

MY MOTHER LAMIA/EARLY YEARS

Following is the a short biography of my mother Lamia, the ordinary life of an extra ordinary woman. She was a special woman because she raised three sons often sacrificing her own well being and a possible long career as a teacher. In an era where most woman were not expected to attend College she had graduated from the University of Istanbul with a B.A. in French Language and Literature. She was active in sports, and extracurricular activities and had supported herself as a teacher during her college years and even after she had graduated from College. She got married to my father, a young naval officer in 1946 and moved to Gölcük, the small sea port and naval base of Izmit; an hours ferry trip from Istanbul. I was born a year after, my brothers Cenan and Mustafa followed in 1950 and 1962.

It was the years after second World War. Everything was in short supply and it seemed the best gift you can give your child was a good education. All three children were sent to private schools which required high tuition and that was only possible by cutting funds from parents own necessities.

I know very little about my Mother's childhood. She was born in February 6, 1922 in their family home at Kocamustafapasa Istanbul, the same house her mother was born in. In this old wooden house both her mother and mother's brother, their respective families and their children lived together; some fifteen to twenty people at a given time. I had written a chapter about this house in my book about Istanbul and I will not go into to much detail here. It was a three story house with several rooms with high ceilings, a Turkish Hamam of it's own and an adjacent huge kitchen with a big stove and food storage room in the basement of the kitchen.

The families often dined together. My mother's aunt Fevziye was an excellent cook who had taken over the kitchen duties. The back yard had several fig trees, a little barn where they always kept a couple of sheep and some chicken and hen. They often visited an uncle, " Hazim " and his little farm which was about forty five minutes walking distance right outside the city walls of the old city. There Lamia would often pet the farm animals, play in the puppy fields with her younger brother Lemi. Sometimes the family would go to a picnic in the Sariyer district in Bosphorus with her three cousins, Bulent, Berrin and Benam. "I would always look forward" for this occasion " she would say After a long trip with the tramway and followed by the ferry, they would disboard in Sariyer. They often picked berries from the bushes, climbed the hills of Bosphorus and played with the with cypress cones all day long. During the summer months they would go to their neighbors summer house in Samatya, play on the sand by the Marmara sea , enjoy the sun and sea. This is where for the first time her "Beyba" (dad) Suphi had taught little Lamia how to swim. Another favorite Summer location was in Yesilkoy, where the kids loved to play in the yard of the another white summer home.

The house in Kocamustafapaşa still exists today; vacant and in ruins. Nobody can do anything about this since it is considered a "Historic Monument" and it needs huge funds to rebuild it according to its original looks. I lived in the house for a short period during my childhood and later during my middle school years. At that time I was going to Sankt George, a private boarding school in Istanbul. My parents were living in Ankara and I was spending the weekends with my Grandmother in the old three-story wooden building along with our other relatives.

The house always fascinated me then and more so now. I had drawn the blueprints of the floor plan from my memory and devoted a whole chapter in my book to it. After thirty years of not being able to see it, I visited the house once, with my mother in 2002. We could not go inside since nobody was home that day but I took several pictures and enjoyed the time I spent with my mother in the same neighborhoods she had spent her childhood. My mother was 81 years at the time and did not even hesitate a second when I proposed to her to go see the "House" all the way on the other Continent in the Old City.

After visiting the house we went through the courtyard of the Sumbul Efendi Mosque. This Mosque was of special interest to her since her Grandfather, Grandmother, her Uncle and her Mother had their funeral ceremonies here and she had often visited Sumbul Efendi's tomb with her grandmother and mother during religious holidays. The courtyard was crowded with people that day, young and old and as we went through the cobblestone streets all the way down to Samatya, passing Armenian Churches and Synagogues, she would stop for a breather and :

" It seems to me that I know all these people " she would say.

