kyryakides (the Greek teacher) and his aunt (his father's sister) from Mersin.



(picture dated July 1953)

This picture of my husband, Miss Grace Towner (my boarding school principal in Adana) and me taken July 1953. Miss Towner visited our home in Los Angeles after she had retired to Pilgrim Place in Claremont, California. She served as a missionary for 40 years in Turkey. (See preceding page) how I found Miss Towner in America.

This is our graduating class. We graduated on April 11, 1917, in Adana Turkey.



Three teachers -- 12 students  
One American teacher (principal)  
One French teacher (left end)  
One Greek teacher (on the right in the back)  
The one in black Turkish outfit in the middle is a Turkish girl who graduated with us.  
(She was one of the Turkish Government Official's daughter).

### **Subjects I Studied as a Boarding Student**

English language and grammar  
American History  
World History  
French  
Math  
Algebra  
Armenian language

We also had to learn to read the Turkish language. (The Turkish letters then were Arabic letters, not like today—today they use Latin letters.)



Miss Lucie Borel -- My French Teacher. She was from Switzerland.

### **The School Buildings**

The school (had about 200 students) consisted of two four-story buildings with a yard in between and surrounded by high walls. There were several trees in the yard and on Saturday when we all washed our own clothes, we hung them on clotheslines stretched from one tree to the other.

Students also took baths in the laundry building.

In the original building, the top floor was a student dormitory with a bed and a closet for each girl. The 3<sup>rd</sup> floor was the principal's room and a parlor (conference room) and the French and Greek teachers' rooms. The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor was the Armenian teachers' dining room and a separate dining room for the American teachers, as well as some classrooms. The first floor was the student dining room and the kitchen.

### **The Food In Boarding School 1915-1917**

This was war time, World War I. We did not have much selection. We had no real butter. Cotton seed oil was used instead of butter. We ate mostly bulgur pilav (pilaf) (cracked wheat) and cereal that were served with cotton seed oil.

One morning I could not eat my cereal. I had never eaten cereal with cotton seed oil before at home. It tasted terrible to me, so I didn't eat it. So the (Mayrighs) cooks saved it and served the same thing to me for lunch. Then again they served it for 3 times a day the same cereal for 3 days. By then I was so hungry, I ate it (3 days old). That was a good lesson for me. After that, to this day, I do not dislike anything. I eat everything.

### **School Buildings continued**

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> four-story building (which was built later on as the school grew) here the top floor was also a dormitory. I lived in this building. In this dormitory we slept on mats on the floor. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors were classrooms, and the first floor was the big auditorium and a few classrooms. Every morning we went to the auditorium for devotional services before classes.

All student bathrooms were in one big out-house building in the yard between the four-story buildings.

In 1917 before America went into World War I – since our school was an American School located in Turkey – we were always cautious that maybe British or French planes overhead would bomb such tall buildings – so we would put an American flag on the roof – flat – so they would not bomb us. I remember once – I was sent to the roof with another girl to spread the American Flag.

### **Types of Transportation**

There were trains to go out of the city. The train station was on the edge of town. We walked to the train station.

Within the city there were horse drawn carriages (like taxis), but we couldn't afford it – so we walked wherever we went.

### **How I was Raised**

I was raised quite strict. To live according to the Golden Rule – Be Honest – Truthful – Responsible – Obedient – Respectful – Help others – do unto others as you want them to do unto you.

I didn't know what a joke was. When someone said something, it had to be the truth.

### **My Church**

Before I went to boarding school (before World War I broke out) my family and I walked to the Armenian Congregational Church (about a couple of miles) every Sunday afternoon for worship services. My father always used to go to sleep during the service. I would poke him to wake him up and he would go right back to sleep.

Then when I was in boarding school on Sundays we had our Sunday school (morning services) in the school auditorium and in the afternoon we all went to church – walking. We would line up and march 2 by 2 – or my fashion -- one teacher in front, one in the back and one or two on each side.

### **1909 Massacre In Adana**

When I was 8 years old, one Sunday afternoon I went to church with my cousin (12 years old) Arousyag – (her mother was my mother's sister). When the service was over, we heard some guns sounding and then – Turkish soldiers herded us and all the people coming out of the church to a park near the river. They kept us there overnight—we had no food or shelter. I remember cuddling with Arousyag to keep warm. I was terribly scared and cried.

In the morning, we were told the soldiers were waiting for their orders – either to throw all of us in the river or let us go. Fortunately, the orders came through to let us go. I don't remember why we went back to the church, but we did. I saw that the Turks had set the church on fire and saw the church bell tumbling down to the ground from the burning tower. When it fell it went deep into the ground.

When I went home, my mother was at the neighbor's house where she had taken shelter from the Turks. When she heard me crying at the door—she knew it was me and she opened the door.

The neighbor, who was an attorney, was not bothered by the Turks, because he wore a white Turkish head band, posing as a Turk himself and he told the soldiers, “What are you doing here, scaring the women and children?” (He had a wife and a daughter). The Turks left him alone. In the meantime, they (the Turks) had looted our house (which was next door) and had even stolen all our bread which we had baked the day before.

### **1915 Genocide – How it effected Koulahseszian & Kalpakian Families**

During World War I Armenians who lived in Turkey were persecuted by Turks and sent to the desert (Dart Yoe) to die. My parents and my brother Haigaz were sent too. My brother told me that my father died of starvation and my mother was killed. My brother escaped and came to America with us later.

My husband’s family, Kalpakians, lived in Mersin, a small seaport town near Adana. Mrs. Mayreni Zelveian (ree Kalpakian) whose husband owned practically the whole town was very wealthy. He kept bribing the government officials so Zelveians and Kalpakians were allowed to stay in their own homes.

Then they (government) found some excuse and they arrested Kalpakian’s son-in-law, Khachadoor Kraherian, who was the bank president, spoke seven languages, sent him to jail in Adana. So the whole family came to Adana to help him. They could never go back to Mersin. All their assets including their house were confiscated by the Turks. That’s how come I met him in Adana.

### **How I Met My Husband – August 1917**

On Saturday afternoon, my girl friend Hripsine, (a teacher from my school) asked me to go to a German Dept. Store – (named Oros-de Bach) with her. She said “let’s go buy some ribbon from an Armenian young man over there.” She had been there before and she knew him. It was rare to see a young Armenian man of military age – (during war time) working in a civilian store.

When I met the young man – Haroutune, (Harry) he asked my name and where I lived. He went home and told his mother – “today I met the girl I’m going to marry.”

The next Monday, his mother came to school and told Miss Towner (my principal) that she wanted to see me because “she was a friend of my parents.” Within one week, his father, and his brother-in-law came to school to see me with the same story. His parents had another girl in mind for him, but he was not interested.



My wedding Picture – Oct. 18, 1917  
(taken at a photography studio)



Our wedding took place in my fiancé's house in Adana. An Armenian Priest came to the house and married us because all churches were confiscated by the Turkish government. At the wedding were his parents, his aunt, Mrs. Zelveian, Miss Towner and the Greek teacher, Miss Kyriakides.

### **How I met my Husband (cont'd)**

Then, he came to school himself to see Miss Towner and told her what his intentions were. Miss Towner told him – She still owes the school \$50.00 – for her room and board. He said he will pay it.

When Miss Towner told me “this man wanted to marry you, but he belongs to the Apostolic Church, not the Congregational Church, you don't want to marry him.” I said, “Yes, I do. It doesn't make any difference what church he belongs to.”

After he paid her the \$50 she released me from the school. We were engaged on Oct 2, 1917 and got married Oct. 18, 1917. Years later he would always tell me and the children that your mother was expensive, she cost me \$50.

### **1917 The Man I Did Not Marry**

In Adana while I was in boarding school, World War I was going on, so everybody was working in defense plants.

My Uncle's wife, my mother's brother's wife was working in a factory where they made canvas by the yard for the war effort. Her foreman was a very handsome young man. My aunt arranged it so I could meet him, his mother, and his sister at her house. She came to school, took me to her house to meet them,

She told me, “After you say, hello, go make some Turkish coffee and serve it. If the mother says, “This is good coffee – they like you.” I made the coffee and served it. The mother said, “Oh, this is good coffee.” I said to my aunt, “They like me and I like him – He is a nice young man. One question – Does this man read and write?” She said, “No.” I said, tell them “Forget it.” I said, “No, to read and write is very important to me.”



These girls were sisters. There were both teachers at Adana Seminary for Girls. Their names were, on the left – Theolinda and on the right Hripsine. Hripsine is the one who took me to the Dept Store where I met my husband.

## **Where we lived after we were married – In Adana**

In those days it was the custom that when a couple got married, they have to live with his folks regardless of how many in the man's family. So when we got married we lived with his folks—with his parents, his brother, two sisters (their husbands), one sister's sister-in-law and her mother-in-law.

I was delegated to do the ironing, cleaning house, knead dough for bread, set the table, clear the table, and was constantly reminded that I didn't know how to cook, how to sew, didn't iron very well, etc.

Since I was at boarding school all this time, I had not had a chance to learn to do all these things.

So we lived with his folks for 9 months and then we moved to our own place. (His folks were very angry that we moved out and never did forgive us.) A few months later on December 26, 1918 our first child was born—a girl—Angagh.

## **Our Home Iron**

The iron in Adana in those days was—top opens up with the handle—you put charcoal inside, light it, take it outside until the coal turns red fire—you press the top down—it clicks, then you put it on a metal flat container and bring it inside—wait till it cools off somewhat and then you can iron.

Once, I borrowed an iron from a neighbor to iron my husband's shirts—somehow it fell on the floor and the handle broke. So we bought a new iron and gave it to the neighbor and we kept the broken one ourselves. That taught me never to borrow anything from anybody. So to this day—I never borrow anything.

The first year we came to America 1923—we lived in Venice, California. Our iron was somewhat “modern”. It was a solid metal with handle on it. You heat this metal on the gas burner—when you think it is hot enough, you put it on a thinner metal and turn a switch on top and the two metals cling to each other and you iron—the thinner metal cools off the hot iron a little so it won't burn the clothes.

## **Coming to America—**

When we left Adana, November 1921 to go to Alexandrette—I remember it was in the night and we were all hurried to get on the train. Turkish soldiers pushing us with bayonets to get on the train—sort of like a cattle car.

