

Biographical Background

Name: Hagop (Jake) Varadian

Date of Birth: April 12, 1938

Place of birth: St. Louis, MO

Father's Name: Nishan Varadian

Grandfather's name: Hagop Varadian

Wife's Name: Barbara Varadian

Place of Birth: Belleville, IL

Married: September 10, 1967

Children:

Name: John Christopher Varadian (not married)

Place of Birth: Granite City, IL

Name: Jacob Andrew Varadian (not married)

Place of Birth: Granite City, IL

Narrative Biography of Hagop (Jake) Varadian

Hagop (Jake) Varadian is a first generation Armenian, born in St. Louis Missouri on April 12, 1938. He grew up in Lincoln Place with a older sister and twin sister. Upon graduation from high school, because his parents didn't have the money to sent him to college, he enlisted in the U.S. Army to take advantage of the G.I. Bill. He spent two years in the service and was stationed in Germany. While in Europe, he was fortunate enough to be able to travel and visited Marseilles, France where he visited his father's childhood friend (from his father's six month stay in France). His grandfather had come to the United States some eleven years before his father and worked for the railroads in the Northwest, mainly in Oregon. His grandmother had also fled Armenia and made it was far as Marseilles, France also. Her health was not particularly good and she chose to remain in France rather that continue on to America. She died in Marseilles, France in 1933 and Jake was also able to visit his grandmother's gravesite and bring back pictures for the family.

Just prior to leaving Germany, his unit received orders for deployment to Beirut, Lebanon. Jake took the opportunity to go with his unit where he was able to take pictures of Beirut and visit the orphanage where his mother had lived. He spent a total of thirty days in Beirut, Lebanon before being shipped back to his unit in Germany and processed for return to the United States and discharge from the U.S. Army.

He returned home to Granite City and began attending college. However, his father had an accident and he had to drop out of college to run the family business. He was able to return to college later at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville campus, where he majored in Education. It was there that he meant his future wife, Barbara, in the campus library. They were married September 10, 1967. Both of them graduated from SIUE and became teachers in the Granite City School District. Jake retired from teaching seven or eight years ago and has been commuting back and forth from Maryville, IL to his farm in Salem, MO. He raises about 150 head of cattle. His wife continues to teach in the Granite City school system, at the Coolidge Middle School. Both of their sons live in the greater St. Louis area. The oldest son John, lives in St. Charles, MO and the other son, Jake, lives in Fairview Heights, IL. Neither son is married.

Jake's father (Nishan) emigrated from Armenia to France, with the help of his father's cousin, but had problems with his visa and ended up spending six months in Marseilles, France while the issue was resolved. The cousin returned to the United States while Jake's father remained behind. Once the visa issue was resolved, he finally made it to the United States and was processed through Ellis Island. He was helped through the Ellis Island processing by a Greek man and his family; and an Italian man and his family. Both families help him with the language portion of the processing. They also gave him money to travel from New York City to Detroit. He was fifteen years old.

He was accompanied to Detroit by the Greek man and his family. Once in Detroit, they contacted the grandfather's cousin and waited until he arrived to pick the young man up. Unfortunately he lost the names of these two individuals and was never able to contact them and thank them for their generosity. From Detroit he traveled to Oregon to be reunited with his father. After living for several years in Oregon, they both moved to Granite City, because of the large Armenian population from their village area.

Jake's mother (Mariam) had a much grimmer experience in her journey to the United States. After part of her family was killed in the 1915 Armenian massacre by the Turks, she, her older sister and mother were cast into the desert. They lived in a cave without food or water for a period of time. The older sister died. The mother, who was pregnant at the time, left one day looking for food, and never returned. His mother then wandered the desert until found by Kurdish people. She was taken to Beirut, Lebanon where she was placed in an orphanage. She lived there for several years until Jake's great uncle, who lived in St. Louis, noticed her name on a list of displaced children that was published in an Armenian newspaper that he subscribed to. He made arrangements for her to come to the United States. She enter the United States through Cuba in 1927.