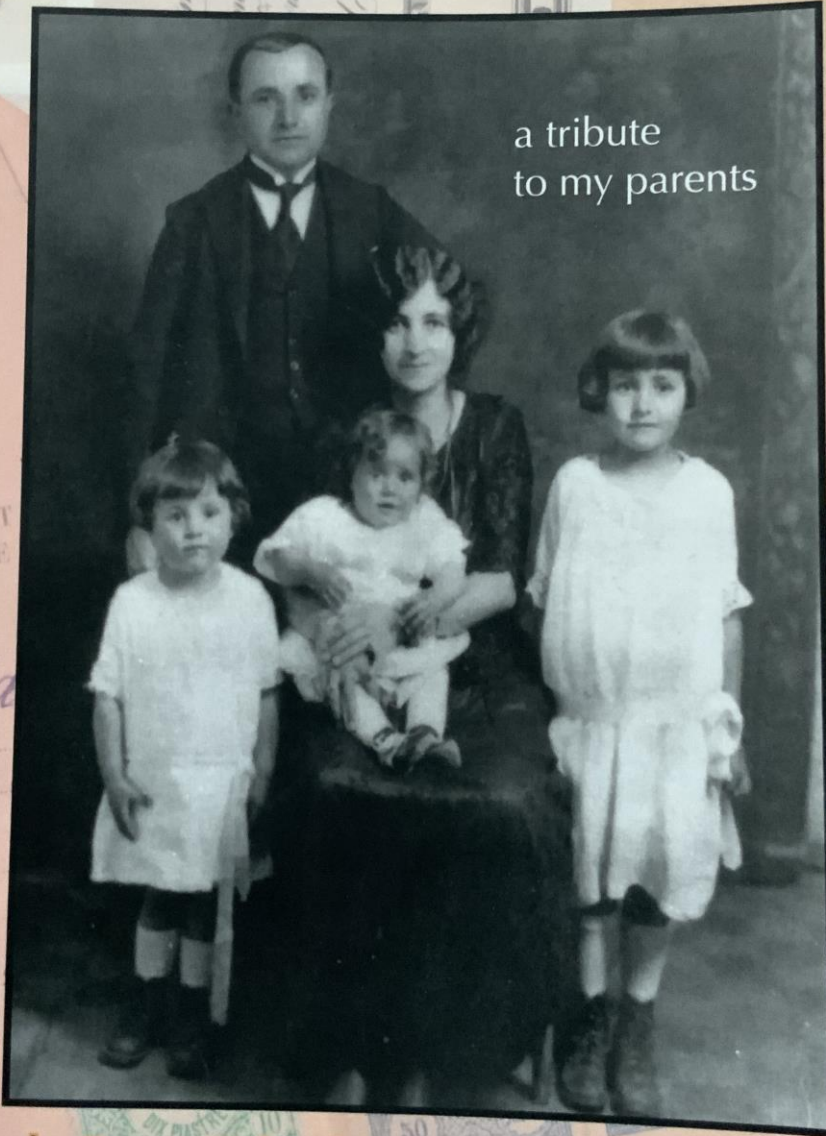


Centennial Memoir



a tribute
to my parents

by Peggy (Pakradouhi) Kalpakian Johnson

CENTENNIAL MEMOIR

A tribute to my parents

*Haroutune and Haigouhi Kalpakian
who became
Harry and Helen Kalpakian*

1917 - 2017

by their daughter
Peggy (Pakradouhi) Kalpakian Johnson

**Centennial Memoir
Tribute to
Harry and Helen Kalpakian**

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The author would like to personally thank Norman L. Green and all the Threshold Documents staff for their time and care.

Front cover photo: Kalpakian family in 1925, two years after their arrival in America.

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Foreword

I recently excerpted a section from my Personal Family Memoir regarding my student days at USC during WWII – *Sunshine and Silence*. That excerpt was included in an anthology, *Memory Into Memoir*, published 2016.

A portion of that same excerpt regarding my student days at USC during WWII was also published in the Spring 2017 issue of the USC Trojan Family Magazine. (Page 44)

At that time I decided to excerpt this section also, a separate tribute to my young, old-country Armenian parents that begins with their 1917 marriage in Adana, Turkey. I felt that their story needed to be told. Their strength, courage and faith were so strong, they never looked back.

At age 97, I feel the powerful weight and responsibility of being the lone survivor of my entire family. As a final tribute to my old-country Armenian parents, I leave a written record of their lives, of their courage, faith and strength.

This is that record.

– pkj

A very special Thank-You for the publication
of this memoir to
my grandson, Bear McCreary

**A Centennial Tribute to my Parents
Haroutune and Haigouhi Kalpakian
1917 - 2017**

This memoir is to pay tribute to – and to memorialize – the strength, courage and sheer guts of my young, old-country parents, Haroutune and Haigouhi Kalpakian (Harry and Helen), who a century ago, came to America, became loyal American citizens, and taught their young family – by example – truth, love, strength, courage, honesty and faith – without ever having to use those exact words. At age 97 (in 2019), the only living member of the original Harry and Helen Kalpakian family (four daughters), I feel in my heart the powerful responsibility, necessity, of telling their story – the story of my brave, young, old-country parents.

After experiencing utter terror, genocidal family deaths, total destruction of their known world in Turkey, the young couple packed up their two small daughters (myself, age eighteen months, and Angagh – hereinafter called Angie – age 4), their few worldly goods and traveled half way around the world to start a new life in the United States of America (and Mama was pregnant on the entire trip!). There was no going back. They now faced new challenges: to raise a family in a new world, to earn a living in a new country, to learn a new language, new customs. Sheer guts.

This is a heart-filled, lively family love story of how my old-country- Armenian-parents, Haroutune and Haigouhi Kalpakian, became American-Armenian-parents to their four beloved American-Armenian daughters.

CHAPTER ONE THE OLD COUNTRY

A love story in time of War

Both of my parents grew up as Armenians in Turkey in the Ottoman Empire. My father's family was from Mersin, a seaport on the Mediterranean. My mother's family was originally from Marash. At the time of the Turkish genocide of the Armenian people, they were both living in Adana in southeastern Turkey. My father, Haroutune Kalpakian was born in 1887. My mother, Haigouhi Kulaksuzian (Koolock-sooz-ian) was born in 1901.

Haigouhi was the third of four children. She was born in 1901 and her little brother Haigaz in 1905; they had an older brother and sister who were born in the 1890s, Asdoor (Arthur) and Dudu. When the genocide began, Art and Dudu had already left Turkey and emigrated to America. Haigouhi and Haigaz lived with their mother, Yasabet, and father, Asdoor, in Adana.



Haigouhi and Haigaz 1906, Adana Turkey

I should briefly pause here to insert Haigouhi's incredible story of survival during the 1915 Turkish genocide of the Armenian people. At age 14 when the terrors started, she was a day student in an American Congregational Church School for Girls in Adana, Turkey. Her teacher, Miss Grace Towner, asked Haigouhi's mother if she would permit Haigouhi to move into the school as a live-in student. Haigouhi could work and teach in the school for her room and board. In 1915 the Americans were not yet in World War I. Miss Towner would have known the American school was a safe place for her Armenian student.

Haigouhi's mother agreed. (Her mother, Yasabeth, had already placed all of their family's pictures in a box – including those family members in America – and buried it under the house – so the Turks could not recognize them as Armenians.) Haigouhi said goodbye to her mother and father and little brother and returned with Miss Towner to the school. Shortly thereafter, they were rounded up with other Armenians and marched into the desert. Here, her father died of starvation, her mother was killed and her little brother, Haigaz, ran away into the desert.

(More of Haigaz's story later.)

In fact, being a student in the American school did save Haigouhi's life. On the roof of the school, Miss Towner had Haigouhi and a few other students spread out a large American flag and fasten it down. Any combatants flying over the city would know this was an American domain. Haigouhi did well in the American Congregational School where she learned English and French languages, American History, English History, World History, math, algebra and Armenian and Turkish languages. (Only Turkish language was allowed to be spoken publicly. There were no public schools in Adana, Turkey.)

To cover her tuition and boarding fees, Haigouhi made her French teacher's bed every day as well as clean her bedroom weekly. She must surely have admired her teachers there, all brave and educated women. She also waited on tables in the teachers' dining room and tutored students in English as well as teaching regular classes when she was a Senior.

Haigouhi graduated from the Adana Girls Seminary in April, 1917. In the graduation picture, she is the only one smiling.



*1917 Graduating class at the Adana Girls Seminary, Adana, Turkey.
Haigouhi second from right middle row (next to the girl in black).
Miss Towner first on left in the back row.*

* * *

Incidentally, my mother, Haigouhi, tells us in her old-age memoir that when she was a student at the American Congregational School, she was given an English class assignment to write an essay about America. She wrote it about Escalators – “Moving Stairs in America.” Of course, she had never *seen* escalators; she wrote what she *thought* they were. Almost like magic. Almost unbelievable.

Years later, soon after her arrival in America, she asked her sister to take her to see escalators – They went to the May Company at 8th and Broadway in downtown Los Angeles. For Haigouhi to see and ride on escalators must surely have been a childhood dream fulfilled!

* * *

While she was a student there, Haigouhi’s aunt, who worked in a factory where they made canvas for the Turkish war effort, approached her. Her aunt wanted Haigouhi to meet the young, single, handsome young Armenian foreman in the factory. She invited Haigouhi, the young man, his mother and sister to her home for an afternoon visit.

Haigouhi's aunt told her, "After they say hello, you make some Turkish coffee - and serve it. If his mother says, 'This is good coffee,' they like you, and the wedding plans can go forward." The young man's mother did compliment Haigouhi's coffee.

Haigouhi said she liked the prospective husband, but she had one question – "Can he read and write?"

The answer was no – and Haigouhi said, "Forget it! To read and write is very important to me! I can read and write four languages! I want a husband who is literate!"

* * *

While she was a student and teacher, Haigouhi and her classmates apparently often visited the dry goods shop where a handsome young clerk, Haroutune Kalpakian, worked. No doubt she and Haroutune carried on a flirtation which led, in time, to his asking Miss Towner for permission to marry Haigouhi. Despite the fact that his religion was Armenian Apostolic, Miss Towner agreed – the times were too uncertain to require a Protestant husband for her young student. In April 1917 America had entered the War. I'm sure Haigouhi's parting with Miss Towner was very emotional and sad. (Miss Towner did ask Haroutune for the equivalent of \$50 to cover Haigouhi's room and board – which he paid.)

Because of the turbulent times, an Armenian Apostolic Priest came to Haroutune's family home to perform the marriage on October 18, 1917. It was too risky for an Armenian group to appear in a public place together, like a church, perhaps especially not in a church.



Haigouhi and Haroutune Kalpakian wedding October 1917.

Their first daughter was born in Adana in December, 1918, one month following the Armistice. My father, a scholar of Armenian history and politics named her Angaghouhi (Independence) in hopes that Armenia would gain and keep its independence.

One of Haroutune's relatives who had a textile importing business in Manchester, England, wanted to open a branch in Russia. He offered Haroutune a contract to accept, which he did. The relative then added that in England, it was also required that his wife sign the contract as well.

Haigouhi refused. She argued that neither of them spoke Russian and that it would be better to go to America, where she had already-established family - and also that she already could speak English.

(Footnote: In my entire adult life whenever I saw babushka-head-covered Russian women, I said a silent THANK-YOU to my mother.)

For the Kalpakian family, emigration was the only viable escape. By 1920 my dad's own family had broken up and already emigrated all over the world – his younger brother, Nishan, and his parents went to Romania, others to Jerusalem. He never saw any of them again.

By 1921 it was no longer safe for Armenians to stay in Adana. They went first to Alexandrette, Syria and stayed for 4 months. From there they took the ship, the Bukovina, across the Mediterranean to Constantinople where I was born March 26, 1922. My father named me, his second daughter, Pakradouhi, after an ancient Armenian Crusades-era prince, Pakrad. My father had relatives in Constantinople. He worked in their rug business while my parents made preparations to go to the United States where Haigouhi's older sister and brother-in-law, Dudu and John Boyd, lived in Los Angeles, California.

They got their passports on March 26th, 1923, my first birthday. The immigration process was lengthy and tedious, and no doubt expensive, not just fees, but bribes. His brother-in-law, John Boyd signed a paper for the U.S. Government vowing that we would not be a burden to the U.S. He would vouch for us. With these many documents in hand, and our household goods accounted for (I have put a partial list of these goods at the end of this memoir), and accompanied by mom's younger brother, Haigaz, we boarded the ship Constantinople, and sailed for America.



Passport photo of the Kalpakian family, Pakradouhi (babe in arms) Haigouhi, Angah, Haroutune – Constantinople, Turkey, March 1923.

CHAPTER TWO THE JOURNEY

No going back: on crossing the Atlantic twice in search of a new life.

We traveled 3rd Class, and our ship had mechanical problems in mid-Atlantic, and we were forced to stop for one full day till the repairs were complete. Because of this we arrived a little late at Ellis Island. The passengers disembarked 1st Class first, then 2nd Class, and by the time they got to 3rd class, *the quota had been filled*. So there we were on Ellis Island – in sight of New York City and the Statue of Liberty. We had arrived in America on August 2, 1923, which was the date of the funeral of President Warren G. Harding, who had died after a short illness. All of the federal offices were closed – including those on Ellis Island. All flags were at half mast. But our little family and Mom’s younger brother, Haigaz, could not be processed in any event. The quota was filled and we had to get back on the ship (a Greek vessel) and go to Piraeus, Greece.

Imagine the disappointment! Disappointment! Disappointment!

Years later, when Mama told us about this Ellis Island experience, she mentioned only her great delight, surprise and astonishment at hot water coming out of the faucets!!! She never mentioned the terrible disappointment.



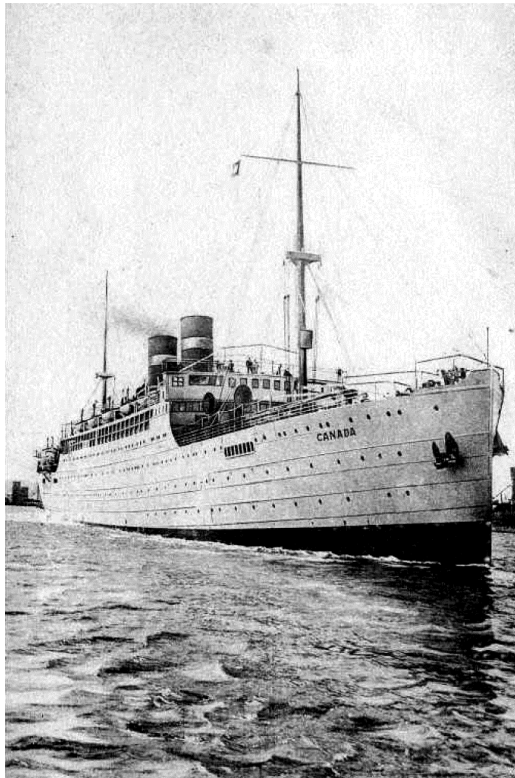
Ellis Island, early 20th Century.

In 1996 my daughter Laura and I went to Ellis Island and found my name and my family’s names on the Ellis Island Computer. We also found our names on the Memorial Wall and were able to pencil-draw over our names for mementos.

* * *

Leaving New York we re-crossed the Atlantic and the Mediterranean and came to Piraeus, Greece. Because we had one-way passports to America, the Greek Government said we must take the next ship to America –which was not leaving for two weeks. For those two weeks, we ate bread and tomato-and-onion salads. (Eating anything was hard for my mom because she was three months pregnant when they started.)

On September 14, 1923, we traveled to America again – on the Steamship Canada – this time Second Class! We disembarked at Providence, Rhode Island in the fall of 1923.



The Canada, The ship that brought the Kalpakians from Piraeus, Greece to the US.

My mother was the only one of us who could speak English. She was told that the next train to New York was at 8 am the following morning. So there we were, my parents, 4-year-old Angagh and one-and-a-half-year-old me; we spent the whole night on a bench in the train station. The following morning, the train took us to New York where my father had a distant relative, a Mr. Isakoolian. He was my

dad's cousin's brother-in-law, a man my dad had never met, who was extremely nice to us. Mr. Isakoolian took us to a hotel, arranged for our stay one night and two days. This is where my parents saw – for the first time – an indoor bathtub and flushing indoor toilet. He also took us to a restaurant for dinner that first night.

For our train trip to Los Angeles, Mr. Isakoolian brought us ham sandwiches for the journey. And he hired a taxi to take us to the train station. My parents were puzzled why the taxi stopped so frequently. He explained traffic signals to my parents – who had never seen traffic signals in Turkey.

From New York, we took the train – changed trains in Chicago – to Los Angeles, California – a 6-day trip – to where Mom's sister and family lived. Dudu's husband, John Boyd, had signed a paper for the U.S. Government vowing that we would not be a burden to the U.S. He would vouch for us.

I have often wondered how we looked to the Boyds and to Uncle Art on our arrival in 1923. The Boyds had been successful Americans for several years. I wondered about that reunion of the sisters. Dudu and Haigouhi had not seen each other since 1907. Dudu had not seen her little brother Haigaz since he was 2 years old – now he was 17. Auntie Dudu had teenage American children by now, Gladys and Haig Boyd. The teenagers may have thought we looked “right off the boat.” Mama, age 22, was 6 months pregnant, her long, heavy skirt hung lopsided due to the pregnancy. Her two small daughters clung to her skirt. Did we smell of moth balls? Maybe. I don't know. Mama could speak some English, the rest of us could not. In my mother's old-age memoir, she says that the Boyds gave a party for us when we arrived. I, as a toddler, of course have no memory of this party, but I sincerely hope they gave us a little time to recover from that grueling trip before we were trotted out to meet total strangers.



Page from the Kalpakians' Turkish passport

Chapter Three The New Country

In my very old age (97), when I see an American flag flying in the breeze, my heart skips a beat – a special silent thank-you to my old-country parents who were truly young in heart.

—pkj

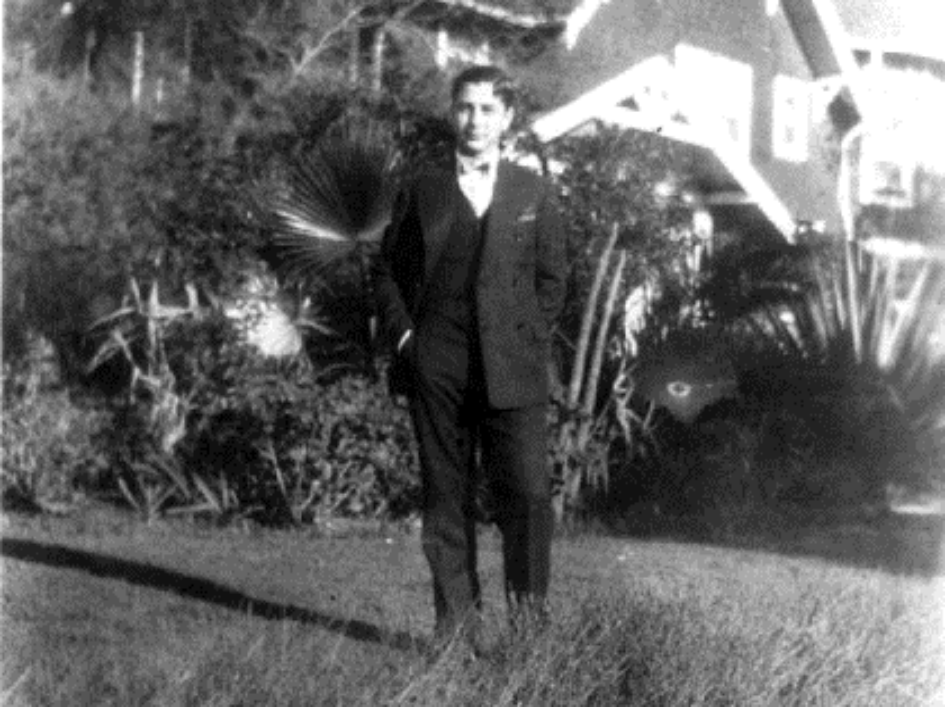
Haigouhi (my mom) was born in 1901 in Adana, Turkey, and her brother Haigaz in 1905; they also had an older brother and sister who were born in the 1890's, Asdoor (Arthur) and Dudu. Arthur had been a student in a Boys' School in Tarsus, where his English teacher was John Boyajian (Boyd). When John was visiting his student, Arthur, in Adana, he met and fell in love with Arthur's sister, Dudu. John decided to emigrate to the Seattle area of the U.S. where he had already-established relatives; he asked Dudu to come to Seattle – and marry him.

Arthur accompanied his sister on the trip--narrowly escaping conscription into the Turkish Army - which had been looking for 23-year-old Arthur for some time. So Dudu boarded the ship alone and Arthur swam out to the ship at another close port. Later, the Turks searched Arthur's mother's home many times, looking for him – they gave her a hard time.



Uncle Art Clark (Asdoor Kulaksuzian) 1920s Los Angeles.

John and Dudu married in Seattle. John Boyajian changed his name to John Boyd. Asdoor Kulaksuzian changed his name to Arthur Clark. These names were rather like the originals, but allowed these immigrants to assimilate more easily. The Boyd's daughter, Gladys, was born about 1909. As a baby she suffered in the damp Seattle climate. The Boyds and Art moved to Venice, California, for their baby daughter's health.



Haig Boyd 905 Harding Ave. circa 1922.

By 1923 John Boyd, now a pharmacist, owned a couple of drug stores in the Venice / Santa Monica area. John and Dudu and their two children and Art as well, all lived in a lovely 10-room two-story home, 905 Harding Avenue in Venice. At the back of their large lot was a two-room gardener's cottage – which is where we lived when we arrived.