## Coming to America

In November 1921 the politics in Adana changed and it was no longer safe for Armenians to stay there, so we got out of Adana. We went to Alexandrette—Syria—(which was under French mandate.) We were there four months. We then decided to go to Istanbul. (It was Constantinople then). My husband's cousin lived there and had an importing business. We thought maybe they could be in business together. Our second daughter Pakradouhi (Peggy) was born one week after we got there—March 26, 1922!

In the meantime my husband's uncle who was a textile manufacturer in Manchester, England had come to Istanbul and was looking for someone to send to Batoom, Russia, to open a branch for him there. He thought Haroutune (Harry) would be the ideal person to send, so his uncle asked him. My husband accepted his offer and signed a contract to go to Russia. His uncle told him—"In England it's customary that a man's wife sign the contract, too", so he told him—"Take it home and let your wife sign it too." He brought it home and was so happy that we would be going to Russia. He said, "We're going to Russia". I said, "We are? Do you know the Russian language?" He said, "No." I said, "I don't either. Do you know any one there – or about the climate there, or the way they run business?" (This was 1922). It was only two years after the Bolshevik government had taken over Russia.) He said, "No, but we'll learn." I said, "I am not going to sign the contract—why don't we go to American, where I have a brother, and a married sister and I know a little English." He was disappointed, but he took the contract back unsigned. I have been thankful that I didn't sign it. Then we decided to come to America. We wrote to my sister and she and her husband sent us an affidavit and we were given permission by the American Consulate in Istanbul to leave for America on



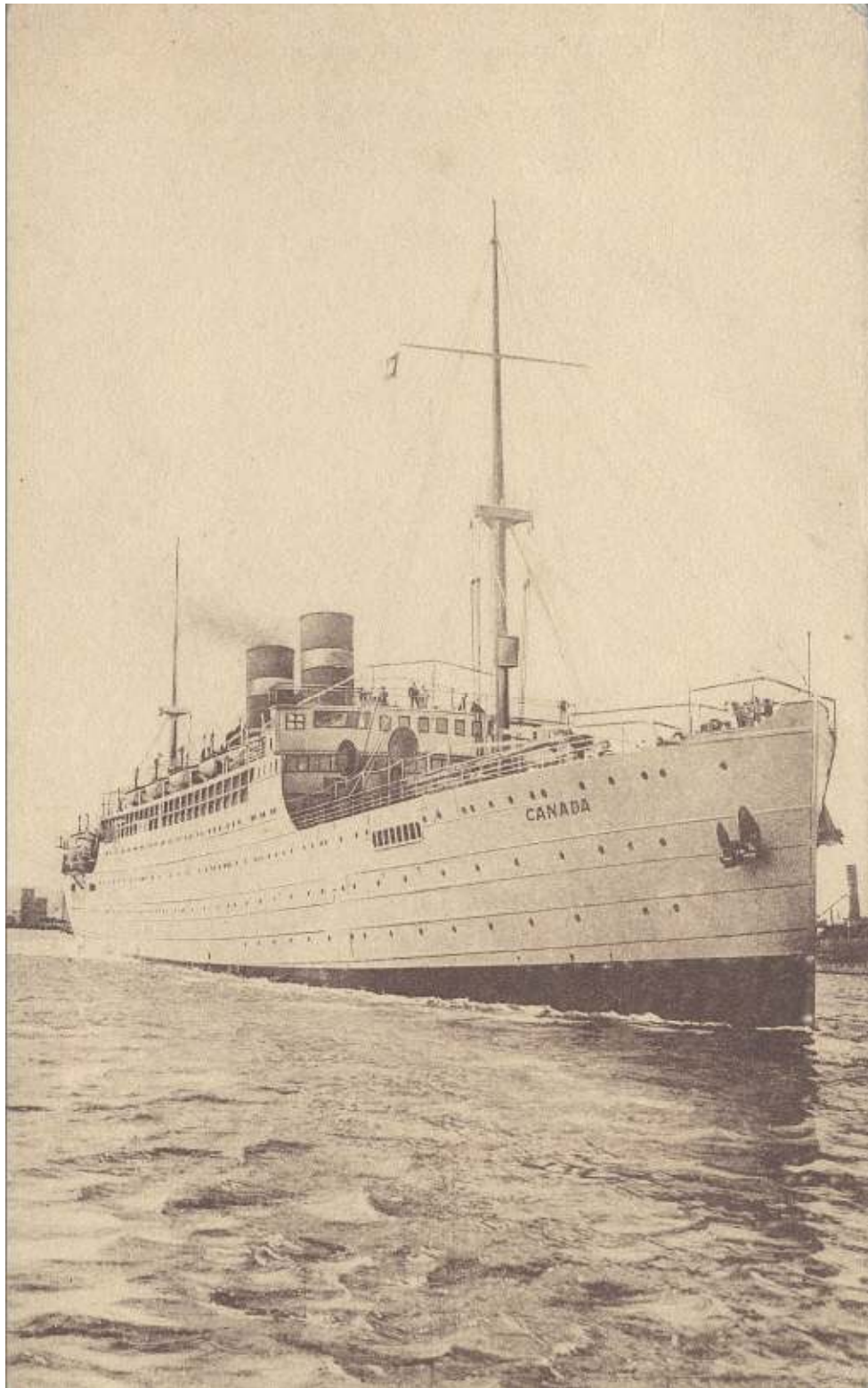
N.Y. — MAIN BUILDING OF ELLIS ISLAND

July 8, 1923. We came on a quota—we had to reach America the first of the next month to get in before the quota was filled. We were traveling on a Greek Steamship line (Constantinople—the name of the ship), 3<sup>rd</sup> class. Our boat had mechanical troubles in the middle of the ocean, so we lost time while it was being fixed. So we didn't get to New York—Ellis Island till August 2, 1923. First and second class passengers were let out first—by then the quota was full. (August 2 was the day President Harding was buried, so all the Federal government offices were closed.) There we were in Ellis Island—so they put us 3<sup>rd</sup> class passengers on the same boat and returned us to Greece.

(They could not return us to Istanbul because they had agreed to take us to America. We had one-way passports.)

The Greek government took us in (because we were on a Greek Steamship Line) with the understanding that we must leave on the next boat going to America. We were in Greece for two weeks. The first time it had taken us a month to come from Istanbul to New York. It took us another month to go back to Greece. (But they gave us our money back.) Then on September 14, 1923, on a French Steamship Line (Canada – the name of the ship) we landed in Providence, Rhode Island, October 1, 1923, 12:15 am. We got off the ship first this time before the quota was filled since we had bought 2<sup>nd</sup> class tickets. (Two weeks in Greece—all we ate was bread, tomato, and onion salad.) On the ship I could hardly eat anything because I was three months pregnant when we started, and we crossed the Atlantic three times in three months!





Steamship Canada (French Line) we came to American on the second time. From Greece to Providence, Rhode Island, USA

Our Passport pictures



Left to right – baby Peggy 1 ½ years old (next to me)  
Next is Angagh, 4 years old  
Next is my husband, Haroutune (Harry) 36 years old



Haigaz (my brother), Angagh and me



FABRE-LINE  
**INSPECTION CARD**  
 (Second Class Passengers)

Port of departure, *Piraeus* Date of departure *14/9/23*  
 Name of steamer *Canada*  
 Name of Immigrant, *Haroutune Kalpakian* residence, *Piraeus*

Inspected and passed at <b>AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL</b> <b>SEP 14 1923</b> <b>ATHENS GREECE</b>	Passed at quarantine port of _____, U. S. (Date)	Passed by Immigration Bureau port of <i>OK YES</i> (Date)
(The following to be filled in by ship's surgeon or agent prior to or after embarkation.)		
Ship's list or manifest, <i>22</i> No on ship's list or manifest, <i>22</i>		
Berth No	STEAMSHIP INSPECTION	TO BE FURNISHED BY SHIP'S SURGEON AT DAILY INSPECTION
	1 at day	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

FABRE-LINE  
**INSPECTION CARD**  
 (Second Class Passengers)

Port of departure, *Piraeus* Date of departure *14/9/23*  
 Name of steamer *Canada*  
 Name of Immigrant, *Higouli Kalpakian* residence, *Piraeus*

Inspected and passed at <b>AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL</b> <b>SEP 14 1923</b> <b>ATHENS GREECE</b>	Passed at quarantine port of _____, U. S. (Date)	Passed by Immigration Bureau port of <i>OK YES</i> (Date)
(The following to be filled in by ship's surgeon or agent prior to or after embarkation.)		
Ship's list or manifest, <i>22</i> No on ship's list or manifest, <i>22</i>		
Berth No	STEAMSHIP INSPECTION	TO BE FURNISHED BY SHIP'S SURGEON AT DAILY INSPECTION
	1 at day	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

We had to get physical tests and be vaccinated on the ship before we could get off in America. These cards (one for each of us) show that we passed the tests.

## **In America – From Rhode Island to New York to California**

The first time we came to Ellis Island—the very first thing I noticed—the most amazing thing was – the hot and cold running water. (We had cold running water in Istanbul, but not hot.)

Then when we came the second time, we got off the boat, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 12:15 am. at Rhode Island in the evening sometime when we went to the train station to go to New York—we had just missed the train. When we asked what time is the next train, they said “8 am tomorrow morning.” So there we were all four of us with one 4 year old, Angagh, one 1 ½ year old, Peggy; we spent the whole night inside the train station on a bench till 8 am same morning till the train took us to New York. We went to Mr. Isakoolian’s office on Broadway in New York City. (He was my husband’s cousin’s brother-in-law.) We had never met him before, but he was very good to us.

My brother, Haigaz, had gotten off the ship earlier than we did and taken the train to New York the night before. When we went to Isakoolian’s office—there he was.

Another amazing thing we saw in America was an indoor bathtub and flushing indoor toilet in a hotel room. This was the first time we had seen anything like this!

Although we paid for everything ourselves, Mr. Isakookian took us to a hotel—arranged for our stay one night and 2 days and he took us out to a restaurant for dinner that night. At the end of the 2 days—he came over—brought some ham sandwiches to take with us on the train. We paid for it—hired a taxi and took us to the train station to take us to Venice, California.

One thing I have to mention that—In the taxi, the driver drove about a block and he stopped. He drove a little farther and stopped again. We were afraid we were having car trouble. We said, “how come he doesn’t go?” Mr. Isakoolian said, “there are traffic signals – he has to obey them.” We had never seen traffic signals in the old country. (Turkey)

Remember this is October, 1923. The train trip from New York to Los Angeles, California took six days to cross the country. (Changed trains in Chicago.) My sister, Doodoo Boyd, her husband John, their son, Haig, and daughter, Gladys and my brother Arthur all lived together in Venice. They came to the train station in Los Angeles at 10 pm to meet us. They took us to Venice in their car. This (riding in a private car—it was a Lincoln.) was a new experience for us.

