

# **Harry Charkoudian's**

## ***From Marash to Massachusetts***

This account, prepared by Harry Charkoudian and written by Thomas A. Crawford, Jr., describes the uprooting of the Charkoudian and Kalpakian families from their homes in southeastern Anatolia in the latter part of the 19th and the first two decades of the 20th century.

It is dedicated to those who failed to survive the massacres and depredations imposed on the Armenian people by the Turks under several regimes in that era, and to those who did, and their descendants. May, 1981

Published on the Internet (June, 2018)

## FROM MARASH TO MASSACHUSETTS

1. THE FOUNDATION	2
2. THE INSURRECTION	9
3. THE EXODUS	25
4. GENEALOGY	39
5. THE FIRST DRUG STORE	42
6. UP TO THE MOUNTAIN	49
7. CHARKOUDIAN, INC.	56
8. GETTING SETTLED	63
9. WARTIME	66
10. FROM SODA FOUNTAIN TO BANK BOARD	69
11. EXPANSION AND GROWTH	73
12. END OF A BUSINESS ERA	78
13. THE CALF ROAST	80
14. REJUVENATION	91

The following is an account, prepared by Harry Charkoudian and written by Thomas A. Crawford, Jr., of the uprooting of the Charkoudian and Kalpakian families from their homes in southeastern Anatolia in the latter part of the 19th and the first two decades of the 20th century.

It is dedicated to those who failed to survive the massacres and depredations imposed on the Armenian people by the Turks under several regimes in that era, and to those who did, and their descendants.

May 1981

## THE FOUNDATION

Every family tree has roots.

The Charkoudian roots are in Marash, in what is now southeastern Turkey.

Twentieth century biblical research has established it as a city of the Hittites.

Marash, now a city of 63,000-plus inhabitants 96 miles northeast of the Mediterranean port city of Adana, experienced Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Arab and finally Ottoman rule.

The Armenian people, first to embrace Christianity as a nation, in 303 A.D., formed a significant minority in the territory of eastern Anatolia under the Ottoman Turk.

As the Ottoman Empire extended its control from Constantinople, captured by the Turks in 1453, it became an empire of minorities stretching from the Tigrus and Euphrates in the East to the Nile in the South, the Dnieper and Don and Danube in the north and to Tunis in the West.

The high water mark of this expansion in Europe was before the gates of Vienna, which withstood the pressure of the Turk from September 26 to October 16 of the year 1529.

But the Turkish tide did not begin to recede from most of the Balkans for another 360 years, from the time of the Treaty of

Berlin in 1878.

It is in the backwash of this tide that the Charkoudian family was caught.

Nahabed Charkoudian, a Marash store owner, and Vartouhi (Kalpakian) Charkoudian, daughter of a physician, had five sons who survived early boyhood, Nishan (born in 1889), Levon (1891), Karekin (1898), Artin (Harry) (1900), and Essaye (Edward) (1908).

Two other sons, one born between Levon and Karekin, and another born between Artin and Essaye, died at the ages of seven and three respectively.

Both of the deceased boys also were named Essaye, and that name, which translates from the Hebraic as Isaiah, was given to the youngest surviving boy in memory of the two others.

At this writing, only the two youngest boys survive, Artin, who is compiling this record, and Essaye, Americanized into Edward.

Shortly before Artin's birth, a fire destroyed the entire business section of Marash, including the store operated by Nahabed Charkoudian.

He subsequently went into the yard goods business, and brought his son Levon in with him as he matured. Nishan, the eldest son, already had a trade as a shoemaker.

But besides helping his father, Levon also assisted his uncle on his mother's side, Habib Kalpakian, in the latter's drug store.



It was on the strength of the profession of pharmacy and the occupation of shoemaker that the Charkoudian family was able to extricate itself, over a decade, from the horrors that preceded, accompanied and followed World War I.

As long as Ottoman sultans had succeeded in their imperialistic endeavors, their actions were designed to have the approval and sanction of Allah.

But the navigational and industrial revolutions that shook Europe out of its Dark Age lethargy led to a succession of pressures from European empires on the Ottomans.

By the latter third of the 19th century, Britain was pressing on the southern flanks in the Egypto-Arab and Persian theaters, the czars were gradually extending their control southward and eastward and the Balkan peoples had begun a succession of struggles toward independence in the northwest.

Disenchantment with the waning power and influence of the sultanate led to a coup in 1908 conducted by the Young Turks which ousted Abdul Hamid from power.

When an attempted counter coup failed the following April, both Turks and Armenians joined in a temporary euphoria that the injustice and impotence of the latter days of the Ottoman Empire were at an end.

Armenians, relegated during the centuries with the Jews and Greeks to trade, commerce, the professions and administration in an Islamic society which limited these peoples to those roles yet hated them for their success in them, now found

themselves welcome to the military service.

This became an ambivalent position to be in, with mini-wars breaking out with the Greeks, Bulgars and Serbs as larger international storm clouds formed which eventually led to the Great War involving all the great powers.

For the Charkoudian family, as with many Armenians who had been excluded from consideration for military service as unreliable through the centuries, fighting to preserve a Young Turk overlordship was an anathema as to preserve the Ottomans.

In 1912, Levon became eligible for the draft. Although he was not the oldest in the family, he held a birth certificate that indicated he was.

One of the escape routes from the Turkish draft led to the United States.

Levon also had a companion who already was in that country.

This companion, Simpat Haytayan, whose father had been a handyman for the Kalpakian family, had settled in Springfield, Massachusetts.

It was therefore decided that Levon would leave for the United States under Nishan's assumed name and under the earlier dated birth certificate.

The second youngest son thus became the first Charkoudian to emigrate to the United States.

During his first year in this country, Levon worked primarily as a waiter in several hotels, including the Highland Hotel in downtown Springfield, long the most prestigious hostelry in the

city.

But while Levon had made passage to the United States under his elder brother's name, the Balkan wars that Turkey was fighting with the Greeks, Serbs and Bulgars required further manpower, and the draft of Armenians continued.

By August, 1913, Levon's age group became eligible and this time, Nishan, with his younger brother already in the United States, was able to arrange his passage to the new country on the latter's birth certificate.

One year before the start of World War I, the two eldest brothers in the Charkoudian family were in the United States, getting established and saving the funds that would enable other members of the family to join them.

Nishan, through his trade as shoemaker, had an easier time getting established in the new country than his younger brother, the hotel waiter.

Another Armenian from Marash, Avedis Jansizian, worked at Filboor's shoe repair on Bridge Street, and Nishan quickly got established there.

Within a year, he was able to purchase his own business, the Reliable Shoe Repair at 252 Worthington Street, and became a shop owner as he had been at Marash.

He bought the business in partnership with Avedis, with the financial assistance of Haytayan. Avedis eventually left the partnership to open his own shoe repair business in Bridgeport,

Conn., leaving Nishan on his own.

About the same time, another Armenian by the name of Nahigian suggested to Levon that if he ever wished to utilize the experience he had while working at his Uncle Habib's pharmacy in Marash, he would have to go to school to improve his English.

Levon accepted this advice, enrolled at American International College for English classes and also attended evening school to pass high school equivalency examinations.

Three years after his arrival in Springfield, Levon was able to enroll at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy in Boston to pursue a career in pharmacy, and carry on a tradition of training in that field that could be traced back several generations in the Kalpakian family of his mother.

In this, he was assisted by Nishan, who provided support for Levon from his shoe business on Worthington Street.

Levon was a good student, and upon his graduation in 1917 after two years of study, he was offered a graduate scholarship to study chemistry at the college.

Professor E. L. Patch, impressed by Levon's diligence, was instrumental in obtaining this scholarship and afterward offered him a position in his laboratory in Stoneham.

Patch was a famous name in those days.

The Patch laboratory produced a flavored brand of cod liver oil that carried the Patch name into many homes.

It was a successful product and Levon's connection with that success conjured up images of such success for himself.

It is said that emigrants to the United States from Asia Minor or Greece always had one foot in this country and the other in the homeland.

It was no different with Levon.

He had dreams of returning to Marash to start a laboratory and possible business of his own.

But those dreams were confronted by the nightmare of World War I, and the fact that the two brothers had been shut off from the rest of the family for more than four years when the Armistice finally was signed on November 11, 1918.

If the nightmare of the two brothers in Massachusetts were of the imagination, that of the rest of the Charkoudian family was reality.

## THE INSURRECTION

The historical reality of Marash during World War I has been recorded by Dr. Stanley E. Kerr, an officer in the U.S. Army Sanitary Corps unit that arrived in Marash in the fall of 1919.

Kerr, who subsequently returned to the Middle East as chairman of the Department of Biochemistry at the American University in Beirut, Lebanon, collected his experiences and research into the book "The Lions of Marash", published by the State University of New York Press at Albany in 1973, after the author's retirement.

It records the massacres and forced exiles which reduced the Armenian population of the city, already diminished from prewar depredations, from 22,000 at the start of the war to 6,000 at its conclusion.

It was a tragedy that was to be spared the patriarch of the Charkoudian family.

On August 14, 1914, less than two months after the assassination of Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand in Sarejevo which precipitated World War I, Nahabed Charkoudian died of a heart attack in Marash at the age of 64.

The death of her husband left Mrs. Vartouhi Charkoudian with three young sons, Karekin, 16, Artin, 14, and Essaye, 6.

In three successive years, she had lost her two oldest sons, Nishan and Levon to the new world, from which she was now cut off by war, and her husband in death.

Widowhood and war forced a breakup in the Charkoudian household in 1915. The mother and two of her sons, Karekin and Essaye, moved in to live with her brothers, Dr. Avedis Kalpakian, and Habib Kalpakian, the pharmacist for whom Levon had worked before the war.

Artin went to live and work with his Uncle Janig, a dentist, the profession toward which he had aspirations.

The professional heritage of this family enabled them to survive, for the Turks, now under the autocratic regime of Enver Pasha, who had seized control in a coup in 1912, were beginning to resolve the Armenian question without foreign interference.

Forced deportations and massacres, which began in the spring of 1915 in Zeitun and Fundijak to the north, spread to Marash by summertime.

Most Armenians were ordered to leave the city by 2 p.m. August 19, section by section, sparing only the professional classes.

The Turks had not expected that their orders would be complied with without resistance, and were prepared to carry them out forcibly if necessary. They were surprised when whole sections, frightened by the spectacle of refugees from the north who had passed through before, with their accounts of fighting and massacre, obeyed the orders.

Although the Charkoudians were spared the threat of deportation during this wartime period, the Der Bedrosian family was not. Dr. Janig Kalpakian learned from a Turkish

acquaintance and frequent drinking companion that the section in which the Der Bedrosians lived was to be deported the next morning.

Priests had been ordained in that family for 21 generations and the wife of Sahag Der Bedrosian, then 35 years old and a priest himself, was Mrs. Charkoudian's cousin.

The Kalpakians were concerned for the family, whose priest-patriarch Sahag already had been deported to Aleppo for purported preaching against the Turks.

Janig's Turkish friend suggested that if the Bedrosians were to report illness in the family the following day, administrative measures probably could be arranged to spare them.

Little Artin, then 15, was drafted to don a turban that night, impersonate a Turk in darkened and troubled Marash, and act as courier with this message of survival for the Bedrosian family.

The message was delivered, the illness was duly reported and accepted by the Turkish authorities as fact, and the members of the Bedrosian clan were spared, for that period at least, deportation or worse.

But the selective deportations of Marashlis continued through June 23, 1916.

By that date, only 6,000 Armenians remained in the city, and that number remained constant until the end of the war. They constituted primarily the professional and skilled members of the population, who were of value to the Turkish military.



Fortunately, they included the members of the Kalpakian family, among them the recently widowed Vartouhi Charkoudian and her three sons.

Both Dr. Avedis Kalpakian and Habib Kalpakian, the pharmacist, eventually were drafted into military service.

The doctor was sent to the southern front where Britain, allied with Arab tribes, including those led by Col. T. E. Lawrence (of Arabia), was applying pressure in Palestine.

Dr. Kalpakian eventually was captured by the British in Palestine and at the end of the war, found himself in Cairo, Egypt.

Habib was assigned to a Turkish barracks near Marash, where he was able to engage Karekin as an assistant, which allowed the latter to escape conscription into the army.

Marash thus remained a safe enclave for these 6,000 Armenians until the end of the war. Stanley Kerr estimates the Armenian population of the city in 1914 at 30,000, indicating that 24,000 had been deported, fled or died during World War I.

Only 16,000 returned to the city from the south after the war to try to reestablish themselves, indicating a loss to war, disease, starvation and emigration of 14,000 residents of the city.

But Marash was only a microcosm of the Armenian people in Anatolia, and as a city with a large Armenian population and a strong religious, economic and professional infrastructure, not an accurate gauge of the sufferings of the Armenian people

during the war as a whole.

Postwar census takers determined that the losses in the villages and other towns in the Marash District were much larger and more devastating to the communities involved.