Another favorite summer resort was Bostanci where her favorite aunt, her Beyba's sister lived. She would often go there for weeks during summer, taking with her the porcelain baby doll, a rare and valuable gift given to her by her parents which I had seen years later in the old house. Her aunt was a beautiful and well-dressed woman and I believe the young Lamia, always admired the colorful scarfs and the patterned Italian shoes her aunt wore.

" One day when I was only five or six, they sent me all of a sudden with my baby doll to my aunt in Bostanci. I did not know what was going on but I knew something was terribly wrong since everybody in the house was crying . Weeks later , I would learn that my sixteen-year-old uncle Mahmut died on that day while playing with a revolver his friend brought, at the backyard of their house."



LITTLE LAMIA IN THE MIDDLE WITH HER
UNCLE MAHMUT (R), NEIGHBOR ŞÜKRÜ (L)

Few years ago I had asked my mother to write down what she remembered from the old Bostanci, since I lived there, in the same old summer house during a summer vacation in 1958. During those summer months in 1958, she was preparing me for the preparatory exam of the Sankt George School. In 1956 we had lived in Dusseldorf for a year due to my father's job and I had learned the German language fluently. Now my mother, the French teacher, who also had learned German easily, was teaching me the grammar from the books so I could start from the six grade instead of the required preparatory class. Of course with her help I succeeded.

I remember living there in Bostanci at the house of Sunullah Dayi, my mother's cousin, or her aunt's son. I recall playing with Turgut, uncle Sunullah's son who was my age; often climbing the fig and mulberry trees in the back yard, making paper airplanes and flying them from the attic of the old house and watch them hit the minaret of the mosque four or five hundred yards away.

Upon my request my mother, wrote a long letter from Buffalo Grove Illinois, while my father was still alive and they were living together at my brother Mustafa's house. The letter started, with the common greeting:

"Sevgili oglum Mehmet Cem " ,(my dear son M.C.) and explained in detail, who lived in the old house in Bostanci when she was only five or six years old ; her aunt, her uncle, and their children. Her aunt, Murside was definitely one of her main influences in her life, especially in her choice of dresses and mainly her Italian shoes. What she had described in the letter about Bostanci and her relatives who lived there in the old house: I put in to my own writing in an article which was titled ; The White House In Bostanci . I kept the letter form , added what I remembered from the suburb myself and decorated it with some historical information. I published the letter or the article in my website and it became instantly a hit. I received congratulatory e-mails from the residents of Bostanci and their forum. Not only they loved to hear from people who lived in their neighborhoods years ago but also they felt proud of an old lady , who dressed so modern and secular even in 1930 ies when she was young. They published some pictures of her from an engagement ceremony in Bostanci in the nineteen thirties in their web site .The pictures were taken during an engagement party of a young lady from the famous Karabekir family, the daughter a hero of the Turkish Independence war, who was one of my mother'e close friends. She was a "modern Bostangian", a role model for all young people, then and now.

I will add the story here, which appeared in both websites, for the convenience of the Turkish reader. Hopefully in the future, I will translate the letter-article into English .

Sevgili Ođlum Mehmet Cem,

Bana gecen gn eski Bostancı'yı ve oradaki Beyaz Kşkte bir zamanlar yaşamış akrabalarımızın hikayesini anlatmamı istemiştin. O gnler o kadar geride kaldıki, adeta bir sis perdesi çocukluđumun belkide en gzel gnlerinin getiđi bu beldenin nnde duruyor. Bu perdeyi aralamaya, cođunlukla yaz gnlerimi geirdiđim çocukluk gnlerine dnmeye bayađı bir aba sarfettim.