905 Harding Ave, as it appeared in 2019

In her old age memoir, Mama especially notes how awed we were by their home and their lifestyle, right down to the big copper washing machine in the basement. We were also awed by their Lincoln sedan. That first Christmas someone took a photograph of my sister and me and all our toys, a photograph that would have been unthinkable in the old country.

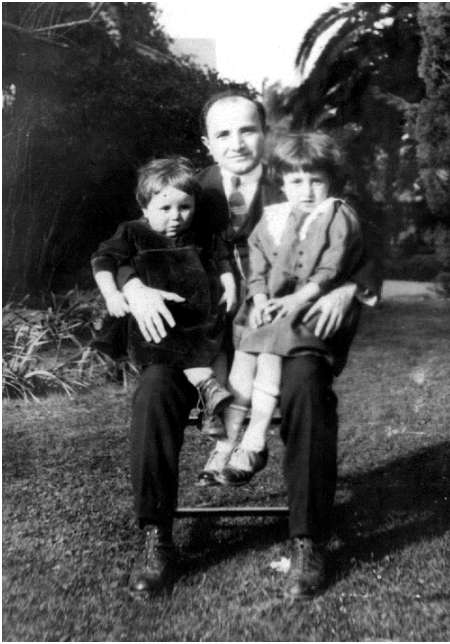
Three months after our arrival, on January 18, 1924, Mama gave birth to my sister, Elizabeth Armenouhi Kalpakian, our first born American Citizen sister. She was allergic to cow's milk - and they found she needed goat's milk, which was very hard to find in 1924. They solved it by bringing a goat to the spacious back yard of Auntie Dudu's home.

The little, two-room former gardener's cottage was surely crowded now, but our family was happy to be together in America, safe from the terrors of genocide – and ready to start our new life as Americans.



Haigouhi Kalpakian & Dudu Boyd, her sister – Venice CA, c. 1924

Teenagers Gladys and Haig Boyd doted on us kids. They called me Peach Face – fat cheeks. They said no one could pronounce Pakradouhi, and so, our American cousins named me Peggy – a popular name for girls in the Twenties. Angie and I called Gladys Gassie. While I was still a tot, I somehow climbed up a ladder to the garage roof, and I was afraid to come down. Haig, then a young teen, climbed to rescue me. While living in the gardener's cottage, I also remember Uncle Art's wedding in about 1926. As a 4-year-old, I sat on the stairway of the great front hall and watched the dancing and wedding festivities.



Harotoune Kalpakian & his daughters, Peggy & Angah, 1924 lawn of 905 Harding.



Haigoui & Harotoune Kalpakian, c. 1924, Los Angeles, CA.

* * *

Like her father, Gladys became a pharmacist (USC School of Pharmacy) and became a staff pharmacist at St. John's Hospital in Santa Monica for many years. She married Clyde Brown, a beloved Santa Monica Chief of Detectives; they had no children. Haig became a business man, married and had two sons. Following his divorce, his sister Gladys and her husband helped to raise, adore, and support those boys. Clyde and Kenneth Boyd later became an attorney and a physician. I almost forgot to mention that Gladys, as a teenager and young woman, was a talented, accomplished saxophonist. Her photograph, with saxophone, is presently at Laura's house. Music was always a part of our extended family as well as our immediate family.

* * *

Mama could speak English, having been educated in an American Missionary Congregational School in Adana, Turkey, but Daddy could not. At age 35, he had to learn a new language. Daunting? Yes. And time was of the essence. He had the responsibility of providing for his growing family, two little daughters and the new baby, Elizabeth. After taking English language classes at Manual Arts High School

Night School (with Haigaz), he worked in a family friend's kewpie doll factory. After a while he clerked in a relative's cigar store at Venice Beach where basically, all he had to say was, "Cigar? Cigarette? Thank you."

I have often thought of my father's experience with lack-of-language and how daunted he must have felt. For a few months in 1988, my daughter Laura, her two sons and my husband, Bill and I all moved to Italy where Laura had a teaching job. I had no Italian at all. When I met our next door neighbor at the Campo, I wanted to have a conversation with him, but all I could say was "What a lovely day it is." Other than that, I was speechless. Imagine Daddy in that situation, knowing he had to speak the English language in order to work.

However, when it became necessary for my dad to converse in English, his charming personality overshadowed his lack of vocabulary. Whenever he was asked his nationality, he always replied [first] that he was an American Citizen, and [second] that he was Armenian. His customers loved him. They called him by his first name – Harry.

Angie started Kindergarten when we lived behind the Boyd's big house. *She could not speak English.* Her Kindergarten teacher came to our house and told Mama that she should teach her daughter to speak English. She also told Mama that we should speak English in the home so that Angie could learn English faster. Mama also realized that Daddy could learn English faster – so that's what we did. And that is how we kids grew up without speaking Armenian or even Turkish. When the parents didn't want us to know what they were talking about, they spoke in old country languages. Later, when I heard them say ICK-IN-GEE (Turkish, I think, for the number TWO), I knew they were talking about me (second child), and I paid special attention. I tried to pick up a word here and there, but I never really did. Angie could pretty well understand the parents when they spoke in other languages, but the rest of us could not. Years later, at our parents' graves, none of us could understand the Armenian priests or pastors' eulogies or blessings.

Some time after Betty was born, Mama, now in her mid-twenties, gradually became an American young woman of the Twenties. She bobbed her hair, used cosmetics, wore high heels and trendy short skirts. She used Coty Face powder and her favorite cologne was Rosewater and Glycerin. In a word, she had Style. She was beautiful. She worked in her brother-in-law's drug store and in a relative's cigar store.



Haigouhi Kalpakian, 1924



Helen Kalpakian, 1926
Both photos 905 Harding.

In 1927 we moved to 2012 Alberta Street, a furnished, one-bedroom white stucco bungalow near the Venice Canal. My mother's memoir says, "It seemed like a palace to us (!)" It was there that a door-to-door photo salesman offered to take a picture of Mom's two younger kids – Betty and me - ages 3 and 5. (Angie must have been at school.) Mama dressed us in our hand-sewn gold-colored pongee dresses for the picture. This photo has since been enlarged and copied many times and is one of our family's best-loved pictures.



Betty and Peggy Kalpakian c. 1927

We didn't stay there very long. In January, 1928 we moved to the corner of San Pedro and 21st Street where my father bought a small grocery store. In the old country, my father had been a rug merchant, but in America he decided to sell a product that is necessary to everyone – food. And also he knew his family would never go hungry.

This store had unfurnished living quarters attached. Mama could work in the store part-time and also keep house and children. In this home, my sisters and I slept on inverted orange crates. Mama worked side-by-side with Dad in his grocery stores for his entire working life – Their marriage was one of love and partnership.

For my 6th birthday March 26, 1928, Mama gave me a birthday party. I have always wondered, how did she know how to give a child's American birthday party? Certainly they would not have done that in Turkey. Perhaps Angie went to one for one of her friends. At my party a Mexican neighbor boy came and brought me a gift of an 8-inch tall pink pitcher, wrapped in green tissue paper. (Please don't ask me how I remember this, I just do!) I treasured that little pink pitcher. To me, that party was the most wonderful, elegant birthday party ever hosted. To this day, it brings tears to my eyes remembering it.

* * *

In about 1929 my father bought a larger grocery store at 109th and Figueroa Streets in L.A, which had a separate butcher area – plus an Italian butcher who played his accordion when he was not busy in his shop. We kids loved to hear Mr. Martillero play and sing Italian songs.



*Harry Kalpakian & his daughters, Peggy, Betty and Angah
in front of their 533 West 109th Place home, 1930*

From that store we could make the short walk down the alley to our rented house on West 109th Place. It was a yellow-and-white frame house, two-bedroom, one-bath, an ice box in the kitchen, with a nice front and back yard, and also a one-car frame garage. We kids played a game we called Annie Annie Over. We sing-song-sang “ANNIE ANNIE OVER!” and threw a volley-ball-sized rubber ball over the garage and someone caught it on the other side. Then they would do the same. That’s all I remember about the game. There was also a long driveway – the kind that had two narrow strips of concrete – with dirt and grass between them. There were geraniums that grew around the house without any care, plus I remember a tall hollyhock plant.

Once we girls entertained our parents with a “radio” in the living room. We didn’t have a real radio, but we had a wooden box. One of us turned “the dial” while

the other two hid in the box and talked and sang like radio announcers. Our parents clapped and enjoyed the show.

Betty and I played with empty thread spools – into which we inserted used crayon-ends who we pretended were cowboys and horses. Apparently we had seen cowboy movies and enjoyed them. On rainy days we also played Hop Scotch on one of the rugs we had brought from the old country. While Mama and Daddy worked in the store, Angie babysat Betty and me a lot. She also sewed dresses for our dolls. For a playtime snack, we spread butter on a slice of bread – and sprinkled sugar on it.

When Daddy came home from work, he was very tired having been on his feet all day; one of us kids took his shoes off (old country high tops) and brought him slippers.

Mama's younger brother, Haigaz, helped Daddy select a car for us: a 1925 used Star Touring Sedan – with isinglass window covers which could be snapped in place in case of rain. Haigaz taught Mama how to drive, and Mom taught Dad. Dad delivered groceries in our 1925 Star to his regular customers. We were very proud of that 1925 used Star. We kept it in the garage. We have a snapshot of Dad sitting proudly in the driver's seat.

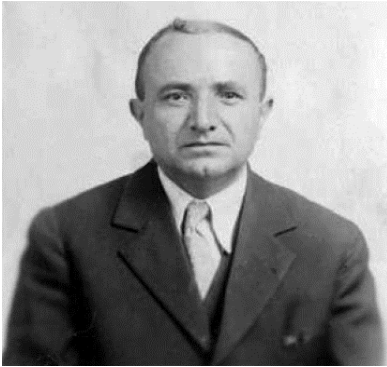
* * *

The Figueroa Street Store was Dad's most successful grocery store. It was the Depression and he extended credit to his regular customers and collected at the end of the month. One customer, the Allbright family (with 2 little girls) couldn't pay their grocery bill. Mrs. Allbright was an artist; in exchange for groceries for her family, Mrs. Allbright gave art oil painting lessons to Angie and me. Angie may have had the talent, but I did not. I wish Mrs. Allbright would have painted portraits of us kids – instead of giving Angie and me art lessons. However, I still have one of the paintings Mrs. Allbright helped me with.

* * *

About this time Mom and Dad began the process to apply for U.S. Citizenship which took years. I feel certain that Haigaz, Mama's younger brother, began his citizenship process then too. His old-country name was Haigazoon(High-gaz-oon) Kulaksuzian (Koo-lock-sooz-ian). He decided to follow his brother Art's lead, and change his last name to Clark. After naturalization his new American name was Harry Clark. Mama too, changed her maiden name from Kulaksuzian to Clark.

They went to night school, took the tests and after a specific period, they appeared in Federal Court and on April 24, 1931 became U.S. citizens - their names changed now to Harry and Helen Kalpakian. Because Angie and I were born in the old country (without birth certificates), both of us became automatic citizens by derivation - which meant that we were minors when we entered the country with our parents and thereby became citizens by derivation. Later, when I was 21 and Angie was 25, our parents took steps for us to have our own citizenship papers.



Citizenship photos of Harry and Helen Kalpakian, 1931

They hired an Armenian woman, Marie Philibossian, to do the legal digging necessary to have our own citizenship papers. Otherwise, we would always have to produce our parents' citizenship papers in order to prove our own. This was very far-sighted on their part.

Mrs. Philibossian told me that if I wished to change my name, this was the time to do it. I elected to be Peggy Kalpakian, since that was the name I used to enter Kindergarten. Angie elected to keep her Armenian name.

At age 21, I received a letter asking me to appear in Federal Court in Los Angeles on August 5, 1943 for my final citizenship status. It was such a major milestone for me – My family would have gone with me, but my parents were working at our store, Angie was teaching in Fontana and Betty was still in high school. So...in the courtroom, I stood alone, trembling, face-to-face with the Judge, my right arm raised – and with emotional tears blurring my vision, I repeated, after him, the full, lengthy Oath of Allegiance to the United States of America, so help me God. As a result of this momentous, heartfelt occasion, I now have my own American Citizenship Derivation Paper (with my 21-year-old picture) dated August 5, 1943, hanging on the wall in this room when I am 97 years old.

Form N 560

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. A-73585

CERTIFICATE OF DERIVATIVE CITIZENSHIP

Application No. 73-585

Personal description of holder(s) of date of issuance of this certificate: for female 1908 years, color White, complexion Light, color of eyes Brown, color of hair Brown, height 5 feet 2 inches, weight 100 pounds, visible distinctive marks None on third finger of left hand British former nationality

Married status Single

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(s)

The United States of America
District of Columbia

Best known that PEGGY KALPAKIAN
now residing at 8058 East Olympic Boulevard, Los Angeles, California
having applied to the Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization for a certificate of derivative citizenship pursuant to Section 203 of the Nationality Act of 1940, having proved to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that (1) he is now in the United States of America and is a citizen thereof through the naturalization of her father, Harry Kalpakian, on April 10, 1901, by the United States District Court at Los Angeles, California, applicant being then a minor and having resided permanently in the United States since October 1, 1928.

that is he is the daughter of the person last mentioned, and the applicant having taken the prescribed oath of allegiance and complied with all of the other applicable requirements of the Nationality Act and Regulations.

Hence therefore, in pursuance of the authority contained in Section 203 of the Nationality Act of 1940, this certificate of citizenship is issued this 25th day of AUGUST, 1943, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and fortythree, and of our Independence the one hundred and seventy year, and the seal of the Department of Interior.

It is a violation of the U.S. Code (and punishable as such) to copy, print, photograph, or otherwise illegally use this certificate.

DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR

*Peggy Kalpakian's Certificate of Citizenship
August 5th 1943*

Fast Forward here – 71 years – to July 4, 2014, when I was a 92-year-old widow, living alone in Bellingham, Washington. As I sat enjoying first-of-the-morning coffee, I turned on the TV and FROZE when I saw President Obama leading the Oath of Allegiance to a roomful of new American Naturalized Citizens in DC. I was riveted. Hearing the Oath of Allegiance administered again brought back a memory-rush of my 21-year-old-self standing alone in Federal Court in Los Angeles, right arm raised, taking the Oath of Allegiance to the United States of America. Suddenly tears gushed to my eyes, tears of appreciation for my gutsy, young-in-heart old country parents. I was limp with emotion. I said to myself, “Happy Fourth of July, Old Girl!”

* * *

As we girls grew up we corrected Daddy’s English – he was very grateful and re-pronounced words correctly. (“What means this?”) We also corrected his agreement of subject and verb. He was a fast learner and improved his English and vocabulary rapidly.

I remember vividly when I was nineteen and worked at the bank next to the USC campus. I mentioned to my boss, Mr. Cunningham, in passing that my father was Ap-os-til-ic —because that was how we all pronounced that word. Finally Mr. Cunningham asked me, “Why do you pronounce that wrong? It’s Apostolic.” I went right home and told Dad how to say it correctly.

I remember on the 4th of July probably 1929 or maybe 1930, our parents bought sparklers for us and also a snake that wiggled on the sidewalk and made a sharp pop. In front of our house, we waved our sparklers and were awed by the fake snake. The parents wanted us to grow up American – and we were.

* * *

At this time Los Angeles was starting to beautify the city in anticipation of the forthcoming 1932 Olympic Games. The City started planting small palm trees all along South Figueroa Street where Daddy’s store was located. We lived about 30 or 40 blocks from the Coliseum at Exposition Park where the Games would be played. Often on Sundays we used to take a picnic lunch and go to Exposition Park where there was a lovely rose garden, a playground and maybe a small museum or two, as I recall. We felt as if the Olympic Games were going to be played in our backyard.

* * *

(2017 Footnote: I have heard that Olympic Boulevard in LA was re-named in anticipation of the 1932 Olympic Games. Prior to that it was either 9th or 10th Street - can’t remember which.)

* * *



*Helen Kalpakian and her three daughters, Peggy, Betty and Angah
in front of their Haas Ave. home, 1933*

In 1931 Daddy bought us a brand new Spanish style white stucco house – 6436 Haas Avenue, for \$5,000. cash . We lived on Haas Avenue from 1931 to 1941 – from my age 9 to 19. It was a happy place. It was a most happy childhood for my sisters and me. I remember at age 10 NOT wishing to be 11 – being 10 was so perfect.

The house had a red tile roof, with a sunken living room, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, a full dining room, a windowed breakfast room, a new electric refrigerator and the latest thing in stoves – electricity. It had open coils. The large bathroom had a tub and a stall shower, and the little bathroom had a stall shower. The little bathroom was Dad’s and we girls and Mom had the big bathroom. Betty and I shared a bedroom and Angie had a room of her own (!) Dad also bought a new

Majestic console radio. My sisters and I sat on the floor around the radio to listen to our favorite shows: Lux Radio Theater, Aunt Jenny's Real Life Stories, and later, Calling All Cars, Your Hit Parade, Sam Spade, Jack Benny, Bob Hope and Eddie Cantor. We loved the afternoon kids' show, Chandu, the Magician. It was scary, but fun to listen to. I was so afraid of Aren-yay, the Evil Dwarf.

(I have to stop and insert right here that in 2013, I found THIS VERY HOUSE on the Internet Zillow, listed at \$276.000!!)



STANDING - LEFT TO RIGHT: Venus Melkonian, Alice Koumjian, Annie Melkonian, Aunt Martha, Rose Koumjian, Angie, Peggy.
SITTING- LEFT TO RIGHT: Alice Melkonian, Uncle Art Clark, Betty. The occasion was the christening of Betty & Harriett, April 1936

* * *

I forgot to mention that Daddy had brought several oriental rugs with us from the old country. So in our new house, we had old-country rugs to cover our new hardwood floors, and maybe a couple more rolled up in a closet. The largest one, maybe 20 x 12 feet was perfect for the living room. This is the same rug on which Betty and I played Hop Scotch on rainy days in the former rental house. (For the past 25 years, this – now threadbare – rug has been in Laura's dining room. Also, in the 21st Century, all of these rugs are now in the homes of the Kalpakians' grandchildren and great-grandchildren.)

My parents also had one prize possession – a special, beautiful silk rug, which they treasured. (They considered it like a savings account in America – to sell, in case they needed money...) They never allowed it to be walked upon – only felt, touched and admired. I remember this beautiful rug hanging on the wall in the dining room of our family home at one time long ago.

* * *

I remember Mama – taking Betty and me with her – going to visit her older sister, Dudu, who now worked behind the soda fountain in her husband’s Santa Monica Drug Store. Auntie Dudu and Mama helped Betty and me get up onto the high stools at the far end of the fountain. Auntie brought two cups of coffee for them – and she made two ICE CREAM SODAS for Betty and me (!) We had never even heard of ice cream sodas – and needless to say, we were delighted and pleased. Wonderful discovery! We later played “Pretend Soda Fountain” in our bathroom at home.

* * *

Mama took us to the Angelus Mesa Library every two weeks and I read all the books I brought home. She took us shopping, sewed dresses for us and adopted American ways and explained them to Daddy, like Santa Claus. They were proud to be American Citizens. Whenever Daddy was asked his nationality, he always replied first that he was an American Citizen and secondly, he was Armenian.

He did, however, keep in touch with events and politics in the old- country through an Armenian newspaper which he received in the mail called Baikar (Bykar) from Boston, as I recall. Mama kept up with both California and national politics. In the 1930’s, her picture was in the Los Angeles Evening Herald as the first person in line at the Federal Building in downtown Los Angeles to apply for an NRA (National Recovery Act) Symbol to hang in our store. I remember Mama commenting on the wonderful age we lived in here in the U.S. where, by the magic of radio, we could actually HEAR, in our own home, the entire Democratic Convention on the East Coast, and we always listened to Franklin Roosevelt’s weekly Fireside Chats.

* * *

While we were all baptized in Dad’s Armenian Apostolic Church, in our daily lives we attended Mom’s Protestant faith. Angie, Betty and I walked several blocks to the local Methodist Church on Sundays – and sang those classic old hymns *Abide with Me*, *Rock of Ages*, *The Old Rugged Cross* and other old favorites.

Later, after we had moved, Angie drove the three of us to Wilshire Methodist Church on Sundays. While I was a 20-year-old student at USC, I was also a Sunday School teacher and volunteer leader of a 15-year-old girls' activity group at this church.

* * *



Peggy, Jr. High, c. 1935

Following a one-classroom elementary education I was introduced to higher education procedures: a different class and a different teacher for each subject when I graduated from the 59th Street Elementary School to the 7th grade at Horace Mann Junior High School in 1934. Junior High school opened many new doors for me – like music, for instance. I was assigned to take Beginning Strings Class – (no one asked me if I wished to take Beginning Strings) – where the tallest kid in the class

was assigned the string bass, and I was assigned to learn to play the cello. When my first male teacher, a charismatic, short, slender, dark curly-haired Italian maestro, Mr. D'Ippolito – we called him Mr. Dee – wanted to swear, or let off steam (I'm sure our class tried his patience), he would shout in his booming basso – rolling his RRRRRRRRRR's:

S-A-C-R-A-M-E-N-T-O C-A-L-I-F-O-R-N-I-A !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I had never had a teacher like that in Elementary! Our class adored him.

He successfully transmitted his love for music to us seventh grade kids. I did learn to play the cello. The school allowed me to take the cello home to practice. We made it to the Junior Orchestra while we were still in the 7th grade, a real honor. I remember we played *Country Gardens* at our introductory class concert. I thought we sounded magnificent.

To this day, in my Nineties, when I hear my grandson, Bear McCreary's cello theme overture for television's *DaVinci's Demons*, or Yo Yo Ma playing, I close my eyes, smile, and thank Mr. Dee and Beginning Strings in the 7th grade at Horace Mann Junior High School, for introducing me to music education.