And studies after the war by Turkish, Soviet Armenian, German, British and American missionary sources, and by Armenian researchers in the Middle East, indicate that the Armenian losses to war, disease, starvation and assimilation into Turkish and Arab homes of orphaned children at a minimum of 500,000 (using Turkish figures), to as many as 2 million (from Armenian sources in the diaspora).

Studies by German Orientalists and the Soviet Armenian Academy of Sciences agreed that the toll was close to, or exceeded 1 million.

Because Marash was closer to the Syrian frontier than many Armenian districts, and because refugees from that city left later and had less distance to travel, the number of Marashlis who survived and were able to return to their native city after the war also was higher than in most areas of Turkish Armenia.

The figure provided by Stanley Kerr in "The Lions of Marash" is 16,000.

Thus, the postwar Armenian population of Marash swelled from 6,000 to about 22,000 with the return of those surviving refugees under first the British mandate, and then the French.

The contention between the wartime allies over the newly occupied territories in the Middle East, Mesopotamia, Lebanon,

Palestine, Syria and Cilicia led to the withdrawal of the British from Marash and their replacement by the French.

It was the collapse of the French in the face of increasing pressure by the revolutionary forces of Kemal Pasha, in defiance of the waning power of the sultanate in Constantinople, that forced all the Marashlis, including the Charkoudians and Kalpakians, from their homeland and home city.

The British had been welcomed to Marash in February of 1919 with an exuberance and euphoria which Turkish chroniclers of the time regarded as insolence.

It took another seven months for the British and French to decide how these varied regions were to be occupied and under whose mandate.

Clemenceau and Lloyd George met in Paris on September 15 and decided that the British would withdraw from all areas north of the Palestine-Syrian frontier and that they would be replaced by French troops in November.

It proved to be a political decision that was beyond the capability of the French military to perform. The British military high command in the Middle East, upset by the political decision to give up this rich prize, refused to delay its withdrawal until the French were better able to muster sufficient forces to withstand potential pressure from the nationalist Turks, who resented allied incursions into what they regarded as their Turkish homeland.

On November 3, 1919, British forces paraded out of Marash. It

took two and one-half hours for the multi-national force representing the British Empire to pass the reviewing stand. They were replaced by a French garrison which was small compared to the withdrawing British, and yet represented one-third of the entire French occupying military force in Cilicia.

The relative weakness of the French was not lost on the nationalist Turks.

The composition of the advance guard of French troops also invoked their wrath.

It consisted of a company of French infantry, a detachment of Algerian cavalry and a battalion of the Armenian Legion of the Orient. Numerically, there were 450 Armenians and only 150 French and Algerians, a ratio which caused the Turks immediate alarm.

They complained to the French shortly after their arrival about the Armenian troops, about asserted insults offensive to Islam and national sensitivities, something they claimed they had been spared under the British occupation.

The fact that some members of the Armenian detachment were survivors of the wartime Battle of Musa Dagh between Armenians and Turks reinforced fears for the future.

Soon, the French administration was confronted with rival claims by Turks and Armenians of insult, harassment, abuse of females and eventually shootings and deaths.

On Friday, November 28, according to a Turkish version of the

incident, the French flag was flown over the citadel in Marash as a symbol of the French determination to take over the civil administration of the city, a role which the British had left to the Turks.

The Moslems vowed not to hold Friday prayers until this provocation had been avenged, and the Turkish flag again flew over the citadel.

Turks stole up the steep path to the fortress, overpowered the guards and replaced the French flag with a Turkish one, evoking a roar of approval from the Turks around the city who had climbed to their rooftops to witness the event.

A French account of the event denies that the French flag ever flew from the citadel tower, and that instead, a group of horsemen led by Dr. Mustafa galloped to the citadel and hoisted both a Turkish flag and a religious emblem, or tekke, and then rode off, firing their rifles in a symbol of defiance.

Subsequently, Turkish civic leaders who had shown loyalty to the sultan and obeisance to the French since their arrival were mobbed, insulted and threatened with death.

Whichever version is correct, it marked the first open defiance of the French occupiers.

The first military clash between the French and the nationalist forces, which numbered in the thousands in the surrounding countryside, took place less than a month later.

Commanders of the French garrisons at Marash, Aintab and at Urfa quickly made accurate assessments that their military

forces were inadequate to the task.

Word was sent to Gen. Julien Dufieux, who was en route from Beirut to Adana to take command of the French occupying forces in Cilicia, for reinforcements.

Dufieux agreed to send reinforcements, and infantry and artillery units were sent north to Marash. The dispatched units arrived exhausted on December 23, 1919, after having battled heavy snow and cold weather.

But a unit transferred from Marash to Aintab to reinforce that garrison there had more to handle.

After crossing the Ak Su River, it was ambushed by Turkish nationalists on December 21 near Karabiyikli (the Black Moustache).

From that time forward, despite reinforcements to the exposed enclaves in Cilicia, the French were on the defensive in their attempts to succeed the British in their occupation.

Lacking wireless communication with their superiors and neighboring garrisons, military commanders were forced to rely on couriers, who were ambushed by the emboldened Turkish nationalists and/or bandits.

Expeditionary forces dispatched to punish the killers of the couriers were themselves ambushed.

French units, occasionally reinforced by Armenian troops, fought the Turks at Sarilar, El Oghlu, Sakjagoez, Pazarjik and Bel Pounar.

The latter encounter, involving the ambush and harassment of a

supply convoy and the capture of munitions from the French, coincided with rebellion in Marash itself.

The growing revolt in the countryside led to the massacre of Armenians in the outlying villages, where they were unprotected by the French and Armenian troops and were weak in numbers compared to the combined bands of chete raiders or Turkish nationalist troops or Kurds.

On the morning of January 21, General Querette, the commander in Marash, recognizing that the tenuous hold of the French was now slipping in the garrison cities themselves, called his officers together and prepared for action.

Shortly afterward, Querette informed the Turkish officials that the French were seizing the administration of the city and that six of their number would be detained as hostages. Rifle fire broke out throughout Marash as this meeting ended.

It was insurrection.

The Armenians of Marash, swollen in numbers by refugees from surrounding villages who already had come under the bullet, knife and torch, began fleeing to the nearest hope of security, whether this be church - Armenian Apostolic, Catholic or Protestant - or school, hospital, well-built stone house or estate.

Marash became transformed into several armed camps, some with the support of French troops, some without; some armed, some unarmed.

The French, meanwhile, were squeezed from the surrounding



hills by the encircling Turks.

The chapter "Devastation and Massacre" in Kerr's "Lions of Marash" provides accounts of the sectors in Marash which turned out to be, depending on their vulnerability, places of massacre, defense or refuge.

The Sheikh's Quarter, the German Farm, the Kouyoujak Quarter, the Sheker Dere, the Church of Asdvadsadzin, the soap factory, the Beitshalom Orphanage, the First Evangelical Church, the Rescue Home, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Covered Bazaar and the Franciscan Monastery.

Each one of these sanctuaries or hoped for sanctuaries had its own stories of heroism and tragedy.

For the Charkoudians, it began in the Sheikh Mahalesi, or the Sheikh's Quarter, and ended at the monastery.

After the war, Mrs. Vartouhi Charkoudian and her three sons had moved back into the family home at the Sheikh's Quarter, the home that had been rented to a Turkish family during the war.

Harry, 18, had resumed his interrupted schooling, as had Essaye. Karekin had opened a general store.

A mile across the Kanli Dere, bloody river in Turkish from another violent time, stood the monastery, in the geographical center of the city.

The Franciscans who inhabited it were known to both Turk and Armenians as the "rope belts", after the manner in which they fastened their brown robes.



But the kanderly, or rope belt in Turkish, became more than a symbol to the Armenians who obtained shelter there during the next three weeks.

Approximately 3,700 Armenians eventually crowded into the three buildings on the monastery grounds.

The Armenians and the French who survived the entire onslaught owe their lives to the architect who had the foresight to consider security in planning the complex.

The church, monastery and school were built of stone and perched on the crest of a steep ridge above the Kanli Dere.

On the morning of the start of the rebellion, a holiday as part of the Christmas season according to the old Armenian calendar, Harry Charkoudian wandered down to the market area of the city.

It was nearly empty.

He saw none of his friends there, and returned immediately home.

The Armenians of the Sheikh's Quarter, a warren of closely connected houses uniting some 200 families, had sensed the same tension as Harry, returning to their homes.

When the rifle fire broke out, the Sheikh's Quarter found itself under siege.

For two weeks, approximately 700 Armenians in the quarter and a squad of 12 French soldiers defended themselves from encroachment by the Turks, who controlled the two flanks.

The residents were not wanting for food. A winter supply had

been laid in, as usual, and holes had been knocked in walls of the adjoining houses, providing a transportation and communications network within the quarter.

Guards were posted at the Charkoudian house during the night, because it stood at the end of the quarter, facing the Kanli Dere and the monastery across the valley.

As the siege dragged into February, concern developed among the defenders as to the supply of ammunition.

A courier was sent across the Kanli Dere via a system of trenches to the monastery, asking for a supply of ammunition. When the courier returned from the monastery, regarded by the resident Armenians as one of the bastions against the Turks, and reported that they too were short of ammunition and supplies, fear set in.

On the night of February 5, it was decided that the entire community would evacuate the Sheikh's Quarter and make its way to the monastery.

That night, the Armenians crawled the mile or so through the trenches and across the Kanli Dere to the monastery, accompanied by the surviving French soldiers of the two-week plus battle.

The Charkoudian family was quartered in the school building after they arrived at the monastery. It was one of three buildings in the complex, which consisted of church, monastery and school.

Also finding refuge there were members of the Bedrosian family whom Harry had warned about deportation five years before.

With 3,700 refugees crowded into the three structures, supplies were insufficient.

Parties of young refugees were dispatched at night into the surrounding area on raids for food and stones.

The food was parceled out by the brothers, one meal of grain per day. The stones and lumber gathered during nighttime patrols were used to block the windows of the structures.

Captain Benedetti armed 30 young Armenians to fire from the monastery and assigned his French troops to man the trenches stretching out from it and to maintain contact with other enclaves in the city.

Casualties from these defensive battles and from patrols to other battle sites were buried in a corner of the monastery building.

The Rev. Materne Mure, one of the priests, recorded in his diary the collapse of several enclaves on the outskirts and the burning of churches.

Each morning, as the situation grew more desperate, the survivors in the monastery looked out toward the Islahiye Road, from which a hoped for relief column would come.

What the Armenians, and the French troops in Marash, did not know was that a relief column was en route, and did score a significant victory over surrounding Turkish forces just outside

Marash, but because of poor communications and confused orders, no advantage was taken of it.

On Feb. 1, according to the French priest, 15 French flags were visible in the city from the monastery.

On Feb. 7, two days after the Charkoudian family had made its way to the monastery, the column came into view of Marash, and its commander, Colonel Normand, spotted French flags still flying over the American mission, the Franciscan Monastery, the Beitshalom Orphanage and two other buildings.

On the following day, the French relief column attacked and, assisted by a counterattack from the city garrison, began to secure strategic areas which had been taken over by the Turks.

The Turkish residents, watching the tide of battle turn with the arrival of the French relief force, began to evacuate the city, leaving only isolated pockets of resistance.

The Armenian residents, unaware of what was to follow, surged from their places of refuge in search of food, and what one diarist noted with reluctance, (Abraham Hartunian in "Neither to Laugh nor to Weep") booty.

As the Armenians celebrated victory, the French recognized defeat.

Although the Turks who had been put to flight did not know this, the French detachment in Marash had supplies enough for only four days of battle and the relief column already was on half rations, and assigned to relieve another siege at Urfa.

General Querette was faced with a decision to withdraw. This was reinforced by pamphlets released by plane, urging or ordering withdrawal under the present circumstances. The aircraft, seen as a sign of military strength by the Turks, actually bore confirmation of the French military weakness.

Thirteen and one-half companies of his force already had withdrawn from the city two days earlier to join the relief column of Colonel Normand. On the night of February 6, Querette went on foot and conferred with Normand.

They decided that any evacuation would be deferred until the following noon, waiting for the response to a bid to the Turkish leaders for a truce and an end to the fighting.

In the event such a truce could not be achieved, the order to evacuate was to be issued that night, February 10, 1920.

Noon passed without any response from the Turks.

The French officers had informed the Franciscans the night before of the impending withdrawal, but were told not to inform the Armenian refugees, to prevent panic and a mass flight that might impede the French soldiers in making their own retreat.

However, such a secret was impossible to keep when Armenian detachments of legionnaires were also stationed at the monastery, and pamphlets from the planes were being read by the Armenians.

That night, the French command sent couriers to other sections of the city informing the French troops to withdraw. at the monastery, the Armenians gathered and agreed that only the able-bodied young men would try to follow the French out of Marash.

## THE EXODUS

It was a decision the wisdom of which Artin and Karekin would soon recognize.

That night, the French withdrew and the Armenians inside the monastery found the gates barred and themselves locked in.

The strong were able eventually to smash the gates open, but only the intercession of Armenian officers in the French contingent prevented the French from driving the refugees by force back into the monastery.

