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## MEMOIR

Pakradouhi (Peggy) Kalpakian

At the present day, April 2013, I am 91 years old – I am writing my childhood and other memories at the suggestion (insistence !) of my daughter, Laura McCreary.

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 know 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 toward deep-seated feelings for Armenians everywhere. I arrived in the United States in the fall of 1923 with my parents and my sister, Angaghoughi. (The ship docked on the day of President Harding's death. No departures from ship. We had to wait another 24 hours to disembark.) 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) – on the road to re-locate in the United States of America.

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 that Maudie loves you.

I feel I have a very special relationship with each of my sons, daughters, grandsons – and I am so looking forward to the arrival of my first great granddaughter.

This memoir is also to pay tribute and to memorialize the strength, courage and sheer guts of my young old country parents, Haroutune and Haigouhi Kalpakian (Harry and Helen). After experiencing utter terror, genocidal family deaths, total destruction of their known world in Turkey, this young couple packed up their two small daughters, 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. To my beloved fam: I want you to know that in my old age, when I see an American flag waving in the breeze, my heart skips a beat – a special silent thank-you to my old country parents, who were truly young in heart.

Before I begin, and very briefly, I should let you know that when we first arrived at Ellis Island, we had traveled 3<sup>rd</sup> class – and by the time our names came up for disembarking, the quota had been filled, so the ship (a Greek vessel) was sent back to Piraeus, Greece – with our little family aboard:

Haroutune Kalpakian, young father

Haigouhi Kalpakian, pregnant young mother

Angaghouhi Kalpakian, age 4 or 5

Pakradouhi Kalpakian, age 18 months (me)

Haigazoon Koolaksuzian (Clark), age 17, Haigouhi's young brother

Imagine the disappointment! 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. )

From Piraeus, we took the next available ship (Second Class this time) and disembarked at Providence, Rhode Island in the fall of 1923. From New York, we took the train to Los Angeles, California, near Venice, California, where Mom's sister and family lived.

Perhaps a brief explanation of Armenian names would be of interest here.

Pakradouhi (PAWK-rahd-oo-ee) - My father, an avid Armenian history reader, named me after a benevolent king in Armenian history, Pakrad. He added the feminine ending ouhi (oo-ee) for me, his second daughter.

Angaghouhi (AN-gah-oo-ee)) his first daughter, was born one month following the Armistice in 1918. Her name means Independence in Armenian. Father felt that the 1918 Armistice would give Armenia independence, which of course, did not happen until many years later. Incidentally, Angagh had a friend in high school (with another 1918 birthday) named Alsace Lorraine.

Mama's Armenian name, Haigouhi was the feminine of Haig, a classic Armenian name -- (High-goo-ee) She became Helen Kalpakian after Naturalization.

Haroutune (Har-o-toon) was my father's name, which became Harry Kalpakian

Haigazoon Koolaksuzian (High-ga-zoon) was my mother's younger brother's name. His name became Harry Clark. (Both Haigaz and Arthur – another brother of Haigaz and Haigouhi – took the American last name Clark – which was somewhat similar to their old country name, Koolaksuzian Koo-lawk-sooz-ian.)

Elizabeth Armenouhi Kalpakian - Her middle name is the masculine, Armen, followed by the feminine, oo-ee.

Harriett Meribe Kalpakian - her middle name is Dad's mother's first name - Mary-beh.

To start my memoir, Laura brought me several bags of family memorabilia to help me remember long ago events: pix, drawings, notes, letters, kid diaries, etc. I have used some of them, and also I clearly remember many special as well as minor events.

Laura suggested as a start to the memoir, I should list addresses where I have lived, and write remembrance of each location.

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#### ADDRESSES OF ALL HOMES I HAVE LIVED IN:

905 Harding Avenue

Venice, California

This is Auntie Dudu and Uncle John Boyd's house – an elegant, lovely two story home set on about a half acre in a lovely section of Venice. Auntie Dudu is Mom's older sister who is married to John Boyd (Boyajian), a pharmacist who owns a few drug stores in the Venice, Santa Monica area. Uncle John signed a paper (before we arrived) that we would not be a burden to the United States. He would vouch for us. (Footnote – In 2009, on her 85<sup>th</sup> birthday, my sister Betty and her son Richard visited Aunt Dudu's former home. They talked to the apparent owner who said that his elderly mother lived in the downstairs portion of the house.) I actually remember the great front hall of this house, with the stairway over to the side, where I (as a 4-year-old) watched the dancing and festivities of Uncle Art's (Mama's older brother) wedding party. I also remember the Sun Room, over to the other side of the great front hall, lots of windows, which had elegant wicker-type furniture.

I wonder how we looked to the Boyds, who had been successful Americans for several years. I wonder about that reunion of sisters, their little brother Haigaz who Dad brought with us – **Mom's sister had not seen him since he was 2 years old. Auntie Dudu had an American-born daughter and son, Gladys and Haig Boyd, teenagers, who 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 English, the rest of us could not. If perhaps the teenagers looked down their noses at us at first,** I should add that later our teenage American cousins doted on us kids. They called me Peach Face – fat cheeks. They actually named me Peggy – a popular name for girls in the Twenties. They said no one could pronounce Pakradouhi. Angie and I called Gladys Gassie. Later, teenage Cousin Haig climbed up on their garage roof to rescue me – I had climbed up on a ladder, but was afraid to come down.

(Like her father, Gladys later became a pharmacist (USC School of Pharmacy) and was a staff pharmacist at St. John's Hospital in Santa Monica for many years. She married Clyde Brown, a beloved Santa Monica Police Department Detective, who died young, no children. Haig became a businessman, had two sons, and following his divorce, both Haig and Gladys raised, adored and supported those boys, Clyde and Kenneth Boyd, who later became an attorney and a physician.)

Re Mama's old-country family, it may be of interest to note here that Mama's older brother Arthur and her sister Dudu were both born in the early 1890's in Adana, Turkey – and both had blue eyes (unusual for Armenians). Also Gladys and Haig Boyd, Auntie Dudu's children, had blue eyes. Mama was born in 1901 and her brother Haigaz in 1905 – both had brown eyes. And thereafter, we all had brown eyes. Remarkably, all four children in Mama's own family came to the United States separately – and escaped the Turkish genocide.

In turn-of-the-century Adana, Turkey, John Boyajian (Boyd) was an English teacher in a university or maybe a general studies school, where Arthur Clark (Mama's older brother) was a student and maybe Dudu was also. Anyway, that is how John Boyd met and fell in love with Dudu. He decided to emigrate to Seattle in the United States where he had already established relatives, send for Dudu – and get married. Arthur (narrowly escaping conscription to the Turkish Army) accompanied her on the trip. After their marriage and Gladys's birth (about 1909, I think), they moved to Venice in Southern California, warmer climate for their baby Gladys's health.

When we arrived from the old country in 1923, we lived in a two room house at the back of the lot of Auntie Dudu's house, which was intended to be a gardener's cottage. The first thing I remember about this house is my being scared by a dog in the yard and my Dad came out on the long porch of our two-room house. He had been shaving, he had shaving foam on his face, he was waving a long single edge blade in his hand and he scared the dog away from me. My hero. I think the dog's name was Bozo.

Another thing I remember is that Auntie Dudu had a shiny copper wringer washing machine in her basement. Surely the latest thing in 1923. I was awed by it.

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 cows' milk and they found she needed goats' milk – which would have been very hard to find in 1924. They solved it by bringing a goat to the spacious back yard of Auntie Dudu's home. (On January 18, 2014, Betty had her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party at an ice cream parlor in Riverside, California with family, friends and neighbors helping her celebrate those 90 years.) There is a snapshot of Mama and me (I think) – and all the Christmas toys that they gave Angie and me at our first Christmas in the U.S.--one was a toy standup telephone. 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.

The other thing I remember about this house was that in 1926 (I would have been about 4 years old) when we were still living in the two room house in back, Uncle Art Clark (Mom's older brother) married May Odabashian and the reception was at the Boyds' big house. I remember sitting on the stairs watching all the dancing, music and excitement in the large front hall. My mother tells the story about me at an early age – wandering alone

by the streetcar tracks. Our mailman found me and took me home. He told Mama I said, "Go bye bye."

(Another time when I got lost was when I was maybe 6 or 7, Daddy took us to the Food Show in LA – a great exposition of food brands and new foods with many tempting samples in every booth to show off to grocers. I guess I was looking around in awe at all the dazzling displays, and let go of my mama's hand, or something. Anyway, pretty soon an announcer took me up to the stage and asked for the parents of this little lost girl.)

Mama could speak English, having been educated in an American Congregational school in Adana, Turkey, but Daddy had the responsibility for providing for his growing family, two little daughters and another one on the way: at age 35, he had to learn a new language. Daunting? Yes. And time was of the essence. At first he worked in a family friend's (Eddie Demirgian's) kewpie doll factory. After a while, he clerked in a relative's cigar store at Venice Beach. Cigar? Cigarette? Thank you.

Angie started kindergarten when we lived there 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 also – so we did. And that is how we kids grew up without speaking Armenian or even Turkish. Angie could pretty well understand the parents when they spoke in other languages, but the rest of us did not. Years later, at our parents' graves, none of us could understand the Armenian priests or pastors' eulogies or blessings.

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, tried to pick up a word here and there.

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. Her favored cologne was Rosewater & Glycerin. In a word, she had Style. She was beautiful. I always loved and admired her.

Haigaz (Hy-gawz), Mama's younger brother (age 17) who Daddy brought with us from the old country, was bright, quickly learned English (un-accented), self-educated himself, and became an American young man of the Twenties. Haigaz never lived with us, but he always stayed close – he was like an older brother to us kids. He took Angie, Betty and me for a rumble seat ride in his new Ford Coupe – and took a snapshot of us smiling in the rumble seat. He gave us ice cream treats at his little ice cream stand in San Juan Capistrano near the Mission, mended our toys when they broke, and delighted us with hand made doll houses

which he built with exquisite detail. Even after he married Martha Hallaian, they visited with us often and were a close part of our lives. In later years, when his wife Martha wanted to move to Fresno to live closer to her sister, Annie, Haigaz bought a tract of farmland in Fresno area and built a house and chicken coops on it, where he ran an egg business successfully for many years. He was a jack-of-all-trades.

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2012 Alberta Street  
Venice, California

After a few years, we moved to a rented house in Venice near a canal. It had one bedroom. Mom remarked later that they thought it was wonderful. I remember trying to use Mom's Coty Face Powder, which was on her dresser, and I somehow spilled it. I felt really bad. She somehow seemed to know about the accident..... One day a photographer came to the door and offered to take a photograph of Betty and me. (Angie must have been at school.) Mama put our home-sewn pongee dresses on us and they took our picture. This picture is presently at Laura's house and also in my house. In 2009, Betty and her son Richard went to the location and our little house was gone. It was a small white stucco in the style of the 1920's in California. To Betty's recollection, the canal was still there.

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**1965 South San Pedro Street**  
Los Angeles, California

In 1928 Daddy bought a grocery store at the corner of San Pedro Street and 21<sup>st</sup> Street. Living quarters were attached to the store – and Mama could keep house and children and also work in the store. On my 6<sup>th</sup> birthday, Mama had a birthday party for me. A neighbor Mexican boy came to the party and brought me a gift of a pink and white pitcher, about 8 inches tall wrapped in green tissue paper. I adored that pitcher, and kept it for a very long time. I started school when we lived here. I remember walking to school one day, carrying my lunch in a brown paper bag – and a wet cucumber slice fell out through the bottom of the lunch bag. I was so embarrassed; I just kept on walking, as if that cucumber slice on the sidewalk was not mine at all.

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

In about 1928 Daddy bought a large grocery store on 108<sup>th</sup> Street and Figueroa. We rented a yellow and white frame house around the corner on West 109<sup>th</sup> Place. It was 2 bedroom,

one bath, with a nice front and back yard, and also a one-car frame garage, over which we played Annie Annie Over. We sing-song-sang ANNIE ANNIE OVER and then threw the volley-ball-size ball over the garage and someone caught it on the other side. Then they sing-song-sang ANNIE ANNIE OVER and threw the ball back to us. That's all I remember about the game. There were geraniums that grew without any care around the house, plus I remember a tall hollyhock plant.

Daddy's store had a separate butcher area. The butcher was an Italian, named Mr. Martilerro, who played his accordion when he was not busy with his shop. We loved to hear him play and sing Italian songs. Mama worked in the store with Daddy and in the summer I remember we kids sat in the back room and ate lunch – watermelon, cheese and bread. Armenian lunch.

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 Allbrights, 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 still have the oil painting I did, with Mrs. Allbright's help. It's signed, P. Kalpakian.

Mom's younger brother, Haigaz, who lived in San Juan Capistrano now, came to our house and he helped Daddy choose and buy a car – a used 1925 Star sedan – with isinglass window covers which could be snapped in place in the event of rain. Haigaz taught Mom how to drive and Mom taught Dad. We were very proud of the 1925 Star. We have a picture of Dad sitting proudly in the driver's seat.

Betty and I played with empty thread spools – into which we inserted used crayons, who were pretend cowboys and horses. Apparently we had seen cowboy movies and enjoyed them. We also played Hop Scotch on our old country living room rug – that [now threadbare] rug is presently in Laura's dining room.

Once we entertained our parents with a "radio" in the living room. This was a wooden box which we hid behind and one of us turned the "dial" and we (hiding in the back) sang and talked like radio announcers. Our parents clapped and enjoyed the show. 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 then sprinkled sugar on it.

When I was maybe 6 or 7, I remember a special Christmas movie just for children. As we exited the movie, every child was given a wrapped present – a toy. It was very exciting. Our childhood Christmases were always low key by today's standards, but wonderful to us.

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.

We attended Figueroa Street Elementary School, which was a few blocks away from home. I went to school there until the 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

At this time, Los Angeles was starting to beautify the city in anticipation of the forthcoming 1932 Olympics Games. The City started planting small palm trees all along South Figueroa Street where Daddy's store was located. We lived about 30 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.

[2013 footnote: I would like to add here that I have heard that Olympic Boulevard was re-named in anticipation of the L.A. 1932 Olympic Games. Prior to that it was either 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> Street - can't remember which.]

While we lived at West 109<sup>th</sup> Place, Daddy and Mama filed for U.S. citizenship. They went to night school, took the tests, and after a specified time, they appeared in U.S. Federal Court and became citizens. Haroutune and Haigouhi Kalpakian became 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. Otherwise, we would always have to produce our parents' citizenship papers in order to prove our own. I appeared alone in Federal Court in Los Angeles when I was 21, raised my right arm, took the oath, and now have my own American Citizenship Paper still hanging framed on the wall in this room when I am 91 years old.

I was told if I wished to change my name legally, this was the time to do it. I elected to be named Peggy Kalpakian, since I had entered kindergarten as Peggy. (Americans found it hard to say Pakradouhi – my cousins Haig and Gladys (Dudu's teenage children) had always called me Peggy. This was a very popular name for girls in the 1920's. Angie elected to keep her Armenian name.

