



1915 - 1985

A TIME TO REMEMBER

SUZZANE DAVIDIAN is from St. Mary Parish in Yettem. She lives in Dinuba where she has attended Wilson Grammar School and is currently attending Washington Junior High School.

For three years running, Suzzane won and earned a SUPERIOR rating in the Peach Blossom Speech Arts Festival which is held at California State University at Fresno. In 1985, she was selected by her drama teacher at Washington Junior High School in Dinuba to have her biography appear in the 1985 United States Achievement Academy National Awards Yearbook. She is active in Girls' Chorus and Drama. Suzzane was selected to participate in the Dinuba Rotary Club Spelling Bee for 2 years. She was also selected as the Most Improved Swimmer by her instructors at the Aqua Jumps Swimming Organization in Dinuba.

Suzzane is a Sunday School student at St. Mary Parish and has attended our Diocesan Summer Camp regularly, ever since she became eligible to do so. She is 12 years of age.

Suzzane took the 1st place award in the Junior Division of the Diocesan Speech Contest. She was given a \$500.00 scholarship award.

Life, how important is this word? Is it a miracle, or is it just another word. Is this word worth the hardships that a person must endure? Does it reward us to be forceful and determined. Is it luck, or is it faith that we have in God to fulfill our destiny?

We Armenians are a very special kind of people. We may not have our own country, but yet we cling to our culture with amazing grace. More than 200,000 Armenians died between 1894-1896; and more than a million and a half between 1914-1918.

Come with me and let us travel back in time; the year is 1915. My name is Zaroohé, and I am 12 years old. My father has been called by the Turks to work on the Turkish road crews. Perhaps I am too young to know why my father has been taken from our home. When I question my mother, she tells me to be still and to say a silent prayer for him. Yet, I know in my heart, I will never see him again. My father never returned.

Much to my surprise, the next thing I realize, our family is leaving our home and village. With only our clothes and our personal belongings on our donkey's back, we begin our walk.

Our entire village of three hundred is now strung out for over two miles. Little do we know that we will be walking all the way to the Arabian desert.

As I am walking away from my village, I wonder, "Will I ever see my home again?" . . . I never did.

The technique that the Turkish police used in transporting us from one village to the next was nothing more than a trick.

First, one group of Turkish policemen escorted us to a village, then another group of policemen would take us to the next village, and so on. This was done in a style, so that the same group of policemen were never with our group twice, only the one time, preventing them from showing us mercy.

As we approached and entered our first village, we found that it was completely abandoned. The Armenian people who had lived there were gone, and all that was left in the village was their filth and waste. We realized that this filth and waste had been left there by the thousands of Armenians who had passed through this same village before us.

We knew that people from these villages must have suffered much or had been abused in many ways. The roads over which we traveled were little more than donkey paths. Soon we were joined by thousands of other Armenians and what had been an orderly procession, now became a scrambling mob. Women were separated from their children, and husbands from their wives. God spared our family because the police didn't separate us. However, those who attempted to stop and rest were left behind.

. We were hungry and starving "Don't die Mama!" Now I am alone

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, I SHALL NOT WANT. HE MAKETH ME TO LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES: HE LEADETH ME BESIDE THE STILL WATERS. HE RESTORETH MY SOUL.

I am comforted by those around me. A young man, who will be my future husband takes on the role as my protector. We lie to the Turks that we are married, for his sake as well as mine. They want to kill him and make me their own. After a while, we are rescued by the missionaries and placed in an orphanage in Aleppo.

HE LEADETH ME IN THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE.

In 1920, in Aleppo, I married my protector, Arshavir Davidian. Later in the year, we were blessed with a son, Sarkis.

YEA THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH, I WILL FEAR NO EVIL FOR THOU ART WITH ME. THY ROD AND THY STAFF THEY COMFORT ME.

Fear and horror surrounded our new family. Our only hope was to leave our homeland and travel to a new country which so many of us dreamed about. The *HOPE* was to live . . . the *DREAM* was AMERICA. In 1923 we arrived by boat to Ellis Island, New York. Alas, the new world . . . a new beginning. We see the Statute of Liberty. To us, it represents freedom and a new life. My first glimpse of America thrilled me with joy and I couldn't help feeling that life here in America would be wonderful.

the brutal massacre and deportation of 1½ million innocent Armenians.