The Armenian officers persuaded the French to allow the relief column to follow the French out of Marash at a distance of one kilometer.

So, Artin and Karekin began a three-day odyssey with their distant cousin Arshag Charkoudian.

Their mother and youngest brother, Essaye, then 12 years old, remained behind.

An estimated 3,700 refugees began that trek from Marash.

They gathered in a field south of the city, on a cold winter night.

That first night, they walked through the night, and managed to keep together.

After traveling all day, they slept the second night in the farm wilderness between Marash and El-Oghlu, the railhead and their immediate destination.

But on the second morning, the struggling refugees were

confronted by a blizzard, which further trimmed their weaker numbers.

Arshag, at 21, one year older than Harry, was separated from his two cousins and never was seen again.

Artin and Karekin stayed together that day, but on the third night, Karekin walked on through the storm while Harry decided to stay at an old farmhouse which was packed with survivors.

Both of them, Karekin through the night and Harry the next day, observed evidence of the wisdom of the Armenians in the monastery in deciding that only the able-bodied attempt to flee.

Earlier groups of Armenians who had witnessed the withdrawal of the French troops from other points in Marash to join the military relief column up to 48 hours before the final pullout, had fled from the city, man, woman and child.

The women and children in these groups of refugees were the first to fall victim to the cold, hunger and weakness, and their corpses littered the roadways to the sea.

On that third day, Harry Charkoudian left the farmhouse and finally, in bright sunlight, walked past the corpses toward El Oghlu.

When Harry arrived there after three nights and two days without eating, Karekin was waiting for him.

Of an estimated 3,700 refugees who attempted to walk in a blizzard to safety and survival, only 1,200 had made it, the two Charkoudian brothers among them.

Harry ate his first meal since the night of February 10, a

hot one prepared by the Red Cross, at El Oghlu.

At the rail station, Harry and Karekin were put on cattle cars for the ride to Adana, and contact with the outside world, Nishan and Levon in America.

From Adana, Harry and Karekin telegraphed to their older brothers for funds to pay their passage to America. Karekin borrowed the money to send the wire from a friend of Nishan and Levon he met in Adana who was a member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.

Although it was still winter, the climate in Adana was much milder than in more mountainous Marash. The refugees, Harry and Karekin among them, slept in the open air with blankets provided by the Red Cross.

Both also served as guards around the Armenian quarter of Adana, which was made tense by reports of fighting and flight from Hadjin, which was even closer to the river port city than Marash.

Harry also was able to earn a little money during the period they waited in Adana by helping a local dentist make the forms or molds for gold caps.

February passed and in March, \$600 arrived from the two older brothers to enable Karekin and Harry to continue their way to the United States.

On March 18, the French military authorities, who still occupied this section of Turkey, issued a 30-day passport or visa (*laissez passer* in French) to the two brothers.



With document No. 10812 issued by the Territoires Ennemis Occupes, Zone North in Cilicia, Harry and Karekin several days later took their second train ride on their odyssey.

This was a class better than the cattle train from El Oghlu.

The wood-burning train from Adana to Mersin, and the coast, also had wooden benches.

The pair arrived at night and was booked into a hotel from which they perceived a strange sensation of sound.

It wasn't until the following morning that they realized that they had been listening to the sound of the Mediterranean surf next to the hotel, a first experience for them both.

They stayed two nights in Mersin, and then were booked for passage out of Mersin to Constantinople. Their transportation was a small fishing boat, and about 100 persons were passengers on the two-day voyage via Izmir, the ancient Smyrna.

The boat docked at Izmir at about 4 or 5 p.m. on the second day of the voyage, but the passengers were not allowed to leave the vessel, not even to go onto the pier.

Both young men were impressed by what they perceived to be beautiful houses near the shore and brick sidewalks.

The next day, the fishing vessel arrived in Constantinople (now Istanbul), providing the two brothers a series of other first experiences.

These included seeing their first trolley car, taking a taxi ride and some sightseeing, including the ousted Abdul Hamid's palace and harem.

But sightseeing was not the principal business.

Medical certificates had to be obtained, from a Dr. Pelligrini at Pancaldi No. 45, and passage had to be verified and confirmed onward, to Italy.

This was all arranged during the next several days, which were spent in an inn, and toward the end of the first week in April, the two brothers shipped out again, to Bari, on the Italian Adriatic coast.

A pleasant portion of the quarantine period in this Italian port was spent acquainting themselves with a local product, Italian red wine.

This interlude over, the two brothers entrained again for the journey across the Italian boot to Naples, where the 30-day visa was verified on April 16, and extensions granted for the trip to New York, via Rome, Marseilles, Paris and Boulogne.

The two travelers were able to avail themselves an opportunity to tour the first of the two tourist Meccas, Rome, by hiring a carriage to see the traditional historical sites. Their train had arrived in the morning, and was not scheduled to leave again until nightfall.

They were not so lucky in Paris.

It was May 1, May Day, the traditional international holiday of the worker, on the day that their train pulled into the French capital.

Paris was, in effect, closed.

Not even a taxi could be hired on the holiday.

The train pulled out again that night, headed north for the French coast, the brothers having seen very little of Gay Paris.

On May 5, in Boulogne, Karekin and Harry boarded a Dutch ship for the longest voyage of the exodus, which had begun in the snow of Marash on February 10.

Levon and Yeznik Chorbajian, Mrs. Charkoudian's cousin, son of Lucia Chorbajian, had gone to New York on the weekend of May 16-18 to meet the two travelers.

However, Karekin and Harry had traveled third class and were not allowed off the ship for processing on either Saturday or Sunday.

Levon and Yeznik, unable to make contact with the two Charkoudian brothers either aboard the vessel or on Ellis Island, remained in New York, and made preparations for a party at the restaurant of another distant cousin, Hagop Antosian.

On Monday, however, Karekin and Harry missed the two greeters again, and were shepherded in a group of Armenian immigrants to one of New York's two main railroad stations for the trip to Springfield.

Karekin and Harry each wore yellow markers on their second-hand suits, which had been bought in Adana, pointing out their destination.

At the station, the two brothers were placed on the right train north to Springfield.

However, the two boys did not at first think so.

They passed through several cars, confused.

It seemed to them that everything was first class, and that they did not belong on those cars with the velvet seats.

They finally came to the realization that all the cars on the train had velvet seats, and that in this part of the new world, there was a different perception of class.

There also was a misperception of distance.

The train the two boarded in New York was one of the kind referred to as a milk train.

Karekin, always the more aggressive and more impatient of the two travelers, insisted on finding out from the conductor at each stop whether they were in Springfield.

The aggressiveness that had served the two brothers well in the Middle East and Europe, helping them to survive and then circumvent bureaucratic delays, did not help to bring Springfield any closer to New York.

Some of the Armenians traveling with them up the Connecticut River Valley were bound for the Indian Orchard section of Springfield, and at the railroad station, Karekin and Harry were directed to Nishan's shoemaker shop on Worthington Street, only two blocks away.

The reunion took place at about 6:30 p.m. on May 18, 1920 amid tears, rejoicing - and confusion arising from the fact that they had been expected to meet Levon and Yeznik in New York and arrive together.

The memory of that reunion was evoked for years thereafter by the first American Harry and Karekin became acquainted with on

their arrival in the United States.

A salesman by the name of Bill Robertson from the E. L. Patch Co. was in the shop getting new heels at the time Harry and Karekin popped in the door.

Mr. Robertson never has failed since to remind those two Charkoudians that he was present on the day of their arrival in the country.

Nishan asked another distant cousin of the family, George Atamian, whose English was much better, to make a phone call to New York to inform Levon and Yeznik that Harry and Karekin had arrived in Springfield.

The two of them hopped on the first train out of New York (they ran almost hourly in those days) for the trip home.

While Nishan and the two new arrivals were waiting for the train to come from New York, he took out his two younger brothers for dinner at a Greek restaurant on Ferry Street.

They were treated to an Oriental-style meal which Harry described as the first decent one they had had for a long, long time.

Nishan also made sure that the two brothers posed for photographs at a nearby studio, dressed in their second-hand Adana suits.

By midnight, the train carrying Levon and Yeznik had arrived from New York, and the four brothers were reunited for the first time since Levon's departure from Marash eight years before.

Nishan had rented a one-room apartment for the two brothers at 92 Spring St., and this was their first home in the new world.

Karekin stayed there for some time, immediately going to work, helping Nishan in the shoemaker shop.

But after a second reunion, involving the four Charkoudian brothers, Yeznik and his brother Arsen, who came up from Philadelphia for the occasion on Memorial Day, Harry moved to Stoneham to work with Levon at the Patch laboratory.

Harry's job was in the shipping room, and he stayed on that job through the summer until the factory closed for a vacation period in August. But that left Harry without something to do, so he volunteered to help replace the boiler at the plant during the vacation.

It was a tough, dirty job, not the kind for one aspiring to become a dentist, but he stuck it out until September, when he returned to Springfield to enroll in English courses at American International College with Karekin.

Thus, the two brothers got their economic starts in the United States, based on the foundations their older brothers had built since their arrival just before the Great War.

But just as the energies were expended to establish themselves in America, so were their thoughts continually in the Orient, where there were still two other members of the family to be concerned about, and eventually to bring across the ocean.

The circumstances of the remaining Armenians in Marash, mostly the elderly and the very young, after the withdrawal of the French, is recounted in a chapter of "The Lions of Marash" aptly entitled "A Precarious Peace."

A kind of peace did come to Marash at that time. But there was also the unease of being trapped.

From February of 1920 until December of 1921, members of the Charkoudian and Kalpakian families who had remained in the city were prisoners of the circumstances of revolution and the resulting chaos in the region.

Revolutionary battles continued to be fought at Aintab and Urfa and other parts of Anatolia.

By April 23, 1920, Mustafa Kemal Pasha had met with the First Nationalist Assembly in Ankara and the seeds of the modern, secular Turkey were being sown.

During this period, fears persisted among the Turks that the French might return, and this placed pressures on the remaining Armenians, who were forbidden to engage in commerce, return to their fields, or otherwise resume a normal existence.

Near East Relief, whose personnel remained in Marash and other cities in Anatolia after the French withdrew, were able to provide sustenance to many of the Armenians during this period, with some difficulty and danger.

France and Britain continued negotiations in the capitals of Europe over the disposition of the territories in the Middle East which had become bargaining chips as the result of the



fall of the Ottoman Empire.

The result, recorded by the French historian Paul du Veau in "La Passion de la Cilicie," was the Accord of Ankara signed on October 20, 1921, requiring the withdrawal of all French troops from Cilicia.

The accord provided assurances of security for Christian minorities in the region, but the remaining 9,700 Armenians of Marash had reason to be distrustful of any such guarantees, and even Turkish friends of Armenian residents warned them so.

Armenians continued to slip out of Marash and other Cilician cities as best they could to the newly emerging nations of Syria and Lebanon to the south.

They were confronted by the difficulty of obtaining documents to travel and the dangers from bandits when they did.

In December, Dr. Avedis Kalpakian decided it was time for him to shepherd one party, of five people, south to Aleppo via Aintab.

He pulled out the major's uniform of the Turkish Army that he had worn during the war, hoping that it would serve both as security and as a status symbol as the party traveled through the unsettled countryside by horse and carriage.

The group led by the major included Mrs. Charkoudian, her son Essaye, now 11 years old, Lucia Chorbajian, Mrs. Charkoudian's young aunt, the latter's grandson Nishan, and Dr. Avedis Kalpakian's son Nishan Kalpakian.

Aintab was Mrs. Charkoudian's birthplace, and the family still



had relatives there.

The doctor successfully led the party to Aintab, got them settled, and then returned to Marash to other members of his family.

Aintab offered them only temporary respite and shelter.

The new borders which were to separate the Republic of Turkey from the emerging Syrian nation were between Aintab and Aleppo, and that is where safety lay.

There was also family in that northern Syrian city.

One of Mrs. Chorbajian's two sisters had married a native of Aleppo, Abdullah Fatel, an Arabized Armenian whose son eventually became an influential lawyer and politician there.

Fatel provided the Charkoudian-Kalpakian refugees a room in Aleppo.

Edward recalls the room as home for six months in 1922.

At first, there were six to the room, but the flow of refugees continued south throughout the year, as even the propertied and the aged realized that the guarantees to the Christian population of Anatolia would not be carried out by the Turkish government.

At one time in Aleppo, there were 13 persons living in that single room. Among the later arrivals were Habib Kalpakian, the pharmacist, his second wife and three children.

Meanwhile, Levon, the master of the English language among the Charkoudians in America, also was becoming practiced in the

ways of the emigration bureaucracy, and obtained the proper papers for his mother, brother and great-aunt to travel to the United States.

Everything finally was in order by summertime, and in July of 1922, Passeport No. 4808 was issued by the Republic of France, still holding mandate over that part of the Middle East, for their voyage.

Mrs. Charkoudian, Essaye and Aunt Lucia passed through Beirut on July 24, Marseilles a week later, and finally, after passing the required medical inspections and waiting through the quarantine periods, headed across the ocean.