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 had a gift for languages – he was a fast learner and improved his English rapidly.

The Fourth of July 2013 will be here in a few days. I remember on the 4<sup>th</sup> 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.

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6436 Haas Avenue  
Los Angeles, California

In 1931 Daddy bought us a brand new Spanish style white stucco house, 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. We girls 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 and Your Hit Parade and Sam Spade and Jack Benny and Bob Hope and Eddy Cantor. We loved the afternoon kid-show, Chandu, the Magician. It was scary, but fun to listen to. I was so afraid of Aren-yay, the Evil Dwarf. Daddy paid \$5,000.00 cash for our new house. I have to stop and insert right here that in 2013, I found THIS VERY HOUSE on the Internet Zillow, listed at \$276.00 (!)(!)(!)

We lived here from 1931 to 1941 – from my age 9 to 19. It was a happy place. It was a most happy childhood for me and my sisters. I remember at age 10 NOT wishing to be 11 - being 10 was so perfect. 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 (Santa Claus????) – and he was proud to be an American Citizen. 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 weekly, called Baikar (By-kar) from Boston, as I recall. The letters looked like squiggle lines. Mama kept up with both California and national politics. In the mid 1930's, her picture was in the Los Angeles Herald Examiner as the first person in line to apply for Social Security coverage for a small business owner. 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.

Our old country parents took us to the beach. (Was it Manhattan Beach? I think so.) 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 sand? I don't know. But in the snapshots, they are smiling.

In the early 30's, the latest fad for teenagers was to make a cellophane belt. I suspect cellophane was a very new and popular product then. Anyway, kids folded and shaped the cellophane sheets into angular shapes which they braided into belts. My older sister Angie asked Daddy to take her to the drug store (at the corner of Van Ness and Florence Avenues)

to buy 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 up and cared for his daughter, and then my scholarly/ history/literature/loving father who had never in his entire life struck another person, actually struck the driver who had hit her. (He was not prosecuted.) It turned out her only injury was a broken collar bone which healed . Eventually, she made the cellophane belt.

While we were all baptized in Dad's Armenian Apostolic Church, in our daily lives, we attended Mom's Protestant faiths -- Congregational, Methodist, other. (We attended Dad's church only on religious holidays or special occasions.) When we lived at Haas Avenue, on Sunday mornings Angie, Betty and I walked west along 64<sup>th</sup> Street several blocks to the local Methodist Church at 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue. We sang classic old hymns – What a Friend We Have in Jesus, Love Lifted Me, Brighten the Corner Where You Are, Abide With Me, Rock of Ages and The Old Rugged Cross. The Old Rugged Cross became one of my favorites, and I used to play it on our piano often, accenting the deep, beautiful melody with my left hand, complemented by right hand chords (my own arrangement). (Today, at age 92, I wondered if I could still play it – I went to the piano – and lo – while the old technique and touch were not there, the definite melody, chords – and even some of the words – were still there.) Music was always part of our family.

I remember the pastor's name was Knutsen. After one of our youth activities, I remember the church members prepared a wonderful meal for us kids in the basement of the church – waffles, topped with applesauce and then topped again with whipped cream. It was a wonderful new taste experience for me. I loved it. After we moved to West Olympic Boulevard, in addition to attending church, we all became active in youth activities at Wilshire Methodist Church – I taught Sunday School, was leader (at age 21) of a 15-year-old girls' activity club program.

Our favorite in the Sunday funny papers was the Katzenjamer 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 loved movies – Daddy took us often to see double features. At that time, movies were played continually and if you wanted to see it again, you could, just by staying seated. ("This is where we came in.") We all loved Ginger and Fred, 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. (Betty was Jeanette McDonald's #1 fan.) I loved mystery stories and dramas. Many theaters gave gifts

of dishes and other types of china to theater-go-ers on slow income nights. Also there were theater community-audience sing-a-longs with the music and lyrics on the big screen while a bouncing ball on the big screen kept time.

The heating vents in our new house were on the wall, about 10 inches higher than the floor. I used to wash my hair, roll it up in curlers and lie on the floor in my bedroom with my head on the heating vent – and read a book while I was waiting for it to dry. What more could you ask????

The new house had a double garage. About this time Daddy turned in the 1925 Star and bought a new 1931 Pontiac. Thereafter, the parents always bought Pontiacs, until Mom was a widow when she bought a new Chevy.

I remember that in the 30'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 fiction short stories by contemporary writers. Mama admired a plant called Angel Trumpet at a friend's home. She brought a slip from it and planted it in front of our house, where it bore glorious large, white trumpet-like blossoms with a heavy, heady fragrance. I remember that fragrance when Betty and I played jacks on the front porch. Mama also read Emily Post, to keep her daughters up on American manners.

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 currently 90-year-old sister, Betty, still makes peanut butter and lettuce sandwiches. For my own children, I made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, but in my old age (92 presently), I sometimes 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 that at my earliest recollection also contained rice, tomato sauce and generous amounts of lemon juice, but later (as I grew up) she replaced the rice with broken-up vermicelli, but retained the chicken broth base, the tomato sauce and generous lemon juice. I don't remember what she called this soup, but her first grandchild, my daughter, my first-born, Peggy Ann, at the early age of about 3 years, called it RED SOUP – and it has become – in our family – the permanent name. I made it for my family for years, and Peggy Ann made it for her family for years. When Brendan, age 18, returned home after a 2-week camp counseling absence, very homesick, he walked in the door and told his mother, "I want some RED SOUP!" Over many years and generations, Red Soup has become our family's Soul Food.

Mama also was happy to discover that there was an American laundry magic to make little girls' dresses beautiful – Starch. Wonderful discovery.

Down on the corner from our house, there was a Swedish immigrant family, the Ingalls. They had 4 kids – 2 sons, Sven and Arnie, and 2 younger daughters, Dorees and Elsie. I was very impressed with the shed in the back of their house where their mother did intricate, elegant weaving on a very large impressive loom. When Dorees, the youngest, had a birthday party, in her eager, child-happy anticipation of the gifts her guests were bringing, she greeted us at the door with: “Come in and bring your present.” The sure possibility of birthday gifts was very exciting to this young, Depression-era birthday-girl. As I have already mentioned, all kids were very much aware of the difficult times. Anyway, I remembered her request to “Come in and bring your present” for many years – and told my own kids about it, but suggested they should not use it – but one of them did.

I was the only one of my sisters who suffered from car sickness. On our Sunday drives in 1930's Southern California, I would first become queasy, and gradually seriously nauseous. I never did vomit, probably because Daddy stopped the car in time and we all got out and I walked around, waited for the feeling to pass. I had called it Orange Tree Sickness – I was sure that watching miles and miles of orange tree orchards, plus the heavy fragrance of orange blossoms and the added movement of the car, had made me nauseous.

(Permit me to fast-forward here briefly to the mid 1950's. When my 10-year-old daughter, Peggy Ann, who had inherited my car sickness gene, was preparing for a field trip with her Brownie Troop, she told the Volunteer-Mother-Brownie-Driver that she had to sit in the front seat or she would vomit from car sickness if she sat in the back seat. To this day, she always gets to ride in the front seat – just in case.)

I entered 59<sup>th</sup> Street School in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. I was a good reader, loved Social Studies, learning about other countries, loved History and English, spelling and the literary arts. Not good in math and art. I made many new friends at school, and thanks to high school reunions in later years, I again came to be in touch with many of my elementary school friends. I loved school. I adored my teachers.

Every time we had ice cream, I noted it in my 1935 diary (age 12 plus 13<sup>th</sup> birthday).

One day we had an unexpected visitor. I think it was 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 why I hadn't removed the 12-dozen box of Kotex from next to the toilet while the guest was here. I said something like, “The box was always there and I felt like that was the norm.” If Mama smiled, I didn't notice it. (Surely the guest was aware that there were 3 teenage young women plus 1 grown woman living there.....) I should interject here Daddy's favorite joke: “I should have invested in the Kotex Corporation.”

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 other

grouped kids. If you caught it once, maybe twice (I can't quite remember), you were then selected to bat the softball to the other kids. Simple games. Elysian times.

In high school as well as in junior high, all girls wore regulation Gym Clothes for gym class. This was a white cotton short-sleeved shirt and black shorts. We had to take our gym clothes home on the weekend, wash them, iron them, and return them to school on Monday in a regulation gym bag. Mama managed washing our gym clothes in our Thor wringer-type washing machine, but I had to iron my shirt myself. I would day dream while I was ironing that shirt – and once I forgot to turn the iron off (this was well before irons turned themselves off if left too long) and was firmly reminded to pay attention to the iron as well as my dreams.

In my junior high years, I saw my first professional-actor-stage play-at our junior high school. President Roosevelt had created a program for unemployed actors (can't remember the name of it – part of the WPA?) wherein government-funded plays were produced and performed all over the country. The government-sponsored play performed at our junior high school auditorium was *Lena Rivers*, which had been a 1932 movie. I'm not sure I understood it ("*Lena Rivers*, born out-of-wedlock, goes to live with her rich uncle.....") I was a very naive teenager, but I loved seeing a real stage play with real professional actors. Admission was free.

Later, in 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, again, I didn't understand the play.

For my 16<sup>th</sup> 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 I also had a manicure (!) About this time, many of my 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 boys I had met at the class (from another high school) came by in their Dad's car to take me to the dance class. Mama let me go. When Dad came home from work, I guess he was furious because he showed up at dance class to take me home.

I was the top in spelling in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The principal, Mr. Greening, had an American friend who lived in Japan, a Mr. Sanborn. He asked his friend to send me a letter and maybe a gift. Mr. Sanborn's letter was congratulatory, and he explained the wonderful cultured pearls from Japan. Enclosed was a pearl necklace, which I naturally assumed were cultured pearls. I treasured them for years like diamonds – and only when I was a middle-aged married woman,

when the necklace broke and I took it to a jeweler for re-stringing, did I find out that my cultured pearl necklace was fake pearls. What a disappointment!

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 remembers 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.

These childhood years were during the Great Depression. I remember being very much aware of the Depression and the very frugal times. One Saturday evening I told Mama that the neighborhood kids had gone to the movies that afternoon (the Knoll Theater on Western Avenue 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.

As a family, we never ate in restaurants. When we went on outings, we always took our lunch – picnic style. When I was about maybe 12, Auntie Makeri (MAW Keree – my mother's cousin) invited me to spend a weekend at her lovely Hollywood Hills home with her daughter, my cousin, Rose, same age. Auntie took us shopping in Hollywood – and when it was lunchtime, she took us to a restaurant for lunch. I think that was probably my first time to "eat out." I was very impressed. Auntie ordered a chicken salad sandwich and a Coke. 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.

I was very impressed by Auntie's fully cedar-lined, walk-in closet, which was near her dining room. I loved to stand in the closet doorway and let the magnificent cedar fragrance envelop me in its elegance. Soooooo Keebar.

When our entire family visited Auntie Makeri and Uncle Pete (her husband), Daddy and Uncle Pete played Tav-lee (backgammon, apparently originally an old country game). I loved to hear them shout and enjoy this game, tossing dice (or checkers?) about with great glee and abandon. They were both great Tav-lee players. Angie got Daddy's Tav-lee board after he died. She learned how to play the game.

Right now (2014) I have my Zorba the Greek CD playing full blast on my kitchen stereo. When No. 11 (Free) came on, monastery-type chants introduced the selection – I was 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.

He also played the mandolin – he had brought it from the old country. It was not flat like a guitar, but it had a big fat round bottom. He played it and sang old country songs as well as Armenian lullabies (Or-Or) to his American baby daughters. I recently wondered what had happened to the mandolin, but none of my sisters has it or even recalls what happened to it. In American music, he enjoyed hearing Rosemary Clooney sing (Ross Bagdassarian's, I think) "Come-on-a My house." In addition to Daddy's music, he also told us delightful, funny, old-country Ho-jah stories, which we enjoyed hearing. He also entertained his American

grandchildren with the same Ho-jah stories . I should add here that Bill loved to re-tell Grandpa's Ho-jah stories to our four children and also to our grandsons. – with great expression and elan.

We had an upright piano at the Haas Avenue house. Both Angie and I took piano lessons from teacher Miss Slaughter. Mama drove us to her house for lessons. Angie played piano better than I did – and she also played the violin very well. Music was always a part of our family.

In 1935 Mama was pregnant again. With already 3 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 Admission to the Union, 1850 – another girl. Since there would be no Harry Jr., she was named Harriett – Harriett Meribe Kalpakian (Meribe was Daddy's mother's name).

We adored our baby sister – and of course, we were perfect live-in baby sitters. Harriett will be 79 this year. She inherited the gift for languages and became a Spanish teacher, full scholarship Phi Beta Kappa graduate in Spanish from USC.

When I entered the 7<sup>th</sup> grade at Horace Mann Junior High, one of my classes was Beginning Strings. (No one had asked me if I would like to take Beginning Strings.) The tallest kid in the class was given the string bass. I was assigned the cello. The teacher was Mr. D'ippolito (we called him Mr. Dee). He was a great teacher. When he wanted to swear or comment negatively, vehemently, on something (I'm sure our class tried his patience), he would shout in his booming Italian basso – rolling the RRRRRRRRRRRs !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

“S-a-c-r-a-m-e-n-t o- C-a-l-i-f-o-r-n-i-a!!!!

I guess I learned to play the cello passably well because I made it to the junior orchestra by the time I finished 7<sup>th</sup> grade. I remember we played Country Gardens. I thought we sounded terrific. To this day, whenever I hear Bear's cello theme music for DaVinci's Demons, Yo-Yo MA play a cello solo, or even a semi-cello solo, I close my eyes and remember Beginning Strings in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade at Horace Mann Junior High in 1934.

In one of the memorabilia bags, I saw Angie's name on a Horace Mann Senior Orchestra Concert Program – she was listed as a violinist. She may have played First Violin. She excelled in everything she attempted. Music was always a part of our family.

In 7<sup>th</sup> or maybe 8<sup>th</sup> grade, all girls were assigned sewing and cooking classes. Miss Waynick, cooking teacher (age about 55-60), asked us what she held in her hand – obviously a pie tin. I raised my hand and said “pie tin.” “Wrong,” she said. “This is a Utility Dish.” (A spoon

drip?) Please don't ask me how I remember this. I just do. We made corn meal mush, refrigerated it over night, and patted it into flat squares. The next day we fried these patties. They were called Fried Corn Meal Mush. We ate them in class. They were horrible. I remember thinking how much better my mother's old-country-cooking was

I was also required to take sewing class. I made a tea towel. In my 1935 Diary, I wrote that I had gotten a "C" on my tea towel. How hard is it to make a tea towel? (Surely just a couple of seams.) I was obviously not a shining star in domestic arts.

I attended Horace Mann Junior High School for 3 years – from 1934 to 1937. For graduation ceremonies (at age 15) I gave a speech for the graduating class. Angie helped me write it and she probably wrote all of it. Anyway, it was a big hit. Daddy and Mom gave me a wrist watch for a graduation present. I loved it! I hugged them and thanked them. Daddy said, "How come you are not jumping up and down (as usual)? I replied with something like, "Daddy, I am growing up."

