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Harry Kalpakian



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Ellis Island remains etched in memories

By RICHARD MARTINEZ The Press-Enterprise

Freedom. Opportunity. Hot water. Escalators.

Those were a few of the things that brought Helen Kalpakian to the United States —

via the Ellis Island immigration station — in 1921.

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

With Fourth of

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

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

during its 60 years of operation. In 1965 it became part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument. Ellis Island was opened to the public in 1976.

To put the Ellis Island experience into a more vivid per-

spective, the University of California, Riverside's California Museum of Photography provided some photos taken in the early 1900s. The photos are enlargements of stereoscopic nega-

tives in the museum's Keystone-Mast Collection.

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

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



Helen Kalpakian No regrets

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

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

(See ELLIS, Page B-4)

Thursday, July 3, 1986

The Press-Enterprise

RIVERSIDE, CA

ere all so happy to be in ica."

lalpakian; 85, was pregwhen she arrived at Ellis I in August 1923 with her and two small chilafter a month-long jourby ship from Istanbul.

he spent four days on Eland, then her family was d away and sent back to

When we came to Ellis

I we came on a Turkish

I," said Kalpakian, who

Is with just the hint of an

Inian accent. "The boat

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I had counted the quota

we were left out."
Kalpakian and her family
a ship to Greece. They

and left some fasting memo-

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

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

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

Kalpakian does remember why she came. She learned English and learned about

America by attending a Congregational missionary school in Turkey.

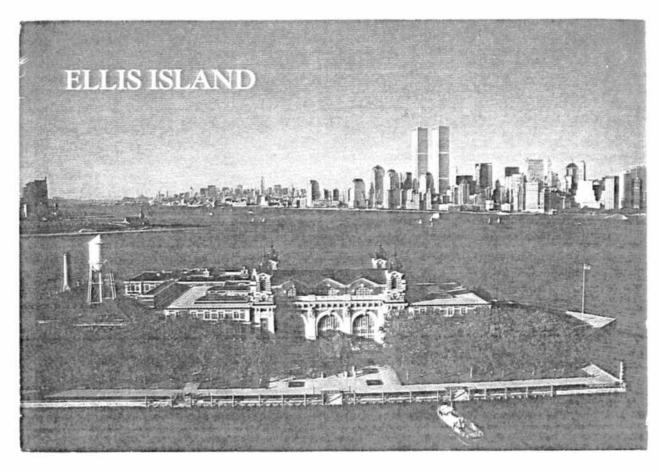
"We all heard so much about America in the missionary school and we all wanted to come to America," Kalpakian said. "I was telling my children the other day that I once had to write a story about America and I wrote about escalators.

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

escalator. I say I used to visual-

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

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





-news release -

NEW SCHOLARSHIP FOR ARMENIAN STUDENTS ESTABLISHED AT USC

Armenian students who are planning to attend USC may be eligible for financial support provided by the newly created Helen and Harry Kalpakian Memorial Scholarship.

The family of the late Mr. and Mrs. Harry Kalpakian of Los Angeles recently <u>contributed a generous gift to the University of Southern California for the purpose of establishing a scholarship endowment for deserving United States citizens of Armenian descent.</u>

Established as a living memorial to their parents, "THE HARRY AND HELEN KALPAKIAN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP" will be administered by the Dean's Office of the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences. American students of Armenian or partial Armenian descent who meet the University's admission standards can inquire about this newly established scholarship.

Coming to the United States from Turkish Armenia in 1923, Harry and Helen Kalpakian established their home and grocery business in Los Angeles, which they operated for the next 40 years. They were exemplary American citizens, bringing with them the best of their cultural heritage and incorporating it with that of their new country. They were most grateful for the freedom and opportunity the U.S. offers its citizens. Mr. and Mrs. Kalpakian always venerated education and it was in this spirit that the Kalpakian Endowment was created.

The Kalpakian family has been active in both the St. James Armenian Church in Los Angeles and the United Armenian Congregational Church of Hollywood.

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HARRY

AND

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KALPAKIAN