They had arranged a party at their home that same night for us—with their friends—so they could meet us.

## **To summarize our first week in America**

We landed in Providence, Rhode Island October 1, 1923 at approximately 12:15 am. Stayed the rest of the night in the train station, then went to New York on the 8 am train—the same day, October 1<sup>st</sup>. We left New York via train on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, for California and arrived in Los Angeles 10 pm on October 8, 1923. We came to John and Doodoo Boyd's (my sister) house on Harding Street in Venice, California.

## **Where we lived and worked in Venice, California**

Here we were in Venice, California, October 8, 1923, staying at my sister's (Doodoo) house. She had a big 10-room house on a big lot.

After a few weeks, resting and trying to get acquainted with our new country and all the freedom and peace of mind it offers, we were so happy to be here.

We went to see some stores, what they looked like, tried to read on top of the stores what they were selling. Since I knew a little English, I could make out what they were like—bakery, grocery—but when I saw a sign that said “Real Estate”. I couldn't figure out. I knew what “real” meant and what “estate” meant—but I couldn't put it together. I learned later that it meant—they sell property.

My sister also had a small 2-room house in the back of her property. After a couple of months living with her—our family moved into this little house.



This picture taken in 1924—on the side lawn of the big front house. I still had my long hair—tied in the back.

On January 18, 1924 in this same little house our 3<sup>rd</sup> child was born—a girl—Elizabeth Armenouhi (Betty). This was the first child born to us in the USA. We were very proud and happy. Our other two children were born—one in Adana and one in Istanbul, Turkey.

(In Adana, between Angagh and Peggy—on October 6, 1920—we had another baby girl—Torkomouhi who died of red measles at the age of 4 months—February 8, 1921. Angagh used to call her “go-go-ouhi” since she couldn’t say Torkomouhi).



This picture taken in 1926, towards the front of the big house. My hair is now cut short.





This picture taken in 1926.

My brother Haigaz – with his new car “Oakland” (General motors car) sports car – with all 3 girls in the rumble seat in the back. My brother and I are in the front seat. The car is in the back yard drive way. You can see the “two-room house” in the back on the right side—where Betty was born. (We lived in that little house in Venice for 3 ½ years).



(the big picture is a bathing suit ad.)

This is Betty (3 years old – 1927) and me in front of my brother-in-law John Boyd’s drug store in Venice. Left rear was my brother, Arthur’s cigar stand in the front part of the drugstore.

While I was taking care of the babies my husband had to learn English, so he could earn our living. He and my brother, Haigaz, went to night school to learn English. They learned enough English to get by—Haigaz (my brother) went to work for my brother-in-law (John Boyd) in his drugstore in Venice. He also lived with the Boyds.

My husband went to work at Eddie Demirgian's doll factory in Venice for 2 months.

Then he bought a cigar stand in Venice in the front part of Strand Cafeteria on the Ocean Front. He owned this business for 3 years—until 1927.

Before we left the Old Country—I had promised to work and help the family's living if we went to America.

So after my baby (Betty) was born, as soon as I could, I went to work for my brother Arthur, who owned a cigar store in Ocean Park and Venice.

I also worked at the drugstore-cigar stand on Windward Avenue in Venice for 9 months until we moved to Los Angeles, January 1, 1928.

In 1927 my family moved from the small 2-room house to the canal house on Alberta Street in Venice.





1927

Here I am standing in front of the Canal house on Alberta Street. This house was furnished and had one bedroom.

We thought we were living in luxury when we were living in a house with a bedroom! It seemed like a palace to us.

### **1928 -- Jan 1<sup>st</sup> Where we lived in Los Angeles**

Our first grocery store, on San Pedro Street -- We lived in the back of the store. (See a more recent picture of the store below.)

### **1983 September 25**

My daughter, Betty, her husband, Finley Bown, and their daughter Barbara drove us to the old San Pedro Street location. (Barbara took these pictures) The store was still there

being operated as a grocery store by Mexican people. I was surprised to see it still being used as a grocery store after 55 years.



I am standing at the entrance of the store. It's a corner store.)



Here I am inside the store. They now have a meat dept. We did not have a meat dept.



This shows the side street, with me and Betty standing by the back door of our living quarters. (Iron bars have been added on the windows in 1983).



This is the overall picture of the whole store building on the corner of 21<sup>st</sup> and South San Pedro Street, Los Angeles



**Picture**

This is the 22<sup>nd</sup> Street house that we lived in (one side of a double) after we sold the store and before we went to another house. (we lived there only 2 weeks).





**Picture Sept 25, 1983**

This is the San Pedro Street elementary school that Angagh, 9, and Peggy 6, attended. (1928). The school is still being operated as a school. Betty—4 years old, stayed home with us and kept us company at the store.

### **Where we lived in Los Angeles, Jan 1, 1928**

Here we are in Los Angeles. My husband bought a grocery store on 1965 South Pedro Street, that had unfurnished living quarters in the back of the store. We moved there with a mattress and a couple of quilts that we had brought from the Old Country. We used wooden fruit boxes as bed stands—put the mattresses on them to sleep on. Then we gradually bought two rocking chairs—as living room chairs—and a dining room table. We couldn't afford to buy dining room chairs, so we used wooden boxes to sit on around the table.

We both worked in the store while the two older children (ages 9 and 6) went to school. The 4-year old (Betty) played in the store and the house – back and forth. I watched her all the time until the others came home from school. Then they all played together in the house.



Our house at 533 West 109<sup>th</sup> Place, Los Angeles, California

Our front door was all glass—with 2 side glass windows. Drive way is to the right (you can't see very much of it.) My husband and our 3 daughters (Angagh 9, Peggy 6, Betty 4) We lived in this house for 3 years.

In October 1928, one day an Italian man walked in our San Pedro Street Grocery store and said, "This is a nice store, is it for sale?" My husband said, "yes". So we sold the store. We were in that store only ten months.

We bought another grocery store—a larger one—with 3 separate depts.—Groceries, meat, and vegetables—on South Figueroa Street. At first we operated just the grocery dept. We rented a house on 109<sup>th</sup> Place (2 blocks from the store). This was a nice frame house, with 2 bedrooms, a nice bathroom and an ice box (the kind you put ice in it) in the kitchen—a big yard and one car garage with a long drive way (the kind that has 2 narrow strips of concrete and dirt in the middle.)

We were in that Figueroa Street store for 3 years (Oct 28, 1928 to Nov 1931). That was the most profitable store for us.



We bought our first car (a used car 1925 Star Touring Car) in Oct 1928. One Sunday afternoon, my husband and my brother Haigaz bought the car. My brother taught me how to drive it first, the same day, and then he went back to San Juan Capistrano where he had a hamburger stand across from the Mission. Then I taught my husband to drive.

### **Depression years – 1928 – 1932**

In 1929 there was a Depression. Lots of people were out of work—lost their homes. Stocks went down – then in 1932 there was a new administration in Washington D.C. The first thing President Roosevelt did was to put into effect the National Recovery Act – NRA. He made new rules and regulations to put the nation back on its feet. Everybody cooperated. We were to show our support by putting up the emblem of the NRA on our store windows. I was one of the first 4000 to go to the Post Office to get the NRA emblem. A photographer snapped my picture as I was getting it.



(newspaper picture Aug 2, 1933)

### Our Very First Car

A 1925 Star Touring car – we bought in October 1928. This car has Isinglass windows like clear plastic (but not plastic). They snap on and off.



My husband is proudly sitting in it. He used to deliver groceries in it.



Here we are again in front of the car, most of our family—Betty and Peggy in the middle.



Our second car – with me in front of it – A 1932 Pontiac in front of our Haas Ave house  
– Our first house that we bought in 1931.





This is a 1939 model Pontiac, bought in December 1938. See how fancy the car is now, compared to the first one

## Re – Cars

Our 1939 Pontiac was the last new car we bought until 1950. During the war years, (World War II – December 7, 1941 till August 1945) there were no new cars manufactured. Automobile plants made jeeps, ammunition and war supplies. It took a couple of years after the war for the plants to change back to make cars again. So our next new car was a 1950 Pontiac with automatic shift --that was invented after the war. (Automatic shift that is.)

## Becoming US Citizens April 1931

One of our most important and proudest events took place in Los Angeles in April of 1931. It was then that my husband and I took out our final American Citizenship Papers of this Great Country. The whole thing took 7 (seven) years. We filed our first papers one year after we got here. Then we had to wait 2 years to file our second papers. In the meantime we had to go to night school (Manual Arts High School) for six weeks – I think – (I'm not sure) to study American Government and American History. We had to learn

the Preamble to the US Constitution by memory as well as other facts about the government. Then we had to take an oral test at a Special Citizenship School. Later in downtown Los Angeles, in front of a Judge, we were sworn in and took the Oath of Allegiance and.....

### **Becoming US Citizens (cont'd)**

Good Citizenship and of Loyalty, and to Uphold the Laws of this wonderful country – (with our right hands up.)

We then went to the desk near by and they gave us our citizenship papers with our picture on it.

They told us if we want to change our names – this is the time to do it. So I changed my name from Haigouhi to Helen and my husband changed his name from Haroutune to Harry.

These are the picture that were put on our citizenship papers – April 24, 1931.





Harry Kalpakian)



Helen Kalpakian

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO BE GIVEN TO  
THE PERSON NATURALIZED

No. 3448138

**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

Petition No. 32765

Personal description of holder as of date of naturalization: Age 30 years sex Female color White  
 complexion Dark color of eyes Brown color of hair Brown height 5 feet 4 inches  
 weight 125 pounds visible disfigurement None  
 Marital status Married race Armenian former nationality Turkey

I certify that the description above given is true, and that the photograph affixed hereto is a likeness of me

**ORIGINAL**

(Complete and true signature of holder)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
 SOUTHERN DIST. OF CALIFORNIA

Best known to me  
 I hereby certify that HELEN KALPAKIAN  
 then residing at 533 W. 109th Pl., Los Angeles, Calif.  
 having petitioned to be admitted a citizen of the United States of America, and at  
 a term of the District Court of the United States  
 Los Angeles held pursuant to law at  
APR 24 1931  
 the court having found that the petitioner intends to reside permanently in the  
 United States, that in all respects she complies with the Naturalization Laws of the United  
 States in such case applicable, and was entitled to be so admitted, the court thereupon  
 entered that she be admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.