A 13-year-old 8<sup>th</sup> grade student at our junior high school, Marjorie Gestring, won the Gold in the 1936 Berlin XI Olympics in the 3 Meter Springboard Diving Competition. When she returned after the Olympics, there was a huge Welcoming Party at Los Angeles Train Depot Station. We watched Marjorie and her entourage step off of the train – the Welcoming Party was held right there on the tracks. (LA Union Station was not built until 1939.) I was part of the Student Welcoming Committee, along with the Mayor of LA, our school Principal, Mr. Rinehart, city officials, a movie actress (her last name was Parker – Jean Parker???), et al. Some time later, the Olympic Committee raised the entry competition age to 14. I think that has not changed since then. After junior high, Marjorie moved on to Los Angeles High School, and won the U.S Nationals in springboard diving in 1938, 1939 and 1940, The 1940 Olympics were cancelled due to the war in Europe. At age 13, she already had the gift of perfect balance.

George Washington High School, Los Angeles: 1937 to Winter 1940. I was apparently the president of the Cinematography Club. All the members, like me, loved movies. We talked about movies, gave our reviews, etc. As editor of the GWHS Surveyor, the first female editor, I might add, I interviewed movie director W. S. VanDyck at the studio, as I recall, and I wrote the story for the high school newspaper. Later, I wrote a letter to W. S. VanDyck, and asked if he would please come to our high school Cinematography Club Banquet and speak to us. I received a phone call from his secretary letting me know that he was unable to come because he is working so hard on Marie Antoinette. I was soooooo disappointed! I had apparently thought he would surely come. His 1938 Marie Antoinette is still considered a classic.

The teacher-sponsor for Cinematography Club – I can see her sweet face, but cannot remember her name. (Miss Gill?) I think she taught English. Anyway, she was apparently a member of the LA Business and Professional Women's Club. She arranged for me to be among the members who reviewed movies for the LABPWC monthly newsletter. Once a month, on Saturday mornings, I took the street car and went to the Biltmore Hotel in downtown LA – up to the mezzanine where a movie screen was set up. There were about a dozen smartly dressed



business ladies there. They showed a new movie – not yet released – and asked ME to review it. I felt so very KEEBAR to be at the Biltmore Hotel with all these important movie reviewers. I wrote my review and mailed it to Mrs. Davis, who was the Chairman. I can remember one of my reviews was actually used in the LABPWC Newsletter – it was a cowboy movie, which I enjoyed.

In the current news – April, 2013 – is an item – Deanna Durbin, the child star singing sensation of the 30's and 40's – has died in France at age 91. She is the same age as me. My son asked me if I remember her – wow! of course I remember her. In the late 30's there was a picture of Deanna Durbin in the newspaper wearing a long black gown with 3 ruffle rows of white lace around the high neck. I adored that dress. I asked Mama to make me one just like it for the upcoming high school dance – and she did – cut out her own pattern and everything. I do not remember my date for that high school dance, but I DO remember that gorgeous brocaded black taffeta gown with white lace ruffles at the neck.

I loved high school. In my first year, the senior drama class performed The Red Mill musical. I loved it. I knew high school was going to be really fun (although drama was not my thing). I threw myself into all activities and excelled in typing and shorthand. Enid Harrison and I were entered into typing contests in all LA high schools and she and I always came in first and second. I loved English and History. I loved high school. I adored and respected my teachers.

Daddy had since bought another store on South Broadway. Every Thursday, when Daddy's 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. All movie theaters charged 10 cents for children, but 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 or maybe more. Admission to the new public swimming pool at Manchester Playground was 5 cents per day to swim. This is where Esther Williams (GWHS 1939) learned to swim – and also she was exempted from the swimming fee (yes, I said charge was 5 cents per swim day) 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. When I was a student at USC, following up on an ad in the Daily Trojan or maybe it was a campus bulletin board, I paid a Beverly Hills USC student 50 cents for the ride to the USC campus. She drove her dad's Packard right past my house on Olympic Boulevard. I can't remember how much the fare was to ride the bus and street car to USC, but it was probably less than 50 cents. Just last week, Knott's Berry

Farm announced their 1934 dinner menu: fried chicken, mashed potatoes, biscuits and rhubarb cost: 65-cents. A 10-cent tip was appreciated. (Also in today's—October 2014---newspaper, the following retro-type item: "In October, 1949 President Harry Truman signed a bill raising the minimum wage from 40 cents to 75 cents an hour.") And I would probably be remiss if I did not mention that there was – at the time – 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 wind up this section by giving 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!

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8645 West Olympic Boulevard  
 Los Angeles, California 90035

In 1941 Daddy bought a house at 8645 West Olympic Boulevard in LA. I had not wanted to move and refused to go see the new house, but on moving day, Mama gave me directions on how to get to the new house on the street car and bus. When we all arrived, my sisters and I were thrilled with the new house. (They had not seen it earlier either.) It was beautiful and wonderful – 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), 2 tiled bathrooms and 2 large bedrooms and one small bedroom. We sisters shared one of the large bedrooms (2 double beds fitted easily – and it also had a second entrance to the large green and black tiled-to-the ceiling master bathroom); and Harriett (now age 6) got the little bedroom. In much later years, this was Daddy's room and his private bath. Blue and white tile. He died in this room in February 1963.

We moved into the Olympic Boulevard house in September, 1941. Three months later, on Sunday, December 7, 1941, during the dinner hour, as I recall, we heard President Roosevelt's speech on the radio re 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.

(I should add parenthetically here that Daddy paid \$12,500. for this house in 1941. Mama (a widow, now) sold it in 1987 for \$350,000.00 (!) )

On October 18, 1942, Mom and Dad celebrated their 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary with a sit-down dinner party for their close friends and relatives – about 16 or maybe 18. We three older sisters acted as servers for the guests. Mama had done all of the cooking in advance – I can't remember if she cooked Armenian or American – but her cooking was always the 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 occasion was memorialized on a plastic record. I don't know what happened to that record. Maybe one of my sisters has it, but I do not.

In his old age, Daddy liked to go to Santa Monica Park, sit on a bench facing the great Pacific Ocean. I suspect he was thinking about how he had come to Santa Monica Park in the first place, and to the Pacific Ocean as well, thinking about the old country (Cesarea, Turkey) where he had been born and grown up, where his family had lived for many, many years, how his own family was now scattered all over the world. To escape the genocide, his mother and brother Garabed had gone to Romania, his brother, Nishan, went to France, and his two sisters, Zabel and Monnick, went to Jerusalem and Lebanon. I suspect he was thinking about how he had come to Santa Monica Park in the first place and the Pacific Ocean as well, and how he ended up here in front of the great Pacific in his old age, the father of four adoring young American women and the grandfather of twelve. I suspect he was thinking about his having become an American. Mama drove him to Santa Monica Park, but she sat in the car while he sat on the bench facing the Pacific. She had had enough of oceans in her young life.

I know how Daddy felt. In my old age, 91, I ask my son to take me to Boulevard Park, which is right at the edge of the bay. I like to sit on a bench, look out to the horizon, watch the boats and think about where I started (Istanbul, Turkey) and where I ended up, at Bellingham Bay, Washington, USA, surrounded by a loving, and best beloved family -- two sons, two daughters, two grandsons and one great granddaughter (not yet born). Maybe I am like my Dad in that respect. Deep, resonating thoughts.

I should briefly pause here to insert my mother (Haigouhi's) incredible story of survival during the 1915 Turkish genocide of the Armenian people. At age 14 she was a day student in American Congregational School in Adana, Turkey (where she lived) when the terrors started. Her teacher, Miss Grace Towner, asked Haigouhi's mother if she would permit Haigouhi to move into the school as a live-in student – which could save her life. Haigouhi could work and teach in the school for her room and board. Her mother agreed. (Her mother – Yasabeth -- shortly thereafter, was killed by the Turks in front of her 10-year-old son, Haigaz. Her father – Hagop --

had already been taken by the Turkish Army and never returned.) At sixteen, Haigouhi married Haroutune Kalpakian – and they began their slow and adventurous exodus to the United States.

Fast Forward to about 1955 to our house on West Olympic Boulevard in Los Angeles. My sister's husband, Finley Bown, saw a notice in their Congregational Newsletter that a Miss Grace Towner, missionary teacher, had retired to Los Angeles (Claremont? Other?) My mother took her youngest daughter, Harriett, age 16 or maybe 18, who very much resembled Haigouhi as a young woman, to the Congregational Retirement Center. When Miss Towner saw Harriett, she said, "Haigouhi?"

Mama invited Miss Towner to come to our house on West Olympic Boulevard for an afternoon visit. Since Miss Towner was very old, Mama arranged for each daughter to come – one at a time that afternoon – with our husbands and children, to meet Miss Towner. And also for her to again meet Haroutune Kalpakian, a proud American citizen. An incredible reunion. Incredible.

[Haigouhi's 10 year-old brother, Haigaz, of course, stayed with their mother – and managed to escape into the desert when she was killed. He lived a child desert wanderer's life for several years – near starvation – ending up, sick, in an orphanage in Adana, where Haigouhi spotted his name on a list of unclaimed orphans. (That is another story.) Haroutune Kalpakian paid for his discharge from the orphanage; he also brought him with us to the United States. He was like a big brother to us kids.]

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

But I digress. Back to 1945. From October, 1945 to December 1, 1945, this small bedroom was the room shared by my husband Bill (just discharged from the Navy), our 4-month-old baby daughter, Peggy Ann, and me. Bill had a new job with the Federal Public Health Service in San Pedro, California. We moved the first week of December 1945 to a federal housing project, Banning Homes, in San Pedro. It was 3 rooms: living room, kitchen, bedroom, plus one bathroom. It must have been furnished because we had no furniture – and we moved right in. Home sweet home.

We gave my parents an elegant inlaid coffee table as a token of our appreciation of their love and hospitality to our new little family to live in their home (along with their three other grown daughters) for the maybe six weeks or so until we moved to Banning Homes in San Pedro. We paid \$75 for the coffee table, probably equivalent to today's \$500 or \$600. Currently, the coffee table is in Laura's living room in Bellingham. It is still elegant, beautiful.

While we lived in Banning Homes, one day around noon, two elderly people knocked at our door. They said they were Bill's parents (!) They had driven from Utah to pay us a visit (!) I had never met them (!) Fortunately, Bill came home for lunch about this time, and introduced us. I don't remember how long they stayed in our housing project home, but it was an unsettling experience. Too long.

Having been the first female editor of the high school newspaper – and loving the work – I applied first to the Los Angeles Herald Express for a job. They put me down with, "We don't hire women for this job. Good bye." Shock. Disappointment. Using my typing and shorthand skills, I did find a job in a real estate office on Crenshaw Boulevard – \$16.50 a week. When I started receiving this great income, I bought the Saturday Evening Post – which was 5 cents and I **also bought the book which was reviewed in that issue of the Saturday Evening Post, Big Family by Bellamy Partridge (the first book I ever bought).** I went to the YWCA at night and took swimming lessons. (None of my family could swim.) I attended Manual Arts High School Night School and took one year of Algebra and Geometry in one year (I was thinking about going to college), I enrolled in an extension writing class at USC. I remember the professor, impressing the class on the importance of choice of connecting words, used the classic example of woman AND child as opposed to woman WITH child.

I soon got a job at the Security Pacific National Bank at University and Jefferson Streets in Los Angeles. I was the manager's secretary -- my typing and shorthand were top notch and I enjoyed the work. The bank was located immediately next to the USC campus. I told Mr. Paul Cunningham, the manager, I would be quitting soon as I wanted to attend USC. I had saved some money from my \$75 a month salary – not enough for 4 years at USC, but a start at least. He was a USC grad and wrote a letter of recommendation for me -- which resulted in a Half General Alumni Scholarship, renewable with "B" average grades. The full tuition at that time was \$180 per semester. The tuition at UCLA was \$29.50 per semester. I had talked to my folks about funding me also, and they would pay for UCLA's tuition, but not USC's, which was exorbitant by current standards. (I should honestly add here that my sister, Angagh, was a Phi Beta Kappa student at UCLA – straight "A" in all classes – she was a foreign language major – and very definitely a very hard act to follow. I knew I was not as smart as she and I could not do as well as she. She was currently reading Marcel Proust's Remembrance of Things Past IN THE ORIGINAL FRENCH.) Angie's UCLA charismatic French professor – Dr. Rene Belle – was also my French professor at USC. He recognized my name immediately as a potentially good student. So Angie helped me academically again. (I was required to take only one year of college French and I did fine.)

While attending USC – which I loved – I worked 20 hours a week at the bank. I met dear friends at USC. Cissie Munro (Phillips) and Mary Frances Davison (Wilson). The three of us (all from different high schools) were inseparable and kept in touch for a very long time. Cissie died a year or two ago. I would write long letters to her and because her vision was so deteriorated,

she could not write, so she would telephone me. We kept up with our families and their ups and downs. Mary Frances is on Facebook and I keep up with her by her family's Facebook entries. Mary had two major emotional tragedies in her life – the death of her husband of colon cancer at age 59, and later the death of her 52 year-old beautiful daughter. I forgive her for any slight she may have sent my way – she retreated to some unknown comfort zone none of us could really enter. I feel she had suffered the ultimate tragedies. Very hard to handle. How can one survive the death of one's child?

When my grandson, Bear, got married in LA 3 years ago, I called Mary to let her know I would be in LA for the wedding. We had lunch together. My other grandson will be getting married on June 1, 2014 in LA -- so I let Mary know I would be in LA one more time – for that wedding – and we could have one last reunion.

Mary quit USC to work to pay (all by herself) for the wedding she was planning with her high school sweetheart, Harry Babbitt Wilson (Hap). This was of course in the heat and height of World War II – Harry was a pilot in the Air Force. Mary was Catholic and Harry was not – so he took classes and became Catholic. I was Maid of Honor and Cissie was bridesmaid at Mary's 7 a.m. , all military Catholic wedding in January, 1944. The reception breakfast was at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles – very elegant and I was so very impressed with the amenities of the Ambassador Hotel. It was an all-white wedding. Mary bought Cissie and my white dresses – and Mary had an elegant gown of Spanish design – lace ruffles from her waist to the floor, as I recall. Mary's mother was Portuguese, which was the motif. Mary instructed Cissie and me (both Protestants) to emulate her mother, who sat in front of us (when to kneel, when to stand, to sit, etc. etc.) I do not recall her father at the wedding. He was not sitting with Mary's mother anyway. For unknown reasons, he was very much against Mary's marriage. While we were students and she was planning the wedding, her father had sent her a telegram (apparently to the home where they both lived) letting her know his disapproval. It was signed with his full name – not Dad. I do not actually know his reasoning or if he ever changed his mind. Harry was a fine husband; thanks to the GI Bill he became an architect at Perrera & Luckman, prestigious L.A architects, and provided well for his family until his tragic death (at age 59) from colon cancer.. (Mary's January 1944 all military wedding picture is on my dresser, here in 2013. I must admit that I do like to look at our sweet young faces with stars in our eyes. We were such good friends.)