Another memorable moment from my time at Horace Mann was in 1935. In 8th grade Social Studies, I met Ruth Meyerson who told me that her dad was taking her to a very important high tech special exhibit in Los Angeles that night – Her dad said it's about the very latest thing called *television*, which, he said, is just like radio, but with pictures! Like a movie! Imagine that! Ruth's dad said she could ask a friend – and that friend was me. I don't remember where in LA we went, but this meeting consisted of a group of well-dressed men consulting excitedly and exclaiming over a small television screen which was all snow – no picture. It was hard for me to think that snow-covered screen could compete with the current magic of radio, but fortunately, I kept my teen-age opinion to myself. I suspect that WWII put television progress temporarily on hold, but I know for a fact that by 1950, almost all Los Angeles homes had TV antennas on their roofs.

But that was not the highlight of my junior high years. It was just the beginning. The star of our junior high school was 13-year-old Marjorie Gestring who went to the 1936 Olympics in Germany and won the Gold in the 3 Meter Springboard Diving Competition. Thirteen years old! At that time there was apparently no age limit, but it was changed the following year to age 14. (I think that age is still required.) She was the youngest person ever to win a gold medal at that time. She remains the second-youngest in Olympic history.

Marjorie was about 5' 2" with blue eyes. Her blonde hair had a mild green tinge due to her many hours in the chlorine waters of swimming pools. She had a pleasant,

outgoing personality, albeit a bit shy, and remarkably, at age 13, she had the gift of perfect balance. She handled international praise with remarkable grace.

Our school had a Collection Drive to help pay for her trip to Germany. Our school newspaper, *The Wise Mann*, gave her the tribute of Honorary Editor (I was the student editor). We featured her huge picture on the front page of our bi-weekly newspaper.

The Los Angeles newspapers did a major pictorial spread – with many pictures and bios of her life. Again, this 13-year-old handled international accolades with grace.

When she returned from the Olympics, there was a huge welcoming party at Los Angeles Train Station Depot. (Los Angeles Union Station was not built until 1939.) Because I was a class officer, I was part of the Student Welcoming Committee. Several of us from our school joined the Mayor of Los Angeles, our school principal, Mr. Rinehart, city officials, a movie actress, Jean Parker, as well as many others. We stood right by the tracks and waved to her as she disembarked from the train. “Welcome Home, Marjorie!” A momentous welcome for a 13-year-old girl!

After junior high, Marjorie won the U.S. Nationals in springboard diving in 1938, 1939 and 1940. The 1940 Olympics were cancelled due to the war in Europe. After Horace Mann Junior High School, Marjorie went on to Los Angeles High School and UCLA.

I have one last special thank-you to Horace Mann Junior High School: a special tribute for teaching me a skill that has helped me for my entire life. Typing! Those junior high school typing teachers (both male and female) insisted on both accuracy and speed. In those early days we learned on Underwood and Royal Typewriters and that training later helped me move gracefully into electric typing, Selectric typing and in my very old age, computer typing. On the manual typewriter, I could type 65 words a minute. On an electric, I could type 95 words a minute. In high school I won first place several times in the All-City High School typing contests.

My typing skills were important to me for the rest of my life. I typed my daughter’s novels, all of them more than once, for twenty-five years.

Thank you, Horace Mann Junior High School, for a great introduction to basic education – to higher education and an appreciation and groundwork for skills that have helped me for a lifetime.

* * *

In the early 1930's, the latest fad for teenagers was to make a cellophane belt from the newest sensation – cellophane – to twist the cellophane sheets into angular shapes, and then braid them into belts. My older sister, Angie, asked Daddy to take her to the drug store to buy a package of cellophane so she could make a fashionable cellophane belt. As she crossed the street in front of the drug store, a car hit her, knocked her down! Dad – outraged – picked her up, cared for his daughter, and then my scholarly, history / literature loving father who had never in his entire life, struck another person, he actually struck the driver who had hit his daughter. (He was not prosecuted.) It turned out her only injury was a broken collar bone, which healed. Eventually, she did make her desired cellophane belt.

* * *

Our favorite in the Sunday newspaper comics was the Katzenjammer Kids – two little boys who were always into mischief. Also Orphan Annie. In the weekday funnies, I especially liked Terry and the Pirates, Dick Tracy (with his marvelous two-way wrist radio) and Popeye. In addition to Olive Oyl, Popeye had a character named Alice-the-Goon-Girl. When she spoke, there were just squiggle lines, so we just had to guess what she said. We loved it! We also liked Toots and Casper and Tillie the Toiler.

We loved movies – Daddy took us often to see double features. All of us loved Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire, Ruby Keeler, Eleanor Powell and all the other dancing pix of the Thirties. We saw Frederic March in *Les Miserables* (which started my life-long weakness for tall candle holders), *It Happened One Night* with Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* with Robert Donat. Barbara Stanwyck in Edna Ferber's *So Big*, Jeanette McDonald and Nelson Eddy in *Maytime*, etc. etc. etc. Many theaters gave gifts of dishes and other types of china to theater-goers on slow income nights. Also there were theater community-audience sing-a-longs with the music and lyrics while a bouncing ball on the big screen kept time.

In my early teens, I saw my first professional-actor-stage play at our junior high school. President Roosevelt had created a program for unemployed actors (I think it was part of the WPA–Works Progress Administration) wherein government-funded plays were produced and performed all over the country. The WPA play performed at our junior high auditorium was *Lena Rivers*, which had been a 1932 movie. Google tells me the story was “Lena Rivers, born out of wedlock, goes to live with her rich uncle...” I was a very naive teenager, and I am not sure I understood it but I loved seeing a professional stage play. And admission was free.

* * *

Once when President Roosevelt came to Los Angeles, all the city schools were let out for the day so the kids could go to see him. My 90-year-old sister, Betty,

remembered that her entire elementary school class went on a bus to the parade. A real thrill to actually see the President. He was everyone's hero.

* * *

I remember that in the 1930's Mama used to receive *The Delineator Magazine* in the mail. I have since looked it up on Google and found that it was a women's fashion magazine founded by Buttricks (women's sewing patterns) - published from 1869 to 1937, with articles on home decor as well as short stories by contemporary writers. Mama also read Emily Post, to keep her daughters up on American manners.

I almost forgot to insert here that Mama used our Depression Era Singer Sewing Machine to make our dresses. It was propelled by a foot pedal (called a treadle) which was connected to a belt on a wheel – I think you started sewing by giving the wheel a few turns – something like that. No motor. No zig zags or fancy stitches – just straight sewing. Marvelous invention. Later she had the machine changed to electric.

Another new thing that Mama encountered was laundry starch. When she was working at the grocery store, she inquired of customers, how did they get their little girls' dresses to look so beautiful after ironing? The answer was starch. Wonderful discovery! Mama always starched our dresses. Speaking of laundry, Mama poured a fair amount of liquid bluing into the rinse cycle of white-whites laundry loads for special enhancement. Liquid Bluing is now passe, but maybe we have it in those little blue dots in dry laundry detergent or blue liquid laundry detergent.

I'm not sure when Mama discovered Peanut Butter, but she felt it needed something else – an additive – in sandwiches – but what? Ah! The perfect answer was lettuce leaves for crispness and texture - and we found Peanut Butter and Lettuce sandwiches in our school lunches. I might add here that I know for a fact that my sister Betty – at age 90 – still made peanut butter and lettuce sandwiches. I have to admit that sometimes in my old age, I smile and make a peanut butter and lettuce sandwich for my lunch. Thank you, Mama.

Mama was a wonderful cook. One of her staple specialties was a chicken-broth-based soup containing broken up vermicelli, tomato sauce, herbs, and generous amounts of lemon juice. I don't remember what she called the soup, but her first grandchild, my first born, at age about 3, called it RED SOUP. Over many years and generations, Red Soup has become our family's Soul Food.

* * *

My daughter Laura and I often go to the Mediterranean Specialties café and Middle Eastern market. Every time we enter the shop, the aroma of the Near Eastern cooking, food, herbs, oregano, cumin, and garlic envelops me. I am instantly

reminded of the pleasure of going to Bartamians' in LA with Mama when I was a little girl, perhaps eight or nine.

The Bartamians sold old-country foods unavailable anywhere else out of their lovely, large frame house. As we went down the stairs to their basement shop, the old country fragrances drifted up – oregano, cumins, garlic – wonderful, familiar old-country scents – where they had large gunny sacks and bins of bulgar wheat, jars of grape leaves, a variety of dried herbs, garlic, mint, dried apricots dried figs, dried dates, dried everything, and old country beans. I also remember large crocks (2 or 3 gallon size) of cheese - an Armenian cheese that resembled jack cheese. They also had a dried beef delicacy called Basterma (Baws-ter-maw), heavy with garlic, which could be served as an hors d'oeuvre or as a sandwich meat. Basterma was wonderful – we loved it, but it had certain drawbacks. After you ate it, you would sweat the smell of garlic for hours. Mr. Bartamian gave me samples of dried candies, sweets and anything else he thought a child would like. Going to Bartamians' was a wonderful experience.

* * *

I don't know how Mama learned to cook American, but she did – she made potato salad, dough-nuts, spaghetti, hamburgers, hot dogs, popcorn, everything.

She also learned to adopt American short-cuts to Armenian cooking. She substituted American refrigerated biscuit dough instead of rolling out her own to make *lamajune*, a sort of Armenian pizza with meat, onions and tomatoes.

Meat, onions, rice, and tomato sauce are the basis for her grape leaves stuffing for derev, which everyone else calls dolma. In our family, perhaps because of where we came from, we call them derev. What we call dolmah is zucchinis, cored and stuffed with the same mixture we put in the grape leaves.

Mama also adapted American Shredded Wheat Cereal for shredded phyllo in an Armenian dessert made with sugar and honey. Later on, she made her own phyllo and her own from-scratch paklava. Even on hot days she would close up the kitchen so that drafts would not wreck the delicate dough.

Armenian cooking is very much a matter of technique and practice. I watched and learned from Mama, skills I have given to my own daughters and my nieces.

The wonderful scent of Armenian cooking in our homes tells you that a celebration is close at hand, and that the family has all gathered.

* * *

When my mother, Haigouhi, wrote a memoir of her life, she did not donate too much time in the book to food, but she did note that as a child in the old country she had helped her mother make bread and bake it in communal ovens on Saturdays. They had bulgar wheat, a coarse cracked wheat and made an unleavened bread in their backyard oven. They had tomato paste, vermicelli and jam, and stored cheese in a crock in the cool part of the house.

When Haigouhi went to live at the Adana Girls' Seminary during World War I, the school had no butter. They used cottonseed oil instead of butter on a sort of cereal made with bulgar wheat that they served to the students at breakfast. Haigouhi had never eaten cottonseed oil and she could not get it down. The cooks served it to her at lunch and again for dinner. After three days, she ate it. "This was a good lesson for me," she wrote in her old-age memoir. "Now, I eat everything."

I also remember her telling us that at the school they ate watermelon, bread and cheese. Even when she was very old, this was her favorite summertime meal.

* * *

The Haas Avenue house had a double garage. About this time Daddy turned in the 1925 Star Touring Sedan and bought a new 1932 Pontiac – with gear shift on the floor, followed by a new 1939 Pontiac, which they kept through World War II, and later. Not until 1950 did gear shifts become automatic – right under the steering wheel. Thereafter they always bought automatic shift Pontiacs.

* * *

Sometimes all the kids in the quiet, residential neighborhood played games in the street - Kick the Can and also a game where the selected batter hit a softball to the group of other kids. If you caught it once, maybe twice (I can't quite remember), you were then elected to bat the softball to the other kids. I remember seeing my older sister Angie catching the ball – and then becoming the batter. Simple games. Elysian times.

These childhood years were during the Great Depression. I remember being very much aware of the very frugal times. One Saturday evening, I told Mama that the neighborhood kids had gone to the movies that afternoon (the Knoll Theater was within walking distance). She asked why I didn't ask to go also. I said I had not wanted to ask for the dime I would need to see the movie.

* * *

I almost forgot to mention that during the 1930's, the U.S. Postal Service delivered residential mail twice daily – once in the morning and once in the afternoon.

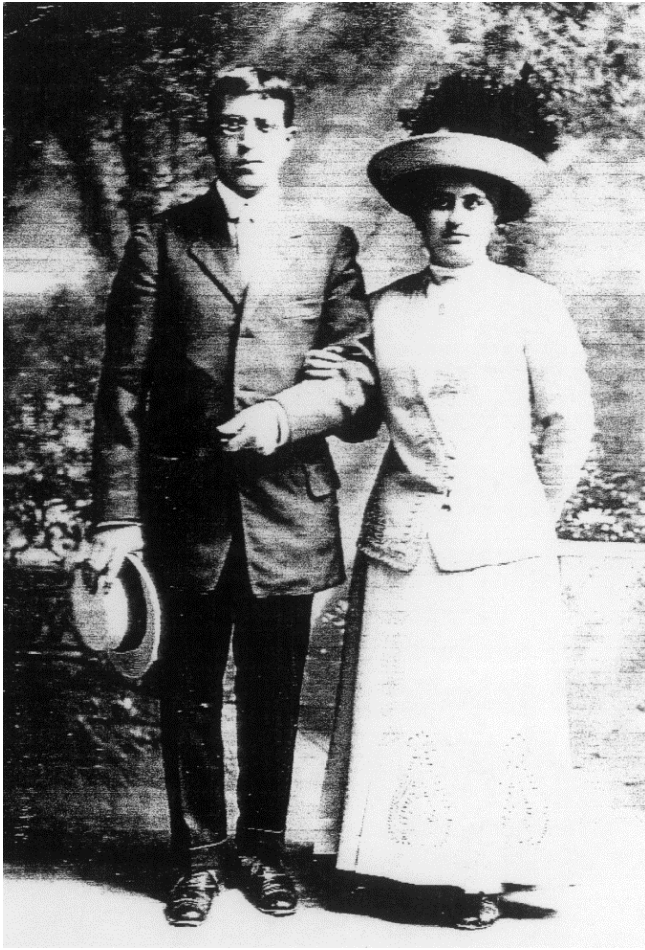
* * *

I felt like our used upright piano had always been in our house, but I guess we acquired it in this era. Weekly, Mama drove Angie and me to the home of our piano teacher, Miss Slaughter, and paid her 50 cents for each of our lessons. Angie played better than I did; our parents so enjoyed hearing us play that piano. (Angie also played the violin in junior high school Senior Orchestra.) My father brought a mandolin from the old country. It was not flat like a guitar, but it had a big fat round bottom. He played it often and sang old country songs as well as Armenian lullabies (Or Or) to his American baby daughters. He loved Strauss's waltzes, The Beautiful Blue Danube and European music, but in the Fifties, he also enjoyed hearing Rosemary Clooney sing "Come onna my house," which was written by Ross Bagdasarian and William Saroyan. Music was always a part of our family.

As I write today, I have Zorba the Greek CD playing full blast. Track Number 11 is introduced with monastery type chants. I am instantly reminded of my father's chanting the Armenian Apostolic Chants of his church – when he was shaving, I think. Maybe other times too; I'm not sure, but I was instantly hearing his voice and those beautiful Armenian Church chants. It brought tears to my eyes.

In addition to his music, he also told us delightful, funny old-country Ho-Jah stories, which we enjoyed hearing. He also entertained his Armenian-American grandchildren with the same Ho-jah stories. One of his great joys was going for the short walk to La Cienega Park--holding hands with his grandchildren--and they loved checking his pockets for candy bars which he always carried for them.

* * *



Koumjian wedding, Pete & Makeri

The Koumjians, Auntie Makeri (Maw-car-ee) and Uncle Pete, our wealthy cousins, lived on Woodrow Wilson Drive, high in the Hollywood Hills, some distance above the Hollywood Bowl. (You could hear music from the Hollywood Bowl at their house!) Mama and Aunty were first cousins – their mothers were sisters, who had lived in the long-ago old country Marash, Turkey. The Koumjians had two daughters; the youngest, Rose, was about my age. The elder, Alice was born in about 1912 so she was a good deal older than us.

When we exchanged visits with the Koumjians, Daddy and Uncle Pete played Tav-lee (backgammon – apparently originally an old country game). I loved to hear them shout, laugh and enjoy the game, tossing dice (or checkers?) about with great glee and abandon. They were both great Tav-lee players.

Though my Uncle Pete never learned to read or write English, he was very smart. He learned his trade – shoe-making – in the old country, and set up shop in Hollywood where he repaired shoes – and became well known in the movie industry for making cowboy boots. I think that his work making cowboy boots made him very attractive to the film industry and that he might have had a contract to supply them. The money from the boots allowed him to invest in 1920's Southern California real estate – and by the time we arrived in the US – 1923 – they were already wealthy.

The Koumjian home was huge and beautiful – designed surely for entertaining – a large, sunken living room – with a magnificent Near Eastern rug covering the entire room, a glorious hilltop view from their living room picture-window – plus expansive dining room and kitchen. I was very impressed with the elegant terraces and arbors in their backyard garden as well as their fully cedar-lined, walk-in closet. I loved to stand in the closet doorway and let the magnificent cedar fragrance envelop me in its elegance. Soooooo Keebar. Also, in a spare bedroom, they had a magnificent, dazzling brass bed, which appeared to my child-eyes as shining gold. Soooooo Keebar.

Aunty and Uncle Pete were charming, outgoing, gracious and loving hosts. Aunty was always so very nice to me. She overlooked my child- awkwardness and childhood social mis-steps with a kind word, a hug, a smile. A truly lovely lady.

Aunty was a wonderful cook. She sometimes prepared sit-down dinners for as many as 16 in their spacious dining room. Her recipe for Old Country Rice Turkey Stuffing is included in my Recipes Chapter. Her kitchen had one of the first refrigerators that had a circular motor on top.

When I was about 10 or maybe 12 years old, Aunty invited me to spend a weekend at their home with their daughter, Rose, same age as me. Aunty took us shopping in Hollywood and when noon rolled around, she took us to a restaurant for lunch. I think it was probably my first time to “eat out.” I was very impressed. Aunty ordered Coca Cola and a chicken salad sandwich. I didn't know what a chicken salad sandwich was, so I ordered the same thing. Very keebar. On another day of that visit, we took a picnic lunch to their walnut grove in the Valley. Wonderful weekend.

Aunty and Uncle Pete's original destination in the U.S. was Boston, where he had already-established relatives, but after a few years, they moved to Los Angeles – for the weather, I think, but not sure.



Cousin Rose Kounjian, Thanksgiving 1939

They had two daughters, Alice and Rose. Alice was born circa 1912 and Rose in 1923. Alice became an administrative assistant to an executive in the Los Angeles City Hall for several years. Then she went to law school and graduated. Rose graduated from UCLA with an elementary teaching degree – and married John Manly Essick, a high school physics teacher, in 1950.

In later years when Uncle Pete’s deteriorating vision prevented his driving, Aunty stepped up to the plate – at age circa 60, she went to driving school – and thereafter she was the designated driver of the family Buick sedan. Hooray for Aunty!

In their very old age, Aunty and Uncle Pete’s medical knee problems prompted them to leave the stairs and steep Hollywood hills of Woodrow Wilson Drive for a modest, street-level home in North Hollywood, where their large, magnificent Near Eastern living room rug had to be rolled up at one end to fit in their new home.

In her very old age, Rose told me the story of her parents' old-country marriage in Marash, Turkey – long years ago. She said that young Peter Koumjian, then age 23, had asked 14-year-old Makeree's parents for permission to marry Makeree – and take her with him to America where his uncle, his father's brother, lived in Boston. The only reason that Makeree's parents allowed their young daughter to go with Peter was that they knew to their sorrow that Armenian lives in the Ottoman Empire would never be safe.

Rose also told me that the Koumjians had originally arrived at Ellis Island on the Thanksgiving holiday (1906) – a holiday that has remained in their hearts to this day. For years, Uncle Pete, a tall, charming, handsome man, thick horn-rimmed glasses and a shock of white hair, had stood at the head of their Thanksgiving Dinner Table – and given special thanks to God for their safe arrival in the United States of America.

Long after her father's passing, Rose told me that she stood at her own family's Thanksgiving table every year and repeated his Thanksgiving prayer.

When Rose became a grandmother (her two sons John Jr. and Peter had married) she lamented to me that she had no role-model to give her a grandmother's guidance since our old country grandmother had been a casualty of the Armenian genocide in Turkey – long years before. While I commiserated with her, I felt certain in my heart that Rose would become a beloved, adored, revered grandmother, with true grace. And she did.

At age 97, the lone surviving member of both of these original families, I would like to say that the Kalpakian family's close and loving relationship with the Koumjian family, was life-long.

* * *

My father took rests from working – vacations – only in those periods when he was between stores. He worked every day 6 days a week the rest of the time. In his stores, he wore a blue grocer's smock/apron, but out and about in LA, he always wore a suit, with vest, and a hat – European style.

As a matter of fact, he wore a suit, vest and a hat even to the beach. Our old country parents took us to the beach. Did they endure the discomfort of sand in their shoes and sitting on a sandy blanket for the pleasure of watching their three young daughters delight in dipping their toes in the Pacific Ocean and making pretend chee-kufta in the wet sand? I don't know. But in the snapshots, they are smiling.