In testimony whereof the seal of the court is hereunto set and this 24th  
 day of APR 11 in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and  
thirty one and of our Independence the one hundred  
 and sixty 2.

  
 Helen Kalpakian  
 Seal  
  
 District Court  
 Los Angeles, California

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

(copy of citizenship papers for Helen Kalpakian)



June 1933 – My husband and I are standing in front of our new Haas Ave house.



September 1933 – My daughters and I are standing in front of our new house (in front of the bay window with awning on top that was the style of houses those days.)

### **1931 – We bought our First house – 6436 Haas Ave, Los Angeles, California**

We had lived in different places the last 8 years since we arrived in the US. We had rented them, but in 1931 we bought our first brand new (3 bedroom, 2 bath with double garage) house in Los Angeles. The two younger girls (Peggy and Betty) attended elementary school (59<sup>th</sup> Street School) and my oldest daughter (Angagh) went to High School (George Washington High). We were so happy to think, where we are, living in the US in a brand new house that came with an electric refrigerator, wooden dinette set with 6 chairs and a gas furnace.

We had bought a few pieces of furniture as we needed them. Now we bought a living room set (2 upholstered pieces of furniture) dining room chairs and a nice gas stove, also an electric washing machine with wringer. We also bought an electric vacuum cleaner.

We had previously bought an old upright piano for the children to learn to play.



January 10, 1932, Los Angeles  
My husband leaning against our 1931 Pontiac car in front of our Haas Ave house. The house was Spanish style with a red tile roof.





February 1940 – My husband and me and Harriett, 5 years old in front of our house.

### **Our First House (cont'd)**

December of 1931 – we bought a brand new 1932 model Pontiac (General Motors) car. Those cars were still made with gear shift on the floor. (then in 1950 gear shifts became automatic – right under the steering wheel.)

On September 9, 1935 we had a wonderful blessed event!! We had another baby girl – Harriett!! She was the joy of all of our family. (This is my only baby that was born in a hospital at the Jefferson Hospital on Jefferson Blvd. I had an Armenian Doctor – Dr. Azadian.)

My three older daughters practically raised Harriett – especially Betty, who was only 11 years older than Harriett

We lived in that house on Haas Ave for 10 years. We sold it in 1941.



April 5, 1936 was the day, Betty 12 and Harriett 7 months old were baptized together in the Armenian Apostolic church in Los Angeles. We had a dinner party at our house afterwards with relatives and friends. Above L to R standing: Venus Melkonian, Alice Koumjian, Annie Melkonian, Martha Clark, Rose Koumjian, Angagh, and Peggy. Seated L to R: Alice Melkonian, my brother Arthur, and Betty.



This is the same day. From left to right is our friend Mrs. Melkonian, next is me, next to me to my left is my cousin Margaret Koumjian. Next to my cousin Margaret is my sister Doodoo Boyd—who had sent us the affidavit so we could come to the United States.

1941 – We sold the Hass Ave house—Then we bough our second house – a duplex at 8643-45 West Olympic Blvd. These pictures were taken in front of the house in 1983, with my 1970 Chevy Nova in front of it.













This is me standing on the landing (1983)



This picture taken from the side angle from Bedford Street shows the rest of the block.

### **1941 – We moved to Olympic Blvd**

In summer, 1941, we bought our duplex at 8643 – 1845 W. Olympic Blvd. Los Angeles and moved in on September 17, 1941. (This was 3 months before US was attacked by Japan at Pearl Harbor, Dec 7, 1941 - & U. S. was at war – World War II.

This house is a duplex with one 3 bedroom, 2 bath house upstairs, and another complete 3 bedroom, 2 bath house downstairs. We moved into the upstairs house and rented the downstairs.

Daddy had sold his previous grocery store – so we bought one in 1941 too – on 615 West Pico Boulevard. In all his stores I worked with him until he retired.

In 1949 he sold the Pico Blvd store when the rent was doubled. He then bought his final store (before retirement) on Museum Drive in Highland Park. He owned this store from 1949 – 1956 – 7 years! He liked this store the best, because he could handle the whole business himself (no butcher or produce man needed).



This is Grandpa standing in front of our house, on Olympic Blvd. About 1942



Here I am also in front of our house about 1942

The girls had grown up by now. Angagh (oldest) had graduated from college – UCLA – and she became a language teacher (French and Spanish). Her first teaching job was in Fontana, California.

Peggy graduated from Washington High in 1940 – worked 2 years in Security Bank. Then 1942 started college at USC.

Betty graduated from Washington High School in 1942 – worked 10 months at LA Times (newspaper) and then went to college at UCLA to become an elementary school teacher.

1941 – Harriett was six years old and she went to the first grade at Carthay Center elementary School on Olympic blvd.

She went to John Borroughs Jr High School, to Los Angeles High School, and University of Southern California to become a secondary school Spanish teacher.





Here are the three girls in 1942 in front of our house, just back from church. Angagh, to the right, was in graduate school at UCLA to get her teaching credential. Peggy in the middle was working at Security Bank near USC. Betty to the left had graduated from High School, was working for the LA Times



This is Harriett 6 ½ years old. She was in the first grade in Carthay Center Elementary School

All three girls who became teachers had to have special (State) credentials (one extra year of college) and all three have life credentials.

Peggy who had taken business courses became a medical secretary at the Orthopedic Dept of San Bernardino County Hospital.



This is Angagh when she got her first teaching job in Fontana, California



Picture 1942

Peggy – graduated from High School in 1940 – worked at Security National Bank. Then in 1942 went to USC.



June 19, 1949

Betty worked first for LA Times. During the war years she worked for the OPA (Office of Price Administration) and the US Navy Dept as a civilian. This is the day she graduated from UCLA as an elementary school teacher. "I finally made it" she said.





This is Harriett when she was attending John Burrough's Jr High School





Harriett's graduation day from Los Angeles High School 1952.



(24 years old)  
Harriett in 1959 – had been teaching 2 years – A high school Spanish teacher

## **1941 – 1945 – World War II**

The US part of World War II started December 7, 1941 when Japan attacked United States at Pearl Harbor in Pacific Ocean. Germany and Italy joined Japan from the Atlantic side – while the US was allied with Canada, Great Britain, and France.

We were all thankful that the war was fought away from US shores. Thank God we won!!!!

We had “blackouts” at night—black curtains on the windows—no lights near the windows—no large group meetings were allowed. Football games and other outdoor evening functions were cancelled.

Meat, sugar and other foods—gasoline and tires were rationed. There was the OPA—Office of Price Administration. Price Controls on everything. (At one time Betty worked for the OPA and the US Navy). Young men were drafted into the service and there were lots of airplane factories (defense plants) and factory workers. Everybody worked for the “war effort” and many people bought War Savings Bonds. We did too. The war lasted 4 years. Thank God We Won!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

## **Our Family Grows**

1944 Peggy – Our second daughter: married William J. Johnson – They had four children—Peggy Ann, Douglas, Helen, and Brian.

1945 Angagh – Our oldest daughter: married George L. MacKellar – They had three children—James, Patricia, and Nancy.

1950 Betty (Elizabeth) – Our third daughter: married Finley J. Bown – They had three children—Richard, Barbara, and Ronald.

1961 Harriett – Our fourth daughter: married Alan E. Donnell – They had two children—Helen Pearl and Howard Harry.

## **Grandpa’s Passing February 11, 1963**

Grandpa retired from the Museum Drive Store in 1956 at the age of 69. Because he wasn’t too well, we stayed mostly around the house. Our most enjoyment was to visit our children and 10 grandchildren. They all lived in Southern California within 80 miles of our house.

Peggy Johnson and family lived in San Bernardino, California. Betty Bown and family lived in Riverside, California. Angagh MacKellar and family lived in Northridge. Harriett Donnell and family lived in Tarzana, California.

In July and August of 1957, he had 2 operations – one for prostate and one for bladder stone. He passed away of a heart attack on February 11, 1963. He did not live to see his last two grandchildren, Helen Pearl and Howard Donnell, nor his great grandchildren.

### **My Career at USC from 1963 – 1975 (University of Southern California) Los Angeles, California**

When my husband passed away (February 11, 1963), I was 62 years old. Here I was all alone. I went to church luncheons and church banquets, but somehow, I felt I wasn't doing anything meaningful. So, I went to night school (Fairfax High School) at age 62 to learn to type so I could get a job.

In the meantime I applied as a desk clerk at a women's dorm at USC. I was accepted. At first I worked one day a week, then a few weeks later I worked more days, so I quit night school. I couldn't get home late from night school then be at work at 8 am the next day.

In those days there were no co-ed dorms. Men's and women's dorms were separate. They had mature women as House Mothers or Head Residents for women's dorms and graduate men students for men's dorms. I started to work on September 17, 1963.

Mrs. Lydia Hovanian (whom I had previously met at an Armenian picnic) was Head Resident at Harris Plaza women's dorm at USC. She is the person who hired me! She was a wonderful boss, an excellent, efficient and organized worker!



Mother's Day 1966

Here I am as Assistant Head Resident at the Head Resident's office – filling in for her on a weekend. (The sign out and in box for the girls is on the desk.)



This is the same day—Mother's Day 1966. Same office. Finley and Betty & family had come from Riverside to visit me and celebrate Mother's Day.

### **My Career at USC**

When I started to work at USC in September 1963, I worked for five months as a desk clerk at Harris Plaza women's dorm (a graduate dorm). Then I was elevated to Assistant Head Resident at Birnkrant Hall (undergraduate dorm) on February 1, 1964. I was given a private room with bath in College Hall. I had all my meals in the dining room with the students. That was very nice. I got my room and board and got paid too. (College Hall



and Birnkrant were in the same dorm complex building so I didn't have to go out of the building to get to one from the other.) I became Assistant Head Resident at Birnkrant in February of 1964.

As Assistant Head Resident I was on duty all day. Mrs. Rising who was the Head Resident was on duty all day too, but she got called at night too. I had to take my days off during the week for one week and then a weekend every other week. It was the same for the Head Resident. We filled in for each other.

The university's main concern was for the students' well being, their safety, convenience and their comfort. Undergraduate students had a curfew to be in the dorm at midnight during the week and at 2 am on Friday and Saturday nights. If they were going out (after 7 pm) for the evening, they had to sign out on a card at the front desk telling us where they were going and when they would be back. If a parent called the school in the evening and wanted to know where their daughter was, we could look on the card and tell them where she was.