But I digress. I loved college and USC. I loved taking classes and learning, learning, learning. I majored in Business Administration, Banking, and figured hopefully on a future great career perhaps at the downtown LA Security Bank. I was invited to join Phi Chi Theta, Business Women's Honorary Sorority and became an officer, Secretary, I think. But my first love was history and literature and I managed to get some of those classes in.

**USC during World War II was very tense emotionally for all students, for young men and women, for professors, for the United States and for the entire world. I remember one girl student asking to skip an exam due to just finding out her boyfriend had been killed in action in**

Europe. In one of President Roosevelt's wartime speeches, he expressed his concern for the young men and women whose [love] lives had been turned upside down by WWII. Weekend marriages were common. The men might not return. Some men wanted babies right away. There were many pregnant widows, and also pregnant fiancées. In about spring of 1943, all the men students remaining at USC were taken into the U.S. Army. Long lines of yellow buses parked along University Avenue and the men slowly entered the buses, single file. To silence. Sunshine and silence. Silence as has never occurred at USC before or since, I would guess. Every person at USC: student, professor, secretary, janitor, gardener— was on campus. The silence was deafening. World War II changed the entire world, but it also changed the very personal lives of the young men and young women who lived it.

I wasn't sure if the preceding exodus of male students from campus to the U.S Army was 1943 or 1944, but [miraculously] in the summer of 2013 I received copy of the USC Family Trojan Magazine, which – eerie unto uncanny – featured on its last page a picture in front of Old College in 1944 of male students leaving for active duty in WWII. So it was 1944 after all. Or maybe 1943 was right and 1944 had another exodus of male students to WWII. The U.S. Navy V-12 Program came to USC following the exodus of its former male students. They wore Navy uniforms and lived in former student dorms.

**Around 1942, when I entered USC, the University announced that**

**they no longer required young lady students to wear silk stockings, due to the war and the shortage of silk stockings. So now it was ok for young women students to 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 now and then.**

[My mother used to buy Royal Purple (brand) Silk Stockings from Sears – by the dozens for us.]

**There was a bulletin on campus that there would be a USO Dance in**

**Hollywood that Saturday night – so my sister Angie and I went. At this dance, there were two sailors, Bill Johnson and Sid Finegold, who were stationed at a Naval Hospital in Long Beach. Bill and I really hit it off well – dancing, conversation, etc. At the end of the evening he asked for my phone number and I said that I would be teaching Sunday School at the Wilshire Methodist Church the next morning – and if he wanted to come..... He didn't show. Angie said she could see that I was disappointed. It turned out that Bill had sent a (penny) postcard to me addressed to the Wilshire Methodist Church which all the church staff read before it was delivered to me – and I did acknowledge the postcard and wrote a note to him at the Naval Hospital. Bill always said that he told Sid at that USO dance that he was going to marry that girl. The rest is history.**

Part of my scholarship required me to replace the Dean of Business Administration's secretary during her lunch hour, 5 days a week, from noon to one p.m. The University paid me

50 cents an hour. It was here that I met a full scholarship student, Virginia Thomblin, a science major upper classman from the Black Hills of North or South Dakota. She shared the responsibility with me for the phone calls, etc. while the secretary was at lunch. She also was paid 50 cents an hour. She helped me with Algebra I (which I was required to take) and I managed to get a B in it. When she heard I got married, she sent me a wedding present of Ernie Pyle's newest book re his war correspondent adventures. Bill and I both read it. She was a very smart young lady. After college I heard she went to work for one of the big oil companies and later became an executive there.

The Dean of the School of Business Administration, Dean McClung, had his office in Old College – the first building of the original college, built in about 1880. His office was elegant – it originally was the office of the first President of USC in 1880 – lots of windows – and his secretary's office was also spacious. Old College was located near the big Methodist Church on campus (USC was originally a Methodist college) – and near to where I guess the Music School is now. It was Victorian at its highest and best. Turrets, everything. Three stories. Many of my classes were in Old College and I loved being there. Some of the classrooms had elevated tiers for the students – and the professor stood at a dais at floor level and looked up as he spoke to the students. The stairs creaked. I loved Old College. Many years later it was demolished and I was so very sorry to hear it.

When I received an extra check for \$10. -- maybe it was a month's pay for lunch hour duty – or maybe my pay for typing someone's term paper – I hope it was not for 10 cents a page (the going rate!), I bought a bright red Catalina bathing suit (one piece as they were in those days) with little white flowers all across the top of the bust line. I loved it and I knew I looked good in it. I was twenty years old. I was a happy student.

One last note re USC during WWII: 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. Tense, emotional times.

On our first date, I told Bill that I had a boyfriend – one of those USC men who had been sent to the US Army. His reply was that he didn't see a ring on my finger .....and of course, there was none. (He neglected to mention that he had given an engagement ring to a young lady in Utah before he went into the Service. After we were married, that young lady came to California to the Naval Hospital where Bill was stationed, returned the ring to him. Bill showed me the ring, asked if I wanted it, I said NO.)

I was now 22 years old. Bill was the first man I really responded to. I knew it was serious. One of our dates was a day at Santa Monica Beach. (I wore my very latest style two-piece white bathing suit under my street clothes.) Carrying our beach towels, we walked from Olympic Boulevard to Wilshire Boulevard, caught the bus to the beach – and returned the same way. Our night time dates at a bar where they had live music and dancing were reached by our walking east along Olympic Boulevard to La Cienega, and then south a block or two to the bar where we danced just about every dance. Bill was a great dancer. I noticed there were other



USC students there also. ( When I told my friend Mary I had ordered a coke at this bar, she was appalled: “How UNSophisticated, Peggy! Next time order a Tom Collins; it’s citrusy and very little alcohol.” Needless to say, this was a big surprise to Bill. I am not sure if he thought I was sophisticated.)

For other dates, we took the Olympic bus to town for a movie.

Bill was stationed at the Naval Hospital in Long Beach and he came to see me by hitch-hiking –which was quite a long distance (35 or maybe 50 miles??). During the war, hitch-hiking servicemen were almost guaranteed an immediate ride. Wartime America opened its heart 100 percent to all servicemen. Times were tense. Shipping out orders came unannounced. We decided at first to get married in Santa Barbara at the mission. (I was endeared to the missions in California.) However, at that time marriage licenses had to be obtained in the same California county as the marriage—plus a small barrier—neither of us was Catholic (!) So we moved it to LA County at the US Naval Chapel in Long Beach, California – a kind of local elopement. Syd Finegold was best man, and my sister Betty was maid of honor. My sister Angagh also attended, as well as a Navy friend of Bill’s, Harry Rupp. A few days before the wedding, Mama bought me a beautiful lavender suit, a fashionable, large-brimmed black hat, plus an elegant white nightgown and other lingerie. When we returned home following the wedding at the Naval Chapel, Mama had prepared an elegant, full table buffet – plus champagne. We overnight honeymooned in Santa Barbara – Mama made the reservation at the Samarkand Hotel. About a month after our marriage, Mama had a sit-down-dinner wedding reception for us at her home for family and friends. I remember it as a very happy and exciting event, with wedding gifts for Bill and me. (Bill borrowed the \$25 to buy a wedding ring for me. Bill always had very good taste in jewelry – and he replaced that ring twice in the 68 years we had together.)

In a month or two, the Navy gave Bill a week’s leave and my parents and sisters paid for a honeymoon-type trip for Bill and me to his old college town of Logan, Utah and to meet many of his relatives. It was the first time I experienced snow and also the first time I had been out of California, since my first arrival. It was a wonderful trip.

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1421 ½ West 101<sup>st</sup> street

Los Angeles, California

This was our first real home – a cute little furnished rental of 3 rooms. We had 3 months before Bill was shipped out in early January, 1945, on the USS Bairoko, an aircraft carrier. He was a lab technician. I was pregnant with my first child, Peggy Ann Johnson – who was born at Seaside Hospital in Long Beach, California on June 28, 1945. When he returned for a quick shore leave after our baby was born, he told us the ship had cut all motors at sea, no lights, no cigarettes, no sounds, etc. etc. because there was a Japanese sub somewhere near beneath them. Bill and everyone on that ship had never been so scared. They survived it. However when he did return

home, he had a streak of gray hair in the middle of his hairline, which he said occurred during the foregoing incident at sea.

Birth of my first child, Peggy Ann, changed my life. The magic of this child coming from my own body and becoming a new body, was the most powerful experience I ever had. I felt a deep and everlasting love for this child, who was a part of me. I felt these same deep emotions when each of my four children was born – an indescribable and all-encompassing love – like no other love – visceral. A truly life changing experience.

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2103 Withrow Court

Banning Homes

San Pedro, California

Bill's first job after the war was for the U.S. Public Health Service at Fort MacArthur in San Pedro, California. We lived in public housing for veterans, which was probably furnished since we didn't have any furniture – and we moved right in. After a couple of months, they assigned him to go to Washington, DC for a six-week special training. Mama suggested he should ask if his wife could go with him – and Mama would take care of our baby, Peggy Ann. He also asked if he could drive, instead of using public transportation. They said YES. My Dad told Bill to get this permission in writing, which he did. Good advice, since Bill had to produce the written permission at a later date.

We had bought a 1939 Ford sedan for \$100. shortly after the war. It was white and a dream car to us. We drove that car 3,000 miles to the East Coast and 3,000 miles back to the West Coast before we realized it did not have a jack, a necessity to repair a flat tire. While Bill attended his training sessions, I got a job at a bank. On weekends, we went sightseeing all over, including to New York, and to visit some of Mama's distant relatives in Paterson, New Jersey. We found Mama's appointed young relatives – who did not recognize Mama's married name (Kalpakian), but when we told them her maiden name (Koolaksuzian), they immediately embraced us, offered us food, totally welcomed us. We sent them a thank-you note as well as a hostess gift of an electric toaster (a very hard item to find following the war years).

We enjoyed east coast sea food, movies, and enjoyed our time there. We were happy to head home, however, as we missed our baby daughter, PA, so very much. I pressured Bill hard to drive for long periods of time, but of course, he was as anxious to get home as I was. We arrived home the day after her first birthday.

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Potrero Road  
Richmond, California

We elected for Bill to use the GI Bill for a Master's Degree in Public Health at the University of California at Berkeley. We lived in an upstairs student housing unit, which was furnished, and also had a built-in ice box. Melted ice dripped into a tray and one is supposed to empty the tray often, as the ice melted. We forgot. The apartment manager (a single, middle-aged woman) lived downstairs below us – and when our ice tray water started dripping into her unit, she was livid and let us know. This student housing project was a compound of several frame buildings, each holding 4 apartments. Each of these buildings was named after former UC-Berkeley grads who were war heroes. These names became well known (and revered) in our student interaction and activities. One of these units was named for Robert Herwig, a Marine who had served 5 years in the Pacific War (!) Was it our building's name? Not sure, but could have been.

We received \$90 a month on the GI and Bill was given a Fellowship which paid \$100 a month – so we felt we were in fat city at \$190 a month – a livable income. However, the first check they sent to us from the Fellowship was for \$10, since we were already receiving \$90 a month from the GI Bill. I found a part time job at a bank from 5 p.m. to about 10 pm, sorting checks which had cleared through the bank that day. Bill was at home with our baby while I worked. He went to school during the day.

He received his Master's in Public Health in 1948. Harry Truman was the speaker at his graduation ceremony. Bill did not walk with the grads – he sat with our baby and me in the bleachers and applauded the President.

[I might add here that much later, when Bill and I took our four kids on Western States vacation trips, we drove by our former Potrero Road student housing building. The kids were unimpressed. They thought the two-story frame looked pretty dumpy, but when we were assigned this furnished upstairs apartment in 1946, we thought it was great.]

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2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South  
Great Falls, Montana

After a brief employment with the TB Educational Program, Bill went to work for the American Red Cross at Ford Ord, Monterey, California. Later, when he was offered a transfer to the American Red Cross Blood Program in Great Falls, Montana, he was delighted, really elated, and we prepared to move to Montana. We went first to Ogden, Utah to visit Bill's family – Peggy Ann and I flew since I was pregnant with Douglas – and Bill drove our new Plymouth first to Utah and then on to Great Falls. It was difficult (for me) becoming accustomed to the weather in Great Falls; and Peggy Ann started to kindergarten there, as I recall. On snowy days, I called a cab for transportation – it was 25 cents to go anywhere in town. On January 19, 1950, our son, Douglas Scott was born at Deaconess Hospital in Great falls (the weather, minus 40 degrees). However, we returned to Southern California in December of 1950 to spend Christmas with Grandma and

Grandpa – and we stayed. As we crossed the Arizona state line into California, the sun shone brightly – we opened the car windows for the first time on the trip – and we were happy to be back in Southern California.

\* \* \*

7051 Beckford Avenue  
Reseda, California

We moved into our own first home – a new house, thanks to the VA and Congress – in about June of 1951. Three bedrooms, one bath, living room, kitchen and back porch. Heaven!!!!

VA offered us also a stove, refrigerator and washing machine – which would be included in the mortgage installments for the next thirty (yes, 30! years). We accepted only the stove, as we already had a refrigerator and a washing machine. Price of our new home was \$10,000.00. Our monthly mortgage payment was \$55.00, which included taxes and insurance, plus principal and interest. We had a large back yard, (lot 50 x 150) , detached double garage.

Early in 1951 Bill started working for Lederle Laboratories, American Cyanamid Corp -- where he worked for the following thirty years. All U.S. veterans were given a \$300.00 bonus to buy civilian clothes. (The equivalent in today's dollars? Maybe \$1,000.) Bill and I went to the May Company Wilshire and bought him an entire wardrobe, including 5 French Cuff shirts, plus cuff links. He looked terrific as he started his new sales job for Lederle Laboratories, calling on doctors and pharmacists

Bill and some of his friends built a covered patio off of the double garage.. I planted strawberry plants all around the edge of the cement floor. We had many barbecues and family parties in the patio. Once I wanted to dry apricots the way the Spanish missionaries did. I spread the apricots out on make-do tables in the back yard, but I was thwarted with flies. I then covered the apricots with cheesecloth. I don't really remember the outcome, but it was a great adventure, and the beginning of my interest in experimenting with preserving and preparing fruit.

Our daughter, Helen Kathleen, was born July 1, 1952 and Brian Clarke Johnson was born October 23, 1957. We were truly a happy family. Our lives centered around our children and a happy home . Peggy Ann, Doug and Helen attended Shirley Avenue School – they walked to school and walked home after school. Halloween was a special fun time. All the kids dressed up and the entire neighborhood was in the Halloween spirit. Great fun!

At age about 5 years, Douglas wrote his first song: I love my Ma-ma ma ma ma. He then told me my lyrics, which I most earnestly sang: I love my boy-ba-ba-ba boy.