This time, Levon did not miss connections.

He met the party, traveling from his workplace in Stoneham, at Providence, R.I., on September 1, 1922.

The Charkoudian family was reunited in the New World.

Their first home was on Middlesex Street, one apartment in a duplex which Nishan and Yeznik had rented and furnished for the arrival of Mrs. Charkoudian, Edward and Aunt Lucia.

By this time, Marash, as the Charkoudians had known it, was no more.

Stanley E. Kerr, in the final chapter of "The Lions of Marash," describes how the last 3,000 Armenians in the city, the poor, the ill, those with relatives who were still serving in the Turkish armed forces, and some of the propertied who had felt themselves to be invulnerable, were forced to sell all they had and leave the city.

He writes+

"When I left Marash on 29 July 1922 with the remaining members of the NER (Near East Relief) staff...we were told that not more than ten Armenian families remained in the city. Of the eighty-six thousand Armenians living in the district of Marash in 1914, only twelve-thousand were known to have survived....The twelve-thousand survivors were scattered to areas of security in Lebanon, South America, the Soviet Armenian State, and the United States of America. The ancient city of Marash, with a history extending far into the dim past beyond the Hittite period and once largely populated by the Armenians, had finally become purely Turkish."

The effect of this tide of history can be shown graphically by the family trees of the Charkoudians and the Kalpakians.

# KALPAKIANs

Nishan	Dr. Avedis	Dr. Janig	Vartouhi	Habib	Haiganous
Died	Died 1933	Died 1933	Died 1941	Died 1956	Died Beir
1890s	Beirut	New York City	Springfield	Springfield	*
Marash	*				*
after	Physician	Dentist	Mass.	Mass.	*
studying	*	*	*	*	*
in	*	Dr. Karnig Jack	*	*	*
medical	*	Dentist Forestry	*	Lucy, Lack	*
school	*	Florida New York	*	Edward, Mary	*
	Nishan	Levon	Karekin Artin (Harry)	Essaye (Edward)	*
	Shoemaker Pharmacist	Shoemaker Pharmacist	Pharmacist		*
					*
	Soagman	Vahran Artin	Daughter	Hagop	Mary Ida
	Died 1950s	Died	Died 1920	Banker	Beirut Beir
	Beirut	Beirut Beirut	St. Stephen's	Canada	
Nishan					
Died 1980	Anna	Onnig	Hagop	Zarouhi	Hrant
Beirut	Beirut	Beirut	Beirut	Beirut	Beirut

# CHARKOUDIANS

Nahabed	Haiganoush	Doudou	Garabed	Kevork (Julfa)	Ha
(1850-1914)		Married	Died	Weaver	D
Died	Died	Vartivor	early 1900s	Died	Mar
Marash	in burning	Kherlakian	about 40	in 1930s	of
Heart	of St. Stephen's	Believed		Aleppo	1906
Attack	Church by Turks	Massacre		*	
*	in February, 1920	Victim		*	
*				*	
*				*	
*		Nazaret	Garabed	Noubar	Gouleni
*		Beirut	Damascus	Beirut (Mazmani	
*				Covina, Cal	
*					
*					
*					
*					
Nishan	Levon	Karekin	Artin (Harry)	Essaye (Edward)	
(1889-1963)	(1891-1932)	(1897-1959)	(1900-)	(1908-)	

# CHARKOUDIANS

Nishan	Levon	Karekin	Artin (Harry)	Essaye (Edward)
(1889-1963)	(1891-1932)	(1897-1959)	(1900- )	(1908- )
Married		Married	Married (1937)	Married
Azniv Sandjian	Arousiak Der Mesropian	Azniv Aladjejian	Madeline Cummings	
*		*	(1910-1966)	*
Arpie	Kenar	Arax	Levon	*
Musician School	Teacher	Ph. D.	* Rose (Kurukian) Pehlvanian	*
Storrs, Principal		Harvard	*	*
Conn.	Eugene,	History	*	*
	Oregon	Holyoke	Newton	*
		*	*	Marion
Nisha	Lorig	Deron	Karoun	*
	Nahabed	George	John	Librarian
	Pharmacist	Oral Surgeon	Chemist	Woburn,
	Springfield	Springfield	Polaroid	Mass.
	*	*	Newton	
	Lisa	Michael	*	*
		*	Jennifer	Leon David
	Stephen	Elise	Maria	Gregory
				Louise Karine

## THE FIRST DRUG STORE

There was another member of the Kalpakian clan, the limbs of whose family tree intertwined with the Charkoudians.

Lucia Chorbajian, Mrs. Vartouhi Charkoudian's aunt, had been widowed in 1895 during one of the early massacres. Her husband was the secretary of the Marash chapter of Hunchak, the Armenian revolutionary organization. After the massacre, his body was never found.

He also left three children, Arsen, Zabel and Yeznik.

The older two were placed in the American orphanage in Marash during their school years, and the widowed mother and her youngest child, Yeznik, moved in with her mother and brother.

Arsen, while studying at Marash Academy, earned a scholarship to Tarsus University, and eventually was admitted to Yale University at New Haven, Conn., in the United States.

He was fortunate enough to be a member of the graduating class at Yale at which President Woodrow Wilson was presented an honorary degree.

Arsen, who also was cited at the graduation ceremonies for his academic achievement, became an engineer and then joined the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. He also was awarded a number of patents during his career.

The second child, Zabel, also graduated from the academy in Marash, and eventually married a seminarian, the future priest, Sahag Der Bedrosian. Both made their way to the United States, and

he was called to serve the Armenian church community as pastor in Troy, N.Y.

They had four children, Nishan and Askanaz (Alvin) in New Jersey, Sahaganoush in Troy and Samuel, also an engineer, in Philadelphia. The father died in Troy in 1927.

Yeznik, the youngest child of Lucia Chorbajian, was engaged in the trade of jeweled embroidery with an uncle in Marash. He early saw there was no future for him in Turkey, and went to live with an uncle in Cairo for a time before going to the United States before World War I.

It was he who traveled to New York with Levon to meet Harry and Karekin on their arrival.

He lived with Nishan Charkoudian when he first came to Springfield, worked during the war at Westinghouse, which was engaged in munitions production, and went back to work with Nishan when arms production slackened after the war.

He and his mother became part of the Charkoudian-Kalpakian clan which lived in the first house occupied by the reunited family in Springfield, at No. 65 Middlesex St.

Not long after the family had become settled, the house was sold to a new owner, an Armenian who subsequently moved into the first floor of the duplex building.

Problems soon surfaced with this new owner and neighbor, and Nishan then made the decision to purchase a home of their own. The deal was made in 1923 with the former Murphy Construction Co., for a



house at 15-17 Dearborn St., two blocks away. The downstairs tenement was rented. The upstairs one had three bedrooms.

Nishan and Yeznik Chorbajian occupied one bedroom.

Mrs. Charkoudian and Aunt Lucia occupied another.

Karekin and Edward occupied the third.

There was a couch in the living room, and this served as a bed away from home for either Levon, who was still working at E. L. Patch in Stoneham, or for Harry, who by this time was studying at Mount Hermon School in Northfield.

Levon decided then, however, to return to Springfield, and a special room was built for him in the attic of the Dearborn Street house.

It was about this time that Mrs. Vartouhi Charkoudian underwent a name change.

Levon, whose English was the best of all the members of the family, felt uncomfortable with the sound of his mother's name. Vart sounded too much like wart in English.

So Mrs. Charkoudian got a new consonant for her first name, making her unofficially Nartouhi instead of Vartouhi.

The name change was only cosmetic, and primarily for those outside the family, for to the family members she remained mom, or mother.

Other changes also were taking place.

Levon, after having worked in several drug stores in Springfield, eventually obtained employment at the Welch Drug Store at the corner of Main and Grace streets.

Mr. John H. Welch had made a good living during the war. Salesmen used to comment that the cigars and cigarettes disappeared from the display windows at Welch's as fast as they were delivered.

The war was a boom time.

But Mr. Welch, as he grew older, became more interested in his checker games (he was a Western Massachusetts champion) than he did in running his business.

In the late spring of 1924, the Charkoudians, who had built their future so far in America on the shoe repair business of Nishan, got their first professional business opportunity.

Mr. Welch offered the drug store for sale for \$4,500.

Levon was able to scrape together \$2,000 to make the down payment. He also obtained a mortgage for \$1,500 and incurred another \$1,000 in debt to three suppliers, \$500 to the Joseph Whitcomb & Co., \$400 to W. L. Sadler and \$100 to the Bay State Candy Co.

The shelves were nearly bare at the time of the purchase, and other liabilities surfaced which Levon was able to straighten out with Mr. Welch.

H. & J. Brewer agreed to stock the shelves for the new owner, which overcame one problem, involving inventory.

Another was caused by Massachusetts Wholesale Drug Co., whose owners purchased the building housing the drug store at what was then 510 North Main St., the present site of a branch of BayBank Valley Trust Co.

This leasing problem also was overcome when the wholesaler resold the building, but Levon persevered and endured the growing pains of

establishing his business in the new land.

An important part of the \$2,000 that Levon had been able to obtain for the down payment came from a colleague in Boston whom Levon had helped when that colleague had bought his first store in the Massachusetts capital city.

A lesser share had come from Harry, who had withdrawn the last \$30 from his savings account to help his brother.

At this time, Harry was near the completion of his course of study at Mount Hermon School.

Four years before, he and Karekin had entered American International College to learn English. Both of them studied day and night through the year 1920-21 to master the language that would determine their futures.

Karekin continued to help Nishan at his shoe store, and when Nishan bought a second shop at 206 Wilbraham Road in 1922, Karekin took over its operation.

Harry, meanwhile, pursued his dream to become a dentist, recalling the times he had helped his Uncle Janig in his office during World War I.

He enrolled at Mount Hermon in September of 1921, and from then until his graduation in September, 1924, Northfield was his home, summer and winter.

Nishan provided the financing for the first two years, and when the burden became too heavy for him, Levon took over the expenses for the third year.

It was a strict regimen of work and study at Mount Hermon, then still ruled by the stern Puritan hand of Dwight L. Moody, the famed evangelist.

Students worked to help pay their expenses, on the farm, in the kitchen, in the dining rooms and in the laundry.

Moody had opened up places in the student body after the war for veterans of the conflict and refugees from it and its aftermath.

The student body was an older one than that of the average preparatory school group. Harry could identify with many of his classmates, Armenians, Greeks and others who had been torn loose from their homeland. There was little leisure time at Mount Hermon.

Besides classwork, housework, farm work, laundry work and kitchen work, there was always homework.

And the noon chapel hour was obligatory, as was attendance at two religious services on Sunday, morning and evening.

Harry had little difficulty mastering the subjects which are abstract and international, the mathematics and the sciences, the chemistry and biology. But any time saved here had to be devoted to the subjects which cause difficulty to every student studying in a foreign language, English and the humanities.

Less than half way through this school career, an accident destroyed a dream.

On a Monday afternoon in March in 1922, a day off for Harry, he went to the carpenter shop at the school to work on a cabinet bookcase for his room.

While using the circular saw, the wood slipped and the saw severed

the tips of the thumb and forefinger of Harry's left hand, and damaged three other fingers.

Today, with the advances of modern surgery, understanding and transportation, all three of the digits could probably have been saved.

But in that day and age, by the time Harry had gotten by train to medical assistance in Brattleboro, Vt., the fingers were irreparable and the dream of dentistry had vanished.

But Harry, with the assistance of his two brothers, persisted in his schooling, and although still undecided about his future, obtained his diploma from Mount Hermon in September of 1924.

## UP TO THE MOUNTAIN

The next eight months were a kind of limbo for him.

It was decided that he would go to Albany, N.Y. and try to get started in the meat business there with the assistance of acquaintances who were already established in the state capital and in nearby Troy.

It was not a future for Harry.

By the following spring, he had decided to return to Springfield, and to strike out on another path. Harry started to work at Levon's drug store in April of 1925, but by the fall had enrolled at the Bay Path Institute on Chestnut Street to study bookkeeping and accounting.

He completed the course of study in 18 months, graduating as an accountant in February of 1927.

This was about the time that Levon began to have a recurrence of the tuberculosis that had afflicted him in his youth. He had undergone treatment with Dr. Avedis Kalpakian, his uncle, during his teenage years in Marash, and had been operated on,

But during his first year at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy in Boston, the disease had erupted again, and by then spread to his urinary tract and the kidneys.

By 1927, his condition was recognized as serious and it was deemed wise that someone be groomed to take over as pharmacist. Harry then enrolled at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy, as had his older brother several years before.

Levon was operated on in Boston in November of 1927, and one of his kidneys was removed. Harry already was enrolled in the college at the time, and during noon visits to Levon at Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston, the older brother would advise the younger one what to do in the future.

On weekends, Harry traveled home to Springfield to handle the business end of the drug store.

Levon was released from the hospital late in the year, but his period of recuperation lasted about six months, and he never regained the good health and the energy that had enabled him to build up the business.

