

Dear Rhoda:

APRIL 26, 1999

I'm enclosing the manuscript that your Aunt Ray wrote for her great grandchildren .I loved it. There are stories that I never heard about Nona's years in Jannina. I edited it a little and typed it, but most of it is Ray's own story.

I thought it would be nice if you picked up the story from the top of page 13 through 17 and slanted it from your parents' point of view.. .

Whatever you decide to do....you can keep this copy and when you add your memoires you can make copies and keep it for your children and future grandchildren. Also you can make a copy and send it to Nancy. I think she would enjoy it. Perhaps Nancy may want to add to it. Perhaps you can write something about your Mom's side of the family.

I'm making copies and sending it to all our family to do the same thing and send it to their grandchildren. I thought it was very interesting way to do a family tree with anecdotes to make it more interesting.

.HOPE ALL IS WELL WITH YOU --

Aunt & Uncle
LOVE, SARAH & JACK

MEMORIES FOR MY GREAT GRANDCHILDREN

BY: RACHEL COLCHAMIRO EISENSTARK

(GREAT GRANDMA RAE)

PREFACE

This story is written for my GREAT GRANDCHILDREN who have asked me to tell them stories about my life. In order to go back in time so that they can understand just where I came from, I am beginning this story with my grandparents who were born in Greece in a little village called JANINA in the mountains of northern Greece. Although both my mother and father were born in the same village they did not meet each other until many years later in the United States.

LINKER FAMILY TREE
BY: RAY EISENSTARK

My grandparents who lived in Northern Greece in a little mountain village were very very poor.....so poor that my mother, when she was a little girl, had to ride a donkey with her father up into the mountain forest in order to pick berries for food. She had three sisters and five brothers. Because they had little food, they decided to leave Janina. Some of her brothers went to Palestine where they hoped to form a new country for Jews.

My mother and her sister came to America where they thought that it would be a better place to live.

My father came to America first. He heard that only good things and wonderful stories about this new land. He was only 17 years old but he was not afraid to enter a land where they spoke a language (English) that he did not know. He had been educated in Greek, Hebrew, Latin and some Turkish. If you are

wondering why he learned Hebrew, it was because he was Jewish and needed to know Hebrew to read the bible during the various Jewish holidays. When his ancestors arrived in Greece, they raised their children in the Jewish customs and religion.

Elias came to America with one of his sisters, her husband and two children.

When he arrived in Ellis Island, the customs men asked his name. ELIAS COLCHAMIRO he advised them .

Elias was the youngest child born to JESSULA & RACHEL COLCHAMIRO who had 10 children. Elias was their youngest son. He had five sisters and four brothers. All he had when he arrived in New York was \$10 but he was very confident that he would make a good life in New York City.

The first thing he did was go to school to learn to read and write English.

In order to make money, he went into his own business by buying thread for sewing machines. He

sold this thread to factories in lower Manhattan. Little by little he prospered and soon had his own factory where he manufactured nightgowns and pajamas.

My mother left Greece for the same reason. They were very very poor and she told me stories about her home in Greece that I never forgot.

Girls never went to school. They were taught to cook, crochet, knit, etc. Esperanza was the youngest of the girls so she was everyone's favorite. Her brothers were traveling salesmen so they brought her silks and fabrics with which to make dresses, hats and whatever clothing the fabric could be used for.

One day she was all dressed in her new outfit and was sitting on the steps of her porch knitting when her father said to her in a whisper..

"Esperanza. Do not move or turn. Be perfectly still until I tell you to move".

Esperanza always obeyed her father and it was a good thing she did. Guess what happened! A big snake had come behind her and if she moved, he

probably would strike her with his poison. Because she did not move, the snake slid away and her father told her it was safe then. Her father always went out into the fields carrying a cane which had a sword on the inside. He used it to protect himself from snakes in the field.

Another story she told me about snakes really scared me.

In the kitchen they had a big stove to keep them warm and also to cook on.

One wintry day, my grandmother went into the kitchen and on top of the stove there was a big shelf. She noticed that there was a new batch of infant snakes on the shelf. She called for my grandfather to get rid of them.

He shoveled the snakes into a big box and took them out and put them in a locker he had outside.