Benim çocuklugumda, Bostanci Istanbul'un nadir sayfiye semtlerinden biri idi. Istanbul'da kşk bulunan hali vakti yerinde paşalar, st kademe devlet zevatı, zengin tccarlar, yanından tren yolunun getiđi deniz kenarındaki bu gzel yerde, birer de yazlık konak yaptırmayı ihmal etmemişlerdi. O zamanlar Bostanci , sıra sıra byk baheli kşklerin, sebze baheleri ve bostanların alabildiđine yayıldıđı bir byk alandı. Buraya Bostancı denilmesinin sebebi de, bir zamanlar Osmanlı sarayının Bostancı başı'nin burada yaşaması, ve Topkapı sarayına taze zezavatin burada yetiştirmesinden kaynaklanırdı. O zamanlar, yalnız Bostancı'ya degil, Istanbula gelip yerlesmek her babayigitin harci deđilmiş. Bugn, Bostancı da minibus yoluna ıkan kavşadıđın orada bulunan taş kprnn yanında eskiden bir karakol bulunurmus. Anadolu tarafından Istanbul'a girecek kişilerden mrr tezkeresi yani bir nevi pasaport sorulurmuş. Amele, kayıkci, kalyoncu, aşi yamađı , v.s gibi işlerde alıma izni isteyenlere duruma gre geici izin verilir ve bunlar bekar uşaklarının yasadıđı otellere yollanmış

Biz gelelim benim çocukluđumun Bostancısına. Dediđim gibi, geniş alana yayılmış sıra sıra baheler

çoğunlukla kızıltopraklı ve çakıl taşlı yollarla birbirine bağlanıyor. Bahçelerde yemyeşil ince diken yapraklı çamlar, incir ve dut ağaçları. Küçük bir kız çocuğu iken, halamın beyaz köşklü evinin bahçesindeki beyaz ve karadut ağaçlarının altına kardeşim Lemi ile beyaz bir çarşaf tuttuğumuzu, ve Sunullah dayının ağaca çıkıp dalları sallamasıyla bir dut yağmuru altında kalışımızı hiç unutmam. Hatırlıyormusun oğlum, 1958 yılı yazı o beyaz köşkte hep beraber kalmıştık. Sen o zamanlar Avusturya Lisesi Hazırlık sınıfını atlama imtihanına hazırlanıyordun. Arka bahçedeki incir ağacının en tepesinden aşağıya düşerken, son anda alt dallardan birine takılıp kalıvermiştin. Nasıl korkmuş, sana nasıl kızmıştım.

Bostancı da unutamadığım bir yerde , Vapur iskelesi ve Tren İstasyon kısmındaki çarşı kısmı idi. O zamanlar bu çarşı küçük, şirin dükkanların bulunduğu arnavut kaldırım bir sokaklıktan ibaretti. İstasyonun bahçesinde çinar ağaçlarının gölgesi altında küçük bir kahve vardı. Beybabam, bazen beni ve kardeşimi buraya götürürdü. O bir kahve içer , bize de gazoz ısmarlardı. Tren İstasyonun biraz ilerisinde Bostancı camii vardı. Bu cami bugün koca koca apartmanların içinde kaybolmuş beklide o günden bugüne Bostancıdan bize kalan tek yadigar olarak yaşamını sürdürüyor.

İstersen sana birazda Bostancı daki o beyaz köşk de bir zamanlar yaşamış akrabalarımın bahsedeyim. Ben babama her zaman , "beybaba "yada "beyba" derdim. Beybamlar iki kardeş imişler. Kendisinden üç yaş büyük ablası yani benim halam yeryüzünde sevdiğim ilk insandı belkide. Mürşide hanım uzunca boylu narin ve zarif havası olan çok hoş bir hanım. O zamanlar benim çok hoşuma giden kıyafetleri vardı. Sadakor beyaz bir etek, üzerinde aynı kumaştan vücuda oturan zarif bir ceket. Başına uzun ipekten çok renkli bir eşarp bağlar, uçlarında aşağıya doğru serbest bırakırdı. Ayağında gene beyaz renkten İtalyan derisi son moda iskarpinler . Halam bir fayton çağırır ikimiz yan yana oturup giderdik. Nerelere giderdik ? Simdi tam aklımda kalmamış ama ben kucağımda taş bebeğim, kırlardan , gelincik tarlalarının içinden geçtiğimizi hatırlarım hep.