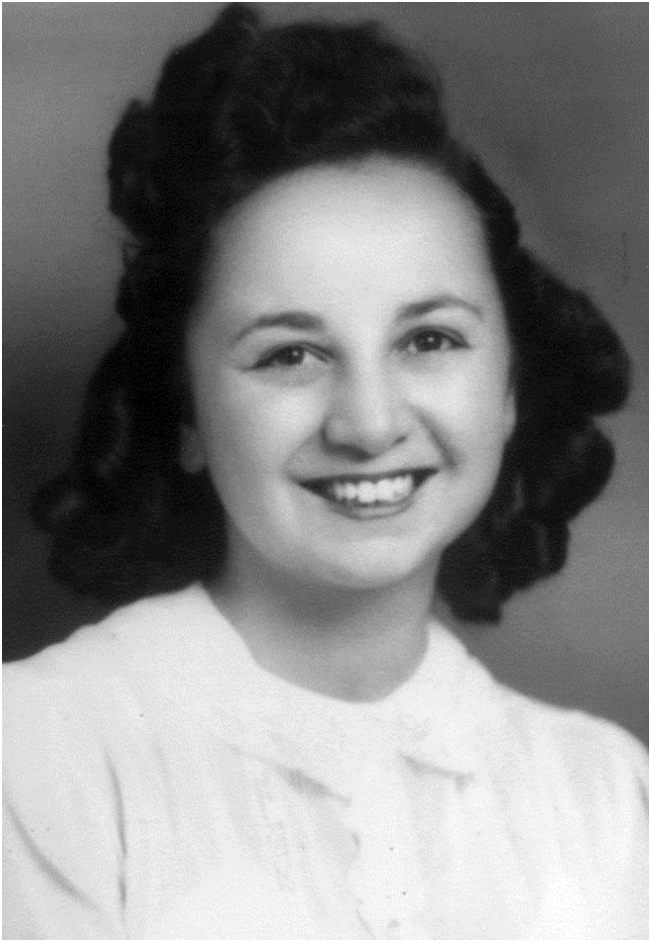


Kalpakian family at the beach, c. 1932

* * *

One summer day when I was just a young teen, we had an unexpected visitor, the Priest from Dad's church. Mama asked Angie to make the courtesy demi-tasse coffee and serve it, and she asked me to run and check on the big bathroom, clean towels, etc., which I did. After the guest left, Mama asked me why I hadn't removed the 12-dozen-box of Kotex from next to the toilet while the guest was here. I replied with something like, "Why should I? It's always there." If Mama smiled, I didn't notice. (I don't remember if the priest used the bathroom, but surely, even he had to realize there were three teenage girls and one grown woman living here.) Daddy's favorite joke: "I should have invested in the Kotex Corporation."

* * *



Peggy, high school grad, 1940

From the time I entered George Washington High School, it was exciting to be a part of this wonderful school. I loved my teachers, my friends, my classes. And I loved my Journalism Class taught by Mrs. Helvey the best of all. We published the student newspaper, *The Surveyor*. At Horace Mann Junior High I had been the editor of that school newspaper, and as a Senior at George Washington, I was the first female editor of *The Surveyor*. I was active in Tri-Y Girls Social Club and many other activities.

We three older Kalpakian sisters all attended George Washington High School. We all graduated with honors as well as being faculty-selected Ephebian, a prestigious Los Angeles City Award to high school graduates for scholarship and service. Ephebian were given gold-plated rings with our initials and year of graduation engraved in the ring. (Mine fits only on my little finger now.)

In 1942, the year that Betty graduated, *The Surveyor* ran this piece:

“EPHEBIANS FULL OF KALPAKIAN

It must be a sister act! With the recent selection of friendly Betty Kalpakian as a Winter ‘42 Ephebian, the Kalpakian family can now proudly boast of three feminine Ephebians in their midst. Peggy Kalpakian, vivacious W’40 [first female] Surveyor Editor, was honored with Ephebianship that year. Back in Summer of ‘36, Washington Ephebian ranks were swelled by the membership of Angagh Kalpakian, who last year achieved the Phi Beta Kappa award at UCLA. Washington now awaits eagerly the enrollment of six-year-old Harriett Kalpakian who will have a family tradition to carry as a Winter ‘53 graduate.”

However, by the time Harriett went to high school, we had moved to Olympic Boulevard, and she attended Los Angeles High School.

In my high school years, I won a contest in the Los Angeles Evening Herald and received two free tickets to the Biltmore Theater. My mom and I dressed up and attended the play. I felt we were mingling that night in the company of Los Angeles’s elite. Good seats – 4 or 5 rows from the stage. The play was about the Spanish Civil War and starred Paul Muni. When he came on stage, the audience applauded. It was a real thrill to see Paul Muni in person – even though I didn’t understand the play.

* * *

For my 16th birthday, Mama gave me a party at night – for both boys and girls. It was a great success and I loved it. For the occasion, I had my hair done at the beauty salon and also had a manicure (!) About this time many of my girl friends and I started taking ballroom dancing lessons at Bessie Clark’s School of Dance in nearby Inglewood. I think it was every Friday night for a specified period. (“Step-close-step, step-close-step.”) Some of the boys from school also attended the dancing school – and they also came to my party. I remember the Fox Trot, but we probably learned other dance steps as well. I loved it.

On one dance class night, two really nice boys I had met at the class (from another high school) came by in their father’s car to take me to the dance class. Mama let me go. When Daddy came home from work, I guess he was furious because he showed up at dance class to take me home!



Kalpikian daughters, Harriet, Betty, Peggy, Angah, c. 1939

* * *

In 1935 Mama was pregnant again. With three daughters, did they want a son? Probably. Mama's due date was August 28, 1935. On that date, Aunt Martha Clark (Haigaz's wife) and her brother took Betty and me to the San Diego State Exposition Fair for the day. It was a spectacular day for Betty and me. Wonderful, exciting experience! Angie stayed home with Mom. But no activity from baby until September 9, 1935 – a California holiday – California's admission day to the Union in 1850. The fourth Kalpakian daughter was the only one of us born in a hospital. Since there would be no Harry Junior, she was named Harriett – Harriett

Meribe Kalpakian (Meribe was Daddy's mother's middle name.) We adored our baby sister – and, of course, we were perfect live-in babysitters. Harriett inherited the family gift for languages. She earned a full scholarship to USC, graduated Phi Beta Kappa in Spanish and became a high school Spanish teacher.



Helen & Harry Kalpakian and their youngest, Harriett, February 1940

* * *

Incidentally, when Mama was in the last stages of pregnancy, August 1935, and unable to drive to the bank to deposit the store's cash, she asked me at age thirteen to undertake this momentous responsibility.

She handed me a plain brown bag that held all the money from the store for that week, coins as well as bills. She did this so it would not look like I, a kid, was carrying a lot of money.

She told me to get on the Van Ness bus and go to the bank up near 54th and Cimarron. As I rode the bus clutching my paper bag, for a fleeting moment, I felt like a heroine in one of the books I had been reading, or maybe like an actress in a spy mystery movie.

I went into the bank, stood in line, and made the deposit, waited while the teller counted it all out. I got the receipt and took the bus home.

In carrying out this mission, I felt especially proud to know that Mama **trusted me** – a 13-year-old kid – with a truly, grown-up, responsible errand. Wonderful feeling.

* * *

In about 1938 Dad bought another store on South Broadway. Every Thursday when his store received a new supply of groceries from a wholesaler, I took the bus after high school and went to the store. Daddy had already arranged the new supply cartons of cans, and other foods in the aisles in front of their display spaces. When I came after school, I filled all the shelves with the new supplies. Daddy paid me 25 cents for this service every Thursday – apparently the going rate – and I was happy with the quarter.

* * *

I understand how it would be hard for today's youth to understand how important pocket change was in those days – and how much it could buy. Candy bars were 5 cents. There were penny candies, the Saturday Evening Post Magazine cost 5 cents, soda fountain Coca Cola was 5 cents.

A loaf of bread was 10 cents (5 cents at the Day-Old-Bakery); overdue-library-book-fines were 2 cents a day per book. All movie theaters charged 10 cents for children, and there was one neighborhood movie, the Seville, that charged 10 cents a seat. We called it The Slimy Dime, but we still loved to go there for movies. Most adult charges were 25 cents.

Admission to the new public swimming pool at nearby Manchester Playground was 5 cents per day to swim. This is where Esther Williams learned to swim (later, she went to my high school, GWHS, 1939) – and also she was exempted from the 5-cent swimming fee since she counted wet towels for the pool administration. Surely her first job. The nearest public playground to us did not have a pool, but my sisters and I all took free tap dancing lessons in the summer. Also, as a teen, I do remember placing my last 2 cents into the slot of a Community Chest (like today's United Way) donation box.

About this time (1934) there was a rather cutesy popular song called “Jimmy Had a Nickel.”

The following is all I remember of the lyrics:

Jimmy had a nickel –
He didn’t have it long when
The kids found out that
Jimmy had a nickel
Jimmy had a nickel
Jimmy had a nickel.....

To give you a true picture of American Depression times, let me just give you the lyrics to another cutesy – but true message of another popular song:

You make love,
You make it dandy.
You make swell
Molasses candy,
But, honey, are you making any money?
That’s all I want to know.

When I graduated from high school in 1940, I got my first job working for a real estate office. I remember with such a thrill and pride, my first weekly paycheck, \$16.50! I immediately bought a Saturday Evening Post Magazine – for 5 cents – and in the Post, they reviewed a new book, *Big Family*, by Bellamy Partridge. That was the first book I ever bought – for \$2.98, and I still have it.

(I don’t remember the minimum wage in 1940, but I do remember that in 1949 President Harry Truman signed a bill raising the minimum wage from 40 cents an hour to 75 cents an hour.)

* * *

For our parents’ 20th wedding anniversary, October 18th, 1937, we kids planned a real surprise dinner party for our parents. First we set the table in the dining room. (We ate most of our meals in the windowed breakfast room, so this was a truly special occasion.) We hung twisted crepe paper streamers criss-cross over the ceiling and chandelier as well as a big HAPPY ANNIVERSARY sign on the wall. While Betty and I decorated, and looked after toddler Harriett, Angie prepared a special dinner and baked a cake.

When our parents came home from work at the store, they were so very surprised and pleased! It was a wonderful anniversary party – and we kids were happy to have surprised Mom and Dad with our elegant party.

* * *

Today, in 2018, the USC-UCLA cross-town football game is played on a Saturday, but in 1938, it was played on Thanksgiving Day.

My sister, Angie, was a sophomore at UCLA, so she had a free student ticket to the game. Since her best friend was not going to the game, Angie also had a *spare* free student ticket – which she gave to me!!! I was in high school – and *truly beyond* thrilled to be going to the Los Angeles Coliseum for the first time for this fabulous game on Thanksgiving Day, 1938. We wore white blouses – required for the half-time card tricks – and had good seats. It was a wonderful game and a most-forever-memorable Thanksgiving Day for me.

Though my sister went to UCLA, I was always a USC fan. When USC made a good play, I stood up and cheered – and was suddenly hit on the back of my head by a paper ball, or something. This was a good reminder to me that I was a guest, sitting in the UCLA student section!

I don't remember which team won that game, but I have always remembered the thrill – of being a high school student – and actually sitting in the UCLA student section at the Los Angeles Coliseum, for the very first time, on that 1938 Thanksgiving Day.

* * *

Public transportation in Los Angeles during the 1930's and 1940's consisted of street cars and buses. The street cars were on street tracks and guided by overhead electric lines. While awaiting a street car, a prospective passenger could advance to the painted SAFE section in mid-street and stand there until the streetcar arrived. Passenger could also request a Transfer (a coupon the approximate size of a dollar bill) from the driver. This could be used as payment on other connecting-travel street cars or buses. Thus, it was possible to get around the great City of Los Angeles on pocket change. Fares were literally loose coins in one's coin purse. (I can't remember exactly the amount, but it was very low.)

While I was a student at USC during WW2, I paid a Beverly Hills USC student fifty cents for a one-way ride to the USC campus. She drove her father's Packard right past my parents' house on West Olympic Boulevard; I returned home for considerably less on the street car and bus.

On that return-home trip from USC, on the corner of Vermont Avenue and Olympic Boulevard, I remember a newsie – a middle-aged, charismatic short man, wearing horn-rimmed glasses, who shouted today's war news at us local travelers:

READ ‘EM AND WEEP! READ ‘EM AND WEEP! READ ALL ABOUT IT!
READ ‘EM AND WEEP!

Street cars were very effective and popular; however, as the population grew, the street cars were outmoded and became obsolete. (They were finally discontinued in the mid-1960s and completely replaced by buses – which still honored Transfers to connect to the next bus.)

* * *

I clearly remember the first time I asked permission from my old-country parents to drive our family car by myself. I was just eighteen. I wanted to drive, Sunday morning, before church, first to my girl friend’s house and then to Centinela Park to play tennis. I half expected to hear a mini-lecture on safe driving, admonitions on the importance of remembering driving rules, courtesy of the road, etc. etc. etc. But they just gave me the keys – and said – YES. They had confidence in me. Wonderful feeling. I was the envy of all my friends.

* * *



*8645 West Olympic, the home the Kalpakians bought in 1941
and where they lived ever after.*

In 1941, Dad bought a larger house for us – 8645 West Olympic Boulevard in LA – (Dad paid \$12,500 for this house in 1941. Much later, Mama, as a widow, sold

it in 1987 for \$380,000!) The new house was beautiful and wonderful – a two-story duplex – we lived upstairs and the lower floor was rented. I think Dad bought this duplex (at his age 54) so he and Mama would have the rent income in their later years when he could no longer work. (Social Security started in about the mid-thirties.)

We loved the new house – white stucco, Spanish arches inside and out, red tile roof, palm trees; it had a large living room with fireplace, large full dining room, a front hall, a back hall, a den, a small room off of the den we called The Study (with 2 bookcases, a desk and a great view of tree tops), two tiled bathrooms and 3 bedrooms – the master bedroom had a second entrance to the large, green-and-black tiled-to-the-ceiling master bathroom. In later years, the small bedroom was Dad's. He died in this room in February 1963 at age 75.

We moved into 8645 West Olympic Boulevard house in September, 1941. Three months later, Sunday, December 7, 1941, during the dinner hour, as I recall, we heard President Roosevelt's speech on the radio about the attack on Pearl Harbor. It was a terrible shock. We were stunned. We had no idea how this would change the nation – and change our lives. And it did change our lives. And it especially changed my life.



Harry and Helen Kalpakian in the Olympic Boulevard house, 1941

* * *

On October 18, 1942, Mom and Dad celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary with a sit-down dinner for their close friends and relatives – about 16 or so. (We had to re-arrange the dining room table diagonally to be able to serve all the guests.) We three older sisters acted as servers for the guests. Mama had done almost all of the cooking in advance – all Armenian. Her cooking was always the very best. For the occasion we had obtained the latest portable recorder and each guest was asked to offer his congrats to Mom and Dad. I think the event was memorialized on a plastic record. I am sorry to say I don't know what happened to that record.



Betty, Peggy and Angah Kalpakian, May 1942 in front of Olympic Boulevard home

* * *

After we moved into the Olympic Boulevard house, Dad bought a store at 615 West Pico Boulevard, followed later by his final store at Museum Drive in Highland Park for 7 years until his retirement in 1956. He liked this store the best because he could handle the whole business himself (no butcher or produce person). Mama worked with him in all his stores until his retirement.

In his old age, Dad liked to go to beautiful Santa Monica Park, overlooking the great Pacific Ocean. I suspect he was thinking about how he had ended up here, an American citizen, father of four adoring, young American-Armenian women, and the revered grandfather of ten. I am sure, too, when he sat at Santa Monica Park, he thought about the old country where he had been born, in Cesarea, Turkey, about where he had lived, in Mersin, Turkey on the Mediterranean coast. From there his family had left their beautiful home due to the terrors, to move to Adana. I'm sure he thought also about his parents, brothers and sisters who had scattered all over the world. He never saw any of them again. I wondered also if he was thinking about – in the mid-1930s – when he had received black-bordered letters from Romania, telling him his parents had passed away.

On those days, Mama drove him to Santa Monica Park, but she stayed in the car while he sat on the bench facing the Pacific. She had seen enough of oceans in her young life.

I think I know how my dad felt about the Pacific Ocean. In my nineties I often ask my son to take me to Boulevard Park, which is right at the edge of Bellingham Bay. I like to sit on a bench, look out to the horizon, watch the boats and islands and think about where I started in Constantinople, Turkey, and though I do not remember anything of the old-country, I feel a strong connection to the sea.

* * *

For many years, my sisters and I brought our families to Grandma and Grandpa's house for Christmas Eve. Mama always had Christmas stockings full of edible goodies for each grandchild, plus individual gifts for each. Later my sisters and I took turns having our families together for Christmas Eve and each family's kids put on a show – it was great fun and my parents enjoyed it immensely. One Christmas Eve, my husband, Bill and our older children, Laura, Helen and Doug, did a soft shoe song-and-dance to the Hawaiian version of the Partridge in a Pear Tree. They wore straw hats and danced around their canes – like pros – great fun.

Family dinners at the Olympic Boulevard house – whether it was just one daughter's family as guest, or the entire family (complete with kiddie table) – those dinners always began with the Hy-Mair. (This is the Lord's Prayer in Armenian, and my daughter Helen can still recite nearly all of it!) Following the prayer, Grandpa would rise, raising his glass, and saying with obvious joyous gusto, "Welcome to our house!"

CHAPTER FOUR

MISS TOWNER: AN INCREDIBLE REUNION

An Immortal Teacher Who Saved Her Students' Lives

My mother, Haigouhi Kulakzuzian, was born into an Armenian family in Turkey in 1901. They lived in the city of Adana near the Mediterranean in southeastern Turkey, and when she was only fourteen years old in 1915, the Turks began their extermination of the Armenian people under the cover of World War I. This is the remarkable story of her survival.

Haigouhi was a day student at the American Congregational Church Seminary for Girls in Adana. (There were no public schools in Adana, certainly not for Armenian girls.) Protestant missionaries had been active in Turkey among the Christian Armenians for decades, especially in education. Haigouhi's family attended the Congregational church in Adana, and she attended their school where Miss Grace Towner was the Principal. Of all of her teachers, Grace Towner was to play a major role in Haigouhi's life. That their paths would later cross at all is something of a miracle.

Haigouhi did well in school. Hers was an American education. She learned English and French languages, American History, English History, World History, Math, Algebra and Armenian and Turkish languages. (Only Turkish was allowed to be spoken publicly in Adana.) She must surely have so admired her teachers there, all brave, educated women. (The only other school my mother had been to – prior to attending the Seminary – was Embroidery School.)

I know my mother adored Miss Towner. In our family photo album, she had Miss Towner's picture on a special page alone. She told her daughters often about the wonderful American teacher who came to her school in Turkey and saved her students' lives. My mother inspired me to want to know more about Miss Towner. I have been researching this remarkable, unsung teacher.



Grace Towner c. 1908

Grace Towner was born in rural Delphos, Kansas in 1883. I had originally thought she must have been born to a farm family, but the name her parents gave her, Cyrcce Grace Towner, was taken from Homer's *Odyssey*. Cyrcce (Seer-cee) was an enchantress of Greek mythology. The Towners had moved from Pennsylvania to become Kansas pioneer settlers in the 1870s.

Her father, Homer Towner, was a Civil War veteran, wounded at the Battle of the Wilderness. Her mother, Evaline White Towner, died when Grace was five years old. After her death, of Evaline Towner's five children, only Grace was sent to live in Osborne, Kansas with her mother's sister, Aunt Mary White Wales, her husband, William Wales (a man of some renown who had a ranch four miles out of town) and their daughter, Dovey, who was a little older than Grace. While the records cannot tell us everything, apparently the two families stayed very close after Grace moved to Osborne. Some years later when her older sister, Jennie was having a difficult birth, Grace went to help her. Unfortunately Jennie died at 21 giving birth and the baby died as well. Grace was heartbroken.

Grace attended Osborne High School where she was on the debate team. She graduated from Osborne High School in 1902, one in a class of nine students, where

each grad had to give a talk on some aspect of the Civil War. She talked about Spies of the Civil War.

After high school, Grace taught in a number of Kansas schools (at \$85 a month salary), rising to Principal in one of them – and entered Washburn College, a Congregational Church affiliate, in Topeka in 1905, where she majored in Liberal Arts classes, including Latin, and played in the Band.



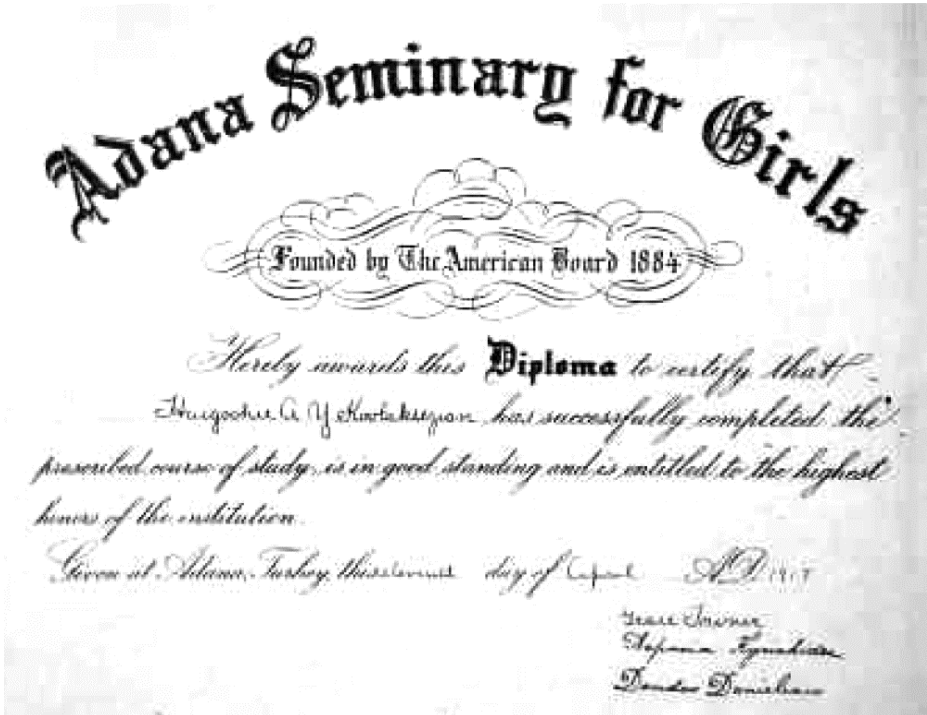
CYRCE GRACE TOWNER, "Grace."
Osborne, Kansas.
Pres. Alethean (3); Cabinet (3), (4);
"Better Half;" Volunteer Band.