When the girls returned they had to sign in at the desk as to when they returned. At midnight we checked the cards to see if they were all back in. If they had not signed in by then we'd call the parents.

As House Mothers and desk clerks, it was our duty to supervise and keep everybody happy—including the parents.



May 1966

This is me standing at the entrance to Birnkrant Women's Dorm, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California



This is the Head Resident's Apartment where I lived after I became Head Resident.

In 1966 Christmas vacation, the Head Resident at Birnkrant Women's Dorm (Mrs. Rising) resigned. I was promoted to her position as Head Resident.

As Head Resident I was given a 4-room apartment on the main floor of Birnkrant Hall. (Living room, dining area with kitchen facilities, a bedroom and a bath) I had all my meals in the dining room (with the students). When I moved into the apartment all I took with me from home was my clothes as everything else was furnished. A maid would clean the apartment once a week, changed all the linen (furnished by the school).

I served as Head Resident from January 1, 1967 until September 1967 when the university policy changed. They no longer wanted mature women as Head Residents.

They felt they should have men and women graduate students (working on their Master's Degrees) to serve as Head Residents.



March 20, 1964

Head Residents of different Women's Dorms – Sorority Houses -- Fraternity Houses had a party. A Hat Contest to see who could put on the fanciest hat. The lady in the pink dress with the fancy big hat is Mrs. Helen Rising, the Head Resident of Birnkrant, at that time. I was her assistant. I am at the extreme right with my hat in my lap.



Here are the 3 prize winners. To the left is me with my fancy hat. Besides some fancy flowers on it, it had a light on it like a radio beam blinking on and off with a battery. (My son-in-law, George MacKellar made it for me.) To the extreme right is Mrs. Prizer, Head Resident of Town & Gown Women's Dorm. In later years Town & Gown building was used for different offices of the school. The lady in the middle is Mrs. Prizer's sister.

Their (the graduate students) services could pay for their tuition and also their room and board. They were hired to serve for 2 years while they completed their studies. So they let all the mature women go, but they asked me to stay if I didn't mind being a desk clerk again. I was very happy to stay. Now I was back as a desk clerk working 8 hours a day, 4 days a week. (I could not be a full time employee.) I was glad I was kept on as a desk clerk. At least I could be at the University. I just loved the school and I still do—

everything about it. To be with university students is a wonderful overwhelming experience!!!!

Gradually, I had to work less days a week; they now decided students also should be working at the desk to pay for their needs.

Now, I was working only every other weekend. My school days came to an end when I retired on March 19, 1975. I was 74 years old.

On my last day, Dean of Women Joan Schafer and my supervisor, Mary Tolman, took me out to lunch at the Faculty Center. Dean Schafer presented me with a silver trivet and Mrs. Tolman gave me a desk set with two pens.



More Pictures of Dorm House Mother's Hat Party

March 18, 1964-5 Mrs. Lydia Hovnanian, Head Resident of Harris Plaza Graduate Dorm, is seated to the right in the front row. She is the one who hired me—the one with black shawl.





Sitting at one end of the table is Mrs. Phylis Tetter, Housing Supervisor. The other end is Mrs. Cox, Assistant Head Resident to Mrs. Hovnanian at Harris Plaza. (March 18, 1964)



In this picture the only name I remember is Mrs. Helen Hamilton (without a hat) sitting in the middle. The Head Resident at Harris Hall. I worked with her too.

**After My Retirement at Age 74! March 19, 1975  
Between 1963 and 1975**

While I was working my grandchildren grew up, got married, and started to have children. (I started to have great grandchildren)

My oldest daughter Angagh, who had married George MacKellar in 1946 had children: James, Patricia, and Nancy.

James married Judy Hogan in 1972 (later divorced). They had two children: Karen was born December 9, 1975. Michael was born on April 20, 1978. James remarried (Michele) September 15, 1984.

Patricia married William Jenkins Stephenson in 1976. They had one boy: Marc, born July 2, 1981. They adopted a Korean girl, Beth.

Nancy married Steven Grubb in June 1974. They had two children: Christopher born, October 3, 1976 and Benjamin born October 7, 1978.

My second daughter, Peggy, who was married to William J. Johnson in 1944, had four children: Peggy Ann, Douglas, Helen, and Brian.

Peggy Ann married Julian P. McCreary III in 1977. They had two children: Julian P. McCreary IV, born February 17, 1979. Brendan was born June 12, 1983. They were divorced January 29, 1985.

Douglas married Jean Mistrial in 1980. She had a boy from a previous marriage, Chris.

Helen was married to Gary Hagerman – divorced.

She is engaged to marry David Mendes. Wedding date is set for July 14, 1984. They were married July 14, 1984.

Brian has not yet married as of this writing – February 21, 1984.

### **My Grandchildren & great grandchildren (cont'd)**

Our third daughter, Betty (Elizabeth) was married to Finley J. Bown in 1950. They had three children: Richard, Barbara, and Ronald.

Richard has not yet married as of February 1984.

Barbara has not yet married as of February 1984.

Ronald married Claudia Johnson in June 1978. No children yet. They adopted a Chinese girl.

Our fourth daughter, Harriett was married to Alan E. Donnell in 1961. They have two children:

Helen – born September 13, 1967. In high school—eleventh grade as of this writing – February 1984.

Howard – born July 27, 1969. In Junior High School – ninth grade as of this writing – February 1984.

As of now, February 5, 1984, my 83<sup>rd</sup> birthday, I have twelve grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

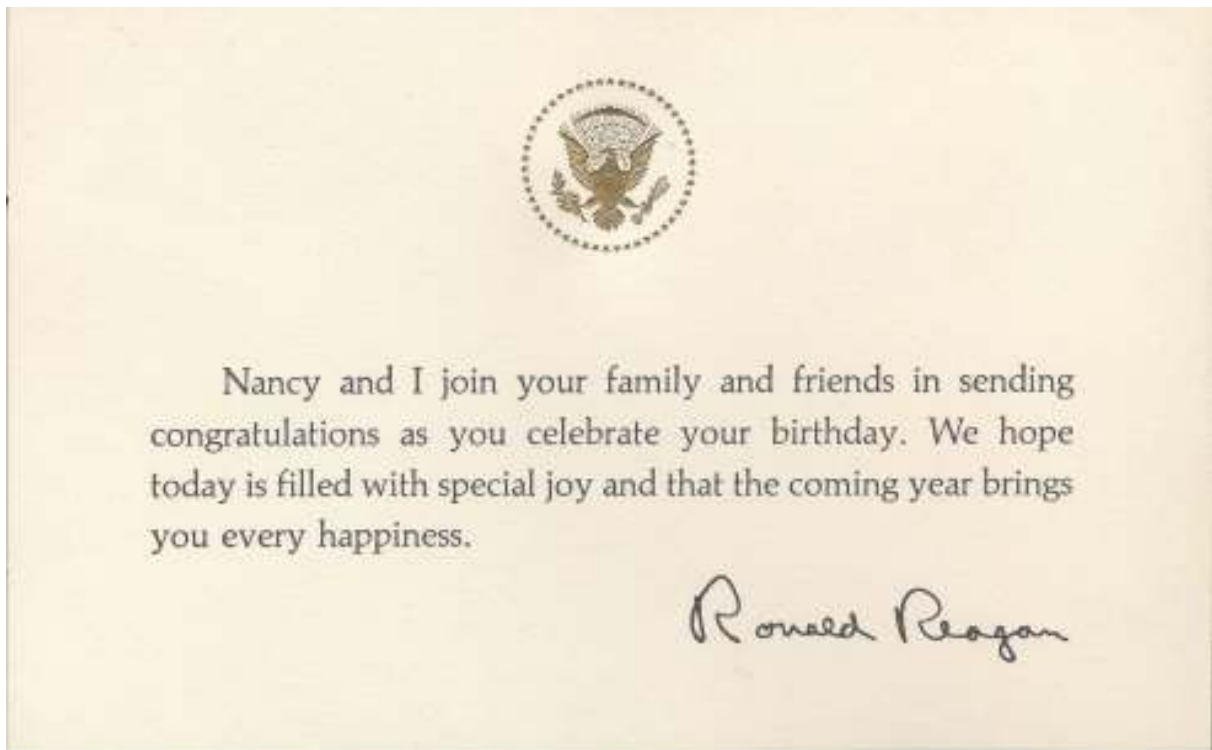
Since I retired, I have been going to all kinds of family gatherings and celebrations, baby showers, baby arrival happy events, as well as younger grandchildren's graduations.

I have been busy visiting my wonderful family. God Bless Them!!!!!! I am a lucky woman. I am thankful for my wonderful—blessed family!!!!!!

### **Special Birthday Celebrations**

My four daughters have been so wonderful to me and have given me special birthday parties with the whole family gathered together each year. Sometimes the party was held in their homes hosted by the one whose home it was, and other times we went out to a restaurant banquet room, hosted by all four of them.

On my 75<sup>th</sup> birthday (February 5, 1976) my oldest daughter, Angagh and her husband, George MacKellar, hosted an intimate dinner party on the ship, Queen Mary for me and my four daughters and their husbands. (The Queen Mary –docked in Long Beach is a luxury shopping center, hotel, and restaurant complex.)



On my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday (February 5, 1981) I received a "Happy Birthday" card from the President of the United States, Ronald Reagan. This was a great thrill for me!!! In fact I received 3 cards from President Reagan!!!



My daughter Peggy, grand-daughter Nancy, and my very good friend Alice Bown had all notified the White House of my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was very exciting!!!

For my birthday celebration that year we had a big Birthday Party at Griswold's Restaurant in Claremont (hosted by my four daughters).

Another Special Birthday – my 82<sup>nd</sup>, birthday was held at Harriet and Alan Donnell's house (my fourth daughter), hosted by all four of my daughters. Harriett had ordered Armenian food—Derevs (rolled grape leaves) cheese borek (made with fillo dough) plus all kinds of other food—ham, salads, etc. That gave the party the Armenian flavor. Everybody liked it. At the party, my grand daughter Patty and her husband, Jenk Stephenson, presented me with a gift photo album to put everybody's picture (at the party) in it. They took instant Polaroid pictures of individual families and put them in the album right at the party!! That was really a wonderful remembrance of the party!!!!