In those early years, we bought a spinet piano (and later a baby grand piano. That baby grand piano is now in Laura's living room. It is true pleasure for Bill and me that our grandsons learned to play piano on that baby grand which had been in our home for many, many years).

Peggy Ann took piano lessons from Mrs. Haskins. We were so very proud when she played in student recitals. Later, Doug, Helen and Brian also took lessons from Mr. Hulbert, who came to our house weekly. Doug and PA continued piano lessons further and both became very proficient, but all four played the piano. (Correction: Mrs. Millett was Brian's teacher.) Music was always part of our lives.

To the delight of our children, we bought a TV – the very latest thing. They loved Howdy Doody, Sheriff John's Lunch Brigade, The Mickey Mouse Club, Betty Boop, cartoons, movies. They would watch television while I was preparing dinner. Sometimes Peggy Ann would read to Doug and Helen while I was preparing dinner. She had just learned to read and was enamored of stories and books. She asked me once if I would type her stories if she were to write them. I told her, of course, I would. [And I did.] Shortly after Peggy Ann learned to read, she became a life-long (yes, life long!) reader. Like my mother, I took my children to the library every two weeks for new books to read. PA and Helen read many of the same childhood books that I had read – Little Maid of Old New York, Anne of Green Gables, Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, etc. etc. Helen read all the Little House on the Prairie books.

We went to Disneyland when it opened in 1955, and were mesmerized by the razzle dazzle rides, Disney's creation of a 1910 community, parades, bands, wonderful food and general holiday spirit. We did visit Disneyland several times thereafter, but that first visit was so very special. We always felt that first visit to Disneyland was magical.

Bill bought a 1948 Chrysler for me around this time. It was dark blue and kind of purple here and there – a really comfortable sedan with Chrysler's Fluid Drive transmission. We loved that car – I took the kids everywhere – and managed shopping trips and other outings. Great fun. Once when we were taking our canary and bird cage over to Aunt Angie's (I think we were tired of it or something), the bird seed spilled in the car. Thereafter, there were always bird seeds in the Chrysler. We never did get rid of them. We kept the Chrysler until 1960 when we turned it in on a new Ford Station Wagon.

One day the mother of one of Peggy Ann's playmates came to ask if I would please take her and her daughter with us when we went to Los Angeles to see Mary Martin in Peter Pan on the stage. (What???? News to me!) Sure, we would take them with us..... The production was mesmerizing – when Mary Martin was flying around over the stage, she asked the audience if they believed. In unison, we shouted, "I believe!" It was a wonderful experience, and perhaps the start of our love for drama, stage and all things imaginative.

(At USC, there was a bulletin board notice that students could see stage plays in Los Angeles for free by ushering at the performances. Requirement: wear black skirt (or pants) plus white blouse or shirt, arrive well before curtain time for section assignment. I did this a couple of

times. I remember seeing Gertrude Lawrence on the stage. It was fun. I took the Olympic bus home after the night performance.)

(In later years, we took all of our kids to see Robert Preston in *The Music Man* on the stage in Los Angeles. On the front steps of the theater, someone asked 6-year-old Helen, who was wearing a darling sailor dress, if she was part of the stage production. Later we saw Douglas Fairbanks Junior in *My Fair Lady*, Pearl Bailey in *Hello Dolly*, and Anthony Quinn in *Zorba the Greek*. While *Zorba* was taking bows to the standing ovation audience, he threw a bouquet to the audience – and Helen caught it!

In 1955, Bill's father, William A. Johnson, a staunch Mormon, had a major stroke and shortly thereafter, died. Bill went to Utah for the funeral and to console his mother. The death of his father affected him profoundly, and upon his return, Bill announced that our children—Peggy Ann, age 10; Douglas, age 5; and Helen, age 2—would be baptized in the Mormon faith, even though they had already been baptized in the Methodist Church. Thereafter, our children attended the Mormon Church until they grew up.

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3246 Turrill Court  
San Bernardino, California 92405

We lived here for 30 years.

In January 1958 Bill was transferred by Lederle Laboratories to San Bernardino and the Inland Empire area. Our new home cost \$20,000.00 – our new mortgage payment jumped from \$55.00 a month to \$150.00 – including taxes and insurance. Our new house had a real fireplace, 4 bedrooms, 2 baths, a couple of smaller patios and a lemon tree in the back yard. Again, heaven!!!

Re that lemon tree: Over time, its branches reached the ground, creating a sort of hiding place around its roots. When Brian was a little boy, he liked to crawl under the lemon tree and pretend it was his special secret hideout – plus the fragrance of lemons. When he was a little older, he built a fort near the lemon tree with tree branches and bamboo shoots for a real fort. We squeezed lemon juice and froze it in ice cube trays – so it was readily available when I needed it. And I needed it a lot. I became a lemon-freak. (Actually, I had begun to be a lemon-freak when I was a teenager and read *Gone With the Wind*. Scarlet O'Hara said her mother loved the lemon fragrance and kept sprigs of lemon verbena in her linen closet. I thought that was soooooooo cool.)

Our children were growing up, all playing the piano, playing baseball, Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts – school activities galore, family parties, summer camping trips, even wedding receptions. Our lives were family oriented. Happy times.

I started planting fruit trees in our wide (150 feet) back yard. First planted apricot and peach trees. Plenty of fruit. I made jam, dried fruit in a special drying-fruit-oven, apricot-this and peach-that, frozen apricots, frozen peaches, etc. By his 8<sup>th</sup> birthday, Brian knew his favorite fruit was pomegranate. We gave him a pomegranate tree on that birthday and planted it in a corner of the broad back yard. Also for that birthday, we spent a weekend in the mountains at the cabin of one of Dad's business friends. I also planted a grapefruit, orange and nectarine tree. At the side of the front of the house, there was a little area where I planted a fig tree and also a persimmon tree. In the winter when persimmons were ripe, I made persimmon cookies and persimmon breads. Lots of fruit, some of it exotic.

Some time after we moved to San Bernardino, I started learning to cook old-country-style, like my mother. In addition to our regular-every-day rice pilaff, bulgar pilaff and red soup, I rolled grape leaves into derev, made la-ma-june, chee-kufta, cheese borak, I tried boiled kufta and for Peggy Ann's home wedding reception, I even made pak-la-va, the wonderful old country dessert made of many layers of buttered filo dough, nuts, and syrup. (Bill loved it!) Over the years, I became more proficient in old-country cooking, and I really enjoyed it.

One winter weekend we all bundled up and rented a cabin a Crestline for a snow playtime. We took our sled – and had a great time sliding down the many mountain areas. Helen was about 7 years old – she rode down a snow mountain and hit a tree – which really shook her up. When we got home she decided to write a letter to “Government Brown” (who was Pat Brown, father of Jerry Brown) to suggest snow slide areas for children. In one of the memorabilia bags, I found the reply to her letter from a Deputy Governor who assured her that the State did have such snow play areas for children at Squaw Valley, and he hoped her local government would also do the same for Crestline. Since there was no TV in the cabin, we had taken several board games for evening fun. Needless to say, we all slept well after day-long snow activities.

On Doug's 14<sup>th</sup> birthday, we gave him a guitar. He loved it. I volunteered to take free adult guitar lessons at the local adult night high school – and I would come home, tell him what the teacher taught me. The teacher gave our class a very brief history of the guitar, and then moved quickly into names of the strings, tuning, chords. The first song he taught our class was “Down in the Valley.” I thought we sounded great. (Shades of Beginning Strings class in junior high school in 1935!) I can even remember some of the words:

Down in the valley,  
The valley so low,  
.....  
Hear the wind blow.

After two – or maybe three – of my lessons, Doug said, "Is that all he taught you?" By this time, he had mastered the guitar all by himself. In his sixties now, he is still playing and enjoying the guitar. Music was always part of our family.

Before proceeding, I should mention here that Bill had been a talented trumpet player when he was a teenager in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. His Aunt Annetta had given him a trumpet that had belonged to her deceased husband. Bill taught himself to play it, to read music – and his high school band teacher entered Bill in a state-wide competition for specific instruments. Bill was the winner of his high school's local contest – and sent to Pocatello to the Idaho State Finals – where he won the top trumpet award for the State of Idaho students. He had played *Bride of the Waves* and *Carnival of Venice*, very difficult trumpet solos, perfectly. Years later, when Bill heard recordings of these two trumpet solos at age 94 when he was a patient in a skilled nursing facility with a diagnosis of vascular dementia, he immediately responded, remembered. It was beautiful to see his remembrance of that long ago event. His face just lit up. The power of music.

We had great camping trips, beginning with a large green tent. On a return trip home from visiting in Utah, in Zion National Park (I think) we had just set up the tent when it started to rain – a real flash flood. At first we stayed in the tent, then we moved to the station wagon and then Dad and Doug dragged the sopping wet tent – also covered with red soil – to the top of the car. Dad drove all night, never stopping until we arrived home in the middle of the night, all of us extremely tired – and glad to be home safely. We had red soil in our driveway for several days.

I think it was the same trip, we stayed in Ogden at Aunt Kitty's place. Brian was a baby and we made a bed for him in one of Aunt Kitty's bottom dresser drawers. There was a Card Lady in Utah who could tell your fortune; Bill pooh-poohed her, but when he was out, all of us girls went to the Card Lady for our fortunes. Great fun. At another campsite (St. George, Utah?) after dinner, Doug and Helen got up on the picnic table – he played his guitar and they both sang – and Helen danced, entertaining our family plus the entire camp.

We graduated from the camping tent to a rented trailer to take to the beach for a weekend. It had no bathroom, no oven – just a stove top – and we managed so well that we soon bought a larger (still no bathroom) travel trailer which we took to Encinitas and parked it at Sea Aire Mobile Park. (We named the trailer *Butchik* – which is Armenian for Follow-Cat or someone or something that always follows you around.) Soon after (maybe around 1970) we bought a longer trailer with a bathroom – shower too – plus 4 burner stove and a real oven -- and parked it in our spot #43 at Sea Aire., where it stayed for 30 years. Thereafter, we spent all of our vacations there as well as weekends and any other time we could manage to be there. We added a room, plus a narrow, steel-frame single bed (we called it the *Orph* – PA thought it looked like an orphanage bed – and it was thereafter called *The Orph*, which, incidentally, is currently in the basement of Laura's Bellingham home). I slept on it when I stayed overnight at Laura's house in those years when the boys were growing up. We also added a couch, a chair, bookcase filled



with books, a desk, a TV, lamps, a real home. At one time or another, all of our adult kids and grandsons lived there off and on. It was our home-away-from-home. Both Doug and Brian became accomplished surfers in those early years. Somehow in the winter months, as I recall, in the night quiet, we could hear the waves breaking on the beach. So peaceful. We loved it.

When Helen was about 10 years old, she became interested in embroidering. (I think I may have started embroidering, but can't really remember.) We bought her an embroidery frame plus multi-colored thread, the works. She wanted to share her interest in embroidering with her friends, so she started The Thursday Afternoon Sewing Club (or something very similar to that). The girls came after school with their embroidering – they sat in a circle, and I read stories to them while they sewed. Then we had refreshments, probably lemonade and cookies. They all enjoyed the sewing club. To this day, Helen still remembers one of the stories I read to her and her friends – Katushka and the Poppy Seed Cakes. (I had loved this story when I was a kid.) Helen said I served poppy seed cookies to her sewing club that day. Ten years or so later, when I was in the hospital having a hysterectomy, Helen embroidered an Aries Ram Sign for me (my sign) and brought it to the hospital. I still have it framed here in my age-91 home library. Thank you, Helen. (Just incidentally, Helen told me many years later that one of her surgeons embroidered – for relaxation. He said it was the only way he could reduce inner tension. He became proficient in cross-stitching, back stitching, etc. and displayed his framed embroideries in his office. Interesting, yes?)

In one of the memorabilia bags I found Helen's (age about 7) report on Brian's behavior while Cory Krisle was babysitting them one evening. She said,

“He burped twice without saying Excuse Me.  
Then he burped and did say Excuse Me.  
Other than that, he was good.  
My report. Helen.”

Bill was Assistant Boy Scout Master to Bill Sullivan – Troop 36, and Doug was a member of the Troop. But when Doug was younger, he was in my Cub Scout Den. The little boys came to our house for their den meetings, usually in our patio. At about this time I had a new crystal punch bowl with matching small crystal cups. I used it for the first time at Doug's Cub Scout Den meeting – as if it were a very special occasion – and the boys loved it. Elegant. The crystal bowl and cups are currently (as of my 91<sup>st</sup> year) in Laura's dining room, still being used for elegant occasions.

Both Doug and Brian became Eagle Scouts – and both attended Boy Scout Camp in New Mexico and Swim Camp in Santa Catalina Island. Fun times.

A year or so after we moved to San Bernardino, about 1959, Bill was honored as one of Lederle Labs' top national salesmen – and he and I were invited to an all-paid wonderful week-long vacation in the Bahama Islands, where they had elegant galas, as well as a special ceremony

presenting [the literal] Gold Cups to the top sales people in the nation. We had a wonderful time and brought back loads of straw hats and Bahama mementos, Wonderful memories.

In June 1967, Peggy Ann graduated from University of California at Riverside, Douglas graduated from San Bernardino High School and Helen graduated from Arrowhead Junior High School. UCR and SB High graduations were held at the exact same time – which we solved by Grandma and Bill going to UCR graduation and I went to SB High with the younger kids.

Afterward we had lovely party in the patio and in the house with kids' friends as guests, our friends and neighbors, et al et al. Lots of food, champagne, music, it was a wonderful party. I had professional photographs taken of PA and Doug. Doug's entire graduating class from SB High were all-night guests at Disneyland that night also (which is why we were able to serve champagne at the party). Exciting times. Close knit family.

In his senior year at SB High at a Senior Talent Show, Doug played a piano solo arrangement of George Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue on the piano -- without music. He also played a mean, show-stopping Bumble Boogie that brought down the house. (Years later, when Bear was taking piano lessons, we found this Bumble Boogie music – and Bear also wowed audiences with the same Bumble Boogie.) In addition to his music, at the same high school talent show, I think, Doug was the winner of The Best Looking Male Legs in his class. On the day of the Senior Talent Show, I went to SB High and stood at the back of the auditorium and watched Doug's performance. I was really proud of my son. He was terrific.

When my 18-year-old daughter, Helen, suggested that I should read a book she liked by John Steinbeck, I replied immediately that I did not like John Steinbeck or his work. She then asked me, *What have you read of his that you did not like?* I had to reply, *Nothing.* I was embarrassed. (When I was growing up in Southern California, we did not like Steinbeck's books about the Okies moving into California with their belongings piled high on rickety trucks.) Anyway, I accepted her Steinbeck book – I think it was Cannery Row. Who could not like Cannery Row? I loved it. I started reading Steinbeck. I think over a period of time I read nearly all the books and articles he wrote. I felt I understood him. When he wrote about his son being sent to Viet Nam, I understood his daily fears. At that particular time, my own son had been sent to Viet Nam and I suffered anguish all the time he was gone, which I knew John Steinbeck also experienced. Back to Steinbeck: I read Sweet Thursday, I read The Grapes of Wrath, Tortilla Flat. East of Eden, I read just about everything he ever wrote..