Eniştemle halam sevişerek evlenmişler. Eniştem Nurullah Bey orta boylu sohbeti tatlı, neşeli, nüktedan bir beyefendi. Çok kültürlü adabi muaşeret bilen eski bir İstanbul beyefendisi. Çogunlukla olağan dışı giyinirdi. Kış aylarında kalın gabardin kumaştan ceket ve pantolon içine ekosele bir gömlek. Boynuna kravat yerine şarap rengi bir fular. Çarsıdan geçerken herkes kendisini selamlar, o da selamlara o zamanlar benim pek anlamadığım cümleler ile karşılık verir hal hatır sorardı. Eniştemin çok çapkın bir bey olduğu söylenirdi. Ama halamı çok sevdiği ve onu çok iyi yaşattığı muhakkaktı.

Eniştemle Halamın bu evlilikten bir oğulları olur, adını Sunullah koyarlar. Tabii anne baba çok mutlu. Çocuk büyür, yakışıklı uzun boylu genç bir delikanlı. Çapkınmi çapkın..Suadiye ve Bostancının bütün güzel kızları Sunullah dayının peşinden koşarlar. O da kızların. Okulu bitirir mi bitirmez mi , bilemiyorum. Sonunda evlenir. Sonra boşanır. Yine evlenir. Tam beş kere . Bu beşinci evliliğinden Turgut isminde bir oğlu olur. Ama bu eşi de kısa zaman sonra çocuğunu ve kocasını bırakıp baba evine geri döner ve karı koca ayrılırlar. Sonra, hayatının son demlerinde son bir kez evlenir genç bir hanımla. Bu evliliğinden güzel bir kız oldu. Sunullah dayı çocuklarına iyi bir gelecek sağlamak için bu muhtesem köşkü iki daire karşılığın satar ve köşkün yerine koca bir apartman dikilir. Çok gecmeden altmış yaşında aniden vefat eder. İste bu çok kıymetli tek evladın sonunda böyle biter.

Aslında eniştemle halamın bir oğulları daha vardı; Masum. Masum eniştemin kız kardeşinin oğlu. Eniştemin kızkardesi hastalanıp ölünce Masum ortada kalıyor. Zira baba başka bir kadınla evleniyor. Eniştem oğlanı alıp eve getiriyor. Halam, o iyi kalpli güzel insana hiç tereddütsüz ve sevinçle çocuğu kabul edip bağrına basıyor. Herkese, Allah bana iki oğlan çocuğu verdi diye söylüyor hep.

Gel zaman git zaman Masum büyüyor. Bu oğlan Bahriyeli olmak hevesinde hep. Zamanı gelince okul

imtihanına sokuluyor. Gedikli subay kısmını kazanıyor ve Bahriye hayatı başlıyor Masum'un. Genç gedikli subayın ilk görevi Atılay denizaltısı ile Çanakkale boğazında yapılan bir tatbiktir. Atılay Çanakkale boğazına doğru süzülür ve burada son olarak boğazın anafolu sularına dalar. Tarih 14 Temmuz 1942 dir ve bu güzel yaz günü Atılay denizaltısı ve genç gedikli Masum bir daha çıkmamak üzere dalmıştır. Battış sebebi hiç bir zaman belli olmayacaktır. Kimisi bir yangın , kimisi ise Birinci Cihan Harbinden kalma bir mayına çarpma diye düşünür.

Bostancıdaki köşkte bir anda matem havası eser. Bir kıyamet günü sanki bir tarafta ağlamalar bağırlar, diğer tarafta garip bir sessizlik, bir ümit ve bekleyiş.. Enistem bütün gece uyumaz. Sabahın alacakaranlığında , Bostancıda deniz kıyılarına koşar. Saatlerce , Marmaranın mavi sularını seyreder, belki Masum yüzerek çıkacak diye. Ertesi günü gene koşar aynı kıyıya. Bu bekleyiş günlerce sürer . Ama Masum hiçbir zaman çıkmayacaktır sudan.