This is me on my 83<sup>rd</sup> birthday, February 5, 1984

This year, my 83<sup>rd</sup> birthday, (February 5, 1984) was tops!!! My family had grown so much, they could not have everybody in one house. So, all four daughters hosted a party at Griswold's Restaurant in Claremont again. Forty people attended!! We were served in a special private banquet room. It was very nice!! At each of these parties we had a large beautifully decorated Birthday Cake and Ice Cream, and a beautiful orchid corsage for Grandma.





This is the picture of my 83<sup>rd</sup> Birthday Party, held at Griswold's Restaurant in Claremont, California

The best Birthday present I could ask for is to see all my wonderful family together, happy, and healthy!!!!!!

### **My parents -- Koulaksezian Family April 24, 1984**

This month (April 1984) I am at my daughter Angagh and her husband George MacKellar's house, and she told me I should write something about my parents and family. So I decided I will do it.

My father – Asdoor Koulaksezian and my mother, Yeghisapet (Elizabeth) Mitilian were born in Marash, which is more inland than Adana—nearer the mountains, in Turkey.

They were married in Marash in 1883 and had two children:

Arthur was born in 1884.

Doodoo (a girl) was born in 1887.

All four came to Adana after 1895 massacre in Marash of Armenians by Turks.

Then they had two more children, born in Adana:

Haigouhi – a girl (me) born February 5, 1901  
Haigaz – a boy, born in 1904

1901 – My sister Doodoo, met John Boyd (a teacher in Boy's school in Tarsus) when John was in Adana visiting my brother, Arthur, who was one of his students.

My sister and John were engaged. He went to America to go to school and became a pharmacist.

1907 – John sent for Doodoo to come to America. A young 19 year old girl could not travel by herself, so my brother, Arthur came to America with her to Seattle, Washington. Arthur was smuggled to the ship from the port of Mersin. A man of military age (23) would not dare to leave the country. Soldiers gave quite a bit of trouble to my mother about this.

Later on when Arthur was well established in America, he sent 50 British pounds per year to us (\$250). Four of us lived on this, when my father got old and couldn't work any more.

1914 – July 28 – The first World War was declared.

1915 – Turkey joined Austria and Germany in war.

1915 – Turks sent all the Armenians in Turkey to some desert called Der Zor, with no food or shelter—where they all died or were killed. My parents and my brother Haigaz (11 years old) were sent to Der Zor too.

I had been attending American Missionary School in Adana as a day student. Miss Towner, Principal of the school, told me to go to her school as a boarding student. So I went to American School – I was saved. America was not in the war yet. I was 13 or 14 years old.

1917 – America got in the war, with the Allies later.

My brother (Haigaz) told me later that as all the Armenians marched in the hot desert sun, my father told him to run away. Haigaz saw our father die of starvation before he ran away. Haigaz was picked up by village Kurds to be a shepherd boy for them. He learned Kurdish. (When he was herding the sheep, he saw the remains of all the people, including his mother's). One day the Kurds were planning to kill him. He understood their language and so he ran away. He ran from place to place for four years. (He has lots of stories to tell.) Then he got sick with a high temperature—he was sitting in the rain under a tree in the wilderness. That's where he was found.

1918 – the war was over. The British soldiers were going around picking up survivors of the holocaust. He was one of them.

They took him to an orphanage in Doert Yol. Later, when the orphanage listed the names of the survivors in a newspaper, one of my girl friends saw my brother's name in there and told me about it.

1919 – By this time I was married and my daughter Angagh was one year old.

My husband wrote to the orphanage that Haigaz's sister was alive and wanted to have him. We had to hire a man to go to the orphanage with clothes for Haigaz and 50 Turkish liras to the school for their services. Then they released Haigaz to him to bring him to Adana to live with us. (I don't remember how much we paid the man.)

Haigaz lived with us and came to America with us.

1984 – Haigaz, now Harry Clark, is married to the former Martha Hallaian (no children) and they live in Fresno. Of course he is now retired (80 years old). In his early years in Fresno, he had a grape vineyard, a chicken ranch and in later years had a grocery store.

My sister Doodoo passed away in 1939—she was 52 years old. Her husband John Boyd died in 1949—he was 76.

They had moved to California from Seattle, Washington in 1920. They had 2 children: Gladys and Haig. Gladys was born in 1909 and Haig was born in 1912 in Seattle, Washington.

Gladys became a pharmacist, and married Clyde Brown (in 1933) who was chief of detectives in Santa Monica Police Department (no children). He passed away in 1981—he was 80. Gladys, now a widow, lives in Santa Monica by herself.

Haig Boyd married Evelyn (now divorced). They had two boys—Clyde and Kenny.

Haig lives by himself in Santa Monica near his sister—now 72. He is working part time as a maitre d' in a Santa Monica restaurant.

My brother, Arthur Clark, passed away in 1940 of a heart attack—he was 56. He was married twice. His first wife was May Odabashian (no children). After she died he married Martha Young (no children). Martha Young Clark now lives in North Hollywood.

### **My Major Travels 1911 – 1973**

In 1911, when I was 10 years old I traveled from Adana to Marash to visit my Aunt and my Grandmother. I went with a caravan of horses that carried sugar, rice, oil, etc. to the mountainous towns. It took 7 days to travel about 100 miles.

Of course we traveled only during the daytime. At night the men had to unload everything, feed the horses. The next morning they had to reload and start all over again. They had special stopping places where there was water.

I was chaperoned by a couple my mother knew from church and trusted.

I rode on a horse sometimes, but mostly on a donkey that was the lead animal of the caravan, which was managed by several men. One of the men on the side guided the donkey. The trails were quite narrow, especially on the mountains—just wide enough for a horse to travel. It was quite an experience for me.

In 1923 – Coming to America

I traveled on a big ship and crossed the ocean 3 times. It took one month to cross the ocean the first 2 times. We traveled 3<sup>rd</sup> class from Istanbul to Ellis Island. The quota was full so they sent us back 3<sup>rd</sup> class to Piraeus, Greece. Third time we crossed the ocean from Piraeus, Greece to Providence, Rhode Island we came 2<sup>nd</sup> class on a different ship. It took 2 weeks. I was seasick the whole time. They would bring my food to my cabin. I couldn't eat any.

In 1923 -- On a train from Providence, Rhode Island via New York, it took 6 days to come to Los Angeles, California.

In 1972 – I flew in a DC-10 jet plane from Los Angeles to Washington D.C. with Angagh. It took 5 hours.

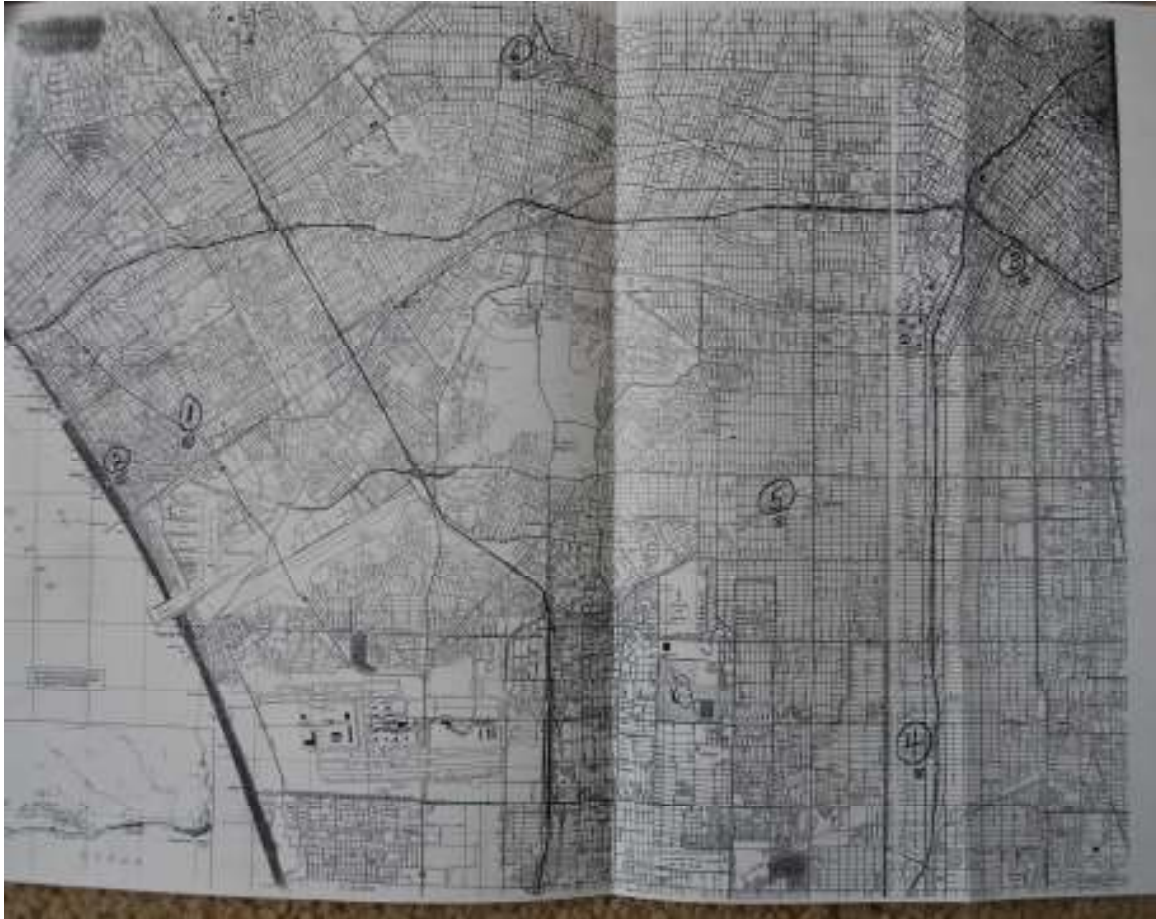
In 1973 – I flew in a 747 jet plane to New York from Los Angeles, with Betty. It took 5 hours.

In 1923 – It took 6 days on a train from New York to Los Angeles.

In 1973 – Fifty years later, it took five hours to fly from Los Angeles to New York.

Traveling has changed quite a lot in 62 years.

In 1923 we came from the Old Country directly to Los Angeles, California. First we lived in Venice, California—part of Los Angeles.



Map of Los Angeles

No. 1 on the map – red X blue circle  
905 Harding Ave – Venice – In a two-room house in the back of my sister’s big house.  
We lived here 3 years.