In one of Steinbeck's short stories, he tells about the elementary-school Mexican boy and the new college-grad social worker.

She asks him:

What did you have for breakfast?

Tortillas and beans.

What did you have for lunch?

Tortillas and beans.

What do you have for dinner?

Tortillas and beans – WHAT MORE COULD YOU ASK?

Thereafter, the expression What More Could You Ask became a part of our Johnson family vocabulary for time and all eternity. We still use it.

Some years later, Laura and I went to Steinbeck's family home in Salinas which had been converted to a tea house, with Steinbeck memorabilia everywhere. We really enjoyed it. The house was true Victorian, two stories and a tower or two on top.

I can truthfully state that 1969 was the worst year of my life. To begin with, there was a terrible flood in Southern California that year, an ominous beginning. Doug, my oldest son was sent to Viet Nam in the US Army, 4th Infantry, and my daughter, Helen, a teenager was very seriously ill with Chron's Disease and had several surgeries. It was day-and-night-worry. After going to bed at night, I would wake up in 3 or 4 hours, lie awake wondering if I had awakened because something awful was happening to my son. Hard getting back to sleep. My daytime life was seeing my beautiful, sweet daughter suffer surgeries – with no guarantees, etc. To lighten this tense era, one day Bill brought me a small gift of an Authentic Worry Stone – a 2-inch long, 1/4-inch high onyx stone with a smooth round dip in the middle. On the back it said something like, For best results, depress thumb slowly in round area. I still smile when I see this little worry stone on my desk today (2014). My prayers were answered and both of them survived. I will leave it there, but I prefer not to refer to 1969 again. Too painful.

However, I feel that a brief summary of that year should perhaps be mentioned. At age nineteen, Doug dropped a college class – (oh nineteen, thou art so nineteen !) – was drafted into the U.S. Army – and sent to Viet Nam in the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry. He used drugs to help him do the required jungle hand-to-hand fighting with long knives, he walked point in dense enemy infested jungles. In Viet Nam, he was hospitalized for malaria. They sent him home to us at age 21 – a drug addict with an undesirable discharge – no veterans' benefits. PTSD is very real. We gave him medical, mental and rehab care over long periods of time. Bill was so outraged at the discharge, he started writing letters to the U.S Army in Washington, DC requesting that the discharge be changed. They refused. He did not give up, just kept refuting their allegations as if he were a trained attorney, with evidence of newspaper clippings and even a photo of Doug and his unit in Time Magazine. (Doug was in the front row.) After two full years of letter writing, the discharge was reversed – with full veterans' benefits. It was Bill's shining hour. HE DID WHAT EVERYONE SAID WAS IMPOSSIBLE. After two failed marriages, Doug is now drug free and happily married to Pauline.

In the late 60's, my boss at an insurance job gave me (yes, gave me) an old Ford Tempest – w/3 gear shift. I had not driven a stick shift since I was in high school, but I managed to drive it home. The boss had bought his daughter a new car and he gave me her old car -- the Ford Tempest. PA recalled the Tempest in a Teapot scandal of the 1920's – and from then on, we called this sturdy, white 2-door vehicle, The Teapot. I drove it for some time and I think all of my kids drove the Teapot at one time or another also. We had even driven it to the beach. It was a sturdy little vehicle and it served us well for a very long time.

When our kids were teenagers, they suggested that on Christmas Eve we should all give each other gifts which we had made. It was a special time for just our family and a time to talk about the gifts we had made for each other. I remember PA gave each of us a painted walnut-size, smooth-face rock. They were really quite beautiful rocks—painted bright blue colors and pink flowers., as I recall. Did she paint a word on them? I can't quite remember, but if she did, maybe it was Love, Timeless or something like that. Even today, November 16, 2013, as I sit here alone in my home library, it brings tears to my eyes to remember the familial love of our family as we sat in our living room all those years ago, the Christmas tree bright with color, many, many gifts under the tree ready for opening tomorrow, as we told each other how our handmade gifts were gifts of love. My children initiated this special occasion. My children are all very special people. I am so very proud of all of them.

For several years, my sisters and I brought our families to Grandma's House for Christmas Eve. Grandma always had gifts for grandchildren, stockings filled with almonds, tangerines and candy. On Christmas Day, all of us celebrated with our in-laws or other. Later, my sisters and I took turns hosting a Christmas Eve Party, where each family put on a show. When it was our turn to host the party, Bill, PA, Helen and Doug did a great soft shoe – song and dance with great elan. They wore straw hats and each had a cane – and sang and danced to the Hawaiian version of the Partridge in a Pear Tree,. PA had learned the words and taught it to the rest of us. It was really cute and a big sensation.

When our kids were teenager (or thereabouts), they wanted to go to the Rose Parade on New Year's Day – so we went – and had a great time. We had seats near the end of the parade, so we saw it all – with great seats. On another Rose Parade occasion, we took them all to a park where the floats were on display following the parade – so we had a closeup view of the magic they did with flowers. Dad, of course, did all the driving in the heavy, heavy traffic. Fun times.

Re our obsession with MGA's: While PA was in graduate school in Delaware, she bought a 1959 MGA for \$200. She drove it all the way across the country to San Bernardino – the first part of the trip a friend rode with her as far as Oklahoma, I think. She drove the rest of the way by herself, as I recall. On second thought, I think Doug flew to Oklahoma and drove the rest of the way home with PA. When they were somewhere near Indio, California, down in the desert, they ran over a large rock, or something like that, and she called home for help. Dad immediately jumped into his car and drove down to where they were stranded. I don't remember what he

did, but PA, Doug, the MGA and Dad all made it home. Dad was the hero. We all loved this little British car. The floor boards got so hot at one time they caught on fire, she said. She stopped at a closed gas station and used their water to put out the fire (!)

When we saw a red MGA for sale in town, Dad bought it. I think he gave it to Helen as a get-well-gift after one of her surgeries. I know it was hers when she married Gary Hagerman at age 22. At one time I drove the blue MGA to work at the County Hospital after Bill taught me how to use the 4-gears. I always drove in my stocking feet, never with shoes on. I needed to feel the gas pedal and the clutch with my stocking feet. I bought a matching blue large-brim hat which I wore when I drove it –plus sun glasses--fun to wave at people who admired the car and thought I was young. I felt young. I loved that car. When it rained we put the top on it, but it was more fun to drive it as open convertible. To open the door of the A, you had to pull a string (!) When we moved to Washington, we had the 3 MGA's – and sold them all together, reluctantly, to someone from the hospital. We loved those cars. At one time or another, all of the kids drove them and loved them. Great pix of the A's.

One summer, PA and Helen were returning home in one of the MGA's after a long stay at the beach – they were both beautiful, sun tanned young women. About 30 miles inside the California border, all cars were routinely stopped for a wet-back check. They stopped for the inspection, and then they were motioned ok to leave. As PA pulled out in first gear, she called out, "We made it again, Rosa!" Thereafter, this became a favorite expression of my beautiful daughters.

[I should include here that after spending that summer at home, PA bought a new yellow convertible MGB to drive cross country for the return back to grad school. She took Brian (who was now about 12 years old) as her passenger, for extra safety on the road. They stopped in DC and other places of interest so it was also an educational trip for Brian. He flew home safely. ]

As our children grew and left the homestead, we communicated actively with them. I remember using the return address on my letters to them as:

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.)

When our kids were teenagers, they started calling Bill and me Padre and Madre. Cutesy. It was just fun and fine with us. However, the Madre somehow stuck longer than the Padre – and I came to be called Maudie – short for Madre – for time and all eternity.

Re Bill's name Dahbee: Bill (retired now) flew to Florida and stayed with Bear (not yet two years old) while Laura and Jay were off traveling somewhere. Laura called Bill DAD, and Jay called him BILL. Baby Bear combined the two and called him DAHBEE. Hence, his name in our family for time and all eternity. [Two-year-old Bear said, "You're a good boy, Dahbee."]

And speaking of teenage affectionate names, I remember:

Peggles-bod

Douglas-bod

H McH

Oh-Brian McJohnson

Fun times.

In February 1974, Helen was 22 years old and a student at San Bernardino State University, majoring in Education, when she met and fell in love with Gary Hagerman, also a student in Education at SBSU. They were married on February 16, 1974 at the Assistencia Chapel (Little Mission) in San Bernardino. We had a lovely reception at our home following the ceremony. They moved to Banning when Gary got a teaching job there and Helen commuted to the college. They were divorced seven years later, after which Helen earned a Master's Degree in Education and Special Education. She taught at the Chino Unified School District for 30 years – and retired to her mini-ranch in Mira Loma. Helen had always loved horses. At her mini-ranch, just a block or so from the dry riverbed, she had her own horse, a barn, chickens, rural life and, yes, a lovely, aged lemon tree (Thank you, Helen). Her neighbors rode by her house on horseback, waved to her. When I visited her, I enjoyed walking to the riverbed, watching distant riders on the dry surface. I felt like I had happened onto a western movie set. Beautiful. Also, later, Helen became Chair of the Southern California Area for California State Horsemen's Association, and currently she is Vice President of CSHA For Region 11 of the Equestrian Trail Patrol.

After receiving her BA from University of California, Riverside, PA went to the University of Delaware where she earned a Master's Degree in History. She taught at Lincoln University, the first black university, in Pennsylvania, for a year or so, until Lincoln's first black President – instantly fired all the newly-hired young, white non-tenured faculty – which included PA – presumably to hire all black professors. Thereafter, PA entered the Phd Program at the University of California at San Diego in Literature, and she moved into our trailer at Encinitas. By the way, she heard that Jay McCreary, also one of the fired young faculty, also entered the PhD Program at UCSD, in Oceanography.

Prior to leaving the east coast, PA and her roommate, Alice, decided to tour Europe, but just before embarking on the trip, Alice was notified that she had been accepted to teach American military children in Germany, starting in the following month – so she cancelled her trip with PA. And PA went on the trip alone, a young woman with knowledge only of a couple of languages. It was the hardest in Germany, where she had no German language, but she did fine. Charm helped. She met many other American traveling students and made notes to be used in her future stories

In the meantime, Brian completed a year or so at Cal State San Bernardino and then transferred to California State University at Fresno, where he earned a Bachelor of Science Degree. He was living on the campus on his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday – so, to celebrate as best we could with him; we contacted a bakery in Fresno and had them send him a Happy Birthday Sheet Cake. He breezed through the degree with honors. Later, maybe 1991 or so, Brian moved to Bellingham, took up SCUBA diving seriously and became an officer of the Whatcom County Dive Search and Rescue Team (Safety Officer). He lives in a trailer on a cliff in Birch Bay with a front row seat at magnificent sunsets over Bellingham Bay, as well as easy access to a footpath to the beach. He always loved the beach. As a teenager member of Encinitas Branch of Calvary Chapel, he was baptized (again) full immersion, in the Pacific Ocean. Later, when his employer gave him a gift of a week's vacation in Jamaica, he took Bill and me with him. It was a wonderful gift, which we all thoroughly enjoyed. He is presently working in an international shipping firm in Ferndale. In my old age, he is my right hand man – he does all my shopping, calls me every day.

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The wedding dress. For various reasons of distance and obligations, I was unable to attend Angie's and Betty's weddings. Angie had the new original wedding dress which was handed down to Betty, and subsequently to Harriett when she married Alan Donnell in 1961. Harriett asked her three sisters to be bridesmaids at her beautiful wedding – and after some alteration, Harriett also wore the same wedding dress. Many years later, after both Angie's and Harriett's passing, Patty now has that wedding dress, which had served for three sisters' weddings.

My father died on February 11, 1963, at age 75 of a heart attack. His passing was a tremendous blow to me and my sisters. He was our lifelong hero, saint and protector – a man of great intelligence, courage, strength, wisdom and faith. We will miss him forever. Thank you, Daddy.

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 local adult night school high school and took a typing class. Maybe she could get a job. When she heard about a possible part-time opening as House Mother at USC, she applied – and got the job. She was so elated! Her new position was Weekend House Mother (to relieve the full time HM), so 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, I think.

In her early 80's, Mama's 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 for some time, until she moved to Congregational Church's Assisted Living in Riverside. Betty encouraged Mama to write her memoirs – which has been helpful to our family as well as helpful for this memoir. Mama enjoyed her stay at Assisted Living to the end in July, 1987. Her true love, her inner strength and beauty, courage, support, and wisdom will always be remembered by her daughters and also by all members of her family. A true saint. Thank you, Mama.

PA had been writing short stories for some time – and I typed them on my Royal Typewriter at home. In the early 70's, I started working as a secretary in the Orthopedic Surgery Department at the SB County Hospital. My typewriter there was an elegant German Adler which had a special nylon film ribbon which printed up much like today's computers, a great improvement over the Royal. With permission from Dr. George J. Wiesseman, I came into the office on weekends and evenings after work to type PA's first novel, *Beggars and Choosers*, which was accepted by Little Brown Publishers (1978) after receiving the manuscript from her – no agent. With the money she received from Little Brown, PA bought a new Adler typewriter for me so that I could type her work at home. I remember once becoming so overcome with emotion while typing a tragic scene in *These Latter Days*, that I stopped typing and went out into our yard to walk among the fruit trees in the sunshine – to calm myself. She was a terrific writer.

In 1977, in a private ceremony, Peggy Ann married Jay McCreary, a graduate student at University of California at San Diego. We had a family wedding reception at our home – with all the trimmings of a big wedding. One of our gifts to them was a pair of Waterford Crystal wine glasses. They are still in her china closet to this day. This wedding was the beginning of our introduction to a new level of happiness – our two grandsons, Bear and Brendan McCreary. They opened an entirely new world to us. Thereafter, our entire lives revolved around them: our dear, sweet boys.

On Friday night, February 16, 1979, Jay called us to let us know that our daughter, PA, had gone to the hospital for the birth of their first child. We were so excited to hear about the birth of our first grandchild! The next day, February 17, Jay called again to let us know that we had a grandson! On the following Monday, February 19, I was on a Red Eye plane to Florida to help with taking initial care of the new baby. He was such a darling baby, his mother called him her little Teddy Bear – and somehow thereafter he was always called Bear. Laura and I took him to the pediatrician for his initial physical exam – a perfect baby! Perfect happiness!



When Bear was about two years old, McCrearys came from Florida to visit us – at the trailer in Encinitas. At the trailer, my favorite activity with my 2-year-old grandson was , holding hands, we took a walk through the trailer park, stopping at the end to notice the ding-dong bell, and stopping to watch the ants on the sidewalk.

In Honolulu, when Bear was about two or maybe three, he and I were out for a walk, holding hands. I think the terrain was slightly inclined, and maybe he was getting a little tired. Bear said to me, “Maudie, my knees are cold.” So I picked him up and carried him the rest of the way. He was a darling child.