Grace Towner c. 1909, graduation from Washburn College

Following graduation from Washburn College in 1909 she changed her name from Cyrce Grace Towner to Grace C. Towner, and she always went by Grace. She taught in Kansas for a couple of years after graduation, but clearly, she had her sights set on playing a larger role in the world. Though Grace's Kansas family and roots would always be important to her, she took the train to Chicago and enrolled in the Congregational Womens' Training School, founded in 1909 by a remarkable woman named Florence Fensham. Miss Fensham was the first woman ever to be granted a theological degree by any American seminary. She graduated from the Chicago Theological Seminary, and later she even taught there, the first woman to do so. She had also served as a missionary in Turkey.

Miss Fensham's Congregational Womens' Training School was housed in a mansion on Dearborn Avenue donated to them. All the students lived there and had their classes. The school trained women missionaries to go all over the world. To be enrolled in this school students had to be over twenty-five years old. The curriculum included much of what we now think of as Education majors. At the same time there were religious studies and language studies. Grace must clearly have taken Turkish and Armenian. Grace stayed there about two years. In February 1912 Miss Fensham died suddenly. Surely, a great blow to Grace. In September she sailed for Turkey where she would teach for forty years.

Beginning as a playground director at the Girls' School in Adana, Grace Towner advanced rapidly and soon became a teacher as well as the Administrator. In 1915, during World War I, at the height of the massacres of the Christian Armenian population, she invited my mother, Haigouhi, to be a boarding student at the school. I feel certain she did the same for the rest of her students, saving all their lives. Imagine the strength, courage, responsibility and ultimate bravery required of the young woman from a Kansas farm to travel to a foreign country, teach Armenian girls and save their lives. On the roof of the school Miss Towner had Haigouhi and other students spread out a large American flag and fasten it down. Any combatants flying over the city would know this was an American domain.



Haigouhi Kulakuzian's diploma, 1917 graduation from Adana Seminary for Girls

Can you imagine how Miss Towner looked to those adolescent Armenian girls? They had never seen a beautiful, young, educated American woman who did not dress like Turkish women, or Armenian women for that matter. Her dress and hair styles were the latest in 1912 America. And yet she could speak her students' language. Those girls loved, admired, adored her. They wanted to be like her.

As I have written earlier in this memoir, my mother left the school in October 1917 to get married. In April 1917 the Americans entered the War against Turkey and Germany. Miss Towner, now an alien enemy of Turkey, stayed on at the school. It finally closed in 1931. Whether the Turks insisted that it be closed, or if the

closure resulted from the world-wide Depression, I do not know, but I am certain Miss Towner was heartbroken. Her life's work had been dedicated to the education of Armenian girls in Adana, and she had seen the school grow in numbers and scholastic standing in her twenty years there. For one year following, she taught in the Turkish Lycee in Adana. There, Miss Towner had a major run-in with the Turkish Government. In April, 1931, the Turkish Government sued Grace Towner, for insulting the Turkish Nationalist Government because she obliged her female students to wear American red-white-and-blue colors. Apparently she gave the students the choice of what color their uniforms would be. The students chose red-white-and-blue, American colors. One student, angry at this, went home and told her parents. Her father sued Miss Towner for the insult to Turkey. The trial was covered in world-wide newspapers, and even in the Osborne, Kansas *Farmer*. It would be my guess that Miss Towner – fluent in the Turkish language – defended herself. The Judge said he would announce the verdict on April 4, 1931. Grace Towner stood her ground. Resistant. Still, she persisted. She was acquitted of the charge of insulting the Turkish Government.

In 1933 she moved to the Tarsus American College for Women where she taught English and English literature and served as Associate Principal. In 1946 she moved to the Uskudar American Academy for Girls, where she taught the same subjects and also was an administrator. At nearly seventy years of age, in 1952 Miss Towner finally left Turkey and retired to a missionary retirement home in Claremont, California. She lived out her days there, dying in 1968 at the age of 85. Grace Towner was honored as one of the early educators of female students in Turkey. Missionaries, colleagues, and students honored her for her service, for her faith, for her dedication to her students, and to education for women. She was an inspiration to many. Miss Towner did more than inspire. She also saved lives.

* * *

Los Angeles, California, 1953, My sister Betty's husband, Finley Bown, saw a notice in their Congregational Church Newsletter that Miss Grace Towner, a missionary teacher, had retired to Los Angeles from Turkey. She was living in a Congregational Retirement home nearby. Since everyone in our family knew the story, Finley recognized Grace Towner's name, and alerted Mama.

Mama drove to the retirement home, taking her youngest daughter, Harriett, then aged seventeen, with her. They went to Miss Towner's room.

When Miss Towner looked up and saw Harriett, she said, "Haigouhi?"

Harriett at seventeen looked so much like the youthful Haigouhi that the years seemed to roll away. What a joyous reunion!

Mama invited Miss Towner to come to our house on West Olympic Boulevard for a Sunday afternoon visit. Miss Towner got to meet Haroutune Kalpakian again, thirty-six years after she had agreed to the marriage. In the dining room of my parents' lovely home, Mama served lunch to Miss Towner, Armenian food she made with her own hands. I feel certain that she made coffee in the correct way as well.

Mama arranged for each of her four daughters to come that afternoon with our husbands and children to meet Miss Towner. Because there were so many of us and so many little children, and she was so elderly, we visited with her one family at a time. My oldest daughter, Laura, who was 8 years old at the time, remembers meeting Miss Towner at her grandmother's house that Reunion Sunday. We were all honored to have met Miss Towner in person, and thanked her for saving Mama's life. Then we went outside and took pictures in the sunshine.



Harry Kalpakian, Grace Towner, Helen Kalpakian, 8645 West Olympic August 1953

In the midst of this happy, almost unbelievable reunion, I could not help wondering if Miss Towner had flash-back-memories to World War I in Adana, Turkey, and the American school sheltering Armenian children from the Turks. I wondered if she remembered the departure of her sixteen-year-old student to whom she had granted permission to marry Haroutune Kalpakian. I feel certain this 1953 reunion was the answer to Miss Towner's parting prayer for Haigouhi in 1917.

I would like to add here my own 21st century tribute to Miss Grace Towner – a courageous young woman who left her safe American home in the early years of the 20th century, learned Turkish and Armenian languages, and traveled to Turkey to teach young Armenian girls in an American Christian school. As an American citizen, she stood up to the Turkish Army during World War I. I know her students adored her. I adored her. She saved her students’ lives and I am honored that I was able to meet her, in person, at that 1953 reunion and personally say thank you for your courage and love, Grace Towner.

CHAPTER FIVE HAIGAZ

The Boy Who Ran for His Life

PART I

Haigaz and Haigouhi were the two youngest of four children. When the genocidal terrors began (c. 1915), the two older ones, Arthur and Dudu, had already escaped and were living in America. Living at home with their mother and father were Haigouhi, age 14 (b. 1901) and Haigaz, age 10 (b. 1905).

Haigouhi was a day student at the Adana Girls' Seminary when the principal, Miss Towner, asked her mother if Haigouhi could move into the school as a live-in student; she could earn her keep by working and teaching in the school. Her mother agreed. Her acceptance saved Haigouhi's life.

Haigaz and his parents were not so fortunate. Haigaz's childhood from age 10 was a true living nightmare.

In 1915 Haigaz and his parents were taken by the Turks and marched into the desert where his father starved to death and his mother was killed. His dying father told Haigaz to run away, which he did. He fled into the desert and changed his name to Ali. Ten years old!

At first he was picked up by the Kurds to be a slave shepherd boy for them. He learned Kurdish language while he lived with them, herding sheep, and soon understood that they planned to kill him. Their chief threw a dagger at him which grazed his neck (the scar remained for the rest of his life). He ran from the Kurds and wandered the desert, from place to place, near starvation, a beggar; he stole food and lived hand-to-mouth, using his wits.

The Germans were allies of the Turks during World War I. They were building a railroad they hoped would go from Baghdad to Berlin. In the desert Haigaz stumbled into a camp of Kurdish workers who were building the railroad. Because Haigaz could speak both Turkish and Kurdish, the Turkish boss hired this ragged boy to translate his orders to the Kurdish workers.

The boss told him to stay out of the way of the German officer in charge of the rail-building - who would be recognizable by his fine-looking horse. A dog who had followed Haigaz around had the poor misfortune to bite the leg of the German

officer's horse. The angry officer threw the dog—and Haigaz—into a jail-tent where both Haigaz and the dog immediately started digging under the tent edge until they could both slip out and run and run and run and run.

Haigaz lied, cheated, stole and befriended another orphan Armenian boy. They worked for a cook in the Turkish Army and ran errands into town to exchange money for the Turkish soldiers.

And finally, after World War I staggered to its terrible close, Haigaz was picked up by British soldiers. He was emaciated – lying under a tree in the rain, running a high temperature. He was taken to a Red Cross Orphanage and placed in their Infirmary. With many other orphans he was scheduled to be shipped off to Jerusalem. His name was listed on an Unclaimed Orphan List in the newspaper. While they were still living in Adana, a friend of Haigouhi's saw it and asked, "Isn't that your brother?" Haigouhi and her husband, Haroutune, paid his Orphanage Discharge fee and he was able to rejoin his family.

At age 17, he had re-connected with his family.

At age 17, he was no longer alone in the world.

Praise God.

* * *

Part II

In the mid-1970s, my daughter Laura, who was a graduate student in History at the time, suggested that we should have a taped recording of Haigaz's own voice of his childhood nightmare experiences during the Armenian Genocide during WWI in Turkey.

At my family home – where my mother Haigouhi, her younger brother, Haigaz and his wife Martha were guests – after a family dinner, Laura brought out a tape recorder – and asked Haigaz (age c. 70) his recollections of that terrible period in his young life all those years ago during WWI.

He recounted his experiences in a soft, quiet, almost-sing-song tone, each more horrible than the last one. When he told us his father died of starvation and his mother was killed, Haigouhi interrupted him – and cried out for him to stop! She didn't want to hear it! Couldn't bear to hear it! Stop!

So we took a break.

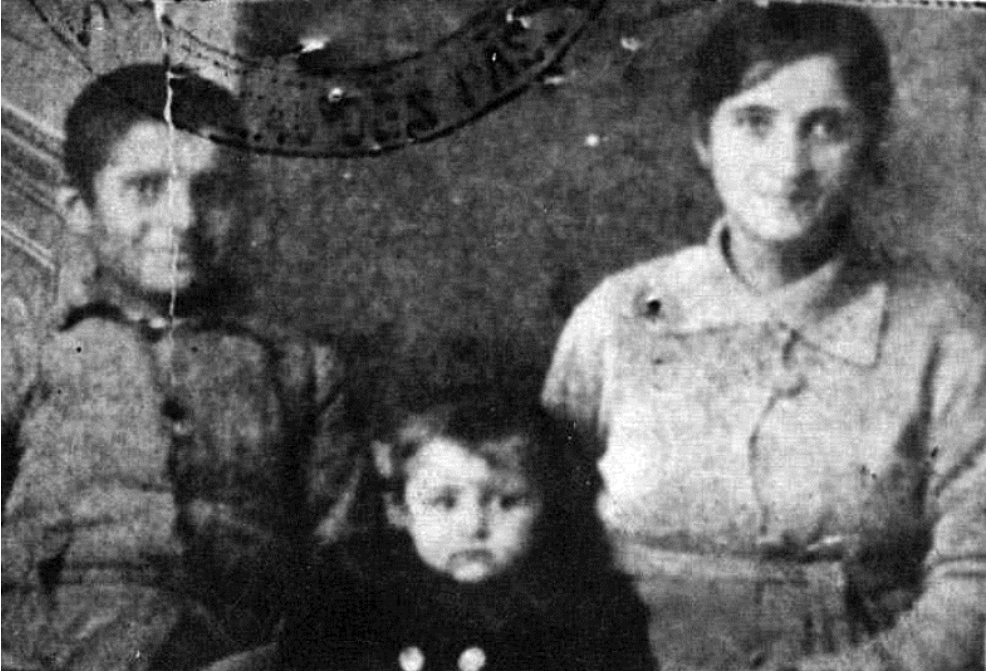
After a while, he continued, in his soft, quiet voice, to the end of WWI when he was found by British soldiers - lying emaciated under a tree, running a high fever– and taken to the Red Cross Orphanage Infirmary.

This full tape recording is in Laura's house to this day. Some time later, her Haigaz Story was published in a non-fiction anthology called *Homeground*.

* * *

Part III

In 1923 when my family—my mother, father, my older sister Angah and I—left Constantinople to go to America, Haigaz came with us. Haigaz was 18 years old, but he looked much younger due to starvation in his childhood and teen years. In order to pay a lower fare for his passage he was listed as 14 years old.



Haigaz Kulakzuzian, Angah Kalpakian, Haigouhi Kalpakian, Constantinople, c. 1922

On shipboard Haigaz engaged with conversations, games and maybe a little flirtation now and then with other young passengers. Perhaps he took my hand and walked me around the deck. I was only a year-and-a-half old, a toddler. By looking after me, Haigaz could give my mother time to rest. For this whole journey, she was pregnant.

We probably talked to the other passengers, all of whom were anxious to talk about their destinations and anticipated new lives in America. Some of the girls were already engaged to U.S. citizens. They knew a little about their destinations in

America – Chicago, New York, New Jersey, but no one was going so far west as Venice, California, like Haigaz.

They talked about how much money they had with them, like \$10 or \$25 or \$30.

They talked about how they were so looking forward to their lives in America.

They talked about not wanting to go back to their original countries.

They were all excited, anticipating their new lives in America.

Haigaz really enjoyed the trip, and he was grateful to his sister Haigouhi and her husband Haroutune – for saving him and taking him to America with them.

When he became an American citizen, he changed his name to Harry Clark, but we always called him by his old country name.

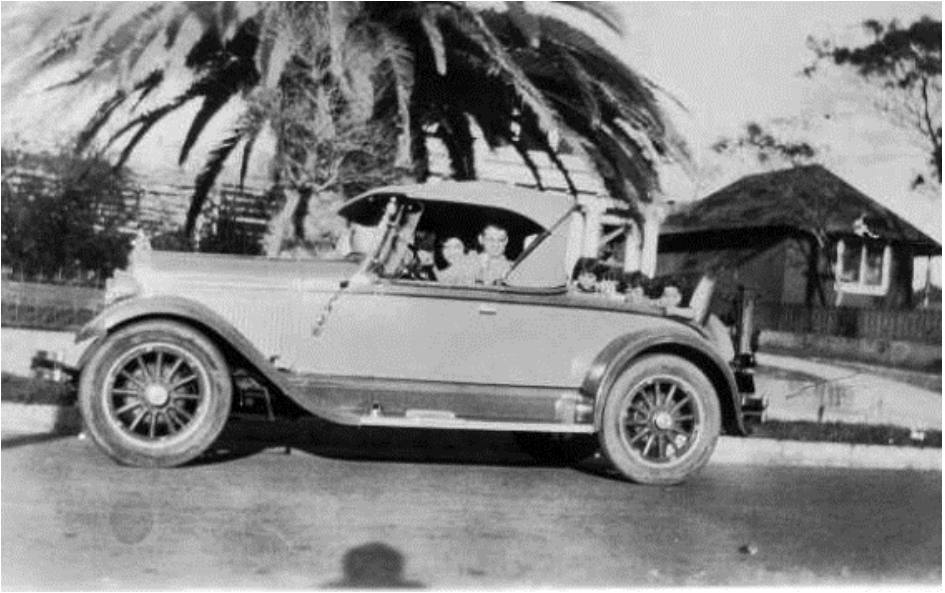
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Part IV

As a grown man, Haigaz was slender, not tall – maybe 5' 5" max. – due to starvation during his teen-age years when his growth was stunted. He had brown eyes, brown hair, a nice smile and a quiet, pleasant disposition, soft-spoken; his English was un-accented. He was exceedingly intelligent, self-educated and constantly learning.

Haigaz and my dad took English Language Lessons at Manual Arts High School Night School in Los Angeles. He became an American young man of the Twenties. Haigaz never lived with us, but he always stayed close. He was our uncle, but he was more like a big brother to us kids. He mended our toys when they broke, he took us for rumble seat rides in his first new 1926 General Motors Sports Car, the Oakland – and took a snapshot of us smiling in the rumble seat. He gave us ice cream cones (a real treat!) in his ice cream/hamburger stand in San Juan Capistrano, near the Mission, and delighted us with hand made doll houses which he built with exquisite detail.

Haigaz picked out our first car for us—a used 1925 Star Sedan – which had isinglass windows which could be snapped into place in case of rain. He taught Mama how to drive – and Mama taught Daddy. We were very proud of that used 1925 Star. Daddy delivered groceries to his regular customers in that car. We took many pix of the family in that car.



Harry Clark (Haigaz) in his 1926 General Motors sports car, The Oakland, with Helen Kalpakian in the passenger seat and Peggy, Betty and Angah in the rumble seat. In the right background is the two room cottage where the Kalpakian family lived from 1923 to 1927

* * *

Martha Hallaian, a beautiful young Armenian woman, was originally from Fresno, California. During the Great Depression, there were no jobs available in Fresno, so Martha, her father, Bedros, and brothers Charles and Vahan, all moved to Long Beach, California in search of work, which they found in aircraft plants, a growing industry.

Later, Haigaz went to work in the same aircraft plant in Long Beach, where he met Martha Hallaian. They married in the early Thirties during the especially severe years of the Great Depression. My parents felt they could not afford a suitable wedding present for Mom’s brother and his wife, so they gave Haigaz and Martha one of the rugs they had brought from the old country as a wedding present of love. This rug remains today in the family of Martha’s married sister, Annie Abcarian. The Abcarians have assured me that this wedding-present-rug is still beautiful, has been well cared for through all these years, and hangs on the wall of an Abcarian

home. I give special thanks to the Abcarian family for their gracious assistance in this tribute.

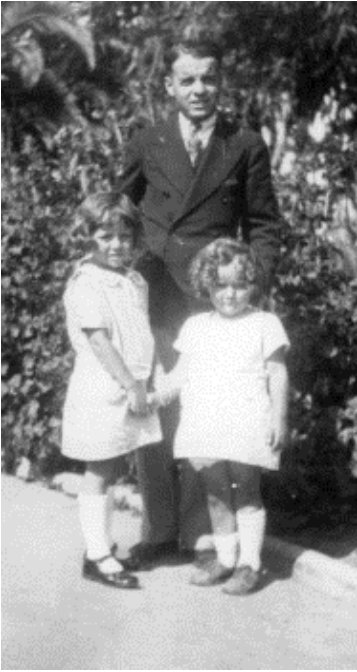


Harry & Martha Clark, c. 1935

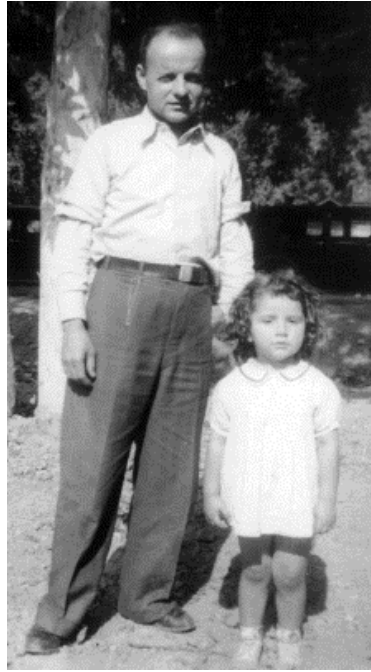
Even after he married, Haigaz and Martha visited us often and were a close part of our family. They had no children. They owned and operated a small grocery store and a hot dog stand in Venice. Martha wore an apron and helped behind the counter. He bought a house in Venice (that had a dishwasher!) and he drove a nice car, a Chevrolet.

Sometime after the Second World War, Martha told Haigaz she would like to move to Fresno to be nearer her sister, Annie. Annie who was born in 1904, just one year older than Martha, had married Mike Abcarian and had three sons, Gilbert, Richard and Donald. They lived and worked in Fresno where Mike was a barber.

Haigaz bought a tract of derelict Fresno farm land. He had always worked as a businessman, wearing a shirt and tie. But now he donned overalls, and went to work as a farmer, something he had never done before. He cultivated the aged vineyard, built chicken coops and ran a successful egg business for several years. He also remodeled the run-down farm house on the land which became their home.



*Haigaz & his nieces,
Peggy & Betty, c. 1926*



*Haigaz & his niece,
Harriet, c. 1938*

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I always felt Haigaz had a special place in his heart for his sister, Haigouhi, who had spotted his name on an Unclaimed Orphan List. When my father died, and the limo came to take all of us to the funeral, Haigaz was with us. Sitting there in the car, his eyes filled with tears, he said, “Haroutune was so good to me. He brought me to the United States with his family. He saved my life.”

I often wonder how Haigaz had such strength, courage, faith and perseverance – His formal schooling ended at age 10 – from there on, he was self-educated. He became an American young man who created a new life for himself – never looking back at those teenage years of true *horror, hunger* and *fear*. He was a life-long hero to my sisters and me – and he was also a hero to his sister’s grandchildren.