Late that night, the mother snake came looking for her baby snakes. When he couldn't find them, he got very angry. He went into the cellar where

my grandparents made wine and kept them in barrels. In his terrible anger, the snake spit poisonous venom into each barrel.

My grandfather knew that snakes are vengeful so he decided to return the snakes back to their original place on the stove.

The next night, when the snake returned, he found his brood. He gently transferred them to another area outside. Then he went back to the house, wrapped himself around each barrel of wine and broke it so the wine ran out and could not be drunk.

My mother and her family heard a commotion and found the two barrels smashed and ruined. My grandfather realized what happened. The snake did not want them to drink the wine and die. As long as he had gotten his brood back safely he did not want to harm this family. Snakes are a lot smarter than we realize.

When Esperanza arrived in New York she too went through Ellis Island . She told them that her name as ESPERANZA MATZA.

Esperanza means HOPE in English....but the man said that she was so pretty he wanted her to have a pretty name. He said she would be called NANCY MATZA in America. And although all her family and friends called her Esperanza, she always signed her name NANCY MATZA on any documents she had to fill out.

Esperanza got a job working in a factory near her home. One day, Elias Colchamiro went to this factory to sell some of his thread. When he spotted Esperanza he was very attracted to her as she was quite pretty. He asked if he could walk her home. He waited for her in the office and when she was ready, they started to walk down a steep flight of stairs. Esperanza was so excited that halfway down, she slipped and fell the rest of the way.

Elias helped her up. Esperanza was so

embarrassed she said she was fine. But actually she was black and blue when she got home. She told everybody she fell real hard for Elias and she wasn't kidding.

Soon they became engaged. In those days (1905) someone from the grooms family (father or uncle) would visit the future bride's family and offer the parents a present....like a piece of Jewelry or something of value to give to the bride if she consented to marry the groom. If she accepted the gift, that meant she would marry him. Esperanza was thrilled to marry Elias.

In those days, very few weddings were as elaborate as theirs. They had a beautiful wedding in a big catering hall on the East Side of Manhattan.

Esperanza was dressed as a bride and rode in a horse and buggy to the wedding.

Everyone they knew was invited. They even had a band that played Greek and English songs. There was drinking and dancing. In those days, it was

customary to give each guest almonds wrapped in net material tied with a ribbon. To this day some people adhere to this custom.

It was one of the nicest weddings of that era and Esperanza and Elias Colchamiro were lucky to have found a two-bedroom apartment in the neighborhood where they started their married life.

The hardest thing for Esperanza was learning to speak English. In Greece the girls were given no schooling and this frustrated her. When her children were grown, she finally had the chance to learn how to read and write English at an adult education center.

But soon she began her family and had no time to worry about school. Elias was very enterprising. He worked very hard, saved his money, and then bought some sewing machines to start his own factory.

Esperanza had her first son in 1908 and a few years later I was born. All told she had 9 children.....5 girls and 4 boys.

1909

One of my painful memories is when my baby brother Sam died of diphtheria. In those days they did not have medicines like Penicillin to help cure him. I still remember how heartbroken my mother and father were. I don't think they ever really got over it.

Because I was the oldest girl, I had to help my mother take care of all the little ones. I never minded it because I loved them and they loved me.

While we lived in Harlem on the fourth floor, every day when I returned from school I would ring our bell. My mother would open the front window and throw a large cloth shopping bag with a few dollars in it which I would catch. Then I would go shopping for whatever vegetables were in season.

My father would shop for the meat and groceries from an East side butcher who would deliver it to our apartment.

When World War II broke out in Europe, all male citizens were told to report for duty. We were worried that my father would have to go....but when they learned that he had five children (and one on the way) they deferred him. When the war was over, I went to my friend's house who lived on Fifth Avenue and watched the parade of soldiers returning from the war.

Because Harlem was so congested with lots of traffic and no place to play but in the gutter...my parents moved us to Coney Island. We all loved it there.

We were only two blocks from the beach and the Atlantic Ocean. We had wonderful years there. When the ocean was calm (at low tide) we were all taught to swim. Before the hot summer came the beaches were fairly empty. We played ball and ran and walked along the water's edge and picked seashells.