Herhalde Nurullah enişte bu acıya dayanamadı ve hastalanarak felç oldu. Ömrünün son senelerini yatakta geçirdi ve bu olaydan dört sene sonra vefat etti. O öldükten 15 gün sonrada Halam bu dünyadan ayrıldı.

İşte böyle oğlum. Bana eski Bostancıyı ve o güzel Beyaz Köşkü ve içinde yaşayan insanları anlat demişsin. Elimden geldiğince ve hatırlayabildiğim kadarı ile anlatmaya çalıştım. Belkide seni üzdüm. Ama Şen ailesi böyle yaşadı ve öldüler.

Hayat işte bu...

Annen Lamia Özmeral

15 Aralık 2003

Buffolo Grove

Illinois

Not: Bu yazı annemin yukardaki tarihte bana yolladığı bir mektuptan derlenerek yazılmıştır.

Cem Özmeral

16 Haziran 2005

Dublin, Ohio

LAMIA'S SCHOOLING

"My Father always sent me to the best schools available. I started the elementary school in one of the neighborhood schools in Kocamustafapasa."

L.Ö.



Her father, Suphi Aykut was at the time working as the passport officer at the Air France Bureau in Istanbul. He spoke some French, had travelled all the way to the New Continent once, but was denied entrance to America at the Ellis Island due to health reasons.

He wanted to raise his children in the best available schools, wanted them to learn foreign languages (French and German were popular at that time), wanted them to be good citizens who knew how to share and help others. His daughter was going to be a modern, polite, good mannered, well dressed, outgoing young lady every body would admire. She was the most beautiful little girl with green eyes, coal black hair and a fair skin. The education would be the icing on the cake.

"When I was twelve, I started the middle school in Jean Darc in the Kumkapi district . Kumkapi was almost an hour walking distance from our house. I often had to take the tram or the bus to the school. The school was founded in 1882 by some Catholic nuns and their primary objective was to teach French culture to Turkish students.

"Not only here was where I first learned French but also penmanship, posture, walking, etiquette and how to dress." L.Ö.

I always admired her hand writing. Oh, it was beautiful as a river's flow. I could never write like that. She had the patience which I lacked and the talent of an artist. Even in her late years very little deteriorated from her penmanship. Check the two passages from an earlier letter and one from her last letter two months before she died. C.Ö.

Yorum ayın 30 u nişanlıları tam
3 ayı yakus bir zaman 15 gün
sonra da nişanlı erinde ola coşum .
Bu sa baki uyandırdım zamanı
15 gün sonra uyandırdım da yaluz

From the letter she wrote to her fiancée Hamza in 1946

25 Eylül 2009
Çiğdem 2009 25 Eylül
Odandayım . hep düşünüyorum
başka hiçbir iş yapamıyorum , hemer yorul-
yorum oturmak veya yatmak istiyorum .
Tek ender olarak çocuklar benim bir yemek

"At Jean D'arc we were allowed to dress according to our individual preferences but within the guidelines of the school. Long sleeved dresses above the knee level, black patent shoes, a white colour or an plaid scarf and a white matching beret. L.Ö.



I think Jean D'arc was where her life long dressing preferences, color and accessory choices were first formed. The Beret, which was a life long friend and companion especially in her late years, was introduced to her for the first time here.

When she was looking at her own pictures taken at her husband's funeral in November 2006 she suddenly realized that she was wearing a beret instead of the customary head scarf for such an occasion. "How come nobody told me about this!" she pitied.

In her own funeral three years later Servet, her brother's wife was wearing a beret too.

The same beret she gave her as a present, thinking she will have no use for it pretty soon after all and she wanted her friend Servet have this as a souvenir.