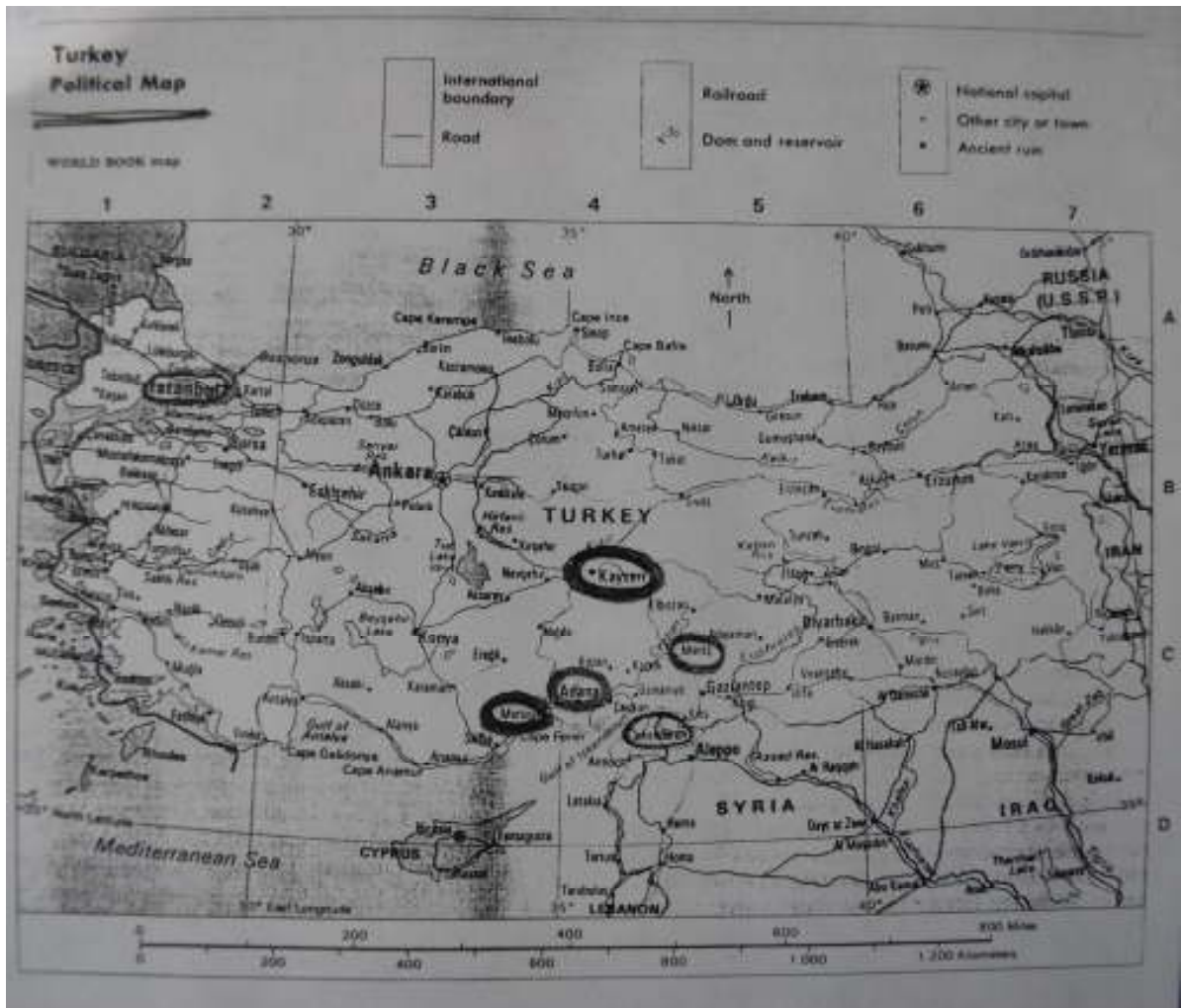
No. 2 on the map  
2012 Alberta St (Canal House) Venice  
9 months – Venice is a beach town

No 3 – 1965 So San Pedro Street Los Angeles  
Lived behind the store – 10 months

No 4 533 W. 109<sup>th</sup> Place – Los Angeles – 3 years

No 5 – 6436 Haas Ave – Los Angeles – First home we bought – 10 years

No 6 – 8645 W. Olympic Blvd – Los Angeles – this is a duplex – we rented lower and  
lived in the upper – 42 years



Map of Turkey – Old Country

I was born in Adana (Orange Circle)  
 Grew up there  
 Went to school there  
 Got married there  
 Had two babies there (one did not live)

Our family left Adana in 1921  
 Traveled (via train) to Iskenderoon (Alexandrette)  
 Then (via boat) to Istanbul (blue circle)  
 My second child was born in Istanbul on 3-26-1922  
 From Istanbul we came to America (via boat)

My husband was born in (Caesaria) Kayseri (Red circle)  
 When he was 7 years old, he and his parents moved to Mersin (red circle)  
 From there his family moved to Adana (orange circle)  
 That's where we met and got married.



My parents and my older brother, Arthur, and my sister, Doodoo were born in Marash (green circle). They moved to Adana between 1895 and 1901, after the 1895 massacre of Marash by the Turks.

## **My Retirement Home**

February 5, 1985

I am 84 years old, a little hard of hearing, my eyesight is not so good. I have to read with a magnifying glass. My right leg is not functioning – Sciatic nerve condition, arthritis in my spine. I have congestive heart failure. My right foot is numb. My legs are swollen. So I have to walk with a cane. Doctor said, I couldn't live alone in my house. Finley and Betty asked me to live with them in Riverside. I did for about 2 years. They took good care of me, but I decided I should go to a Retirement Home. They have their own life to live.

So Today, March 6, 1985

I enrolled in Plymouth Tower in Riverside. This Retirement Home is sponsored by Congregational Church Homes in Riverside. A very nice place – A very cheerful lobby. I have a nice room and bath. Very friendly people – good food. They clean your room once a week – furniture and linen furnished. It's just perfect. Congregational church minister – Mr. Davis comes every Friday at 10:00 AM and gives us a talk on an interesting subject. Every Sunday at 3 PM a different denominational church comes to give church services.

I am thankful I ended up here in this Retirement Home. Oh, I forgot, they have good food. They serve 3 meals a day, seven days a week.

This is Plymouth Tower in Riverside – I am very happy here.

I moved in March 6, 1985

I now live in a Retirement Home – Plymouth Tower in Riverside – A Congregational Church sponsored facility. I like it here very much. They are very good to us residents. They serve us 3 good meals a day, seven days a week. They clean our rooms once a week, change our bed—furnish the linen. The maintenance is very good. Things are done within a few minutes.

I, Helen Kalpakian, am 84 years old on this day, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1985. I will be 85 on February 5, 1986 (maybe). I am writing my life story for grandchildren and great grandchildren to whom it is wholly dedicated. By the time you are old enough to read and appreciate it, I will be very old or maybe gone (you will know me, perhaps, as someone who has to walk carefully and watch her diet).

This day I walk with a cane very carefully so I will not fall. I fell once and cracked a rib, it's on the mend now.

## Addendum

The following article was taken from The Press-Enterprise, Riverside, California on Thursday, July 3, 1986.

**Ellis Island remains etched in memories**

By RICHARD MARTINEZ  
The Press-Enterprise

Freedom, Opportunity, Hot water, Escalators.

Those were a few of the things that brought Helen Kaipakian to the United States — via the Ellis Island immigration station — in 1921.

An Armenian, she has never regretted leaving her homeland of Turkey behind.

With Fourth of July festivities at the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island tomorrow, Kaipakian and two other residents of the Plymouth Tower retirement home in Riverside reflected on their contact with Ellis Island 60 years ago.

Ellis Island was used as a reception center for immigrants from 1892 until 1924. It then served as a immigration station, as well as a detention center for enemy aliens until it closed in 1954. Some 12 million immigrants passed through

during its 60 years of operation. In 1945 it became part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument. Ellis Island was opened to the public in 1976.

To put the Ellis Island experience into a more vivid perspective, the University of California, Riverside's California Museum of Photography provided some photos taken in the early 1900s. The photos are enlargements of stereoscopic negatives in the museum's Keystone-Mast Collection.

For these three Riverside women, Ellis Island was the final hurdle in getting to America. The 60 years since they were there has erased much of that experience from their memories, but some recollections remain vivid.

Hungarian-born Grace Endrud of Plymouth Tower said of her experience in 1920: "I danced all the way to America because there was music on

the boat from morning until night. I was on Ellis Island for only hours and I was only 18. I was young enough to be happy and foolish."

Anna Bilbach, 92, a native of Austria, said because she was traveling second-class on her ship in 1913, she did not actually have to set foot on Ellis Island as third-class and

(See ELLIS, Page B-4)



**Helen Kaipakian**  
No regrets



The article is continues.....

other passenger-immigrants had to do.

"The first- and second-class from the big boat went straight to shore," she recalled.

“The immigration came to our ship, they look at my eyes. I was 19. I was very healthy, young, good looking, everything. They let me go to shore. We were all so happy to be in America.”

Kalpakian, 85, was pregnant when she arrived at Ellis Island in August 1923 with her husband and two small children after a month-long journey by ship from Istanbul.

She spent four days on Ellis Island, then her family was turned away and sent back to sea.

“When we came to Ellis Island we came on a Turkish quota,” said Kalpakian, who speaks with just the hint of an Armenian accent. “The boat had mechanical problems and we were a day later than we were supposed to be there. They had counted the quota and we were left out.”

Kalpakian and her family took a ship to Greece. They returned by ship to America and arrived October 2, 1923. That time they got to bypass Ellis Island and go straight to shore at Providence, R.I. because they had been checked by immigration officials onboard ship. The family was bound for her sister’s home in Ocean Park, which is now part of Santa Monica.

But Ellis Island was Kalpakian’s first taste of America and left some lasting memories.

“When we came to Ellis Island the most amazing thing to me was running hot and cold water,” she said. “You know you take it for granted here. When I saw the hot water I said, ‘What a country!’ “

She remembers Ellis Island as teeming with immigrants. People crowded into rooms, slept on cots and numbers were doled out for physical examinations and interviews.

“I don’t remember a lot because I was caring for two small children,” she said. I was pregnant and I couldn’t keep anything in my stomach.”

Kalpakian does remember why she came. She learned English and learned about America by attending a Congregational missionary school in Turkey.