In 1929, he went to Vermont on a vacation, a report of which is contained in a letter he sent to his old salesman friend, W. L. Robertson.

It indicates that although he had lost his good health, he had not lost his sense of humor.

The letter, which Robertson kept and later turned over to the family, catalogued a long series of lighthearted complaints about the penny-wise, pound-foolish economies of the proprietor of the Newfane Inn in that Vermont town.

The next year, Levon had another serious setback, and Harry, although he had not completed the courses at the college of pharmacy, was able to take over the business because he had passed the state test, and had obtained his license to practice.

Levon was spending more and more time in and out of hospitals,

requiring the attendance of both day and night nurses.

Dr. Harold Buddington suggested that Levon again would be best served by fresh air, preferably in the country.

A friend of the family, Ara Horhorouni, knew of a place.

Ara had a brother who was a motorcycling enthusiast, and took part in rallies up the steep dirt Monson Road that climbed Minnechaug Mountain in Wilbraham.

Ara himself was a hiking enthusiast, and came across a cottage for rent near the crest of the hill at Ridge and Monson roads. This was easily arranged, and it was decided that Mrs. Charkoudian and Levon would spend the summer at the cottage.

The cottage was owned by the Porter family in Wilbraham, and Levon, who had a warm personality, quickly made friends with them and members of other families who lived in that sparsely settled rural area, one which remained so until after the end of World War I.

The stay that summer was beneficial to Levon, so much so that the family began to make inquiries about buying a house or land in the neighborhood.

However, the full effects of the depression had not yet been felt by the farming community of Wilbraham, and no land was for sale.

Two families, the Porteris and the Bowles, both owned large parcels, but were holding on to them in anticipation of a land speculation boom that was not to materialize for three more decades.

But there were four acres of land owned by a resident of Belchertown who had bought the parcel 40 years before, had cut some



timber, and then moved on.

When he was contacted, and returned to look at the grown-up wood lot, he agreed to sell for \$200. This was the first purchase of land on the mountain which would mean so much to so many members of the family in the not-too-distant future.

However, at the beginning, it had its drawbacks.

It was difficult to get to, being off the main road, Monson Road. And access to Middle, or Peak Road, as it was called, was difficult in winter.

But Levon learned of an adjacent six acres that might be available, and persuaded Mr. George Lemon, a farm neighbor, to talk to the owner, a Mr. Shaw, and perhaps persuade him to part with the property.

By the spring of 1931, the deal was made, and an additional six acres were transferred to Levon. The Charkoudian summer property now consisted of 10 acres.

But despite the opportunity to spend several months of the year in fresh mountain air, Levon's health continued to deteriorate.

The inevitable came on February 13, 1932.

Levon's death was the first loss suffered by the Charkoudian family in the new world, and was especially tragic considering his age, 41.

His death also seemed to kill the desire of the family to go back to the mountain.

There is no recollection of anyone having gone there the rest of

the year 1932.

But there were still connections with the people there.

Mr. Clarence Bowles continued to come to Karekin's shop to have his shoes repaired.

By 1933, members of the family were again returning to the land on the mountain, and looking forward to what could be done with it.

Up to that time, the family had had to carry water to the site for any function. They had rented a cottage from the Porteris only for the summers of 1930 and 1931, and that was not available any more.

They now owned their own land, and were responsible for its development.

The first problem was water.

An effort was made to dig a well on the property in 1933.

Every time Karekin met Mr. Bowles, he would again pester him about more land.

The situation was different in 1933 from what it had been three years earlier.

By that time, Bowles was under pressure to pay his taxes, and was also feeling the pressure from the Federal Land Bank, the institution that financed many farmers.

One Sunday, Nishan, Karekin and Harry went up to the mountain with Mr. Bowles, staked out a piece of property, and offered him a check for \$500 for it.

Bowles agreed, and another strip of 10 acres was added.

A dispute later developed over a right of way to other Bowles

property adjacent to land owned by Charles Merrick, whose family helped found the town of Wilbraham, and this was later resolved by the purchase of another small parcel by the Charkoudians.

Four separate deeds thus recorded the mountain family grounds.

It was decided to have a family reunion on Mother's Day in 1934, a precedent for many more in the future.

The clan was growing by this time.

Ten years before, Nishan had married to Azniv Sandjian of Troy, N.Y. There had long been contact between the communities of displaced Marashlis in Springfield and the Albany-Troy area, and this contact eventually produced a Charkoudian-Sandjian union.

The Rev. Sahag Der Bedrosian had performed the ceremony in Veterans Hall on State Street in Springfield with the assistance of a Protestant Armenian clergyman (Azniv was evangelical, not Orthodox).

By the time of the first family reunion on Wilbraham Mountain, Nishan and Azniv had had three daughters, Arpie, Kenar and Arax, all of whom were there for the gathering.

Karekin had in the meantime gone a little farther afield to find his bride. Marriageable females were not easy to find in the Armenian communities in the United States.

Eventually, it was decided to make a match between Karekin and the daughter of Uncle Janig's brother-in-law in Aleppo.

To facilitate her admission to the United States, Karekin quickly made arrangements in the court at Springfield to expedite his own

citizenship (this required a side trip to Boston where Levon and Harry served as witnesses.)

Karekin then met Arousiak more than halfway by traveling to Marseilles, France for the wedding. The established 31-year-old cobbler from Springfield and the 18-year-old bride were married in that French port city in 1929.

By the time of the family reunion in May of 1934, this union had produced one son, Nahabed, who also was in attendance.

Uncle Harry recalls having worked late that day before joining the festivities, which had been arranged in the main by Karekin, who had obtained a huge cake to honor the matriarch of the family.

Several other families joined the party under the big oak tree that day, the Komourians, the first Armenian family to settle in Springfield, the Soukiasians, whose friendship stemmed from the gardening tips Mr. Onnig Soukiasian gave to the Charkoudians from his farm background, and the Jansizians, a shoemaker colleague of Nishan's and Karekin's from Indian Orchard.

It was a large and friendly gathering on a plot of ground which consisted at that time mainly of rocks and stumps.

## CHARKOUDIAN, INC.

Essaye, long since called Edward in the New World, was absent from this party. He had enrolled, like his two older brothers, at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy, starting in September of 1931.

When Levon passed away, he had willed the drug store in Brightwood to Harry, with the stipulation that Harry turn over 25% of it to Edward upon the latter's becoming a registered pharmacist.

Edward had graduated from Technical High School in Springfield in 1931 and then took the three-year program at the College of Pharmacy.

During this interim period, Harry planned for the future.

Uncle Habib Kalpakian had moved to Springfield in 1929 after having spent several years in New York, operating a store and working for several Oriental rug dealers.

During the 1920s, he was confronted with the problem of bringing his second wife over to the United States from Cairo, where she had been living with her brothers and her baby son.

During much of this time, Mrs. Charkoudian had been taking care of Habib's two children by his first wife, who had died of disease during the Marash troubles; <sup>after</sup> World War I and

Habib had brought his children, Lusadzin and Jack, with him when he had come to this country.

By 1929, Uncle Habib had obtained his citizenship, and had brought the rest of his family over. They moved into an apartment opposite the drug store, and he worked there with and for Levon during much

of the period of the latter's illness.

But by 1934, Harry had to think of providing a place for Essaye upon his graduation, and also to find a spot for Uncle Habib.

Harry had a patent medicine store or candy store in mind for his uncle, but whenever he would make inquiries among druggists, salesmen, or wholesalers, he was always asked whether he was interested in another drug store.

The first serious suggestion of a drug store was made by Mr. Oswald Refuse, sales manager of McKesson & Robbins.

Shortly afterward, when W. L. (Bill) Robertson, the longtime friend of the Charkoudians, dropped in and complained about being on the road, Harry broached to him the idea of going into partnership on the store mentioned by Mr. Refuse.

Robertson expressed an interest, but then didn't show up at Harry's drug store for the next three weeks. During this period, Harry's interest in the possibility grew.

The store, May's Pharmacy at the corner of Belmont Avenue and Whittier Street, was in the East Forest Park section of the city.

Finally, when Robertson showed up again after three weeks, he indicated that he was not interested in a partnership, but would be willing to lend Harry \$300 toward the purchase if he were serious about going ahead.

This further whetted Harry's appetite, and he started to shop around for more financing toward the purchase price of \$3,500.

A finance company Harry contacted was unwilling to lend the money

without holding a mortgage on each store. Harry was, however, unwilling to do this, preferring to have one of the two stores free and clear, especially considering the excellent credit rating established and maintained by Levon from the beginning.

A salesman from Massachusetts Wholesale Drug Co. then suggested that Harry contact his wholesalers much as Levon had been able to do 10 years before.

At the Joseph Whitcomb Co., which had financed some of Levon's inventory a decade before, both of the sales managers, a Mr. Duncan and a Mr. Whitten, were cooperative.

When they asked Harry what he needed, he responded \$1,000.

When they asked him if he was sure that is all he needed, Harry conceded that he really needed \$2,000, but had planned to seek the second \$1,000 elsewhere.

The two told Harry that if it was \$2,000 he needed, it would be \$2,000 that he would get, and that Mr. Whitcomb, then 74 and ailing after a stroke, would be in the following day to make the necessary arrangements.

It was decided that this loan would be made from a trust fund, rather than from the wholesaling business itself, and there was a delay when Harry indicated he would require two years to pay it off.

The bank was wary of a loan of that duration, considering Mr. Whitcomb's age, his infirmity and the complications that might result in his estate.

Mr. Whitcomb the following day decided to take over responsibility

for the loan himself and make it a personal one to Harry for the two years duration.

This \$2,000, plus \$300 from Mr. Robertson, \$500 from Mr. George Peirce, the owner of a restaurant across the street from the drug store, and \$700 in cash which Harry had managed to gather together from the business, enabled him to make the first expansion of the Charkoudian drug business, less than 10 years after Levon had bought his first store.

The sale took place on April 1, 1934, and May's Pharmacy became Belmont Pharmacy.

Things weren't quite that easy, however.

The store was quite rundown, and required considerable renovation.

General Ice Cream and Doane & Williams of Holyoke were helpful in the purchase and installation of a second-hand soda fountain and fixtures respectively for the store.

The purchase was well-timed.

Essaye graduated from pharmacy college two months later, and immediately came into the newly remodeled store, one which became the envy of the neighborhood in that depression era.

Later, Peter Blondi, a former associate of John D. Smith, one of the best drug stores in the city, was hired to manage the store, and Edward and Blondi worked as a tandem in that store for two more years.

But while things were looking up on Belmont Avenue, there was a



setback downtown.

1936 was the year of the big flood in Springfield, and the North End was hard hit.

Things already were in a bit of a bind before the high water came on March 18.

Harry had bought a patent medicine store for Uncle Habib in Pine Point, and he was no longer available to work in the Brightwood store.

Edward and Blondi were busy with the Belmont Avenue store.

Uncle Habib's son Jack had taken his father's advice and was attending the Albany College of Pharmacy, which was still a three-year course, while the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy in Boston had adopted a four-year curriculum.

Harry was strapped for personnel.

He had earlier written to Mr. Arthur Bertrand, a registered pharmacist who had worked at the store when Levon was ill and Harry was still in school.

Mr. Bertrand, however, did not respond to his request to come back to work in Springfield immediately. When he did, however, it was timely.

Shortly before the flood, Harry received a letter from Bertrand asking whether the offer was still open. Harry responded with a check for traveling expenses from New York so they could talk about it.

Mr. Bertrand arrived just after the flood.

He was booked into the Coolidge Hotel, and when he went over to look at the place of his past and future employment, it was all mud.

The floodwaters had risen to soda fountain level in the shop.

Harry, going down to the neighborhood to survey the damage on March 20, two days after the inundation, got an unexpected tour.

He was hailed by Richard Hickey, then president of Moore Drop Forge Co., who was making his way toward the factory on Wason Avenue in a rowboat.

Commodore Hickey made a detour over to the drug store with Harry, and the latter saw his nut case reflected back at him in the floodwaters outside.

By the third day, the waters had begun to recede, and everyone connected with the drug store, including the newly employed Mr. Bertrand, began the huge cleanup job.

It took three weeks, primarily because the flood had left deposits of clay that were difficult to remove.

The flood, which reached a crest of 28.4 feet in Springfield, an alltime high to that date, left 35,000 homeless in the Pioneer Valley, and caused \$20 million in damage. Three persons lost their lives.

But the Charkoudians overcame this calamity, as did thousands of others in the valley.

And soon afterward, opportunity began to come to them, rather than having to go out looking for it.

McKesson & Robbins, the pharmaceutical company, approached Harry with a proposal to take over the Triangle Pharmacy on Dickinson

He was booked into the Coolidge Hotel, and when he went over to look at the place of his past and future employment, it was all mud.

The floodwaters had risen to soda fountain level in the shop.

Harry, going down to the neighborhood to survey the damage on March 20, two days after the inundation, got an unexpected tour.

He was hailed by Richard Hickey, then president of Moore Drop Forge Co., who was making his way toward the factory on Wason Avenue in a rowboat.