The steady sound of the waves as they

hit the sand and then retreated made us feel safe and secure. When it was near dinner time, I gathered all my little brothers and sisters and walked them home. What fun it was.

We needed a bigger house, so my parents moved us to a one-family home in Brighton Beach which was also a few blocks from the boardwalk , the beach and the ocean. Now we had a four bedroom house which seemed very luxurious to us.

In one bedroom we had two double beds. Each was occupied with two sisters...and in the other bed another two sisters. There was a large opening into the second bedroom, where there were two more double beds. Two of my brothers slept in one bed....and one sister slept alone in a big double bed. My older brother had a small room to himself...while my parents had the room at the end of the hall.

In all the years I lived at home, I never

remember sleeping alone in a bed! But I never minded because we played games like GHOST ...and entertained each other by singing....or acting out skits. We had lots of fun.

As I grew older, my friend Ruth and her older sister helped us form a "Girl's Club". Ruth's older sister helped us with our meetings and every month would take us on a trip to the Statue of Liberty or MACY'S Dept. store at Christmas time to see Santa Claus. One time she took us on a boat up the Hudson River....another time she took us to Coney Island where we spent the day at a fun place called Steeplechase. What fun we had.

When I was 13 years old, I asked my mother if I could take some of the younger kids to see Santa Claus in Macy's Dept. store. She knew I would take good care of the little ones so she let me go. We had a wonderful day and the kids behaved themselves all day. After that she let me take them to many places of interest. Steeplechase in Coney

Island was our favorite. This was a very big building which held 51 exciting rides and amusements. My mother gave us lunch to take along so we could stay all day. We enjoyed the slides....games...rides of all kinds. Steeplechase stayed open all summer and ended with a wonderful Carnival and baby parade. What fun it was while we pushed our way through the happy crowds throwing confetti at everyone. We would also go to the boardwalk in the evening and watch the most spectacular fireworks.

I also took them to the local movie. The admission was six cents. They showed two double features and a serial called Pearl White. Each week they continued the story....which lasted a few years.

All the children in our family were very smart in school. My sister Terry was the smartest. She majored in languages and still teaches French and dancing here in Miami.

The girls were not encouraged to go to college (not in my family anyhow)....so I went to work

for my father in 1928 as a bookkeeper.

In 1929 there was a financial crash in wall street stock market. It left many people penniless, including my father. Things got very hard for my parents. With so many kids to support it was very hard to make ends meet. However, they managed to keep plenty of food on the table and the clothes worn by the younger children were all hand-me-downs. Only on Passover would we get new clothing and new shoes etc. But no one seemed to mind. As long as we had food to eat...a place to sleep and that big wonderful ocean and beach to play on, we were always a bunch of happy kids.

We had many happy years growing up in Brighton. In the summer all the family would congregate outside our private home. Across the street lived a nice young man named JACK EISENSTARK. He lived alone and worked in a fruit store in the neighborhood. He would join us. My younger sisters would tease me about him because he paid so much attention to me. My sister Jean had a boyfriend who also came over quite often. Before long, I fell in love with Jack so when he proposed marriage I said YES.

At that time my father was offered a good job in Greensboro, N.C. and they planned on moving the entire family there. My mother wanted me to have a big wedding (like hers) and invited everyone we knew. Jean didn't want to leave Murry so they decided to get married also. All the plans were made for my wedding at the Aperia Manor, a fancy catering hall. So we had a double wedding which was the talk of the town! We even spent our honeymoon together. My older brother Jesse, and my sister Terry were going to college so they stayed

on in New York. The rest of the family moved to Greensboro, N.C.

Jack and I rented an apartment above a store on Brighton Beach Ave. That's where my daughter Carol was born. She was the first of my mother's grandchildren and the favorite of all her uncles and aunts. She was very bright....loved to dance....and often entertained the family. A few years later, my son Elliott was born.

My mother moved back to N.Y. as she missed her grandchildren. In 1940 my parents made weddings for four of my siblings. Eventually my parents had 21 grandchildren -- which certainly kept her busy. We all lived in Brighton, or nearby, and saw each other often. The cousins became very close friends and grew up together. Those were happy years for all of us until the war broke out.