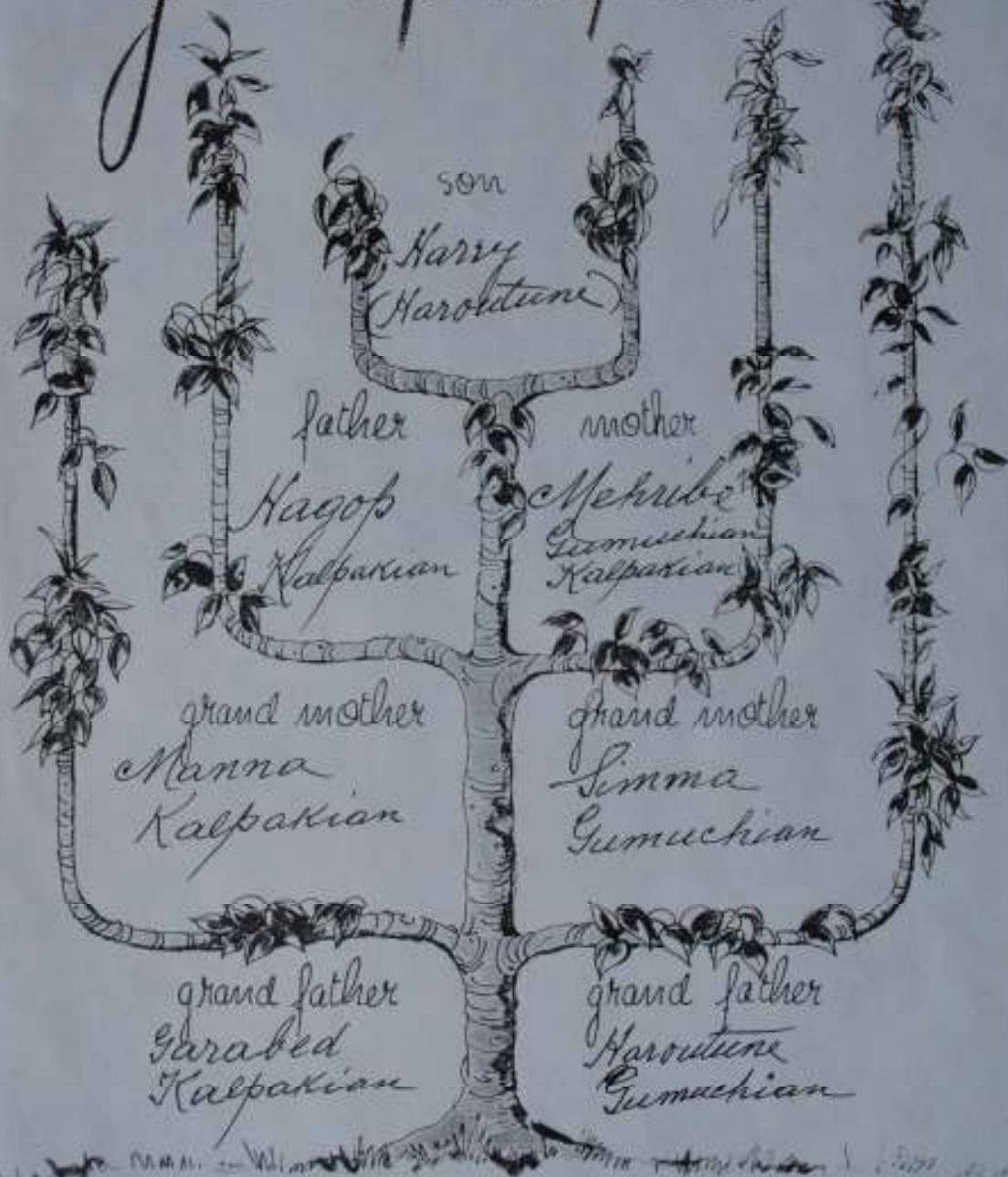
“We all heard so much about America in the missionary school and we all wanted to come to America,” Kalpakian said. “I was telling my children the other day that I once had to write a story about America and I wrote about escalators.

“I had never seen an escalator but I could visualize from what my teacher would say. You step on it, it goes up,” she recalled. “When I got to America the first thing I told my sister was, ‘Now, where’s an escalator?’ She took me to May Co. that used to be Hamburger’s in downtown Los Angeles on 8<sup>th</sup> Street. She say this is escalator. I say I used to visualize it this way.”

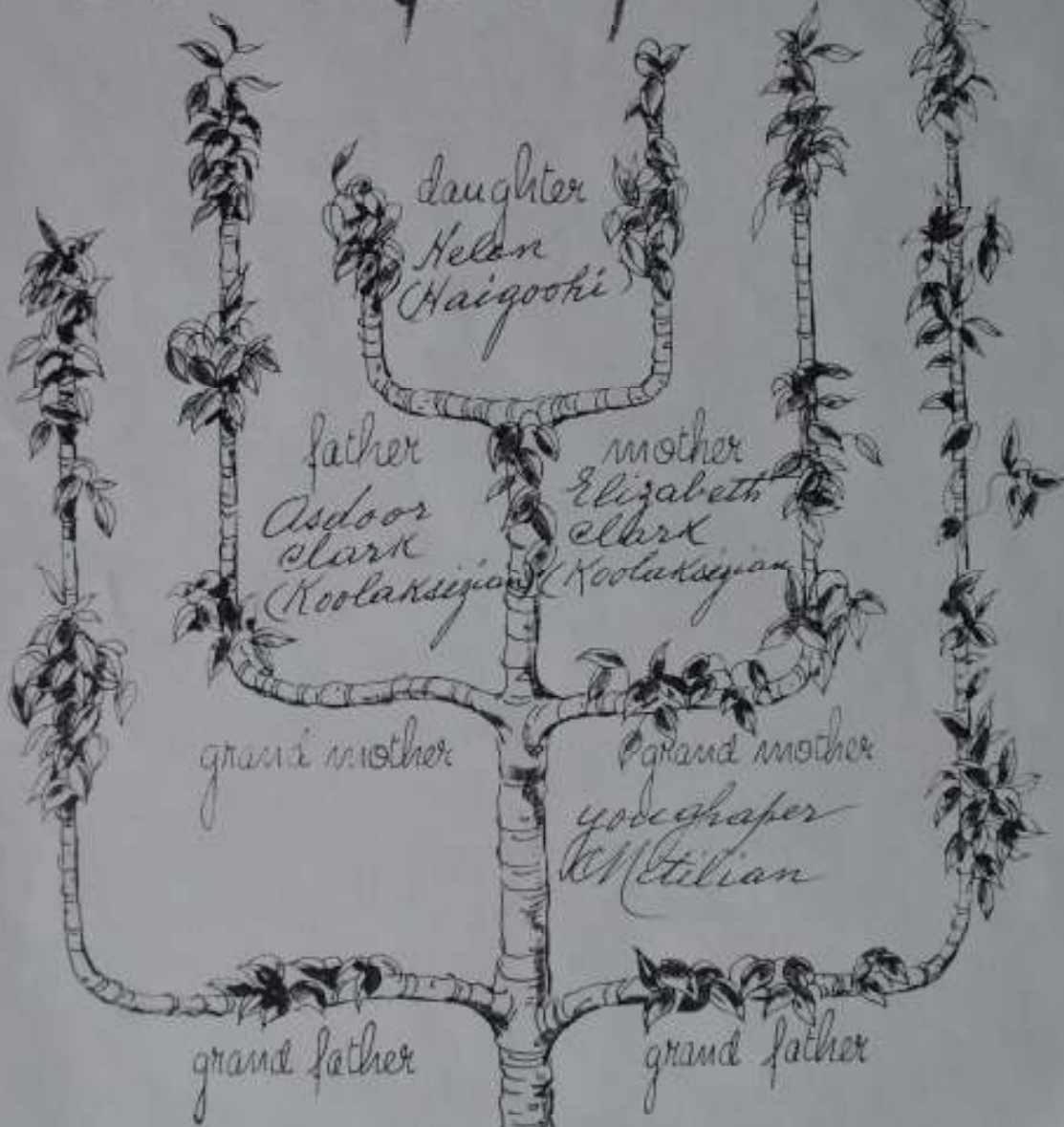
Kalpakian has never regretted coming to America. She and her husband, a grocer, raised four children in West Los Angeles. Kalpakian moved to Riverside in 1963 (actually it was about 1983) when her husband died. Her daughter, Betty Bown, has lived in Riverside 36 years.

Of America, Kalpakian says: “Lots of times I say if I can just relay my feelings to the people who are born here, and take it for granted,” she said. “You have the opportunity here. You are not tortured here. You are not persecuted. The country is so good to you, gives you everything, so many opportunities. I am so thankful to this country.”

# grooms family tree



# Brides family tree





Harry Kalpakian talks about his family.

I was born at Caesarea (Kaysari) Turkish Armenia  
Dec. 12-1887, and I moved 1896 with my parents to  
Mersin (Cilicia). I attended Armenian school in  
Mersin and learned Armenian, French and Turkish.  
I quit school in Feb. 1903, and work in my father's  
business. 1915 during first world war we went  
to Adana. I got married Oct. 18-1917, we had  
our first daughter Angah born in Adana  
Dec. 26-1918, and we left Adana Nov. 1921.  
we went to Alexandrett (Syria) we stayed 4  
months, and March 21-1922 we reach Constan-  
tinople (Istanbul) we stayed about 1 1/2 years,  
our second daughter Peggy was born there  
and we traveled on S. S. Canada (French steam  
ship line) and landed on U. S. Oct. 1-1923 Provi-  
dence, R. I. and New York, and we came to Venice  
California Oct. 8-1923, our 3<sup>rd</sup> daughter  
Elizabeth (Betty) was born in Venice Jan 18 1924  
and we moved to Los Angeles Jan. 1<sup>st</sup> 1928  
I bought my first Grocery store San Pedro, 21<sup>st</sup> Street  
our 4<sup>th</sup> daughter Harriet was born in Los Angeles  
Sept. 9-1935, California admission day

W. M. Kalpakian

Harry Kalpakian family notes

my Grandfather  
born 1824 died 1896  
he was 72 years old  
my Grand Mother died when  
I was baby I dont know not  
my Father was born 1853  
and died 1931. he was 78.  
my sister was born 1884  
she died 1950  
my Brother Garabed  
was born 1890 he died  
1959 June 9.  
my sister Zabel was born  
1896 April 25 she lives  
Damascus Syria she  
got 2 sons and 2 daughters  
my youngest brother  
Nishan was born 1902  
he lives Marseille France  
he has 1 son and 1 daughter

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1120 heart died  
1220 anatomy

1305