These are the people we honor on Martyrs Day. They died because they believed in their religion and refused to give up their faith. Indeed, these people deserve to be honored. If tomorrow we were given a choice, as some Armenians were, between giving up the Christian faith and being killed, how many of us would choose to be killed? It's something to think about. But the Armenian faith has refused to die. In fact, it is growing stronger every day throughout the United States. The Armenian American Citizen's League, the various political organizations, the AGBU, the ACYO, and the Church itself have been established as important Armenian organizations. Today there are 18 Armenian day schools in the United States, 28 periodicals published in the United States, 10 of which are English language, 4 major resource centers, and many libraries and bookstores. Armenians have built about 200 churches in the United States in the last 50 years. So you see, we as Armenians have kept the Armenian faith *alive* since our ancestors were massacred.

Then there are those who are reminded of bitter feelings when they think of the Genocide. These people refuse to forgive what the Turks did to the Armenians. Recently, Armenian terrorists bombed a Turkish embassy. This was not the first such occurrence, and all the related incidences can be described in one word: revenge. Revenge on the Turkish people. And what provokes this revenge? The fact that many, many Armenians still have not *forgiven* the Turks for the Genocide. And why haven't they forgiven? Perhaps they haven't really been encouraged to. The Armenian Church has not sufficiently stressed forgiveness for the Genocide in the past. But if we don't forgive, we must not expect God to forgive us. The Lord's Prayer says, "and forgive us our trespasses *as we forgive those who trespass against us!*" This means that we are asking God to forgive us *in the same way* we forgive others. If we forgive the Turkish people, God will forgive us our sins. But if we pray that God will forgive us *as* we forgive those who sin against us, and we still refuse to forgive the Turks, then we are *not* asking God for forgiveness. Those who still hold a grudge against the Turks should not even take communion until they have forgiven, because our church does not believe in taking the body and blood of Christ at a time when one is not at peace with all men. So *what* if the Turks don't apologize for the Genocide? So *what* if they don't acknowledge it? It's *still* up to us as Christians to forgive them. *We are* the first Christian Nation, so let's uphold our Christian reputation and *forgive*.

Hundreds of years ago there lived a very special man. He was special because he was not only man, but *God*. This man was Jesus Christ, and he was a martyr. Jesus died so that we could have eternal life. Would Jesus ever say to those who crucified him, "I hate you and I'll never, ever forgive you!"? No! Of course not. Jesus would forgive them. And that is exactly what we should do to anyone who sins against us. *Forgive*.

We're often told to "forgive and forget." We all know this is extremely difficult to do. In our daily lives, it *is* a good idea to forget the bad things people

do to us. When we forget, we have forgiven completely. But maybe, sometimes, it's better *not* to forget. Such as with the Armenian Genocide. If we forget, completely, the horrors our ancestors suffered, and forget all the people who were killed and hurt, how will we, as a society, ever be able to prevent another Holocaust from occurring? We *must* remember in order to make sure that it never happens again. But if we must remember, how can we ever forgive completely? By hating the sin, but *loving* the sinner. We can dislike what the Turks may have done, but we must not dislike the Turks. This, also, is hard to do. From the two phrases, "forgive and forget," and "Love the sinner, hate the sin," we can see that it is always important *to forgive*.

April 24, 1915.

When Armenians think of this date in the future, what will their thoughts be? Hopefully, they will remember and respect the Armenian martyrs who died for the Christian faith. They will remember the pain, agony, and torture their ancestors suffered, while at the same time looking ahead for ways to prevent more suffering in the world today. But most importantly, it is my sincere hope that they will remember the Genocide with no feelings of bitterness or hatred, and will always love one another. Jesus said that the greatest of all the commandments is love. Love God, and love your neighbor as yourself. Love your enemies. *Pray* for those who persecute you. Don't hate the Turks or anyone else for any reason, because when *we forgive others, God forgives us*. Holding a grudge against the Turkish people won't *solve* any problems — it will only *make* problems. Forgive. Hate the sin. Love the sinner. *That* is what God wants us to do. And *that* should be the reason we celebrate Martyrs Day.