And her shoes and her boots. Her perfect small feet with the pinkish red birthmark on her ankle. The shoes even the house shoe, the so called "terlik" had to have heels at least an inch, neatly polished, elegant and always in style. On her last visit when it was snowing in Columbus, I asked her to wear one of my daughters modern sheep skin boots to keep her warm. She did not say "no", but she never wore it. Hers had to be the black polished pattern boots, not the suede bulky looking sheep skin.

"Later on during my middle schools I transferred to another French School, the St. Pulcherie in the Taksim District . Little more far away from our house but another school formed by French nuns one of five hundred or so world wide. Here not only was I introduced to French culture and literature but also on personality development level I was thought to be a sharing , caring and responsible individual. After graduating from St. Pulcherie I started attending the Istanbul Kiz Lisesi or Istanbul Girl's Hihschool in Cagaologlu District. his old High School was formed during the Ottoman times in mid Nineteenth century and not only had reputation for providing the young Turkish woman the best in education but also in physical development and sports. In 1924 (when I was only two years old) Istanbul " Kiz Lisesi" had won the first Girls Highschool Volleyball Championship in Istanbul.

" Here in the Physical education classes I got involved with volleyball and gymnastics. In the latter I excelled".

ISTANBUL KIZ LISESI

1938



ISTANBUL KIZ LISESI 2008

After graduating from High School she started attending University of Istanbul in the Beyazit District where she would graduate from the

Department of French Language in 1944. During her college years she wanted to be not a burden to her family and started working as a part time gymnastics teacher at the Uskudar Girls High School on the Asian shores of Istanbul. At that time of course there were no bridges connecting the European part of Istanbul with that of Asia hence in addition taking the bus from Beyazit to Eminonu at the mouth of Golden Horn, she had to take the Ferry even in bad weather to reach the shore of Uskudar. While she was teaching gymnastics she would often practice swimming when she visited her aunt in Bostanci or on their frequent visits to the Prince Islands in the MarmaraSea. She was an adventurous young woman who would try different things, like horseback riding, taking flying lessons, being a girl scouts leader to list few. These were all unknown activities for most young people at the time let alone to a young woman. She also dressed very fashionable and developed into a very attractive young lady. One of her pictures with the Girl Scout uniform made her the cover of a sports magazine. She would also start teaching French in the same Uskudar High School during her last years at the University. She would continue teaching French even after she graduated till she got married in 1946 and moved to Gölcük.



She was a good swimmer, I could not touch her in that. Her generation never knew swimming pools , the wavy waters of Marmara was where she learned swimming and she could swim for hours. One day , when we were little kids and swimming with her in Kucukyali with aunt Servet and her kids, a strong wind blew away my plastic ball towards the Prince Islands. She swam for a good ten minutes, caught the ball and brought it back.

I am looking to her pictures from her college years. It is amazing how modern , fashionable , joyful active and young she was. Always smiling, close to her friends, loved by her students, a modern and model Turkish woman of the new Turkish Republic. C.Ö.



Of course before she got married to my Father there were lot's of young men who were affectionately interested in her. One such young man was her classmate at the University of Istanbul. His name was Ryzy, he was of Polish origin and quite handsome lad. When I asked her of their relation ship, she would say that they were only good friends. But she also confessed to me that when she just became engaged to my Dad, a young and handsome teacher at the Uskudar Kiz Lisesi, were both were teaching, asked the school Director if he can give him a helping hand to ask her family in marrying her. Of course it was too late. The hand some young teacher was to become a prominent Turkish news paper journalist later on.



ÜSKÜDAR KIZ LİSESİ circa 1944. LAMİA IN WHITE IN THE MIDDLE, THE YOUNG TEACHER WHO WAS TO BECOME A FAMOUS NEWS PAPER JOURNALIST (E.G.) second to her left.

TO BE CONTINUED.