When he was sixty-five, he wanted to retire. But all his American records listed his age as three years younger than he really was, dating back to the records from the ship that had brought us here. He had to get depositions from the family – including my mother – as to his real age. He finally got Social Security and was able to retire.

Haigaz died at age 82, in 1987, in the same year Haigouhi died, just a few months later.

Haigaz often said that while he was active and busy, learning and making a living in America, he never thought of his years as a desert/beggar-child. But after he retired, sometimes in his sleep, he dreamed he was still running, still running, still running...

CHAPTER 6
SUNSHINE AND SILENCE
USC DURING
WORLD WAR II

America's #1 Father-of-the-Year!

Growing up in Los Angeles during the Great Depression, my great and all-encompassing dream was to go to the University of Southern California. I had always lived in the academic shadow of my older sister, Angie, who was a Foreign Language Major at UCLA, learning four foreign languages with Phi Beta Kappa grades. A truly hard act to follow. She was attending UCLA, so USC was the place for me. (As it turned out, of the four Kalpakian daughters, two went to UCLA and two to USC.)

All Depression Era children were well aware of the tight economic times, and our family was no exception. My older sister went to UCLA for \$29.50 per semester—as opposed to USC's tuition fee of \$180.00 per semester. The exorbitant tuition made this dream impossible. Far too expensive.

After high school, with my excellent typing skills (sixty-five words a minute on the standard typewriter of that day), I got a job at the Security National Bank, University and Jefferson Branch, which was located next to the USC campus. I was the bank manager's secretary. I immediately started saving money from my \$75 a month salary—not enough for four years at USC, but a start. I told Mr. Paul Cunningham, the bank manager, that I intended to be a USC student soon. Mr. Cunningham was himself a USC alumnus, and he wrote a letter of recommendation for me. As a result I received a Half General Alumni Scholarship, renewable with B average grades. Tuition for me was now \$90 per semester. Working part-time, I achieved my impossible dream. In the fall of 1942 I became a USC student during WWII!

The country was fully mobilized for war, the entire nation unified in working together. America accepted food, gas and tire rationing, black-out-windows, and standing in lines when necessary to buy special products. Any man in uniform who hitch-hiked was guaranteed an immediate ride. Another sign of America's true heart was the posting of blue stars in their home windows – representing family members in Active Military Service and gold stars for family members killed in action. Nearly every home had stars in their windows.

In 1942 when I entered USC, the University announced they were revising their dress code. Women students were no longer required to wear silk stockings, due to the war and the shortage of silk (silk was needed for parachutes). Women

students could now wear bobby sox or even paint their legs *as if* they were wearing silk stockings. I never did paint my legs, but I did wear bobby sox often. The University also suggested student-ride-sharing to save gas. I paid a Beverly Hills student 50 cents for a one-way ride to the USC campus. She drove her father's Packard right past my parents' house on West Olympic Boulevard. I came home on the street car and bus for a good deal less.

My first love was history and literature and I managed to take some of those classes, but I knew that English majors had a hard time finding a job. I majored in Business Administration, Banking, and I hoped for a future in finance. I loved taking classes and learning. I was invited to join Phi Chi Theta, Business Women's Honorary Sorority, and became an officer.



Peggy Kalpakian at USC, c. 1942

Part of my scholarship required me to replace the Dean of Business Administration's secretary during her lunch hour. Five days a week from noon to

1:00 p.m. The University paid me 50 cents an hour. (The national minimum wage was 40 cents an hour.) This dean, Dean McClung, had his office in the first USC President's office in Old College, built in about 1880. Old College was located near the big Methodist Church on campus—Victorian at its highest and best. Three stories with turrets and lots of windows. The stairs creaked. Some of the classrooms had elevated tiers for the students; the professor stood at a dais at floor level and looked up as he spoke to the students. Many of my business classes were in Old College and I had a special affection for it. I was sorry to hear years later that it was demolished.

Another scholarship student, Virginia Thomblin, shared the responsibilities with me for the Dean's phone calls while his secretary was at lunch. Virginia was a Senior, a science major, originally from one of the Dakotas. While we filled in for the dean's secretary, Virginia helped me with College Algebra, a required course, and I managed to get a B in it.

* * *

I was twenty years old and a happy student, still working twenty hours a week at Security Bank, loving my classes and making new friends. I met two other Angelenos from different high schools, Mary Frances Davison and Cecilia Munro. We met in Bovard Auditorium at Dr. T. Walter Wallbank's Man and Civilization lecture—a course required of all freshmen. We three were inseparable and became lifelong friends. At Mary's wedding in 1944, I was her Maid of Honor and Cecilia was her bridesmaid in a beautiful, wartime, all-military white wedding. This photograph still sits at my desk as I write this.



*Best college friends, Cissie Munro, Mary Davison, and Peggy Kapakian,
USC, c. 1943*

In one of President Roosevelt's speeches, he expressed his concern for the young men and women whose love lives had been turned upside down by World War II. When men went to war, everyone knew they might not return. Weekend

marriages were common. Some men wanted babies right away. There were many pregnant young widows, and also pregnant fiancées.

The University encouraged current students to write letters to former USC students who were fighting overseas. Names and APO numbers were listed in the Daily Trojan as well as on bulletin boards. I do remember writing at least one such letter. Maybe two. No replies. These were tense, emotional times for all students, for professors, for all young men and women, for the United States and for the entire world. I remember one student asking a professor to skip an exam because she had just got news that her boyfriend had been killed in action in Europe.

In the spring of 1944, all the male students remaining at USC were taken into the U. S. Army. I shall never forget that day; it remains as clear in my mind as if it were yesterday. Long lines of yellow buses parked along University Avenue and the men slowly entered the buses, single file. Every person on campus – student, professor, secretary, custodian, gardener – stood by and watched. We stood in the spring sunshine and in absolute silence. Silence as has never occurred at USC before or since, I would guess. There were no brass bands, no patriotic speeches, no flag waving as these young men entered the buses and left for war with no guarantees to return. My boyfriend at the time, a young man I had known since high school, was one of those who boarded the bus for the U.S. Army and the war. He did return and graduated from USC a few years later.

World War II changed the entire world, but on a very personal level, it changed the lives of everyone who stood there in the sunshine bidding silent farewell.

* * *

The Navy V-12 Program followed at USC shortly thereafter and the campus male void was filled by new Navy male students – wearing Navy uniforms – who lived in the dorms.

* * *

As I have said, while I was a USC student, I continued part-time work at the bank, saving money to pay the next semester's \$90 tuition. At the beginning of my Junior Year, I ran out of savings. I – reluctantly – had to ask my dad for the \$90 tuition. It was a very hard sell. I knew that it was truly exorbitant tuition. Both he and I were well aware that UCLA was still \$29.50 per semester, and that the national minimum wage was still 40 cents an hour and that bread was still ten cents a loaf. My father's careful instincts regarding money were formed during the Depression. He did not give me an answer right away. He said he would think about it. Waiting for his decision was pure agony.

Though I do not remember the words my father spoke when he gave me a check payable to USC for \$90 (NINETY DOLLARS!) I do remember we were in the little den just off the kitchen. I started to cry and threw my arms around him because I knew that my old country father truly loved me – understood me – his second daughter – and had faith in me.

To me, my old country father, Haroutune Kalpakian, had become America's #1 Father-of-the-Year!

CHAPTER 7 CHRISTMAS 1945

“Deck the halls! The War is Over!”



Peggy & Bill Johnson wedding picture, 1944

On September 2, 1945, Southern California – like the rest of the world – celebrated the end of World War II. Everyone was elated! Strangers talked to each other in grocery stores and on the street, motorists honked their horns; a time of manifest celebration! Everyone was happy and celebrating! The soldiers and sailors were coming home! It was an exciting time of renewal and dreams of the future.

September 2, 1945, my husband, Bill Johnson, was still at sea in the South Pacific serving as a pharmacist's mate on an aircraft carrier, USS Bairoko.



*Kalpakian-Johnson wedding party, September 16th, 1944, Long Beach Naval Chapel.
Left to right: Harry Rupp, Sidney Finegold, Bill Johnson, Peggy Kalpakian Johnson, Betty
Kalpakian, Angah Kalpakian.*

On a USC bulletin board in March 1944 I had seen a notice for a USO Dance in Hollywood one Saturday night. I asked my sister, Angie, if she wanted to go -- she said yes. At that dance I met Navyman, William Johnson. We danced the entire evening; we seemed to be a great dance team. When at the end of the evening he asked me for my phone number, I didn't give it to him, but I did say I would be teaching Sunday School the following morning at Wilshire Methodist Church at 10 a.m, hoping he would show up. But he didn't. The following Sunday, however, the Church Secretary, smiling, brought me a Penny Post Card -- addressed to me c/o the

church -- from Bill Johnson. I probably still have this post card. Six months later, in September, 1944, we got married.

In mid-October 1945 Bill was discharged from the U.S. Navy. I drove down to meet him, San Pedro, or Long Beach, I can't remember which. I brought him home to my parents' house in Los Angeles where I had been living with my baby daughter -- born June 28, 1945. They gave us the back bedroom and the little bathroom that was attached to it. My sisters all had to share a bedroom, and they and my parents all shared the other bathroom.

At this time, my older sister, Angie, was teaching high school French. Harriett (ten years old) was in Carthay Circle Elementary School. Betty had just re-registered at UCLA. With the GI Bill, UCLA and USC were registering hundreds of new students every day. Betty met her future husband, Finley Bown, at UCLA after the war.

We were crowded there in my parents' house, but it was impossible to find a place to live. Returning servicemen who remained in Southern California after the war had flooded the housing market.

We stayed with my parents for some five weeks. Bill had a degree in physiology from Utah State University, so he soon found a job with the U.S. Public Health Service at the Army Base Fort MacArthur in San Pedro. Finally, first week in December 1945, Bill found a housing project home for veterans, Banning Homes. There were many six-unit one-bedroom homes, plus a community laundry room, community clothes lines, snack bar, playground for children, office, etc. --actually a small community. Our place, 2103 Withrow Court, San Pedro, California, was one of several one-bedroom furnished frame homes connected together -- located on the outskirts of the City of San Pedro -- it was literally built in open former weed fields. Our immediate next door neighbor was a black couple with a three-year-old boy -- who became close friends. (I think they were the only black vets -- all the others were white -- all with small children.)

The housing project homes were furnished with basics so we just moved right in: a living room, a small bathroom, small kitchen and a bedroom. We brought our baby's crib and set it up in our bedroom. It was wonderful! We had windows only at the front and back -- since the sides were also the walls of our neighbors. There was a warm feeling of camaraderie among the residents. At first, the men asked each other about their service in the war, where they had fought, etc. etc. etc. All cordial neighbors. Lots of little children. Every day, a local vegetable truck came around -- rang a bell to let us know he was there for our choice of many fresh veggies -- and even a few other items, nuts, candies, and sometimes bread, rolls and eggs as well. We were truly happy in our new housing project home.



Peggy & Bill Johnson, c. 1946 with their daughter, Peggy Ann (Laura)

About once a week I would drive Bill to work, and then drive into Los Angeles to my parents' house. I brought my laundry. My mother did it all, and hung it all out to dry, baby clothes, baby diapers, shirts, sheets, everything, while my sisters and I played with the baby. We would have lunch, and later in the day I would go pick Bill up and we went home.

Also at this time, I remember a daytime radio program hosted by an Italian Chef Italiano. He announced that one could entertain DINNER FOR FOUR – A DOLLAR, NO MORE! He then noted that since ground beef was 25-cents a pound, one could make spaghetti or macaroni with one pound of ground beef and Italian Sauce, plus salad – lettuce, tomatoes and green onions for pocket change – bread or rolls and a can of fruit cocktail divided into fourths, with a dab of whipped cream for dessert – all for ONE DOLLAR ! I was so very impressed with his enthusiasm for inexpensive entertaining that I never forgot it!

Bill and I were very grateful to my parents for taking us in right after the War when no one could find housing. We gave them a thank-you gift of a new inlaid

coffee table – appreciation for their generous hospitality and love during the war years. We paid \$75 for it – probably \$400 or \$500 in today’s value – which is still beautiful today and located in Laura’s house.

By Christmas 1945, our second Christmas together, Bill and I were thrilled to be in our new housing project home with our first baby. For Christmas Eve, we went to my parents’ house for a lovely dinner and opening gifts. Our baby was my parents’ first grandchild and of course, they really enjoyed having her there to celebrate her first Christmas with all of us. They made a big fuss over her – My sisters wanted to take turns holding her – they all gave her lovely baby-girl gifts. My family adored her.



Bill Johnson and his daughter, Peggy Ann (Laura) in front of their apartment at Banning Homes, c. 1946

For 1945 Christmas Day, my husband and I wanted to entertain to celebrate having a home of our own. In addition to my parents, we invited my Uncle Pete and Auntie Makerie (Mock-er-ee) to come visit us and see our new housing project home. We had only been in our new home for a couple of weeks, so Mama prepared the simple meal of homemade chicken salad sandwiches, salad and a dessert. Auntie and Uncle Pete also made a big fuss over our beautiful baby and our new home. We also exchanged gifts – It was a wonderful Christmas! We were supremely happy!

I was so grateful that my husband had returned safe from the War, we had a beautiful baby daughter, just six months old. We had our own comfortable home. He had a good job. My parents were nearby. It was truly another time – gone forever, a Christmas I will never forget.

CHAPTER 8 FINDING OUR FRENCH COUSINS

The Kalpakian Diaspora

Emigration was the only escape for Armenians during and after the Turkish Genocide under cover of World War I. My father's family, remarkably, all of them survived those terrible years. By 1920 my dad's family had completely split up and emigrated all over the world. Many of them went to Romania, Jerusalem and Lebanon. My dad never saw any of them again.



Kalpakian family, 1891, Turkey. Harotoune Kalpakian far right, his father's arm around his shoulder.



*Haigouhi & Haroutune Kalpakian shortly after their marriage,
Seated, is mother Meribe Kalpakian c. 1917*

After we were settled in America, my father stayed in touch with his diaspora family for some time – He was especially close to his younger brother, Nishan. We knew that Nishan had gone to Romania with family, married Nevart, an Armenian young woman, had a son, Hagop and a daughter, Armine, and that they had later moved to France. But after my father died in 1963, we somehow lost touch.



Nishan, Nevart, wedding, 1929

We later learned from correspondence with Astrid that in the late-1930s, Nishan and Nevart were asked to leave Romania on very short notice because they had French passports. They had to leave everything – the house, the job – in a matter of days. They went to Marseille – where they knew no one. Nishan was an accountant and worked initially for the prelature of the Armenian Church in Marseille.



Armine & Hagop Kalpakian 1941

I already mentioned that my mother, Helen, in her very old age, wrote a comprehensive Kalpakian family memoir, *The Story of My Life*. Some time after her 1987 passing, Jenk Stephenson, her grandson-in-law, made copies of her memoir for family and for me, and some time later, he also entered it into the Internet. In

about 2015 or maybe 2016, Nishan's family in France picked up on Helen Kalpakian's Memoir on the Internet, contacted Jenk — and that was the key to our finding our French cousins!

So now we are in contact with our French cousins:

Armine Kaloustian – She is Nishan's daughter – She is 82 years old, a widow, living in Lyon, France. Armine is my first cousin.



Armine and Jean Kaloustian, 2014

Armine has three children: Frederic, Astrid and Sonia:

Frederic Kaloustian, a businessman, who spent 15 years living in Asia – now lives in Lyon.

Astrid Kaloustian – her partner, Hugues and their ten-year-old daughter, Agathe, live in Paris in sight of the Eiffel Tower. After Agathe was born, Astrid became a stay-at-home mom.

Sonia Kaloustian – lives in Lyon. She has several university degrees and does training for different companies.

Patty and Jenk went to France a few months ago and visited our new French extended family. They do speak English – and Patty teaches French so

communication was perfect. Some months after their return, Patty and Jenk came to visit us in Washington. She brought with her a gift for me from Armine that Armine had sewn by hand, a beautiful small quilt with perfect stitching. I have it on my couch and I admire it every day.

In addition to getting to know each other through pictures and emails, Astrid, her partner, Hugues, and their ten-year-old daughter, Agathe, came to the U.S – to Los Angeles, Venice, in July, 2018 and met many of us in person. What a remarkable international reunion of the families of the brothers, Haroutune and Nishan Kalpakian!

While they were there, Laura flew down from Washington and hosted a wonderful lunch at a Venice restaurant where our French cousins also got to meet Bear, Brendan, Raya and little Sonatine, age 4. What a wonderful, warm, loving reunion!

Our cousins' Southern California visit was wrapped up with a lovely celebration at the home of Patty and Jenk – wonderful Armenian food – marvelous hospitality. The local people of Harry Kalpakian's family gathered to celebrate this wonderful family reunion. Patty and Jenk, and their son, Marc, their daughter, Beth, and her husband, Nathan, Laura and Helen, Nancy and her husband Steve, and Barbara Bown who was on her way home from Monterey.



Helen Johnson, Barbara Bown, Astrid Kaloustian, Patty Stephenson, July 2018

Patty's dinner table was loaded with Armenian food, most of which Patty had prepared – Tabooli, Rice Pilaff, Derev (stuffed grape leaves), cheese borack – Nancy made paklava from Grandma's recipe – and the La-ma-Joon came from a local

Armenian bakery. They took many wonderful pictures to celebrate this momentous occasion.

One picture of this sit-down dinner at Patty's house is so very special because the actual table in her house is the original dining room table from Grandma and Grandpa's house on West Olympic Boulevard – as well as the chairs. You can almost hear Grandpa, standing at the head of the table, joyously saying, "Welcome to our home!"



Kalpakistan family reunion, July 2018, in California

After this reception, our cousins continued their U.S. trip to Northern California to see Ron and Sara Bown as well as Yosemite National Park and San Francisco – before returning to France.

On July 30, Agathe's 10th birthday, at Ron's house they had a birthday cake and a delightful birthday celebration for her – Plus, I sent her Birthday Horoscope to her. The personalized cake had writing in French and when the candle was blown out, it began spinning around in a circle and playing "Happy Birthday."

Agathe received a birthday gift of a lamp that re-creates the night sky on her bedroom ceiling as well as the ultimate symbol of 2018 youth, the fidget spinner, and also a model of DaVinci's helicopter of about the year 1500. Ten years old – She will always remember her 10th birthday celebration in America! What a wonderful age! She and Brandon Bown also discovered that the language of play is universal – since neither of them could speak the other's language. It was a wonderful international family visit.

I am so very sorry to say that, due to old age, I was unable to travel to Southern California to meet our French cousins, but my heart was there to welcome them and to convey my wishes of love and Armenian-American hospitality. This was truly, a magnificent international family reunion.

To me, the sole surviving member of the original Haroutune Kalpakian family, this reunion was like a dream come true. For the current families of Haroutune and Nishan to meet together in person in America – in another era – was a magical ending to a family love story. A true family love story.

In addition, our French cousins came from Paris, France directly to Venice, California – which was the exact final destination of our long, arduous trip from Turkey – now nearly one hundred years ago.

Our cousins' visit to America also prompted my daughter Helen to search Google Earth to find the lovely two-story ten-room home at 905 Harding Avenue in Venice, California – where my mother's sister and brother-in-law, Dudu and John Boyd (Boyajian), lived in 1923 when we arrived. Uncle John was a pharmacist and owned a couple of drug stores in the Venice/Santa Monica area. Helen found current pictures of the house – now surrounded entirely by very tall trees and by a low fence – in the neighborhood of ancient, large homes of the last century. The gardener's cottage at the rear of the lot – which was where we lived when we arrived – was gone. Also the frame garage where the Boyds had kept their Lincoln Sedan, was also gone.

At the time of this reunion, Laura and Brendan went to see the house in person; they talked to some of the neighbors, but did not receive a response from 905 Harding Avenue.

I have fond memories of this house. As a child, I was awed by the many windows of the Sun Room on the main floor, the huge front hall and the magnificent sun room furniture as well as the copper washing machine (!) in the basement.

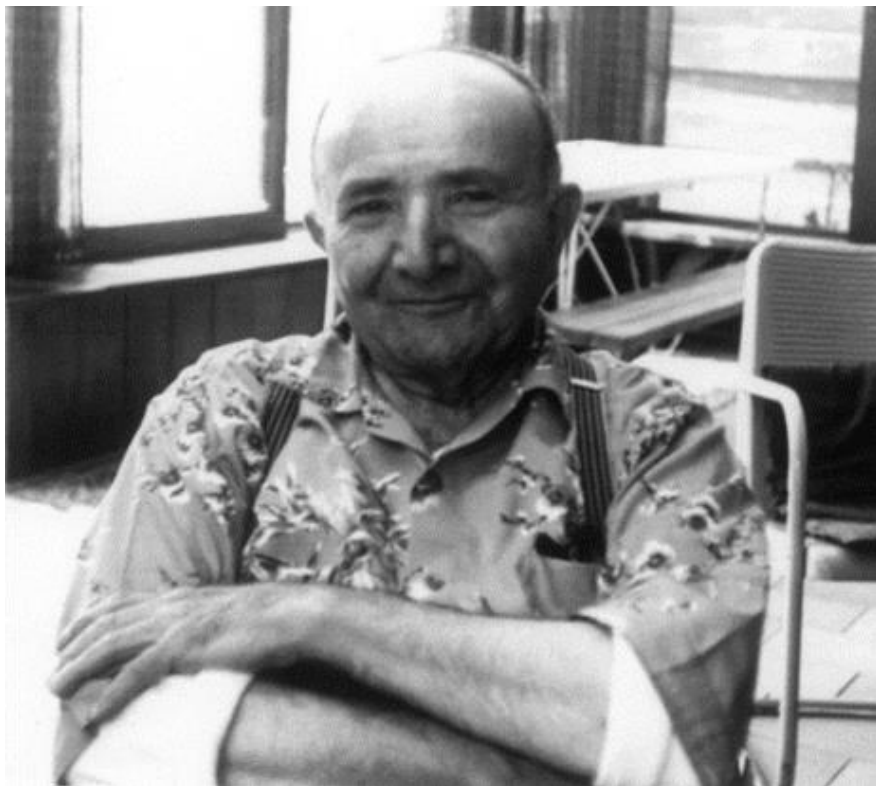
I wrote thank-you letters to Astrid and Armine for their gifts to me on the occasion of this reunion – an elegant French confection delicacy called Specialites de Provence and a lovely picture book, Paris Monuments – both wonderful remembrances of this historic occasion. Thank you, dear ones.