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Most Outstanding Girl — Valle Verde Elementary School
Hugh O'Brian Leadership Conference — Northgate High School
Soroptimist Girl of the Month — Northgate High School
Very Important Female Award — Northgate High School

Maggi is 17 years old. She won the 2nd place in the Senior Division of the Diocesan Speech Contest and was given a \$250.00 scholarship award.

Good morning. For the first exercise on the Armenian Genocide, I would like you to turn and face your neighbor. I would like you to take a few seconds and clear your mind of all things - all prejudgements and all thoughts. For this is a journey into the unknown. All you need to take with you are the abilities to empathize and connect. Now, all go along with this exercise, please. Take their hands. Their right in your left, and their left in your right. Look your neighbor in the eyes, without laughing, because the Armenian Genocide is a serious matter. This journey is a representation of the Armenian problem 70 years later. Your eyes looking into your neighbor's eyes, your ideals and thoughts coming together with theirs.

Now that you've met your neighbor, please face front. I will take you on a journey through your mind, making you think about what you believe and why. Just keep your neighbor in mind.

Of the pairs, the one closest to the door, you are a Hittite. Being the ancient people of the land, your family is very wealthy. Wealthy enough to send you to school. You're 15 years old and in your eighth year of school.

Those of you who are seated on the other side, you come from a long line of Romanians. Living in the city, you have attended school with the fortunate, as well as the unfortunate. You have been brought up in a family atmosphere where you were taught to stand up for your rights, but always, always keep an open mind.

You both come from strong religious families and attend church weekly. You both proclaim to be Christians.

The students in Romania have just been told a shocking story, which many believe to be fact. The information comes from foreign newspapers and visitors to your country. You're told that your great-grandparents, great-grandma Rachel and great-grandpa Frank, murdered the Hittites and took away the small land that they had. Now it's not proven that great-grandma and great-grandpa were involved, but their friends probably were. Would you believe it or not? Murdering thousands upon thousands of people. "Why?" you ask yourself, "Why did they kill? Is a religion that important to kill for?"

As educated as you are, you quickly run down to the biggest library in town. You don't go to a smaller one, because this is an important issue. Up the library steps you go, just thinking about all the torture those Hittites went through. Upset and confused, you ask the librarian about The Genocide and where you can find information.

What? She doesn't know what you're talking about? How can anyone not know? Thousands, the newspapers read, were killed and brutally!

Wait a minute, maybe the foreign newspapers and visitors were lying. I mean, how can there not be any information like legal documents in our wonderful country? And great-grandma and great-grandpa never seemed like the killing type.

So you say, "I guess it's all a myth."

Meanwhile, the Hittite has grown up with the knowledge that the Romanians slaughtered his relatives. He's angry about it and some of his friends have been covering the murders, but you're not sure if it's right.

The Romanian and the Hittite come face to face one day. Please face your neighbor now. There are two ways you can deal with this situation. Either you, the Hittite, take revenge by ridiculing or hurting the Romanian. Or you can calmly explain to the Romanian what his ancestors have done to your people. Show him evidence and love him, in spite of what his great-grandparents have done. Remember -- you both proclaim to be Christians and love God. You're staring at them, the murderer. What will you do?

Now that you have experienced this lab practical, I'd like you to hold those feelings and face front.

The way I handle the situation is to inform, demonstrate, and forgive. I'm not forgetting that in this, as a representation of the Armenian Genocide, many of my ancestors were brutally mutilated, and those who were spared, fled their, and my, homeland.

Put yourself in the place of the Romanian. Would it be easy for you to believe the word of visitors and foreign newspapers over your own country? Think about it. We need to have patience and inform. Violence is NOT the answer.

In the story, if you listened carefully, you know that both of the characters you were playing were Christians. Believing in God and forgiveness. How can we ask God to forgive us if we don't forgive others?

At the end of the Lord's prayer (Matt. 6:14-15) it reads:

"For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."

In other parts of The Bible, in Luke, Matthew, and Romans 13:14 it reads; "Bless those who persecute you. Bless and curse not." Followed in verse 18, "Never pay back evil for evil." Vengeance is the Lord's. Armenians who bomb embassies and chastise the Turks, are they not cursing? Not to mention stooping to the Turk's level.