When I told 4-year-old Bear that we were all going to the movies on Saturday to see a great movie about baseball. He replied, “Do you mean ‘The Natural,’ Maudie?” (Robert Redford) I was stunned! He was a bright 4-year-old.

Following the separation and divorce from Jay, Peggy Ann and 4-year-old Bear moved back to Southern California, rented an apartment in Redlands (with a rented piano), and Brendan was born on June 12, 1983 in Redlands. I had gone to Pregnancy Lamaze Training Classes with PA at the hospital where I worked, and I was present (as labor coach) in the delivery room at Redlands Community Hospital when Brendan was born. [Another powerful, emotional, earth-shaking experience.] He looked All Johnson to me. PA named him Brendan William Johnson McCreary. Beautiful. We now had two wonderful grandsons, the lights of our lives.

Once when Brendan was about 3 years old, tired, crying, didn’t want to take a nap, I held him up close, put my cheek on his cheek, and whispered that I wanted to tell him a story. He stopped crying, listened. He loved the stories I told him for a very long time: The Little Red Hen, The Gingerbread Boy, The Three Pigs, Chicken Little, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, etc. etc. etc. Once after I re-told the Three Bears story, 3-year-old Brendan asked me what a “walk in the woods” was. Shortly thereafter, I took him to the Interurban Trail in Bellingham which was a modern footpath on the edge of the city through a verdant, almost-blindingly-green-tall-trees-forest. I still remember the thrill of holding Brendan’s 3-year-old hand as we were taking a walk in the woods, just like the Three Bears in the story.

About this time, PA changed her name to Laura Kalpakian. She was offered a teaching job at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington, which she accepted. Since Bill was already retired, he helped Laura move with Bear and Brendan to Bellingham. They drove in two cars. Bill tied Brendan’s crib on top of our 1977 Chevy and loaded the back seat and trunk with high chair, kid stuff, toys, books, etc. etc. etc. Eventually Laura bought her family home on Cornwall Avenue and the little family moved in. Home sweet home. Forever home sweet home.

Laura wrote – and published – *Crescendo* about this time. In the book, the protagonist played Beethoven’s 11<sup>th</sup> Piano Sonata and the music was integral to the theme of the book. She

learned and played the very difficult Beethoven's 11<sup>th</sup> Piano Sonata herself – in order to describe the relationship of the music to the story. Music was always a part of the McCreary family life.

When Brendan showed an interest and talent in the saxophone in an elementary school music program, Laura bought his first saxophone with monthly payments for 4 years through an offer affiliated with the school music program. His first private teacher was Mr. Kelly, followed by Mr. Ray Downey, whose studio was a small shed in the backyard of his friend's house on Elizabeth Street. In the winter, I sat in the shed with them during the lesson, always with something to read, but in the spring, I sat outside in the yard which was dominated by an ancient magnificent wisteria – the most breath-taking, gorgeous wisteria I had ever seen. Unforgettable lavender beauty.

The boys both took piano lessons from Paul Klein – and Laura insisted that I should take lessons from him also. (With Paul's guidance I was able to play Debussy's *Clair de Lune* – 5 flats – and Duke Ellington's *Sophisticated Lady* - 4 flats - reasonably well. Thank you, Paul!) Both boys showed immediate special talent for the piano and music. Bear played the piano at many school functions and he also played in the Bellingham High School jazz band. That class was held an hour before regular school started at 7 a.m. or something very early like that. Maybe earlier. So he was up early and Laura or I drove him to school. Brendan played saxophone in the Squalicum High School marching band as well as the Squalicum High School Jazz Band. He was featured soloist in many exhibition performances and on graduation, he was selected the Most Valuable Player in the Band. [On one occasion when the Squalicum High School Band was marching down Cornwall Avenue in a parade, Laura and I ran alongside Brendan, cheering – he never once changed his gaze from straight ahead.]

When Brendan was in Assumption Middle School, the Missoula Children's Theater produced *Children's Wizard of Oz*. Brendan was selected as the Lion. I was so thrilled to see him perform like a pro on stage, I stood in the middle aisle of the auditorium (blocking the vision of the audience behind me) and took a full roll of film pix of Brendan on stage in his lion costume.

When Brendan attended Assumption Middle School, he also played the soprano sax in Church on Sundays. When he played those beautiful hymns, Laura and I, sitting in the congregation, held hands, and sighed at the beauty of his music. As I recall, Brendan continued to play in Assumption Church services even after he was a student at Squalicum High.

When Brendan was in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade at Bellingham High, he auditioned for – (and got) the part of Helen Keller's younger brother in the school production of *The Miracle Worker*. The high school had a professional photo made of Brendan for the part. That photo is presently in my living room. His math teacher wrote a fan-letter note to him on his math homework paper. "You were great in *The Miracle Worker*." Thank you, Mrs. Elmendorf.

When Bear was about 16, Paul Klein told Laura he had taught Bear all about music that he knew (Master's in Music, WWU). Thereafter, Bear explored other music venues and Brendan started taking jazz-type piano lessons from another teacher (can't remember his name). (Bill

McDonough, thank you, Laura.) When Brendan was still in high school, the new teacher got him a gig, playing background soft jazz piano at a municipal cocktail party in City Hall. Since Laura was out of town, I drove him there and I sat in the car in the parking lot for most of his 2 hour gig, and then I went inside. It was such a thrill to see my high school age grandson playing professional background music at an elegant cocktail party. Brendan was paid \$75 for his music. Probably his first \$\$\$ for professional performance.

At Christmas that year, the new teacher had a recital at beautiful Lairmont Manor at which Brendan was the finale (the very best of all the teacher's students). On a stage bedecked with multiple poinsettias, Brendan played Summertime by Gershwin on the grand piano, and was accompanied by a string bass. It was so moving and so very beautiful it was beyond description. The audience caught its breath at the magnificent professional performance of this high school boy. He brought down the house! Bill and I were so very proud of our talented grandson. (I had to hold Bill back – he was all over the place praising Brendan.)

Every year on Elvis Presley's birthday, the McCrearys had a birthday party for him. Admission at the front door required that the guest sing an Elvis song. They watched Elvis movies and listened to his records all evening. Laura served wonderful refreshments and the kids loved those parties. Also at New Year's, Laura had parties for kids and adults. At midnight, the kids all took kitchen pans and lids out in the front yard and banged in the new year. Great Fun. Great parties. All of the boys' friends loved Laura and stayed in touch with her many years after both boys had left home. She was a great hostess.

When the boys were about 10 and 6, I heard on the radio that people could go to the Hovander Pioneer Homestead ranch and pick as many apples as they wished – and people could also crush the apples on a cast iron hand-apple-press for apple juice. Laura, the boys and I went to the ranch with sacks – we picked a lot of apples – and we used the cast iron hand-apple press for apple juice. However, the press required a lot of energy and we soon tired from the pressing process, so we took the rest of the apples home – and I made a lot of applesauce. But it was fun.

Dad and I enjoyed our wonderful grandsons' childhood – we were part of all their activities. They were the joy of our lives. In the early years, we looked after the boys while Laura was teaching, which was fun for us as well. We took them to the movies, to school events, to birthday parties, to weekend sightseeing trips in our new home in the State of Washington. When Laura went to Scotland to a Writers' Retreat, Bill and I flew with the boys to Disneyland – they were about 14 and 10 years old. We stayed a night or two at the Disneyland Hotel in a suite of rooms. Two bathrooms. Great fun. When Bear bit into a solid ice cream bar, one of his braces slipped and he was in terrible pain. Bill and I found an orthodontist in town – who very graciously fixed the problem with the braces – without charge.

At first, Bear attended a private co-op school, which gave the pupils Wednesday afternoon off. On those days, we took the boys to their favorite hamburger place for lunch – can't think of the name of it right now – (was it Win's?) for hamburgers and fries—and maybe a fun place afterward. Thereafter, both boys attended Parkview Elementary, Shuksan Middle School, Assumption Catholic Middle School, Bellingham High School and Squalicum High.

Speaking of going to fun places after school, Dahbee delighted in taking the boys to PayLess Drugs' Toy Department – (yes, PayLess seemed to the boys to have specialized in toys). Also, Dahbee and Brendan frequently enjoyed a special treat – just the two of them – of canned pasta – I think it was Spaghettios.

Brendan attended pre-school at Western. Laura took him there in the morning and we picked him up at 11 a.m. and took him home – or wherever we planned fun for that day. It was enjoyable for all of us. I remember one day when we were waiting for Laura to come home from work, 3 year old Brendan entertained us in the kitchen: he stood on the kitchen stage -- in front of the stove--and sang Obla-Dee, OblaDah, Life Goes On. I think (I hope) Dahbee video taped it, but I'm not sure. It was a truly special and spectacular performance. We all applauded loudly. He was a sensational performer even at age 3.

When Brendan was about 5, I took him to lunch at the mezzanine cafe of The Bon in downtown Bellingham. (This was before the Mall came to town.) We both enjoyed it. (I think we had hamburgers.) We visited the comic book shop in town as well as the music store. Also, at that time, the local bus stopped in front of his house – so he and I took a ride on the bus – its entire route – until it returned to its starting place in front of his house. It was his first (and maybe only) bus ride. Fun.

When Bear was about 10, one morning he found an abandoned full size boy's bicycle in front of his house. Laura suggested they should take it to the police station in case someone would be looking for a lost bike. The station told Bear they would hold it for 30 days, and if no one claimed it, it would be his. No one claimed it – and Bear felt it was a bicycle from heaven. He had had a little-boy bike, but did not have a full size bike. That bike is still in Laura's garage – and still runs.

Faculty at Western Washington University were offered the opportunity to teach American students in Siena, Italy. Laura jumped at the chance. Bill and I went with her and Bear and Brendan – to take care of the children when she was teaching. We stayed 3 to 4 months from September through the end of December, 1988 (or thereabouts) We had a two bedroom furnished apartment on a third floor apartment building on Via Cavour, Siena. Bear was 9 years old and Laura enrolled him in Italian school – within walking distance of our apartment. The teacher did not speak English – and neither did the pupils. Bear was placed in a first grade class – and picked up Italian quickly. Bear told his mother that the Italian kids were ridiculing him and teasing him since he (at first) could not speak Italian. Laura wrote a note to the teacher (in her best Italian) explaining Bear's discomfort and unhappiness. When the teacher read the note, she burst into a powerful lecture to her students – upbraiding them for their rudeness, cruelty, bad manners, etc. etc. etc. Things changed. Bear was even invited to some of the Italian students' birthday parties. When Bill, the boys and I were sightseeing, we would ask Bear to ask directions (in Italian). People were always amazed at this little American boy who could speak fluent Italian.

Twenty-five years later (2013) when Bear and Raya were in Italy for the premier of DaVinci's Demons, Bear went to his former school in Siena, had his picture taken at his former

desk. He also had his picture taken again in the exact places where he had been photographed as a 9-year-old. Great pix.

Brendan was four years old and ready for kindergarten, but the Italian kindergarten was far away from our apartment and we would have had to take him by bus – so Brendan stayed with Bill and me while Bear was in school.

On one of our Italian fun trips, Dahbee bought Brendan a special toy that he REALLY wanted. As we left the toy store, Dahbee suggested we should have some gelato at the nearby ice cream shop. Brendan replied that he couldn't have gelato because he was too happy with his toy. (What a darling boy!)

We celebrated Christmas there in our Italian apartment. We have pix of the boys and me threading popcorn for tree decorations. We left Italy a few day after Christmas – and hand-carried gifts of a soccer ball and Italian Christmas cakes that would not fit in luggage. It was a very tense and nervous flight home. We were on Flight 103 from London. The immediate preceding Flight 103 had crashed in Locherbie Scotland – terrorist attack. When we landed in Seattle, all the passengers applauded – and Bill kissed the American soil.

On one occasion in England, when Brendan returned from a British pre school class, I asked him if they gave him a cookie after class. He replied, No. They had given him a biscuit.

After high school, Brendan attended the local college for one quarter and then he transferred to USC in Los Angeles – major in Music, plus Letters, Arts and Sciences. At his 2006 graduation, Laura and I attended (and Brian looked after Dahbee who was still living at home following his stroke). It was a fabulous occasion – wonderfully celebratory, with a family party at the Moonlight Beach Motel in Encinitas. We were all so very proud of Brendan. Following graduation, he found a day job teaching music to pre-schoolers in private schools, but his heart went into performing, recording and writing new music – and creating a CD recording of his original music. I loved hearing him sing as background on TV shows. We were so very proud of him.

When Bear was maybe a sophomore at USC and Bill and I were on vacation at the trailer in Encinitas, Bear came on the Metro to spend a weekend with us. It was a real thrill for Bill and me to have Bear (as a young man) there with us at the trailer, where I used to hold his hand and walk with him as a 2-year-old in the park – to stop and see the ding-dong bell and watch the ants on the sidewalk. My heart skipped a beat when I looked at his beautiful young-man-face --- a scholarship student now at USC where he was just beginning to get real recognition for his musical genius—to even dream about the bright future that was surely ahead for him. I remember we took him on that first evening to sit on the sand at the beach and watch the sunset, which was spectacular. Also on that visit, we took him to a music shop on PCH called, I think, Lou's Records, where he enjoyed spending a lot of time checking out music at the shop. He had a great time and bought several tapes, records, or whatever he liked. On Sunday, he caught the Metro back to LA and USC. It was truly wonderful for Bill and me to have our oldest grandchild spend that weekend with us at the trailer. Memorable weekend.

Bear was awarded a Presidential Scholarship to USC's Thornton School of Music – major in Music Composition – and since Music Majors were also required to take non-music classes, Bear took Geology. His geology class went on a field trip to the wreckage remains of the St. Francis Dam, San Francisquito Canyon, high above Los Angeles. At midnight, March 12, 1928, a small leak in the dam had expanded to a major break and like a sonic boom, it exploded into a devastating flood on sleeping Los Angeles, not stopping until it reached the Pacific Ocean – causing many sudden deaths, terrible destruction and catastrophic panic.

Bear was so impressed with the tragedy of the St. Francis Dam, he wrote both lyrics and music to his composition, *The Collapse of St. Francis*, which he performed at USC's Bovard Auditorium at his Senior Recital. Another Music student, Melanie Heyn sang the vocals. It was a huge success and received tremendous praise and applause. USC now knew for sure (which we already knew) that Bear McCreary was a musical genius. Elmer Bernstein complimented Bear on *The Collapse of St. Francis*, and commented on Bear's remarkable talent and achievement.

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Some time around maybe 1990 when Laura sold a book, she bought a computer, a printer, copy machine, fax machine and other electronic equipment from IBM. When she asked IBM to teach us Word Perfect, they told us we were on our own. At that time Laura felt she could never be parted from her typewriter, so she sent me to Community College, at first to a One-Day-Crash-Course in Word Perfect – which introduced me to the many significant differences between typing and computer skills. I was still confused. So Laura sent me again to the local college to take a 4-quarter course in Word Perfect, but after about one-plus quarters, I felt I had learned enough to handle Laura's manuscript writing. At that time, Word Perfect was not as simple as it is today – and I did learn it – with assistance from Bear, who was still a boy, living at home and in school.

