

“A Tribute to Grand Dad”, watercolor
Gigi Vranian

This is Craig Vranian’s hand, who is Ed’s second oldest son. Every year he smokes a cigar and drinks a beer on August 1st (Reuben Bedros Vranian’s birthday) to honor his Grand Dad. Of course, his grandfather drank a Budweiser, but Craig drinks a Bud Light since he is a Cardiologist.

His grandfather was born in 1903 in Aleppo, Armenia. When he was 12, he came home from school to find his family had been murdered. He subsequently lived through the Armenian genocide, which was the systematic killing & deportation of Armenians by the Turks of the Ottoman Empire, which lasted from April 24, 1915 until the 1920’s. At the end, between 600,000 to 1.5 million Christian Armenians were dead. He walked the death march and then rode for a while with T.E. Lawrence, a British officer who made daring raids killing the Turks. T.E. Lawrence came to be known as Lawrence of Arabia.

When he was 19, he left Armenia with the help of an aunt, came to America by ship and landed in Detroit, Michigan. He eventually came to Richmond, VA and met and married, Ethel Vranian- apparently a related cousin, by a 5th or 6th generation connection. All the Vranian relatives, here, are related to Ethel’s side of the family. They had one son, Ed, my husband. They operated a successful deli in downtown Richmond, called Reuben’s Park Avenue Inn from the 1930’s to 1960’s. He was a wonderful grandfather to Ed’s 4 sons. What an amazing life story which he never spoke of to his family. He did describe, on tape, his time during the death march to a cousin, Vigen Guroian, who was a religious professor at UVA. A life worth this tribute.