Commodore Hickey made a detour over to the drug store with Harry, and the latter saw his nut case reflected back at him in the floodwaters outside.

By the third day, the waters had begun to recede, and everyone connected with the drug store, including the newly employed Mr. Bertrand, began the huge cleanup job.

It took three weeks, primarily because the flood had left deposits of clay that were difficult to remove.

The flood, which reached a crest of 28.4 feet in Springfield, an alltime high to that date, left 35,000 homeless in the Pioneer Valley, and caused \$20 million in damage. Three persons lost their lives.

But the Charkoudians overcame this calamity, as did thousands of others in the valley.

And soon afterward, opportunity began to come to them, rather than having to go out looking for it.

McKesson & Robbins, the pharmaceutical company, approached Harry with a proposal to take over the Triangle Pharmacy on Dickinson

Street, which was having financial difficulties.

Triangle was operated by a Mr. Baker, a pharmacist who was doubling as a chemistry professor at American International College. The educator apparently was having problems maintaining two careers at the same time.

McKesson held a mortgage on the pharmacy, and was willing for the Charkoudians to take it over at 50 cents on the dollar.

It was also about the time that Mr. Blondi and Edward Charkoudian were becoming too big for one drug store. Blondi always had had a forceful presence and a superiority complex. Edward also had become an experienced pharmacist with a yearning to run his own store.

The question was who was to manage what and where.

When Blondi rejected a suggestion that he take over the Triangle Pharmacy, Edward volunteered to do so.

Triangle Pharmacy was purchased for \$1,700 at auction.

McKesson cooperated with the new owner in building up the stock, and after another thorough cleanup and modernization, Edward took over the third store in what was becoming a chain.

On Dec. 31, 1937, Harry and Edward incorporated the three stores into the Charkoudian Drug Corporation.

## GETTING SETTLED

That was the big move of the year on the business side, but significant events were occurring on the personal side as well.

It involved first Nishan, and then Harry, and all started at a church convention.

Nishan had gone to New York City in 1936 to the Armenian Apostolic Church meeting.

While there, he spotted a man walking with his arms behind his back in a manner peculiar to and indicative of a Marashli.

Nishan walked up and introduced himself, and sought to confirm the obvious.

The man was George Elgin, and he acknowledged being a Marash native.

Contacts were expanded between the two families, and at a second meeting, Mrs. Charkoudian, carrying on an ancient tradition of mothers with bachelor sons, asked if George had a sister.

The sister's name was Grace, and she lived at 20 Crandall St. in Binghamton, N.Y.

Although George had been born in Marash, their parents had moved to Caesarea after his birth, and Grace, whose given name was Aznive Aledjejian, had been born there in 1910.

Her father had died in the 1915 turmoil in Armenia, and the widow fled to Syria with her two daughters and another son. Grace and Stepan survived that tortuous journey, but the other daughter died en route.

Grace's mother subsequently became the house mother of an orphanage in Aleppo, and exercised considerable ingenuity to protect her surviving daughter from predatory Arab families who wished to forcibly adopt orphaned Armenian girls.

At one time, Mrs. Aledjejian had to hide Grace in a closet to prevent her from being taken.

George had gone to the United States, like Nishan and Levon, before World War I. Mrs. Aledjejian was unable to make her way to the United States until 1920, when they settled in Binghamton.

Grace became a citizen 13 years later, on May 8, 1933.

The similarity in background fostered the relationship between Harry and Grace, and the couple was married on July 4, 1937 in the Episcopal Church at Binghamton with two clergymen officiating, an Episcopal rector and a priest from the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Harry's marriage, and the growth of the families of Nishan and Azniv, who by now had four children, and Karekin and Arousiak, who had two, resulted in a shifting of the housing accommodations for the Charkoudians.

At first, another two-family house had been acquired at 491 Wilbraham Road.

But the combination of hard times during the depression and a certain nostalgia resulted in the sacrifice of one of the houses for a short period.

Karekin and his family moved to Carlisle Street, and Mrs. Charkoudian expressed a longing to return to the old homestead on

Dearborn Street where she had first lived upon coming to the United States and where her second son had died.

Even the family dog expressed its preference, wandering from the Wilbraham Road house back to the old place on Dearborn Street, as though showing displeasure over the move.

Eventually, Nishan was able to repurchase the old homestead, which had since been renovated and refurbished, and before the 1930s had passed, Harry was able to refinance the repurchase of the Wilbraham Road house.

By the end of the decade, through some astute and fortunate shuffling of mortgages, the four families, mother and Edward, Harry and Grace, Nishan and Azniv and their family, and Karekin and Arousiak and theirs, had become settled in their respective apartments in the two duplex houses at Dearborn Street and at Wilbraham Road.

## WARTIME

December 7, 1941 marks the beginning of an era for most Americans who were alive on that date. But for the older members of the Charkoudian clan, it marks an ending.

Mrs. Charkoudian had passed away in late November of that year at the age of 73.

This loss was accompanied only a few days later by the passing of Azniv's brother-in-law in New York City in his early 40s, leaving two young children.

On Pearl Harbor Day, Harry recalls taking care of Nishan's children at Dearborn Street while their parents were in New York for the funeral service.

Because members of the Charkoudian family were still observing the traditional Armenian 40 days of mourning, there were no radios on in the house that fateful Sunday.

It would have passed without anyone knowing the United States had been attacked by Japan had not a friend of Kenar Charkoudian, Nishan's second eldest daughter, telephoned with the news.

The first family member to be affected directly by the war was Jack Kalpakian, son of Uncle Habib and the recent graduate of the Albany College of Pharmacy.

Jack was inducted into the U.S. Navy shortly thereafter.

Edward, the only Charkoudian of service age, soon followed.

He entered the U.S. Army Medical Corps, and was assigned abroad,



first to Australia and then to the primitive jungle island of New Guinea, target of the Japanese thrust southward in the Pacific.

The environment took a greater toll among U.S. servicemen than combat in that inhospitable tropical clime, and Edward was among the casualties. He was eventually returned to the United States, and the U.S. Veterans Hospital at Topeka, Kansas.

Upon his arrival there, Harry and Grace arranged to travel out to see him, and to plan the future.

Edward returned home to Massachusetts in 1943, and was married the following year to Madeline Cummings.

Harry and Edward had agreed that everyone's best interests would be served if Edward could find a drug store to operate away from the pressures of the competitive city atmosphere.

They were fortunate to find the Lee Pharmacy for sale in the Central Berkshires, and arrangements were made for Edward to take over sole control of that store under the Charkoudian name, but under a separate corporation.

Edward and Madeline settled in the Berkshires for what turned out to be a long tenure, living first above the pharmacy and then moving into a home of their own in Lee.

What was most important was the addition to the family of a daughter, Marion, who later followed some of the same paths of her Uncle Harry, enrolling in the Northfield School for Girls, companion institution to Dwight L. Moody's Mount Hermon School.

She proceeded to graduate from Simmons College, and became a

librarian at Woburn. Her parents, after nearly a quarter of a century in the Berkshires, retired to Cape Cod in 1977, where they live in Centerville.

## FROM SODA FOUNTAIN TO BANK BOARD

Two events occurred shortly before the war, both of which were to return dividends to Harry and all the Charkoudians in very different fashion.

One was intuitive, the second a reaction to a seed planted by a precocious 14-year-old refugee boy.

The first stemmed from the recognition by Harry that pharmacists in Western Massachusetts were not assured of a steady supply of licensed pharmacists as long as they had to rely on graduates of the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy in Boston.

By 1938, Harry had been elected secretary of the Springfield Druggists Association, and later he was to gain the presidency of that organization.

Throughout his tenure in office, he sought to generate interest in and support for the Western Massachusetts School of Pharmacy in Willimansett, which was founded in 1927 and struggled for its existence until becoming a four-year college in 1948, assisted by the financial and legislative support of pharmacists in the region.

Uncle Harry's efforts in this regard were rewarded years later, when he was awarded an honorary bachelor of science degree by the institution on June 3, 1973.

The school has since been incorporated into the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy, but retains its identity as the Hampden Campus at Western New England College in Springfield.

As such, it graduates up to 100 students a year.

Since the Charkoudians first took an interest in this institution, it has been providing trained pharmacists to the drug store owners of the four Western Massachusetts counties.

A check of graduates who at one time or another worked in stores of the Charkoudian chain turned up 14 names.

The first was Stanley Bigda, who eventually became a manager in Palmer after working at the Belmont Avenue and Winchester Square stores.

Others were Peter Kozak, Charles O'Connell, Marcel Martell, Clarence Kibbe, Robert Tongue, Leonard Rock, Robert Suave, Andrew Frydryk, John McDonald, Paul LaBelle, Paul Nahabedian, Nahabed Leon Charkoudian and Walter Salastri.

There were many more who worked part-time or during their student years.

The second seed of an idea which was to produce a different kind of dividend was planted by a 14-year-old Jewish refugee boy from his seat of wisdom at the soda fountain.

The words remain fresh in the memory as when they were first uttered in 1939.

"I want to converse with you," Harry remembers the teenager saying.

"What have you got to say? Harry responded.

"Why are you not a bank director?" was the second remarkable remark.

The boy had his conversation.

He proceeded to inform Harry that the proprietor of the rival drug store in the neighborhood, Phil Erard of the Erard Pharmacy at the corner of Douglas and Main Street was a director of Hampden Savings Bank.

The boy expressed his view that Mr. Charkoudian was as upstanding a pillar in the community as his competitor, and that he should enjoy the power, privilege and prestige of such a position.

The germ of this idea remained dormant for a considerable time in the Charkoudian consciousness.

Every once in a while, it would threaten to sprout.

Harry once was moved to ask John Brauveldt, a teller at the Springfield National Bank, how one became a bank director.

The response at that time was that the principal prerequisite was to have a large account at the institution.

Harry also broached the subject to Ernest Carman, his lawyer.

Carman did not immediately make any response, but did convey the question to a fellow charter member of the board of the Highland Cooperative Bank, a Mr. Walter L. Spaulding.

It wasn't until 1947, however, that the seed germinated.

Harry occasionally drove to Northfield for a function at Mount Hermon School. On one trip, Spaulding, a fellow alumnus, went

with him.

The matter of banks and bank directorships came up in the conversation, and later, Spaulding, an accountant with the Ludlow Manufacturing Co., telephoned to say that Harry had been elected to the board.

The only condition was that Harry agree to purchase shares.

Harry agreed to buy one share a month, at \$10 a share, and thus fulfilled the prophecy of his teen-age customer of eight years before.

The relationship with the bank, which later merged into the United Co-operative Bank, lasted for nearly three decades, until Uncle Harry was put out to pasture in 1975.

## EXPANSION AND GROWTH

The relationships with the Hampden College of Pharmacy and the Highland, later the United Co-operative Bank, were rewarding ones which accompanied and enhanced the growth and development of the Charkoudian Drug Corporation during the same period.

The first addition to the chain after the incorporation took place in 1940, when McKesson & Robbins, which was aware of the successful transformation of the Triangle Pharmacy, had another problem drug store on its hands.

The Winchester Pharmacy at the corner of State Street and Eastern Avenue was an old business, having been established in 1890. However, the combination of the depression, followed by the outbreak of war, had adversely affected the business. The building and the store itself was rundown.

Arrangements for the purchase, again on favorable terms, were made, including lease protection in case of a foreclosure on the building owner, and the deal was swiftly consummated.

Again, the building had to be remodeled, inside and out, with new floors and fixtures. The job was completed in early spring, and the store opened for business under the name of the Square Pharmacy, with Harry Kennedy as manager and Jack Kalpakian, the recent graduate of the Albany College of Pharmacy, as his assistant, on April 1, 1940.

Things were changing at Brightwood too.

Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the rent was increased for the Brightwood store. Another block, at the corner of Main and Walter streets, was for sale at the time, and it was decided to purchase it, plus the adjacent lot.

The Brightwood store thus moved from 3316 Main Street to 3270 Main Street, and soon, with the assistance of second-hand building materials provided in the tight wartime market through the assistance of the then commissioner of buildings for the city of Springfield, a contractor, a second building was constructed on the vacant lot.

The building served as a warehouse for the growing chain during the war, and afterward, in April of 1946, a new Brightwood store was established in that building, at 3274 Main Street and the old drug store in turn became the warehouse.

The last established Brightwood Charkoudian Drug Store at 3274 Main Street has remained in business during five decades since, into the 1980s.

Edward worked at the Brightwood store at 3270 Main Street after his return from the war, and before the purchase and incorporation of his Berkshire store.

Also joining the corporation as pharmacists and/or managers during this period were Harry Kennedy at Winchester Square, George Vatrain at Triangle Pharmacy, Walter Sztore and Patrick Pendergast at the Belmont store, and Mr. Bertrand at Brightwood.



The scenario of growth and development then shifted again, this time back to Winchester Square.

Growers Outlet had purchased the building from the owner/landlord at Winchester Square, and was interested in putting up a larger building at the corner.