My first big computer project may have been COSETTE, the sequel to *Les Miserables*. Adding a French accent at that time required several steps, finding the correct accent at another electronic location and transferring it back to the manuscript over the correct word. Also, as I recall, changing a fault required pulling up the bowels of the computer, trying to figure out what all the symbols meant, and making the change. Ugh. Help. Help. Help.

Laura had a contract with Harper Collins that she would submit the completed manuscript on a date in February of the following year. She and I worked for long and tedious periods of time to meet that date – and we did. Needless to say, Laura has since mastered the computer; she now enters and submits all her books electronically by herself and she is presently (2013) my computer guru. Thank you, Laura. She also took me with her to New York when she appeared with Katie Curic on the NBC TV Today Show to plug COSETTE. It was a very exciting event. I sat in the Green Room and watched her on national TV. Wow. How great is that?????!!!!!!

I want to add a special note here that while we were in New York for the launching of COSETTE, we went to Ellis Island and found my name and my family's names on the Ellis Island

computer which listed the names and the dates of arrivals in the U.S. We were able to pencil-draw-over the names for mementos. Memorable record of that very special family milestone.

A few years ago, Angie's daughter, Patty, invited me to come to Southern California for her mother's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Angie was the oldest daughter. She was Mama's #1 helper with her younger daughters, she was babysitter to Betty and me when we were very young, she made dresses for our dolls, she helped us with our homework, looked after us when Mama was working in Dad's store; she was the capable older sister we loved and admired. Angie had all of the talents: musical, academic, mathematic, administrative, etc. She excelled in every endeavor she attempted. None of us knew that her 90th birthday which we celebrated at the Mission Inn in Riverside that weekend, was the last reunion of all four of the Kalpakian daughters. It was the beginning of the end of an era. She opened the door for us. She passed away before her 91st birthday. Sisters are sisters forever. We are heartbroken. We will miss her forever. Thank you, Angie.

At age 85, Bill had a major surgery, a double heart bypass. We were told he was the oldest patient here who had had this heart bypass. It was a very long surgery and Brian, Laura and I spent almost a full day in the St. Joseph Hospital Waiting Room. To ease our anxieties and concern for Bill's surgery success, Laura and I proofread the galleys of her new book, *The Memoir Club*. It was a long, slow recovery for Bill, over the entire following year, but he made it. The Johnsons are tough cookies.

In April, 2005, at age 87, Bill was diagnosed as having had a stroke. He was not aware of the current year, he could not remember everyday household locations, he could not remember many vocabulary words and tried to re-learn them, etc. He did not have physical loss – just mental and some weight loss. Fortunately, he could remember all family members. His diagnosis was Vascular Dementia. (It was not Alzheimer's.) I took care of him at home for 6 years, and in July, 2011, at age 93, Hospice admitted him to Highland Convalescent Care, where he received excellent care for 14 months.

Highland Care celebrated all of the holidays with its patients, but I particularly remember Valentine's Day of 2012 when they had a romantic dinner for their patients. Spouses were invited to an elegant, candle light dinner – with live music (a flute, cello and a guitar), a single red rose for the women, sparkling cider served in champagne flutes, a steak-asparagus-and-baked potato dinner served by the Highland staff in wait-uniforms. Brian and Lynda took me to the dinner party (I needed a driver) and took pictures. I spent all day getting ready for the 5 p.m. date. I wore my fanciest outfit, all black silk, with elegant jewelry Bill had bought for me so many years ago. I even used a matching pin as a hair clip in my hair. I know that Bill, in spite of his dementia, enjoyed the evening "very much." I wrote a thank-you letter to the Administrator, complimenting her on a memorable evening for her patients as well as their spouses. It had certainly rekindled long-dormant emotions for Bill and me as well as their other patients. It was a magical, unforgettable evening.

Hospice called us two, maybe even three times, and told us that the end was near for Bill, after which he remarkably bounced back to vitality and free-wheeling wheelchair speed down the hall toward the dining room for lunch! They called him the Come-Back Kid. Until September 2, 2012. Age 94. He left a loving and admiring family. We still miss him. He is interred at Enterprise Cemetery in Ferndale. We visit him as often as possible – I will never forget the playing of taps as he was laid to rest. That moment will stay with me forever.

Bear graduated from USC – Thornton School of Music – in 2002 – with an additional year to include Recording Arts. Finding a job in music was difficult. For some time he was sleeping on a friend's couch, with help \$\$\$ from home – until he found a technical-music-scut-type job for a man who had done the score for Battlestar Gallactica. (Can't think of his name right now. Was it Gibbs?) Bear worked in his music studio in Malibu. When the employer was offered to do the score for Battlestar again, he was too busy with a score for a major motion picture, so he asked Bear to do it. Opportunity! Bear took on the job – and wowed everyone associated with the TV production with his originality and quality of music. Here he was right out of college, (with no place to live) – with a TV show score that everyone raved about! That was the beginning. Today (2014) Bear is a successful musician – employs a staff of musicians and also performs himself. He has scored several motion pictures and many TV shows – plus he received an Emmy in 2013 (at age 34) for the theme music for Starz' TV drama DaVincii's Demons. He has also received Emmy Nominations for The Human Target (2012) and Black Sails (2014).

One Sunday afternoon Brian, Laura and I went to the artsy Bellingham Limelight Theater to see Bear's movie, The Europa Report, a SyFy movie based on Galileo's notebooks and observations. When Bear's name came on – full screen credit – we clapped and hooted. The musical score was fabulous. When the final credits came on, the audience was so riveted by the movie's climax music that no one moved until the credits were completed. Wow. Terrific. Powerful. That's our boy!

Bear and Raya were married August 21, 2010 at the Frank Lloyd Wright compound atop the Pacific Palisades in Los Angeles. It was surely the most elegant wedding ever performed. Raya was stunningly beautiful – the wedding vows were exchanged with live music against a backdrop view of the fabulous Pacific Ocean. Every aspect of the wedding was perfect – the seating, the name cards, the full course meal plus an elegant many-layered lemon cake. The musical program, of course, was professional, plus family members and friends as well danced, sang and spoke about this marriage of two truly beautiful people. Also, the following day, the bride's mother gave a lovely brunch in the garden of her LA home. I was so very happy to be able to attend my grandsons's wedding. Love always, Bear and Raya.

Bear and Raya are expecting their first child in June of 2014. More on this later.

Later: we now know that their baby is a GIRL! We are all elated! The last time a girl was born in our family was 1952!!!! (Helen) Hooray! Hooray! Hooray! (I had already suggested only boys' names for this baby – we were so boy-oriented (!)



Raya sent us email pix of their daughter still in her mother's womb – a beautiful, clear picture of an adorable baby girl, with fine, delicate features. So very exciting! This is my first great-granddaughter! What wonderful news! We are all elated!

In November of 2013, my daughters, Laura and Helen, gave an elegant KALPAKIAN GIRLS' REUNION PARTY at Helen's home in Mira Loma. Three of us, surviving daughters of Haigouhi and Haroutune, were there, plus many daughters of our sisters (plus Richard Bown). What a wonderful reunion party. Great Armenian food. Gifts for all the guests. Betty and I entertained everyone by singing (twice – the second time for the video cameras) our George Washington High School Fight Song and our high school Tri-Y Club song:

When a Tri-Y girl walks down the street,  
 She looks a hundred per from head to feet –  
 She has a word, a smile, a winning way  
 And when you see her, boy, you'll recognize her and you'll say now,  
 There's a girl I want to know,  
 She looks a hundred per from head to toe --  
 And just to be with her is quite a treat  
 It's hard to beat  
 A Tri-Y girl !

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. True heartbreak. Heartbreak.

A few days after the Reunion Party, that November, 2013, we were graciously invited to Bear's home for a memorable Thanksgiving Dinner. Laura did the cooking — she served dinner buffet style to 21 guests, seating them at an L-shaped table. (Raya was pregnant with Sonatine.) Bear gave me a tour of his home sound proof music studio – and took a picture of both of us with his Emmy statue (which was very heavy). He also played piano for me in his elegant music room (my favorite room in his home). What a marvelous, exciting party-time trip for me! True happiness. (Footnote: I wore my new red patent leather shoes (2-inch heels) to this Thanksgiving Dinner. I had bought them some time earlier in the hopeful anticipation of an invitation to a party to which I could wear them. They did receive a lot of attention.)

I am not sure how I got to be so old without noticing it. I am truly grateful to be here at (presently) age 91. I am able to live alone only because Laura and Brian are my total support. Since I no longer drive, I have to be driven to doctor (and other) appointments. Brian does all of my shopping. I walk whenever the weather is bearable. When I had Dad at home for the 6 years following his stroke – Laura took me to her house for a regular vacation weekend relief from care giving – while Brian took care of Dad. It was greatly appreciated. Also when I went to LA for

Bear's wedding, Brian took care of Dad so I could go to the wedding. I could not live alone without their help. Thank you, Laura and Brian, you are my life supports.

In my very old age, my life-long love of reading has become a sort of lifeline for me. Sitting in my favorite chair in my home mini-library, reading takes me away to other places, other times, other interesting people. Bios are my very favorite, but fiction and non-fiction are also part of the lifeline.

It was a beautiful day when Brian brought Lynda Pettit into our lives. When he first met her, my initial thought and hope was that Lynda would take Brian into her already-established family – and she did – but what happened immediately was that Lynda became an integral part of our family. She was like a daughter to me. And she did magic as well. She single-handedly painted my back porch, shampooed the carpeting, and did countless courtesies which made my life more comfortable and easier. When I returned home after surgery last summer, she stayed here to keep an eye on me, looked after me. Thank you, dear Lynda.

On June 1, 2014, Brendan and Shweta were married at the Frank Lloyd Wright compound in Pacific Palisades. It was the greatest disappointment of my entire life that I was unable to attend their wedding, My heart was there with them at this beautiful and magical wedding. The bride was stunningly beautiful and Brendan was the handsome bridegroom at the blending of two beautiful people on the cliffs overlooking the great Pacific Ocean. Both families participated in the ceremony and all the guests enjoyed a wonderful, meaningful blending of two families – as well as a celebratory party and music, music, music. Thanks to John Harrington's video of the wedding ceremony, I was able to go to the wedding after all! I had tears of happiness throughout this beautiful ceremony. I was so proud of Brendan and Shweta – and my lovely daughters also. Sheer joy.

On June 1, 2014 was the most exciting wedding of the year – and on the following day, June 2, Sonatine McCreary was born!!!!!! So much happy excitement!!!!!! I am near tears with happiness whenever I think about this adorable child. Mother and daughter are doing well – and the entire extended family is rejoicing beyond description! We were able to see pix of Sonatine shortly after her birth – a beautiful infant – who is my first great grandchild! I am so looking forward to holding her close to my heart, feeling her heartbeat against mine, when her parents bring her to our town some time in the future. Sheer joy. For weeks after her birth, Bear and Raya sent daily email pix plus email videos of their beautiful daughter, Sonatine. We loved them. We lived on them. Daily. Sheer beauty. And Bear was enchanted by his lovely daughter. His expression when he held his daughter was priceless. She was surely the most photographed baby in the world.

On July 4, 2014, age 92, as I sat at my breakfast table enjoying first-of-the-morning coffee. I turned on the TV – and lo, there in Washington DC, is an official swearing-in of new naturalized American citizens. I was riveted. Hearing the oath administered brought back a memory rush of

my 21-year-old self in Federal Court in LA, right arm raised, taking the oath of allegiance. Sudden tears. Tears of appreciation for my gutsy young parents. In President Obama's welcoming speech, he mentioned several outstanding naturalized Americans, including George Mardikian, (of the 50's? 60's? 70's?) who hosted Omar Khayyam, a successful San Francisco Armenian-American restaurant.

I was a limp rag. Happy Fourth of July, Old Girl.

I was riding high on the wave of happiness during Brendan's wedding last month – followed by more joy and excitement over the daily fix of pix of our new baby – when we received the startling, sad word that my sisters Harriett and Betty had been hospitalized in Southern California with diagnoses of pneumonia. Stark reality. Betty recovered in a few weeks, but Harriett became more seriously ill and her diagnosis now was lung cancer. Hard to believe, since she had never smoked and was always active and in good health. She looked after others and was an integral part of her church. She died on July 7, nearly six weeks after her first sign of illness. She was 78 years old, the youngest of the Kalpakian sisters. I will miss her forever. Sisters are sisters forever. There were no good byes. She will always have a place in my heart. I am heartbroken at the loss of my sister. Heartbroken.

. Thanksgiving 2014: Helen came from Mira Loma, California for Thanksgiving – and she brought her new friend, Bobby – the man she plans to marry. We admired her engagement ring and we were delighted to enjoy their company. It was wonderful to have Helen here and physically in our lives again. It was a wonderful Thanksgiving Holiday to have them here. We took many pix.

It is Christmas, 2014 – all the family is here (at Laura's house) – both grandsons, their wives, AND Sonatine, my great granddaughter! It was such a wonderful thrill to hold this beautiful baby, to feel her baby heartbeat against my old heart. It was such a thrill to feel her tiny, perfect fingers on my old, wrinkled hands. She and I were the oldest and the youngest. It was the most exciting Christmas of my life. I am too old to be able to watch Sonatine grow up, but I am confident in my heart that her capable parents will always love, cherish, nurture and protect her. Bear and Raya are perfect, wonderful, devoted, loving parents.

My daughter, Laura, is the essence of a renaissance hostess.. She has created wonderful gourmet meals and generously opened her heart and her home to her family and their friends. In addition to being a very talented, gifted writer, she is a loving and dedicated mother, and she adores her granddaughter, Sonatine, and her daughters-in-law, Raya and Shweta.

In my very old age (I will be 93 next month), I have noticed that my short term memory is declining. (Did I take my pills? Did I put my keys away? Did I put the trash out?) Very often I cannot remember little acts I did even a few moments ago. It is disconcerting and I am seriously working on keeping tab of myself, so I have set up a morning and evening routine check list



12 September 2014

Dear Laura –

I am writing to thank you for repeatedly and firmly insisting that I write a family memoir. I am also writing to ask that you please take great care of this Family Memoir. While I have jokingly referred to it as My Masterpiece, I am very well aware that it is not a masterpiece, but a very personal family history of a remarkable family at a memorable time. I truly hope that future family members will read, appreciate, understand, remember and revere the history of the Armenian side of our family and the gifts of love, courage and sheer guts they contributed. Please do not make it Required Reading. Only Requested Reading.

Thank you from my heart of hearts, dear Laura.

Love always,

mom

(Pakradouhi Kalpakian Johnson)

13 March 2015

Dear Fam –

While this memoir currently ends up-to-current-date, I am writing to let you know that it is still a Work-in-Progress, as I do insert new entries as I remember them. Thank you.

Love always,

maudie

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