CHAPTER 9 FAREWELLS

Always in Our Hearts

Once when I was maybe 8 or 9 years old, I was sitting next to Mama at a church or Christian-church-type meeting when apparently the speaker said something that reminded Mom of her mother. She murmured her mother's name. And cried. That moment was crystallized in my memory because I had never seen my mom cry. I think it was the only time I ever saw her cry.

* * *



Last photograph of Harry Kalpakian, 1962

My father died on February 11, 1963 at age 75 of a heart attack. He lived to see all his daughters married, and to become grandfather to ten grandchildren whom he adored. His passing was a tremendous blow to me and my sisters. He was our life-long hero, saint and protector - a man of great intelligence, love, courage, strength and faith. We will miss him forever.

* * *

When Mama became a widow at age 62, she went to all the ladies' church luncheons available, but she clearly needed something else to do. Without telling her daughters in advance, she went to Fairfax High School's adult night school and took a typing class. Maybe she could get a job...When she heard about a possible opening as part-time House Mother at USC, she applied – and got the job. She was elated! Her new position was Weekend House Mother to relieve the full time house mother. She first refurbished her wardrobe – and then spent the first part of each week getting ready for the weekend job. She loved it. She loved USC. She became a USC football fan.

Later, when the full time House Mother retired, Mama was given the full time job - as well as a furnished apartment on the main floor of the dorm, Birnkrant Hall. She was so very proud of her first paycheck; she carried the stub in her purse to show us how proud she was of it. She had worked in Dad's stores all her life, but she had never received a printed paycheck. "See my name as the payee"... Mama worked for USC until she retired - in her late 70's.

She continued, however to love USC and USC football. In fact, she loved USC so much that in 1987 after her death my sisters initiated a USC Harry and Helen Kalpakian Scholarship for an Armenian or Armenian heritage student. It is ongoing to this day thirty years later, and my daughter acts as administrator for the family.



Helen Kalpakian, c. 1982, Woodland Hills, California

* * *

On one special day in June 1967, my husband and I gave an elegant Patio Party in honor of the graduations of three of our four kids:
Laura, University of California, Riverside;
Douglas, San Bernardino High School;
Helen, Arrowview Junior High School.

It was a wonderful party for friends, relatives, students, neighbors, et al. – great Armenian food, music, dancing - exciting times. Close knit family. Grandma (my mom, House Mother at USC Birnkrant Dorm) told us that Movie Director Mike Nichols was filming several scenes for his movie *The Graduate* at the USC campus on the same day as our party. Dustin Hoffman and Anne Bancroft! Grandma skipped all that exciting activity at USC, to come to our party.

* * *

Incidentally, as our children grew and left home, we communicated actively with them. I remember using the following return address on my letters:

SAAS

(Society for the Advancement of Armenian Swedes)

Required reading: *My Name is Aram* and *The Human Comedy* by William Saroyan.

(Muted message from Mom: Remember that you are Armenian.)

Did I mention that my *o-dar* (non-Armenian) husband, Bill, became an authentic Armenian Shish Kebab chef? His kebab was the very best. Over the years, both Bill and I excelled in Armenian cooking.



*Bill Johnson & his father-in-law, Harry Kalpakian, January 1945,
just before he shipped out for the Pacific*

And just incidentally, I was once excited to read William Saroyan’s short story, “The Parsley Garden.” I thought that Saroyan had recognized the importance of parsley in Armenian cuisine, and had written a story about it – which went straight to my heart. However, when I read his Depression-era story, I learned that “The Parsley Garden” actually included okra, bell peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, garlic, onions, mint, eggplant, and yes, parsley. I also found that the “Parsley Garden” was actually a place of cool-of-the-evening solace to a young single mother who had worked long hours that day packing figs – She had worked overtime for the extra 50 or 60 cents.

* * *

Shortly after Mama turned 80, her doctor told her she could no longer live alone. While she kept her home on West Olympic Boulevard, she lived with Betty and Finley in their Riverside, California home. Betty encouraged Mama to write a memoir - which has been helpful in our family as well as to this memoir. After a few years she moved to Plymouth Tower, Congregational Church’s Assisted Living in Riverside. Mama enjoyed her stay at Assisted Living to the end in July, 1987. At her funeral her pallbearers were her beloved four American sons-in-law and her beloved grandsons.

Her true love, her inner strength and beauty, courage, support and wisdom will always be remembered by her daughters, grandchildren and great grandchildren. A true saint. Thank you, Mama. We will miss you forever.

* * *

In November of 2013, my daughters Helen and Laura gave an elegant Kalpakian Girls’ Reunion party at Helen’s home in Mira Loma, California, honoring the three Kalpakian daughters still alive at that time – Betty, Harriett and me. Betty and I entertained the guests with the Fight and Tri-Y Songs from our alma mater, George Washington High School. We actually sang them twice, the second time for the video cameras. It was a wonderful party – great Armenian food – *la-mah-june* (Armenian pizza), *derev* (baked meat, rice, tomatoes, onions wrapped in grape leaves), salads, ice cream and cake – plus gifts for all the guests – who were Angie’s daughters, Patty and Nancy, Betty’s daughter, Barbara, Betty’s son Richard, and Betty, Harriett and me.



Peggy, Harriett and Betty, November 2013

We did not know, on that happy occasion, that in less than a year, Harriett, the youngest daughter, would tragically pass away after a short illness in July 2014. There were no goodbyes. Heartbreak for me. True heartbreak.

In February 2016, shortly after her 92nd birthday, Betty also left us after a brief hospitalization. Shock. Another heartbreak. True, true heartbreak.

Angie, the oldest, had been the first to pass away. None of us knew that her 90th birthday party at the Mission Inn in Riverside, was her last reunion with her sisters. It was the beginning of an end to an era, almost as if she had opened the door for us. Sisters are sisters forever.

* * *

Two of Mama's granddaughters Helen Kathleen Johnson and Helen Pearl Donnell have been honored to carry her name – and grandsons James Harry MacKellar and Howard Harry Donnell were also named for my dad. Also, my youngest son, Brian, carries his Armenian grandmother's American maiden name – Brian Clark Johnson. In addition, my parents' first grandchild, a novelist, changed

her name to Laura Kalpakian, thereby guaranteeing world-wide recognition to their old country name.

With great pride and awe, I can tell you that the daughter of Brendan and Shweta McCreary – born January 30, 2018 – has been named Zai Pakradouhi McCreary. My eyes teared up when I heard the news.

A few months before she was born, I went over to Laura's so we could Face Time with them. They wanted to tell us the name they had chosen. They put a sign that said Zai for her first name. And then, they put up a sign that said Pakradouhi for middle name. I was so shocked, I know I screamed – and I think I nearly fainted! I was totally overcome with emotion. I wept to know that the name my old country parents gave me 97 years ago will live on with this beautiful great-granddaughter in America! I thank you from my heart of hearts, dear ones.

Additionally, Laura's new novel, *The Great Pretenders*, published in April 2019 by Berkley Press, has a special dedication. I was also overwhelmed with emotion to read the dedication on this new book. It reads:

Dedicated to Zai Pakradouhi McCreary
and her great-grandmother
Pakradouhi Kalpakian Johnson

* * *

Harry and Helen's children, grandchildren and great grand-children have made many contributions to American academics, teaching, languages, literary and music arts – and each generation continues to reward their faith in America with more brilliant new gifts and talents.

I truly feel in my heart that good health in my very old age (97) has been a gift to me – the sole family survivor – to be able to create and leave not only this written record of my remarkable Armenian immigrant family, but also a living, loving, heart-filled testimonial to my young-in-heart-old-country parents, Harry and Helen Kalpakian (Haroutune and Haigouhi), to their four daughters, and to their talented grandchildren and great grandchildren.

This is a true story of courage and conviction, and finally a happy story.

Epilogue

After having four daughters, I always felt that my parents secretly wanted a son to carry on their name. However, their first grandchild, who became a novelist, single-handedly granted their secret wish when she changed her name to Laura Kalpakian – thereby guaranteeing world-wide notice of their old-country name. When her novel, *Cosette*, the sequel to Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, was published in France in 1995, children of my Dad's younger brother, Nishan Kalpakian, who had emigrated to France – his family bought the book and wondered about the American author, who, remarkably, had their old-country family name.

Author's Note

When I look in the mirror, I see this 97-year-old woman, but I know in my heart, I am the same young woman of spirit I have always been.



The Author holds the first galley of this book

I have been raised in America, I am a Naturalized American citizen, I feel I am American in every way, but in my heart of hearts, I feel that a part of me is still Old-Country-Armenian. Sometimes (in my very old age) I wonder if I might perhaps have come from the Old-Country to bring to my current American family, Old-

Country-Armenian Intensity to Love, to Personal Strength and to Courage. Also, I am indescribably drawn favorably toward other Armenians. Armenian-Americans have become an integral part of America's soul and heartbeat.

I arrived in the United States – destination, The City of Angels – in the fall of 1923 with my parents and my older sister, Angaghouhi. I was 19 months old and Angie was about 4. Angie was born in Adana, Turkey (December 26, 1918) where our parents met and married (October 18, 1917), and I was born in Constantinople (now Istanbul March 26, 1922). They knew they wanted to leave Turkey and move to the United States. And once they were in Constantinople, they took all the necessary measures (including bribes) to secure passage.

I have always had a special place in my heart for our destination in America – the City of Angels. Los Angeles in those early days was a vibrant city, a wonderful place to grow up. Because I want my sons, daughters, grandchildren and great grandchildren to know how it was to grow up in that great City of Angels in another time, I dedicate this heartfelt memoir with love.

To my sons, daughters, grandsons and great-grandchildren, I hope that these remembrances convey to you my everlasting unconditional love for all of you. You will always be in my heart no matter where I am. Know always and forever – that I love you with all my heart. I feel I have a very special relationship with each of my sons, daughters, grandsons – and my great grandchildren. This memoir is also to pay tribute to and to memorialize the strength, courage and sheer guts of my young old-country parents, Haroutune and Haigouhi Kalpakian (Harry and Helen).

Theirs is a true story of courage and conviction – and finally, a happy story.

–pkj

MY SISTERS

My sisters and I all married American men – three of them veterans of active military duty in World War II – U. S. Army and U. S. Navy – all good husbands, fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers – who became semi-Armenians.



*Helen Kalpakian & her daughters, c. 1970.
Left to right: Harriet, Betty, Helen, Angah, Peggy*

In our youth, my sisters and I would have accepted dates from young Armenian men, but there were no Armenian young men around, so to speak. In LA's early years, young Armenian immigrant families had settled in various outlying

areas in the huge expanse of the City of Angels – meeting in groups only in churches – none of which were anywhere near where we lived – so we had no interaction.

My sisters and I all lived long enough to know that USC would eventually have an Institute of Armenian Studies, Armenian student social events and classes in Armenian History – and also to know that the sleepy suburb of Los Angeles, Glendale, would become a vital, active Armenian community.

* * *

At age 97, I am the lone surviving Kalpakian daughter – I miss my sisters very much. I also feel I should tell you a little about their active, productive lives. The four Kalpakian daughters all went to college, two to UCLA and two to USC. All three of my sisters earned California Lifetime Teaching Credentials (as well as two granddaughters, Patty Stephenson and Helen Johnson).

ANGIE

Angie, the oldest Kalpakian daughter, married U. S. Navyman George MacKellar in 1946; he was also a member of her 1936 George Washington High School Class.

When we were little, she was Mama’s assistant and babysat Betty and me. Angie was truly gifted academically and she was generous, sharing her talents with Betty and me, helping us with our homework, especially math and science. As the eldest, she watched my father, saw what he did in terms of business and real estate, and she learned from him. When she went to UCLA, Angie majored in Foreign Languages. She learned four languages, French, Spanish, Latin and German. After graduation (Phi Beta Kappa), she taught French in high school. Angie was also a world traveler. In the 1990's she went to Adana, Turkey, hoping to find the American Adana Congregational Seminary for Girls our mother had attended, but it was gone. Her daughter Patty inherited her gift for languages and her thirst for travel.

Patty taught French and Chinese for many years and still leads student groups to China. Daughter Nancy worked in the San Bernardino County Courthouse and Angie’s son, Jim, has his own insurance business.

BETTY

While Betty was a UCLA student, she was a performing member of UCLA’s Music Workshop and had successfully appeared as the solo gypsy dancer in their

October 1947 production of the opera *Carmen*. In January 1948 she was to have had a starring role (singing/acting) in *Carousel*, which was cancelled by the New York Theater Guild on technicalities. Betty was always a Jeanette MacDonald fan – and loved musicals.

Betty married Finley Bown in 1950, was a stay-at-home mom for many years. When she noticed that there was not an Armenian Apostolic Church in Riverside, California, she single-handedly organized and founded the first Armenian Apostolic Church in Riverside - complete with a priest, Sunday services, youth activities, picnics – a total church – all as a tribute to our old-country father's faith, Armenian Apostolic. Betty's son, Richard, edited the Church Newsletter – and, with a smile, always included a Ho-Jah story in it. Betty also encouraged Mama to write a memoir of her life – which has been a help to me writing this memoir. In her 80's, Betty and a friend traveled to Armenia. She also took steps to learn Armenian language.

Richard, a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of California, is retired from the Riverside Art Museum and a Riverside catering company. He was also his mother's principal caretaker during her widowed later years.

Betty's daughter, Barbara also inherited the family gift for languages. In addition to a UCR BA, she studied German language, literature, political science and music in Bonn, Germany. She also sang in the Bonn University Choir. Later, after learning American Sign Language, she was accepted at Grad School Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. Barbara worked as a Claims Representative at Social Security Administration at first in Monterey and then in Salinas, California. She retired in order to assist Richard with their mother's declining health. Currently she is co-director of the RiverSong Threshold Choir of Riverside.

Ronald, Betty's younger son, became an Ordained Minister in the Presbyterian Church, and after retiring, he became a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and is presently a health consultant in a U.S. Naval Hospital in central California.

HARRIETT

My youngest sister, Harriett, alas, did not keep up the Ephebian tradition at GWHS. She went to Los Angeles High School, and attended USC on a full Scholarship, and graduated in Spanish, Phi Beta Kappa in 1956. She became a high school Spanish teacher, and married Alan Donnell in 1961. Later, she became an integral part of the research department of a national real estate company in Southern California. She was also a part of the leadership in her local Methodist Church. Her son Howard was also a USC Phi Beta Kappa Scholarship Spanish language major, studied in Spain and received a Fulbright Fellowship. Harriett's daughter, Helen, is an accountant and raises horses.

PEGGY

I was a scholarship student at USC in Business Administration. After raising a family, I worked for many years as Administrative Assistant to the Director of Orthopedic Surgery and Rehabilitation at the San Bernardino County Medical Center.

Following the family gift for language and teaching, my daughter, Helen was a Special Ed teacher for over thirty years, retiring in 2010 with honors. Laura, the Kalpakians' first grandchild, is a published novelist, actively working on new material and with a book coming out in 2019. She also is a cofounder of a group of writers in the Pacific Northwest. Brian, my youngest, a Cal-State grad, moved to the Pacific Northwest in the early 90's and has a career in international shipping. My son Douglas is retired and lives in Southern California near the beach.

Bear and Brendan McCreary (my grandsons) are both grads of USC's School of Music. In fact, Bear was the 2016 Keynote Speaker at the USC School of Music Graduation. Bear received a 2013 Emmy Award for his musical score of the television show *DaVinci's Demons*. Both Bear and Brendan are active in the film and music scene in Los Angeles.

ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT INFORMATION

GLOSSARY

Dear Reader:

I have already explained how it was that my sisters and I did not speak Armenian or Turkish growing up with our old-country parents (my father had to learn English in a hurry), but our at-home vocabulary included many old-country names for some everyday items – many of which are still used in my family today – and probably in my sisters’ families as well.

HY-MAIR - The Lord’s Prayer.

KEEBAR -An aristocrat, a high-class person. (“Be-deh-keebbar-kee”) “You are one true aristocrat.”

PER-NICH - A pot-holder. My husband and my children learned this one in a hurry.

Also, my grandsons were puzzled when their mother called for a PER-NICH.

KISH-ER NOTES - was a nightgown. We just called our nightgowns Kishies.

KORD-ZER-ON - Toilet. We just called it the KOD-GEE.

GER-GOO-JOOK - A really old person. Could be used either as a compliment or negative. (You drive like a Ger-goo-jook!)

DZER-AR- A peasant-type bundle of linen (or other) tied up in a sheet.

GERD-ZEH - Gnaw. GERD-ZEH the bone.

CHISH - CHI-CHISH - Urine. My son Brian never learned the American word for Chish until he was in Kindergarten.

BERT - Flatulence.

TUSS - Silent version of Bert. (Tustin, Calif. was an in-family joke.)

HULL-LOT - Snot, or phlegm. (Another in-family joke: the French movie, “Mr. Hulot’s Holiday.”)

CHIP-PICK - Small irritation that forms in eyes involuntarily. (“You have a chip-pick in your eye...”)

BOH-CHICK -A follow-cat, a person or thing that follows one around. We named our travel trailer THE BOH-CHICK. It always followed us.

PARO-VY-LESS - “Enjoy it in good health” – To say to someone who has acquired something new. Also used as the equivalent of “Congratulations!”

MY-RIG - Mother, Mama

GULL-LESS - Less-than-perfect.....A gull-less job: a quick, once-over, make-do job, or maybe an incomplete job.

GER-A-GOUR - (Gair-ah-goor) - Dinner, a meal.

AESH-EK - (Ess-sheck) - Donkey. My father also found this word to be an effective (silent) comment to some errant Los Angeles drivers.

SOUP - AH - Baby donkey

HOD-JAH - A teacher, master or elder, comedian
VER- MAK - (Vair-mock) - A wonderful, warm, old-country quilt filled with lamb's wool.
KEH-SEH - An old country bath mit/pocket – with rough finish - used to remove dirt stains from children's knees, or other, etc.
INCH-BESS-ESS - Armenian greeting – Hello, how-are-you.....
VOR-ICK - Backside, tush
OAF-AH-MON - Alas!
OR-OR - Armenian lullaby. My father sang his favorite lullabies to all four of his daughters when they were babies.
ANOUSH - AH-NOOSH - A term of endearment, sweet one, lovely -
OCH-CHEEK - A girl
ANOUSH (AH-NOOSH) OCH-CH - Good girl, a sweet girl
ODAR (OH-DAR) - Non-Armenian person

ARMENIAN NAMES FOR FOOD

LA-MA-JUNE - Armenian pizza - delicious!
RICE PILAF - A staple of Armenian cooking
LOCUM - (LOCH-HUM) - A candy similar to gum drops or Aplets and Cotlets
DOL-MAS – Also called DEREV. Meat, rice and tomatoes baked in grape leaves or cabbage leaves.
CHEESE BORACK - A delicious cheese pie made with Armenian cheese and layers and layers of filo dough.
BULGAR PILAF - Like Rice Pilaff – made with bulgar wheat.
CHEE-KUFTA - A wonderful main meal – made from fat-free raw, top-grade ground beef steak (or lamb), softened bulgar, parsley, green onions, tomatoes, etc. – which has been kneaded by hand. Delicious!
TABOOLI - A wonderful, summer-type salad made with softened bulgar, green onions, parsley, tomatoes, olive oil-lemon dressing — absolutely delicious!
PAKLAVA - (pawk-lah-vah - An elegant, delicious dessert made with syrup, crushed walnuts and layers and layers of filo dough. My husband loved this – one of his very favorite Armenian foods.
SHISH-KEBAB - Roast meat (kebab) plus tomatoes, onions on a skewer (shish) - A main-dish delight. My Odar (non-Armenian) husband Bill became an authentic old-country-Armenian Shish Kebab Cuisine expert. Over the years, we both became proficient in old-country cooking.
HALVA - a Near Eastern candy

HO-JAH STORIES

For five centuries, the people of the Near East have been laughing at stories of HoJah, the teacher-priest-elder-comedian who had a talent for being very foolish as he did wise things – and being very wise as he did foolish things. (From *Once the Hodja* by Alice Geer Kelsey.)

I would like to share a few of the amusing, old country HoJah Stories that Grandpa Kalpakian told to his children and grandchildren.

THE FRYING PAN

Ho-Jah borrowed a frying pan from a neighbor, and later returned it with another small one, saying, the pan had a baby. The neighbor was surprised, but pleased to accept both pans. Later, HoJah borrowed the pan again, and this time he did not return it at all. When the neighbor inquired about it, HoJah told him that the pan had died. When the neighbor did not believe that the pan had died, Ho-Jah pointed out that since the neighbor had believed the pan had had a baby, he would have to believe the pan died too.

* * *

HOJAH AND THE DONKEY

HoJah and his son were going to another village. His son was riding the donkey, and HoJah was walking along side of him.

People along the way, stopped and muttered, “Look at that! The poor old man is walking and the young man is riding the donkey. The youth of today has no consideration, no respect!”

HoJah was irritated, so he told his son to get off and walk while he rode the donkey. Another group of people remarked, “Look at that, on a hot day, the father is riding on the donkey and the poor boy is walking.”