My brother Oscar went into the army -- Terry's husband Sidney Landau went into the Marines. Most of the others took defense jobs to aid in the war. That's what Jack did. We moved to Baltimore, Maryland so Jack

could work in the shipyards.

Carol and Elliott loved it there because we had a house with two bedrooms upstairs and the kitchen and living room downstairs. There was a backyard to play in.

There was no such things as toys for the children. Jack was very handy and built a toy wooden doll house. It was quite large. The whole neighborhood joined in. Some of them whittled furniture -- others wallpapered the rooms. we had lights that went on and off. They made a bathroom and shower. I made the curtains for it. When it was all finished all the girls in the neighborhood played with it.

My sister Jean shipped her son's old broken peddle car. Jack fixed it up and painted it. Elliott loved it was he road it up and down the street. He was the King of the Road. He was a good kid and let everyone take rides in it. I left both the car and the doll house in Baltimore when we returned to New York after the war.

One day a week, Jack came home two hours earlier than usual so we could go into town to shop for the week.

We always took the kids with us. They enjoyed stopping at the Ice Cream parlor for their ice cream cones which was a big treat.

The shoemaker, the barber would stop by the neighborhood. Three times a week the vegetable man stopped by. Some of us would chip in and buy a bushel of apples and in the evening when the children were asleep and the Daddy's too, the women (five of us) would get together in someone's house and we would peel and slice the apples. The head cook would let us help her make the dough. We all brought our own pans and we made about two pies. We talked about our life and shared stories about our home town. I was the only one that came from New York.

One of them, a beautiful Italian woman taught us how to make different spaghetti dishes. We really helped each other with problems that came up.

Most of my family took turns visiting us. That made us happy.

I liked living in Baltimore. It was a very interesting

experience meeting people from different parts of the country. Some were from the south and some from the West.

Carol loved to dance, so we enrolled her in a dancing school. When the school put on shows, I invited my family to see her entertain with her group. After four years of dancing, she quit because she had lots of other interests and dancing took up too much time. We still have many pictures of her in the little tulle outfit I made for her "on her toes". She never gave up dancing and when she grew up she won some contests for "best dancer" up in the Catskills. She loved dancing to the music of Tito Puente every Friday night in Manhattan.

One day Carol came home from the beach all excited. She told me that she met a very nice fellow. His name was IRVING LINKER. Everyone that met him liked him. He came from a family of TEN kids. I thought my family was big....but his was bigger.

Today, most kids have their own room. Irving told me a story that made me laugh.

He met a little 8 year old girl and asked her if she had any sister or brother. She said "Yes. I have a brother".

She asked Irv if he has any brothers or sisters. "Yes" he replied, "I have 9 brothers and sisters".

"Oh, you're teasing me", she replied. "Name all of them".

Irv. named them....and she still wasn't sure. Finally she said, "how is it possible? I never saw a house with 11 bedrooms!"

In her generation every kid had their own bedroom! But that's your generation. Each generation improved on the last one.

When Carol and Irving married, we had the wedding in the Manhattan Beach Synagogue. With his huge family and ours, there was lots of dancing and fun.

A few years later, Elliott married Roz and so Jack and I were alone

Carol & Irv moved into a lovely apartment in Brooklyn where David and Adam were born. They needed a bigger home, so they moved to Flushing, New York.

From there they moved to Chicago. They took many pictures and some movies which you probably can see.

When we got older, my brothers Jesse and Morris, and my sister Jean and Murry retired to Florida.

My son Elliott and Roz moved to Florida with their children. Jack and I realized that we were at an age where Florida would be the best move for us.

After living in Florida a few years, Carol and Irv Linker moved to Florida also.

Elliott and Roz had Stacey and Craig. Craig recently married and is living in Florida.

David met Mommy in Florida and they married and moved to New Jersey where Daddy could further his career. That's where his two beautiful daughters and handsome son were born.

AND THAT'S WHERE WE ARE AT NOW. I had my 88th birthday this year. It has been wonderful having such a loving family around me. Very often I see my sisters and brothers, children and grandchildren, and great grandchildren --- with more on the way .

It's been a good life with so many people to love in my old
age.