

Success didn't spoil Leo Dardarian

Last time we learned about Louis Rosenbloom and his success at owning and operating Louis' Restaurant at 107 Falls St. opened in 1913. A later story caught my eye highlighting a Leo Dardarian, who began his career as a dishwasher and at the time of the story, Feb. 7, 1945, owned a half-interest in a restaurant which serves more than half a million meals a year. It noted a comparison with a Horatio Alger novel in that regard.

Dardarian came to this country at the age of 14 from Armenia in 1913 with a few words of English and French, with \$3 and a one-way ticket to Niagara Falls, where he had relatives, in his pocket. His first employment was at the old International Hotel as a butcher's apprentice but he did not earn enough to send some extra money home to his family in Armenia, so he got a part-time job as a dishwasher at Louis' Restaurant. Back in 1913 the restaurant seated only 40 but in 1945 when the article was written, the seating capacity had risen to 200 diners. He learned well during his first 10 years from Rosenbloom, who patterned his business on the system used in Statler hotels. He considered him a "master." In 1925, he decided to quit and open his own restaurant and instead he was offered an interest in the business if he could raise some money as Rosenbloom was thinking of retiring.

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COMMENTARY



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The new Armenian Choir following its installation and blessing. Leo Dardarian is seated next to the Rev. Servop Manoogian, Armenian church leader.

He found some help through Louis Silberberg (also a part owner) who guaranteed his bank note and later, during the 1930s, he and Sam Friedman a local merchant bought the entire control of the business and became equal partners.

Leo Dardarian handled the purchasing and preparation of the food while Sam, the "front man" took care of personnel and customers. During 1945 the restaurant purchased 175,000 pounds of meat, 100,000 pounds of poultry and 60,000 pounds of sea food annually. Naturally there was more to make the meal. Added to the main course were 250,000 pounds of potatoes, 100,000 quarts of milk and 250,000 eggs and other items. Louis' customers downed 500,000 cups of coffee a year along with 100 pounds of sugar a day. I do not think all of that went into the coffee as they also a large dessert menu.

Following the example of

his former boss he was able to handle the growth of his business easily and "kept up the standards set by his beloved mentor." He kept in touch with Mr. Rosenbloom until his death in October 1948. He was generous and his ability to give back was mostly about food as he played an important part in raising funds for his starving fellow countrymen in Armenia after World War I. Later, here at home, during the depression years in the 1930s he was a pioneer and leader in establishing the Niagara Falls soup kitchen which served a total of over 75,000 meals to help those in need. At the time of the newspaper article in 1945, he was active in the job of helping to raise funds for an Armenian church in Niagara Falls. He served as treasurer of the group.

A Buffalo Courier Express article of Sept. 15, 1950, which stated, "A group of practical-minded Falls churchmen has

rented its contemplated church site for use as a gasoline business to help raise funds for a new church building. After purchasing property at Ninth and Niagara as the site for their new church, the building committee of the Armenian Apostolic Church reaped a "good offer" from a gasoline firm to rent the property for use as a service station, Leo Dardarian, treasurer of the building fund committee, disclosed today. "It's hard to raise money for religion these days," Dardarian said, "so we decided to accept the offer and find another location for the church. The steady revenue from the property will help gain additional money for the construction of the church."

The struggling congregation of the Armenian Church, the only church of this faith in Western New York, was organized in 1946 with the help of the St. Peter's Episcopal Church, which had extended its facilities and the services of its clergy until the new congregation obtained a pastor and built a church of its own. A total of \$20,000 has been raised for the new church as of this date.

A new choir of the Armenian Church was installed and blessed at St. Peter's Church this week by the Rt. Rev. Servop Manoogian, dean of the Armenian Apostolic Seminary in Jerusalem. The newly-vested choir sang both modern compositions and Armenian Chuang hymns and liturgy dating back to the fourth century."

Stay tuned ...

The city of Niagara Falls — celebrating 125 years of history. Contact Norma Higgs by email at niwahigg@aol.com.