The supermarket chain, however, was bound to honor the drug store lease. It was thus arranged that the Charkoudian Drug Store would move to a larger older building nearby, with another complete remodeling.

This facility at Winchester Square evolved into a model of its kind in Western Massachusetts.

Business continued to prosper in the chain through the postwar period, although problems did develop with one store.

There was a personnel problem at Triangle Pharmacy, and a decision was made to sell that store in 1949.

Mr. Blondi, who had been let go before the war after a series of disagreements, heard about this sale, and approached Uncle Harry within a year, and offered to buy the Belmont Pharmacy, if it were for sale.

There was no intent to sell at that time, and Harry suggested that there was a store available for Mr. Blondi to buy in Westfield, if he were interested.

Mr. Blondi found out, however, that the purchase price was too much for him to swing by himself.

He also made an effort to buy the Westfield store in partnership, but that deal also fell through.

Then a real estate man involved in the establishment of a shopping center on Main Street in Westfield approached Harry with a proposal to put a drug store at the site.

Blondi again was contacted.

This arrangement worked out.

It was agreed to form a separate corporation and Harry offered \$25,000 toward its establishment.

When Blondi was asked how much he wished to invest in the corporation, he said that all he had was \$5,000, but that he was willing to turn the entire amount over to Harry to use as he wished, and to use the established Charkoudian name for the store.

This gesture of trust and cooperation on the part of Blondi helped to erase the ill feeling of difficult times in the past, and made Uncle Harry, in particular, feel complimented and well disposed toward the new partner and the newest Charkoudian venture.

Two years later, in 1953, a tobacco wholesaler reported that there was a drug store in Palmer that was experiencing difficulties, and could be purchased for a reasonable sum.

It was a repetition of a familiar pattern.

Again, the building housing the drug store was an old one, more than 100 years old, and the store itself had become rundown.

It was bought, and after a thorough remodeling, was reopened

in partnership with the manager, Stanley Bigda, under the Charkoudian name, similar to that of Blondi's in Westfield.

Through the 1950s and 1960s, drug stores under the Charkoudian name and corporate umbrella provided products and services for the public and livelihoods for pharmacists, managers and clerks in Brightwood, on Belmont Avenue, Winchester Square, Palmer, Westfield and Lee.

These trunks and branches had sprung from a tiny seed planted by Levon Charkoudian at the corner of Grace and Main streets with \$2,000 scraped together from every conceivable source, the trust of a few creditors and a generous supply of faith.

## END OF A BUSINESS ERA

During this successful period, most members of the later generations of Charkoudians were passing into professional and business life, as had Charkoudians and Kalpakians before them in the old world.

Uncle Harry Charkoudian tried to interest clerks in the drug stores to buy shares in the respective corporations to maintain both their interest in and benefits from the growing businesses.

However, he was unable to transfer this entrepreneurial gift outside the family.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, inflation ate away at the foundations of the smaller drug store chains, neighborhoods began to change and the trusted and reliable personnel in the respective drug stores began to age.

The first store to go was on Belmont Avenue, which had to be sold in 1968 because of personnel problems.

In Westfield, Blondi was approaching 70 years of age, and was becoming harder to get along with for his clerks. That store also was sold shortly thereafter.

At Winchester Square, volume from the very beginning had not allowed the business to support both a pharmacist and a manager, and as urban blight worsened, so did the business climate.

That climate deteriorated so badly that it became impossible to sell the business, once a model for the entire region.

The lease was expiring, and it was decided to close the store, and most of the merchandise was sold at half price, with the balance being taken to the Brightwood store.

In Palmer, Mr. Bigda lost a reliable clerk for a decade to death, and had difficulty replacing him. It was decided that that store had to be sold as well.

In subsequent years, Harry has noted the advent of the computer age and its tremendous potential for the small businessman. In fact, he rues that the age arrived too late for him to apply it. Cash accounts, inventory and billing now can be controlled by computer in a manner unthought of during his Bay Path Institute days. The computer age might have served as a bridge to preserve and expand the chain.

But there was a bright spot in the Charkoudian family business saga, the Brightwood store, the only survivor from the once extensive corporate group.

Nahabed Charkoudian, oldest son of Karekin, had followed three of his uncles into pharmacy, and had graduated from the Hampden College of Pharmacy in 1950.

When Harry Charkoudian decided to take up more serious pursuits such as golf, Florida, backgammon and family history, he was able to turn over the Brightwood business to someone, Nahabed, who could maintain the family name and tradition near the spot where the first seeds had been planted.

## THE CALF ROAST

The economic foundations of the Charkoudian family were laid in the shoemaker shops of Worthington Street and Wilbraham Road and at the first Charkoudian Drug Store in Brightwood.

But there was a community foundation too, and it was scratched and hacked out of the stump-filled parcel of wood, field and marshland which crossed the spine of the Minnechaug Mountains in Wilbraham.

The first family gathering on May 12, 1934 was only the beginning of a tradition.

Harry Charkoudian, in the first draft of this account, noted that although he was working on drug business nearly every day, everybody else was working too, tough physical labor on Wilbraham Mountain.

There were trees to be felled, wells to be dug, brush to be cut and rocks to be moved. There was the problem of shelter. The old oak tree, which still stands, could not be expected to provide protection indefinitely from the capricious New England elements.

The property acquired by and through Levon in the 1930s had been an orchard of chestnut trees before the blight of the early 1900s.

The mountain had become a community workfest.

## THE CALF ROAST

The economic foundations of the Charkoudian family were laid in the shoemaker shops of Worthington Street and Wilbraham Road and at the first Charkoudian Drug Store in Brightwood.

But there was a community foundation too, and it was scratched and hacked out of the stump-filled parcel of wood, field and marshland which crossed the spine of the Minnechaug Mountains in Wilbraham.

The first family gathering on May 12, 1934 was only the beginning of a tradition.

Harry Charkoudian, in the first draft of this account, noted that although he was working on drug business nearly every day, everybody else was working too, tough physical labor on Wilbraham Mountain.

There were trees to be felled, wells to be dug, brush to be cut and rocks to be moved. There was the problem of shelter. The old oak tree, which still stands, could not be expected to provide protection indefinitely from the capricious New England elements.

The property acquired by and through Levon in the 1930s had been an orchard of chestnut trees before the blight of the early 1900s.

The mountain had become a community workfest.

Members of Springfield's Armenian community would make their way to the mountain with the tools and their washes.

In the early days, Nishan would buy two or three lamb quarters at 12 cents a pound and put together a big shish kebab for the Sunday noon meal.

Karekin was responsible for the water supply, lugged from a not so nearby spring in five gallon cans supplied by Harry from the drug store, cans that previously contained alcohol.

In 1935, it was decided that a water supply would have to be found on the property.

Mr. Janzisian knew of an elderly Indian Orchard resident of French-Canadian extraction who had a reputation as a douser, a finder of water.

One Wednesday afternoon, Harry drove Mr. Janzisian and the Frenchman, who hardly was able to walk, up the mountain to survey the site.

The old man slowly circled the oak tree and concluded there was certainly water there, enough to have supplied a mighty oak for a number of generations.

Then he walked away from the oak and stopped at a spot which he determined was the main spring source.

A stick was driven into the ground to mark the spot.

The following spring, a group of the younger men and boys attacked the task.

First, they attempted to drive a pipe through to the water



source.

But this attempt proved unsuccessful, because the subsoil was clay, and unyielding.

The digging started.

Five feet down, the well diggers hit ground water, and everyone got excited.

But this was only the beginning, and the job wasn't getting any easier.

Mike Campora, Mr. Porter's Polish handyman, and a helper were hired to continue the project, but they got only three feet deeper before the clay got so thick that they were unable to penetrate it with their hand tools.

A fellow by the name of Anderson from Upper Tinkham Road was then engaged to bring up a little dynamite to help loosen the clay. This enabled the diggers to get down to 22 feet, where they hit ledge.

The suggestion to dynamite the ledge was rejected because it was feared that this might divert the water supply through veins created by the blast.

Harry obtained four or five clay pipes at a reasonable price from the O'Sullivan Co. on Colton Street in Springfield and the manager of the General Ice Cream Corporation was kind enough to deliver them to the mountain in one of the company trucks.

Karekin and Onnig Soukiasian the barber were the well diggers.

They constructed walls of stone to enclose the well from the bottom to allow the spring water that they had tapped to

collect. A triangle wood form was dropped down to construct the well to a height of 10 feet. Pebbles were lowered to fill in the sides, and clay walls were built above that height to prevent the surface water from running in.

Jack Vakel, a plumber, provided the pipe and pump, and Karekin purchased a cement cover for the well. Although both the pipe and pump have since been replaced, the same old cover remains as a practical reminder of the labors and contributions of the past.

As soon as one water problem was solved, the community attacked the second one, the rain.

Until this point, whenever it rained, the only shelter was the trees.

Mr. Janzisian again came to the rescue.

He had noticed that there was a small highway food stand for sale on Stony Hill Road in Wilbraham. He called Harry up and they drove out to take a look at it.

The price was only \$25, but there was a problem of delivery. This was resolved by the farmer-salesman, who offered to deliver the stand to the mountain for \$2.

The deal was set.

From that time forward, there was some shelter from, as well as a supply of, water for the Armenian community and friends.

By this time, in 1936, much of the property had been cleaned up, stumps pulled out, brush burned and land cleared.

Mr. Lemon then would bring over his horse and plow, and plowed furrows from the entrance to the property up to the top. This became a community garden for a number of years.

The next project involved a stand of oaks near the ridge.

The congregation of St. Gregory's Armenian Orthodox Church in Indian Orchard was in need of wood both for a fire to keep the church warm in winter and to build a clubhouse in the church basement.

The stand of oak would provide a ready supply.

The young men of the community responded.

They cut down the oaks, sawed them up and transported them to the church, providing a double service of land-clearing benefiting the church community.

This left another stump-clearing project, one too big to contemplate doing by hand.

By this time, however, Mike Campora had bought a Caterpillar tractor. He was hired to come pull out the stumps with a chain, quite a project even with the use of a modern tractor.

So went the 1930s.

Each winter, Nishan, Karekin, Harry and Edward, when he was in town, would gather to decide what the project would be the following summer.

First water, then shelter, a garden, wood-clearing, etc.

Then in September of 1938, nature resolved the question for them.

The 1938 hurricane was the most devastating ever to strike

New England. It sped up the East Coast overnight and then abruptly turned, causing loss of life exceeding 600, primarily in the Narragansett Bay section of Rhode Island.

But the damage was extensive throughout the six-state area, including the Pioneer Valley.

Among the casualties was the portable school which was then being used between Wilbraham Road and Parker Street for the then sparsely populated Sixteen Acres section of Springfield.

Mr. Janzisian again was on the spot.

He found out from a city councilor that the city wanted to unload the damaged goods and suggested that the Charkoudians submit a bid of \$105 for the structure, an envisioned expansion of the foodstand shelter on the mountain.

The day after the next council meeting, a telephone call informed the bidders that \$105 was the highest bid, and that the portable school had a new owner.

The next problem was how to get the 80-foot long by 45-foot wide building to the mountain.

Another French-Canadian was found who was willing to deliver the structure to Wilbraham and set it up in exchange for half of it.

This was regarded as a good bargain, and delivery was made in late September or early October of 1938.

Unfortunately, an early snowstorm that year put an end to plans to finish the project before the winter set in.

The following summer, members of the family picked up their tools and flexed their muscles again to construct a permanent shelter on the mountain property.

The consensus was that the structure looked very awkward as it was placed, and it was decided to cut it down in size. Galvanized iron was obtained for the roofing after the four walls had been firmly anchored, but the amateur builders still were not satisfied with their artistry.

Mr. Lucien Ricard was enlisted to finish off the project, and it was he who put in the beams that supported the structure and the partitions which turned it from a shell into a shelter, which even included a bathroom and a porch.

From that time on, the building served as a temporary residence for many members of the Charkoudian family during the spring, summer and fall.

Mrs. Charkoudian spent many pleasant days in this idyllic place during the last two years of her life, and other members of the family, particularly Karekin and Arousiak and their children, also utilized it in this way.

When war came, so did the victory gardens.

Mike was again enlisted to plow the area that had been cleared of oaks for the Indian Orchard church, and with the addition of 25 tons of lime to counter the sour soil, the gardens and the number of gardeners grew.

Karekin also planted some fruit trees, and the mountain property became a community gathering place throughout the war

years and beyond, producing good will in addition to its annual supply of fruit, potatoes, tomatoes and peppers.

The hard work was combined with two pleasant meals at noon and at night, naps, the playing of the children and what became traditional games of pinochle.

Among the many guests who attended some of these family gatherings was Moses Sunukjian of Troy, N.Y., Nishan Charkoudian's brother-in-law.

He was so impressed and had such a good time that he vowed to return to the mountain after his two sons had come back from the war, and to bring a calf to turn on a spit over a wood and charcoal fire.

He was true to his word, and at least 75 people attended that calf roast, including a large Troy contingent.