So HoJah pulled his son up on the donkey too.

Another group of people said, “Look at that, two of them riding and the poor donkey is about to pass out on this hot day.”

Ho-Jah was fed up. He and his son got off the donkey and walked along side of it. This time, people said, “Look at those stupid people. They have a donkey but won’t ride it!”

HOJAH AND ANOTHER DONKEY

One day when HoJah was going to the village with his friend, he decided to ride on his donkey backward. His friend asked, “Why are you riding on the donkey backward. You must be very uncomfortable.”

HoJah replied, “If I sat facing forward, you would be behind me. If you went in front of me, I would be behind you. Either way, I would not be facing you. So this is the most logical way.”

* * *

HOJAH AND THE DONKEY PART III

In a conversation with a friend, HoJah bragged that his donkey was so smart, he could teach it how to read. The friend said he didn’t believe it, but he would give HoJah three months to prove it.

HoJah went home and started to train his donkey. He put its feed between the pages of a big book and taught it to turn the pages by its tongue to find its feed. Three days before the 3 month period was over, he stopped feeding it.

To demonstrate his literate donkey, HoJah asked for a big book and put it in front of the donkey. The hungry animal turned the pages of the book with its tongue, one by one, and when it couldn’t find the feed between the pages, it started braying.

The friend said, “This sure is a strange way of reading.”

HoJah said, “This is how a donkey reads.”

* * *

HOJAH AND THE CAMEL

Hojah was traveling in the desert on his camel. When evening came, Hojah set up his tent, went inside to rest, leaving the camel outside.

The camel started to cry, “Oh.....Hojah.....My eyes are so tired – sand in my eyes.....Oh, Hojah.....Please let my eyes into your tent.”

Hojah felt sorry for him, and said, “All right, but just your eyes.”

Then the camel started to cry again,

“Oh..... Hojah..... my legs are so tired. I carried you on the desert safely.....My legs are so tired, please let my legs come into the tent.”

Hojah felt sorry for the camel, so he said, “All right, but just your legs.”

When the camel moved his legs into the tent, he pushed Hojah outside into the night.

* * *

HOJAH AND THE SERMON

Hojah went to the pulpit to deliver the sermon, and before he started the sermon, he asked the congregation,

“Do you know what I am going to be talking about today?”

Half said yes – and half said no.

So he told the ones who knew – to tell the ones who didn’t know.

And he walked away, and sat down.

DECLARATION OF GOODS THE KALPAKIANs BROUGHT TO AMERICA

Below is a partial list of the goods that my parents declared when they first came to America in 1923. The entire list is very long, and has in it some items that are inexplicable to me. Some of them struck me as so minor as to be touching.

3 dresses	1 table cloth
6 blouses	1 Diploma American School
3 skirts	1 box envelopes
3 petticoats	1 iron
6 pairs gloves	2 lamps
5 dresses for children	1 package photographs
1 bottle perfume	4 curtains
2 big towels	27 books
2 pantaloons	5 blankets
8 little plates	1 little box coffee
2 big spoons	1 little box tea
1 2-cup coffee pot	1 kilo macarone
1 brush	1 kilo sugar
30 spoons and forks	1 kilo boulgour
1 broom	4 pillows
1 box needles	1 brush
3 pairs shoes	1 trunk
3 umbrellas	3 neck ties
1 piece of sponge	1 wool overcoat for women
Some thread for stockings	4 pieces of soap
2 paintings	2 collars for women

AND:

3 BALES OF RUGS –

They brought the rugs as a kind of savings account – They could be sold in case they needed money in their new home. Many of these same rugs remain in homes of their grandchildren and great-grandchildren today.

Following is a copy of a 10th Grade English Class essay written by my son, Douglas Scott Johnson, in April 1965. (I found this copy among Kalpakian family papers.)

An Unforgettable Person

by Doug Johnson

I shall always remember my grandfather as one of the most remarkable men I have ever known.

When he first came to the United States in 1923, he was thirty-six years old and could not speak a word of the English language. He had a wife and two children, and one on the way. Not only did he learn to speak English, although not too well at first, but he also entered into a business. When it was necessary to converse in English, he had a charming personality which overshadowed his lack of vocabulary. Many years later, when his four daughters were attending universities, he asked them to help him with his vocabulary and help him to speak more fluently.

Grandpa was a tower of strength. Physically he was a short, heavy-set man. However, his honesty, integrity and understanding made him a giant in my eyes. He was loving and kind, and always had a surprise candy bar in his pocket for me.

Grandpa had a marvelous sense of humor. He would tell endless old-country stories with such humor that we laughed for hours. He could sing delightful old-country songs, and on occasion, he would dance.

I am proud of my Armenian grandfather and grateful for the heritage he has given me.

Armenian Recipes (with American short-cuts)

Armenian cooking is as much the skill of the cook, the touch, the experience as the ingredients. Don't expect any of them to turn out beautifully the first time. They require time. Good luck.



Peggy Johnson making derev, November 2013, for the Kalpakian Girls' Reunion

Rice Pilaff

Armenian Cuisine Staple

1 cup Long Grain White Rice

1 cup crushed vermicelli (some crushed vermicelli)

1/4 to 1/3 cup butter or olive oil

Pre-heat water in kettle (2 cups)

For perfect rice pilaff melt your butter or olive oil in a saucepan, and then brown crushed vermicelli in the butter – stirring occasionally so that it does not burn. When vermicelli is golden brown, add dash of salt, 1 cup of Long Grain White Rice and 2 cups boiling water. Cover and do not re-open. Turn heat to Low for 20 or 25 minutes. Taste test.

For Bulgar Pilaff, substitute bulgar wheat for rice.

TABOOLI

A wonderful summer salad

2 cups of medium or coarse bulgar wheat

Soak overnight or a couple of hours – covered – before using.

Squeeze any water out (with cheese cloth) before starting.

Put the bulgar in a big bowl and add:

1 ½ cups finely chopped green onions.

2 cups finely chopped parsley

¾ cup tomatoes – cut up small

salt / pepper / lemon pepper to taste

Mush all together with hands

Add: ¼ cup olive oil

1 cup lemon juice, mixed together

Toss with forks — Garnish

Serve – Wonderful summer salad

CHEE - KUFTA

This great Armenian favorite is a version of Steak Tartare

2 cups fine bulgar

1 pound very lean Top Sirloin Steak

Remove all fat or muscle

Grind in food processor – or have butcher grind it 3 times

1 large onion – finely chopped

Pinch cayenne

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

1 cup finely chopped parsley

½ cup finely chopped scallions (including 2 inches of the green tops)

4 tomatoes cut into 8ths

¼ cup finely chopped green pepper (optional – I don't use it)

Soak the bulgar to cover (10 minutes or overnight). Squeeze dry the bulgar in cheese cloth and place in a bowl. Add the ground steak, onion, cayenne, and salt and pepper. Knead the mixture about 8 minutes with hands moistened by occasionally dipping them into a bowl of lightly salted ice water. Add 2 tablespoons each of parsley, scallions, and knead 1 or 2 minutes longer, or until the mixture is well blended and smooth. Taste for seasoning. Keeping hand moist, form the mixture into patties (with one hand) and arrange on a serving platter. Season the remaining parsley, scallions with additional salt or lemon pepper, and sprinkle over the patties. Garnish with the tomatoes. Serve immediately. Serves 4. Wonderful gourmet meal.

LA-MA-JUNE
(Armenian Pizza)

1 ½ - 2 pounds ground beef (not too fat, not too lean) (9% to 16%)
2 packages Pillsbury's Biscuits (plain or buttermilk)
2 or 2 ½ small cans tomato sauce
1 bunch parsley cut fine
1 onion and a few green onions – cut fine
3 or 4 tomatoes, cut small
1 teaspoon salt / lemon pepper
Mix together meat, tomatoes, onions, parsley, salt and tomato sauce.
Set aside.

On a cutting board or bread board, sift some flour. Open one package of biscuits, separate biscuits, and with a rolling pin, roll out each biscuit to size of a thin saucer – and place on a sheet of wax paper. Roll out all 10 before starting to bake.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees, Place one shelf high and one shelf low.
Before greasing cookie sheet, warm pan slightly. Grease warm cookie sheet lightly with Crisco. Now place the rolled out biscuits gently on the cookie sheet – 3 or 4 at a time. Place about 3 tablespoons of meat mixture on each saucer-size biscuit – and spread with fingers – all the way to the edges. (Meat mixture should not be too thick or too thin – it should cover all the dough's surface. If it doesn't spread readily, add more tomato sauce to meat mixture.)

Now place the cookie sheet on the lower oven shelf for 5 minutes. By then the edges should look brownish.

Move cookie sheet now to top oven shelf. Bake 4 or 5 minutes more. Check under side with spatula. (May take longer. If the bottom is brown, but the meat is watery, leave in another minute on the top oven shelf.)

When lamajunes are baked, place them separately on a sheet of foil to cool. (Taste one to see if more of anything is needed for taste.)
Repeat with second package of biscuits. This recipe makes 20.

DEREV (DOL-MAH) (Stuffed Grape Leaves)

Ground beef (the leaner the better)

3 pounds for large jar of grape leaves

1 ½ pounds for small jar grape leaves

(If you have your own grape vines, clip the tender leaves, place in kitchen sink, add generous amount of salt, pour boiling hot water on them, rinse and start.)

In a big bowl add to the ground meat:
1 or 2 onions – diced
parsley – one whole bunch for large jar
1 cup long grain white rice
Tomato Sauce - 1 15-ounce can
Some lemon juice (pour some in, generously)
Lemon pepper
Garlic - powder or granulated
Mix all this together with your hands.

Rinse off groups of grape leaves. Cut stem as close as possible to leaf and lay out – stem toward you. Place meat mixture in middle of leaf. Fold sides in and roll – keeping tight as possible.

Place rolled leaves closely and tightly in Dutch oven or large pan, starting down the middle.

Cover with water.

Place inverted dish over rolled leaves – to hold them tight and together.

Bake uncovered at 325 degrees for about 1 ½ to 2 hours.

Check by cutting one open to see if the rice is cooked.

CHEESE BORAK

2 pounds Jack Cheese or mozzarella, diced

3 eggs

Some parsley – chopped

2 ½ cubes of butter

1 package phyllo dough – thawed for several hours in refrigerator

Combine cheese and parsley.

Add 2 of the eggs, beaten

Mix well.

Set aside.

Melt butter slowly. Remove sheets of phyllo carefully, one at a time, and place on cookie sheet or baking pan. Brush EACH SHEET with butter (all over) – using pastry brush – and layer sheets in pan. After every 3 or 4 sheets of phyllo, place a little of the cheese-egg-parsley mixture on each sheet. Continue till all sheets and cheese are used. Place one sheet phyllo on top.

Beat one egg and spread with fingers all over the top layer – for looks.

Bake at 350 degrees - 15 to 20 minutes. Check if the top is browned.

Serve warm or cold.

Notes from Grandma re phyllo: No drafts in the kitchen when you are applying the butter to phyllo. Also, do this quickly as possible so sheets will not dry out. Phyllo is very delicate – Handle with care.

Aunt Martha Clark made a version of this using lasagna noodles instead of phyllo. She also sometimes added spinach.

STUFFED ZUCCHINI

(Dol-mah)

Filling:

1 ½ lbs - to 2 lbs. Ground beef (not too lean – not too fat)

about 2 lbs. Zucchini

1 onion - diced

some parsley – about 1 bunch – chopped

some rice (maybe ¾ cup)

Some lemon juice

Tomato sauce – 2 small cans (one for stuffing mixture and one for on top of zucchinis in baking dish)

In a big bowl mix well with hands.

Set aside.

Core out all zucchinis – as near to the skin as possible. Save insides.

Cut slits in sides of each zucchini - sprinkle insides with lemon pepper.

Now place mixed stuffing mixture into each cored zucchini – and place in large pan or baking dish – side by side.

Cover with water and tomato sauce – and place upside-down dish on top to hold them in place.

Bake at 350 degrees – 1 to 1 ½ hour – Check by taste if the rice is done.

Sprinkle the cored zucchini insides with lemon pepper, add a little water and heat until cooked (very short time). Add butter and serve.

RED SOUP

Beginning with good chicken stock (not canned) is essential. Stock is easily made: take the carcass and bones of any chicken you are finished with (rotisserie chickens are great for this) put it in a big pot with lots of water. To this add one big onion, washed, but not peeled, some peppercorns, a few garlic cloves and any herbs or other vegetables (carrots, celery etc.) you might have on hand. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for four or five hours. (Or more.) Strain. Throw out the

solids. This stock freezes well or will keep in the fridge for days, so you can always have some on hand.

To the pot of chicken stock add one can of tomato paste, rinsing out the can. Stir till the tomato paste is broken up. To this add za'tar. We like to use a lot, three or four tablespoons. Bring to a boil. To this add a few handfuls of vermicelli broken up into small pieces. (Angel hair spaghetti broken up will do, but vermicelli is best.) Stir in and turn off the heat. In twenty minutes or so your vermicelli will be soft. To this add the juice of one lemon, and some salt, stir in and serve. For some reason, the twenty minutes wait is essential, not just for the vermicelli to cook, but for the flavor itself.

(Za'tar: In a jar stir together one Tablespoon each Mexican oregano, ground thyme, ground sumac, ground cumin. To this add two Tablespoons white sesame seeds, and one teaspoon each Aleppo pepper or Marash pepper, kosher salt and ground pepper. Cover tightly. Keeps well.)

AUNTIE MAKERIE'S OLD COUNTRY RECIPE FOR RICE STUFFING

½ pound butter

6 cups long grain white rice

1 cup pine nuts (Auntie used almonds)

1 cup chopped onions

1 cup raisins (Auntie didn't always use raisins)

2/3 teaspoon cinnamon

2/3 teaspoon allspice

1 Teaspoon pepper

2 Tablespoons salt

All of chopped giblets, liver, heart – which have been partly boiled

Braise rice in butter and combine other ingredients, including partly boiled giblets.

Stuff in bird cavity.

MY MOTHER'S SHREDDED WHEAT PAKLAVA

Shredded wheat

1 cup shelled walnuts – cut up

add to mixture: 1 tablespoon white sugar

½ teaspoon cinnamon

Set aside.

Put 3 cups sugar and 1 ½ cups water in pan on stove. Boil about 5 min.

Add 1 teaspoon lemon juice to syrup after it boils – leave on stove

1 minute and remove.

While syrup is boiling, dampen each shredded wheat biscuit with cold water and place on dish towel and cover with another dish towel.

Melt 3 tablespoons shortening in fry pan and pour melted shortening into oven tray.

Cut each biscuit (like a book) and place therein:

1 heaping teaspoon walnut mixture

Fold back and place in greased tray.

Melt 1 cube oleo or butter in fry pan, and when sizzling hot, pour

1 teaspoon at a time over each biscuit

Bake in moderate oven 15 minutes until bottom is browned – let stand for 10 or 15 minutes until lukewarm.

Pour lukewarm syrup over warm biscuits.

Before serving, allow to stand at least 1 hour.

ROSE PETAL ICE CREAM

I have never tried this recipe. It was originated with George Mardikian, owner of Omar Khyam Restaurant in San Francisco years ago. It might be fun to try it.

0.5 pint organic milk

Yolks of 6 organic free range eggs

3.5 ounces castor sugar

0.5 pint organic cream

1 cup rose petals

4 tablespoons rose wine

Beat the egg yolks with the sugar. Add milk, and stir over a low heat in a basin standing in a saucepan of hot water. Heat carefully until the mixture thickens.

Whip the cream until it forms soft peaks and fold it into the cold custard mixture which you have just prepared.

Remove and discard white ends of rose petals – then mix the petals with the wine.

Fold rose petal mixture into ice cream mix – and freeze.

Stir once or twice during freezing – or use an ice cream making machine.

Good luck!

HOW TO MAKE TURKISH COFFEE

This is the coffee that Haigouhi would have made for the mother of the prospective groom when she was still a student at the Adana Girls' Seminary. The Armenian

custom was, if the mother of the prospective groom said, “This is good coffee,” marriage negotiations could go forward. Haigouhi made the coffee; the mother said, “This is good coffee,” expecting no doubt that the orphaned Haigouhi would be delighted to marry her son. But Haigouhi asked if her son could read and write. The answer was no, and Haigouhi refused to marry an illiterate man.

This coffee goes by many names, Turkish coffee, Greek coffee, Lebanese coffee; the coffee is pretty much the same, but the names are different for obvious reasons.

My mother taught all four of her daughters how to make this coffee when we were very young. Even before we could drink coffee.

FOR FOUR DEMITASSE CUPS

Measure four overflowing cups of water into the cooker

Measure four heaping teaspoons of coffee

Four scant teaspoons of sugar

Heavy on the coffee easy on the sugar

Give it one mix.

Put the pot on medium heat. Watch it very closely. As the coffee starts to rise in the pot, let it rise as high as it can, turn off the heat and serve immediately. The froth that rises to the top is the most prized part.

Note: The coffee must be ground especially for this, pulverized unto powder. It’s best to use a pot suited to the number of cups you wish to make.

HOW TO READ YOUR FORTUNE FROM THE COFFEE CUPS

I copied this from the summer 1998 edition of ARARAT, the Armenian literary magazine, sadly no longer published. The author just says “Diana.” The last line is typical Armenian fatalism!

Turn over the small cup

Into the saucer,

Twist it three times

And make a wish

Wait until the black

silt of coffee makes

paths in the cup

to follow and read

If you see Mt. Olympus
You will be famous
But Ararat might loom
With its two peaks

If there is an Ararat
Look for a dove with
A letter presenting
Two choices
Where to live

If there are trees
Birds will settle
If there are cranes
Your love will come soon.

If there are clouds
Good news will be delayed
If the rim had stuck
Your wish will come true

If the rim was not stuck
Your wish will be granted
But you won't want it
When it is handed to you.

Armenian Names

A brief explanation of Armenian names might be of interest here.

Armenian names are all given phonetically since they do not use the Latin alphabet. Many Armenians who emigrated to America changed their names for easier pronunciation. In my family, some did, some did not.

We kept Kalpakian, but my parents changed their first names from Haroutune and Haigouhi to Harry and Helen.

My mother's maiden name, Koolaksuzian (Koo-lawk-sooz-ian), was changed by her older brother, Asdoor who came to America in about 1905 with his sister. Asdoor Koolaksuzian became Art Clark. To us, he was Uncle Art. My mother's younger brother, Haigazoon Koolaksuzian (High-gaz-oon), took his cue from Art and changed his name to Harry Clark. However, in our family we always called him Haigaz. My mother's maiden name thus became Clark.



Asdoor Kulakzuzian, c. 1900

Asdoor Koolaksuzian accompanied his sister Dudu to America so that she could marry Hovaness Boyajian. Boyajian had been Art's English teacher at a school in Tarsus. Boyajian came to Adana with his student, and met Art's sister, Dudu, and fell in love. He emigrated to America, to Seattle, and wrote for Dudu to come to the US and marry him. She could not travel alone, and so her brother came with her, narrowly escaping the Turkish authorities who wanted to conscript him.



Dudu & Yasabeth, c. 1906

Once in America Dudu's husband changed his name to John Boyd; Dudu kept her own name. The Boyd children had one American name, Gladys, and one Armenian name, Haig. The Boyds moved to Southern California for Gladys's health; the damp of Seattle did not agree with her. Art came with them. Until Art's 1926 marriage, they all lived together in the big house at 905 Harding in Venice, California.



Their home at 905 Harding – In 2019 for sale for 3.5 million dollars

John Boyd, a pharmacist, owned drug stores in Santa Monica and Venice. While we lived in the two room gardener's cottage behind their house, my mother started working in the Venice store. She spoke English and I also think having this job was good for her morale. She cut her hair and wore makeup. To me she was very glamorous.



Helen & Betty Kalpakian Venice, California store, c. 1928

My father, a scholar of Armenian history and politics, named their first daughter, born in December 1918, Angaghouhi (Independence) in hopes that the newly formed Armenian Republic would gain and keep its independence. This was not to be; by 1922 Armenia had been absorbed by the Soviet Union, and remained part of the Soviet Union until 1991 when it was dissolved. (Incidentally, years later, my sister had a friend in high school named Alsace Lorraine, a girl also born in 1918, and named for momentous events at the end of World War I.)

He named me, his second daughter, Pakradouhi (Pawk-rahd-oo-ee) after Pakrad, an Armenian leader in the Crusades Era, c. 1100. (Adding the oo-ee to an Armenian name makes it feminine.)

My maternal grandparents were Asdoor and Yasabeth Koolaksuzian. They both died during the Armenian Genocide, Yasabeth killed outright, Asdoor starved to death, but all four of their children lived and emigrated to America.

On the paternal side, my grandparents were Hagop and Meribe Kalpakian. They and all their children survived the Genocide and emigrated across the diaspora, to Jerusalem, Romania and France. Late in life my father scribbled on a piece of paper important information about his family. His grandfather was born in 1824 and died in 1896. His grandmother died when he was just a baby. His father was born in 1853 and died in 1931 [in Romania]. Oddly, he gives no information about his mother. One sister, Monnik (Mawn-nik) was born in 1884 and died in 1950. His brother Garabed was born in 1890 and died in 1959. His sister Zabel was born in 1896 and lived in Damacus, Syria; she had two sons and two daughters. His youngest brother Nishan was born in 1902 and lived in Marseilles, France. Nishan died in 1970. My father was born in 1886 and died in 1963.

My two younger sisters, both born in the US carried on the family names. Betty, born 1924 was named Elizabeth Armenoui, after our maternal grandmother, Yasabeth. Harriett, born 1935, has the middle name Meribe after our paternal grandmother. Neither Angie nor I, both born in Turkey, have middle names.