Karekin and Yervant Papazian led the work brigade that dug the pit, gathered the wood, and started the fire on Saturday for the Sunday roast.

Among the neighbors invited to the feast were members of the Porteri family. They had such a pleasant time that Mike, who had married Mrs. Porteri after the death of her husband, promised to supply the calf himself the next year.

He was as true to his word as Moses Sunukjian had been, and the next summer, people came from as far as Boston and Troy for another mountain calf roast.

Drinks came from the drug store, and food from the ladies in

the Armenian community, who worked together in its preparation.

Two moving picture records were made of these gatherings, but unfortunately, the 8 millimeter version taken by Harry, now in George Charkoudian's possession, is an imperfect one, and a better version taken by Harry Topuzian was misplaced or destroyed at Valley Cinema after not having been picked up for a lengthy period.

After the blackouts of the war years, lights went on all over the world. They even went on on the mountain - for the first time.

An electrician was hired in 1946 to wire the house.

Karekin and Harry waited that day for George to come up to the mountain, and when he arrived, surprised him in the evening by switching on the light at the back porch as he arrived.

"Oh, my God, Dad, Uncle, it's just like home now," he exclaimed. "Now you can stop fussing with the gasoline and kerosene lamps."

But although the electric light replaced the kerosene lamp, it could not efface the memories of the family, friends, neighbors and business associates who had enjoyed that period of rustic charm.

Drug store clerks and wholesale drug company executives in particular enjoyed the trips up the mountain, and much good will was fostered in the business community and for the drug business during these social gatherings.

Bill Thompson, the drug sales manager, still talks about the "fingers" he enjoyed on the mountain, his description of the Armenian "yalanchis," a grape-leaf wrapped specialty.

But for the generous supply of happiness provided by the mountain, there was also the corresponding sadness that accompanies the passing of time.

On March 10, 1959, Karekin Charkoudian, who had successfully undergone a colostomy operation, died suddenly and unexpectedly at the hardware store which he had started at Pine Point in Springfield seven years before.

His passing was all the more a surprise in that there had been immediate concern at the time about the condition of Harry, who had suffered a serious heart attack, and who had only returned home from the hospital himself two days before Karekin's death.

This loss, similar to that of Levon a generation earlier, removed much of the heart and muscle from family life on the mountain.

Karekin had done a prodigious amount of work there, and his death resulted in a decline of interest in and care for the property.

This continued long beyond the respectful period of mourning for the third of the five Charkoudian brothers.

But with the passing of time, Nishan and Harry got together and decided that they would again pick up the burden that Karekin had laid down.



They contacted the Phelps Construction Co. and arranged to spruce up the property.

A roof was added over the front porch, the building was refurbished and a helper was hired to maintain it.

At the completion of the project, the two men stood in front of the house with a sense of satisfaction and Nishan remarked, "This will last the rest of our lives."

He added that it would be up to the younger generation to carry on.

That this generation was preparing to do so was evidenced by the family dinner held on the night of June 9, 1963 at the Oaks Inn in Springfield.

The family was gathering to celebrate a triple graduation twinned with the 50th anniversary of Nishan's arrival in Springfield.

George had completed Tufts Dental School, John had graduated from Bates College in Maine and Marion had graduated from the Northfield School for Girls, prior to her matriculation at Simmons College.

The realization that the younger generation would have to carry on came the Sunday after that dinner.

Nishan died in Wesson Memorial Hospital of a heart attack suffered earlier in the day at his home.

He was 74.

## REJUVENATION

The mountain again fell into disuse after this shock to the family, but for a shorter period than after the deaths of Levon and Karekin.

Karekin's son George returned to Western Massachusetts after his graduation from dental school, and served a period of internship at the Western Massachusetts Hospital in Westfield.

During 1964, George displayed the interest in the mountain that his father had before him, planting fruit trees and tending the property.

He also became the first member of the third generation of Charkoudians to be married.

The wedding of George and Toni Fresco took place in Keene, N.H. that year.

Subsequently, they returned to Boston for his study in oral surgery at Tufts and at Boston City Hospital, but the family was to return to Western Massachusetts in 1968.

Earlier, Mrs. Grace Charkoudian, who had suffered a series of heart attacks, passed away on April 7, 1966, at the age of 56.

Like Azniv Sandjian and Arousiak der Mesropian before him, Harry found himself without a lifetime partner.

The first years as a widower were not easy ones.

And he tried not to impose himself on his brother, sisters-in-law, nephews and nieces.

For example, in 1965, he had taken up golf, joining Wilbraham

Country Club, an idyllic and not too hilly nine-hole course within sight of the Minnechaug Mountain ridge line.

One afternoon in 1967, not finding anyone at the club at the moment for a game, Harry went out alone.

Coming off the steep tee at the first hole, the cart tipped over and Harry suffered an ankle injury.

After getting back to the clubhouse, he drove himself to Wesson Hospital to have it checked.

But although his heart specialist happened to be on duty that day, and was able to ascertain that there was nothing wrong in that area, a rash of serious accidents at the same time prevented Harry from getting proper and immediate treatment for the ankle injury, and he was sent home with a pair of crutches.

Mary (Kalpakian) Hiscock, Uncle Habib's daughter, happened to call the next morning, and finding out about the accident, made sure that the rest of the family knew about the injury and any needs that resulted from it.

About two weeks later, Nahabed accompanied Harry to the doctor's for the removal of the cast.

Similarly, the following year, Harry had bought a riding lawnmower in an effort to help keep up the mountain property. But one day, while working with the machinery, the blades cut off part of the middle and index fingers of his right hand.

Forty-two years earlier, he had had to take a train to Brattleboro, Vt., for treatment for his fingers after the saw accident in Northfield.

This time, he was able to drive himself to Wesson Memorial Hospital, where he was admitted for a two-day stay for treatment and repair.

In these and other instances, Harry found himself home, alone and requiring attention and care, but not wishing to bother relatives.

These, in every instance that they became aware of Harry's indispositions, were helpful and caring.

But they also realized that the answer lay in not living alone.

Younger female members of the Charkoudian clan picked up the matchmaking responsibility that had been handled by Mrs. Nartouhi Charkoudian a generation before.

Toni and Bethel Charkoudian, the wives of George and Leon respectively, were particularly active in their efforts to get Harry paired off.

Bethel had a relative-candidate in the Boston area, and contacts were made in that regard.

But Harry would have nothing of the thought of moving to Boston or of leaving Springfield and his relatives in the area.

In the interim, George and Toni had moved back to Springfield, where George had established a practice in oral surgery. They also brought two children back with them.

Other branches of the family also were growing.

Nahabed and John now both were married, and were raising families.

George had picked up his interest in and contribution to the mountain, and Nahabed had assumed more and more of the responsibilities for the drug store that he was to take over in 1974.

But it wasn't any member of the younger generation of Charkoudians or their spouses who provided the right connection.

In 1973, Arousiak began going shopping with a recently widowed neighbor, Mrs. Rose Pehlvanian.

Mrs. Pehlvanian's husband Harry, who had bought Karekin's shoe store at 206 Wilbraham Road in 1952 when Karekin opened his hardware store, had died in June of 1972.

That wasn't the only connection she had with the Charkoudians.

She was a Marshli, and she and her family shared the common tragic family history.

Rose Kurukian was only 7 years old at the time of the Turkish massacre of the Armenians of Marash in February of 1920.

She, her mother, her Aunt Marie, her older sister Lydia, brother Paul, and paternal grandparents set out from their home for the German Hospital as hostilities broke out.

Rose's mother had Paul, who was sickly, strapped to her back.

After passing through a cemetery near their home, Turkish soldiers began firing their weapons and the party began to split up.

Aunt Marie and sister Lydia were walking faster than the

others, left them behind, disappeared, and were neither seen nor heard from again.

Rose was separated from her mother and brother in the confusion, turned, and wandered back toward home.

She eventually found herself in the house of an Armenian photographer with a large number of other children separated from their parents, and a few adults, who luckily for Rose included her grandmother's sister and her widowed daughter.

In this chaos, luck struck again for Rose, and others in the group.

Seven-year-old Rose found a bag, and it turned out to contain money, which she quickly turned over to her older relatives.

When the Turkish police arrived and led the group to the Marash city jail, the money went with them.

For 30 days, the inmates, who were provided a meager ration of bread and water, supplemented it with food purchased with this money through the Turkish guards.

At the end of a month, hostilities had ceased, the Turkish nationalists had taken over the administration of the city, and the children were released and marched to the German Hospital.

Armenian mothers at the hospital descended on the scraggly band of waifs, hoping to find their own among them.

Rose was spotted first by a friend of her mother, who had safely made her way to the hospital a month before with Paul.

"I just came alive again," Rose told her mother at the reunion, a scene that even touched the Turkish soldiers who

witnessed it.

The next step was to clean up, shave the hair and delouse the children who had been packed into jail cells for 30 days so tightly that they had slept sitting up, yet had survived through and probably because of that incarceration.

In subsequent months, the Kurukians realized that it would be impossible to remain in Marash. Mrs. Kurukian, who already had lost her husband through banishment and death at Der-Zor, in what is now Iraq, in 1915, and her daughter Lydia during the February uprising, arranged to leave the city with her father-in-law.

They first went to Aleppo, in what is now Syria, what was for many the first way station to freedom. Aleppo turned out to be a way station for five years.

Then, they moved on to Beirut, where Paul stayed with his grandparents and Rose with an aunt.

Their mother left shortly to cross the ocean to America, with plans to call for her children to follow as soon as possible.

Rose lived in Beirut for four years at the Seaside Orphanage, which was run by American missionaries.

She did not go to the United States until 1930, after her mother had married an American citizen, Panos Yemenijian, easing the children's passage through her newly obtained citizenship.

Rose lived first in Springfield at 1272 State Street and attended the High School of Commerce, and worked for several years after finishing school.

Her first marriage, to Harry Pehlvanian, was in 1938 in Hartford, and the union produced two children, George Paul in Riverside, Calif., and Harold Allen of Houston, Texas.

Harry operated a shoe repair shop in Glastonbury, Conn., until 1951, after which the family moved to Springfield, with the subsequent purchase of Karekin's business.

The house they bought on Benton Street was near that of Arousiak and Karekin, and the Pehlvanians became occasional visitors to the Sunday mountain gatherings during the 1940s and 1950s.

These visits came more often in the early summer of 1974, with the gentle prodding of Arousiak.

Despite the contributions of apple pies, however, Rose felt that she was intruding on family gatherings, and tried to beg off the visits.

Toni then jumped in, insisting on Rose's continued presence, and making sure of it by arranging to pick up both Arousiak and Rose for the trips.

Harry Charkoudian and Rose (Kurukian) Pehlvanian began to get together on the mountain.

Harry then asked Toni one day whether he should ask Rose out to dinner.

Toni wasted no time following that up.

"Did Uncle Harry call you?" she asked during a telephone call that night.



"Not yet," Rose responded.

The following Sunday, Bethel Charkoudian joined Toni in the endeavor.

Husband Leon was promoting a fund-raising gathering at George's house to help cover the deficit incurred during Carroll Sheehan's unsuccessful candidacy for the Republican gubernatorial nomination in Massachusetts.

The event was scheduled for an evening in October of 1974.

This was an inconvenience for Rose, because she found out that the Sheehan fund-raiser was on the same night as a quarter century banquet of her employer of many years, the Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Co.

Things went down to the wire.

Finally, early one morning, Harry heard a ringing of the doorbell, and there stood Bethel with two tickets in her hand, and a commanding presence which induced her uncle to make immediate contact with Rose.

Her phone was unlisted, but that turned out to be neither an excuse nor a deterrent, and Arousiak was contacted to get the number.

The energetic and long-frustrated effort finally began to bear fruit that night.

"I understand you need a chauffeur for the fund-raiser?" Harry asked.

Rose proceeded to inform Harry that she not only had a car, but knew how to drive it, but would accept an escort to the

function.

The Sheehan fund-raiser also raised expectations for the future, and there followed a steady stream of yalanchis, paklavahs and American applie pies and more frequent contacts between Harry and Rose.

By the following month, Harry was ready for Rose to make her move. One night, while sitting at Rose's place, Harry popped the question with a bluntness typical of many an Armenian male.

"How about moving to 935 Roosevelt avenue?" he asked Rose.

Rose, unlike many of her younger sisters of the '70s, wanted to know whether that was a proposal of marriage or not.

Harry gave a response worthy of Shakespeare.

"As You Like It," he answered.

The wedding, in the finest of ecumenical traditions, took place on January 11, 1975 in the First Baptist Church in West Springfield, Rose's home congregation, with a Baptist minister, an Armenian Apostolic priest, a Roman Catholic soloist and a Jewish organist.

The marriage has lasted and deepened, and suggests that the man who wrote "Life Begins at 40" may be less than half right.

Each generation can aspire to achieve the satisfaction that family patriarchs do who see members of the younger generations cleave or return to the family and other traditions which enabled the older members to survive, prosper and express their thanks to a God for each new day, one more gift added to what has been a life of bounty.