

A 60-YEAR-OLD CRIME UNCOVERED

Posted on September 5, 2015 by Keghart

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✘ **Avedis Kevorkian**, Philadelphia, PA USA, 5 September 2015

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Yes, I am including all the Armenians, though only one small segment is the cause of my
agitation.

And, what is so amazing is that the event that has caused my distress took place more than 60 years
ago.

In 1951, the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) produced a massive and remarkable, 9x12,
book dedicated to the Armenian boys and girls who fought in the Second World War, and it was
called, modestly and simply, "Our Boys." I treasured it and kept it in a file cabinet, rather than on my
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About five years ago, Greek friends asked me to help them compile a history of the Hellenes in
Philadelphia centered on the only Hellenic Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I took out "Our
Boys," and went to the meeting. So impressed were they, the project manager asked to keep it for a
week, and at the next meeting praised it to skies and said that he hoped that the Greeks could
produce something equally impressive. Their book, because of unique circumstances and the long
history of the Post, is different.

"Our Boys" went back into safekeeping in my file cabinet.

Recently, I was asked by someone who was involved in the Philadelphia Genocide Centenary to
help him put together a modest publication of 100 interesting facts about the Armenians of
Philadelphia. During our discussion, he mentioned that others had said that one of the items should
involve an early merchant whose name no one seemed to know because he was identified only by
the name of his shop. Embarrassingly, I could not get it right, because his name is unusual, and it
rattled around in my mind.

At home, I remembered "Our Boys" and decided to check it because the merchant's son was in the navy and had participated in the D-Day landings and had told me some unforgettable stories.

I took out "Our Boys" and went through all the names beginning with what I thought was the first letter of the man's name. No luck. I tried another letter. No luck. I decided to start with the first name in the book. I went through the book, looking at each photo and reading the home town. About mid-way, I became uncomfortable because of a pattern I noted in the book. But I persevered. I went through every one of the approximately 4,282 names. No success.

I thought about what had bothered me, and then realized that many names were missing from the book. I checked each name I could recall who I know served and who was not in the book, and then it hit home. The missing servicemen and service women had parents who were in or affiliated with one of the so-called Armenian "political" parties.

My blood started to boil, and boils still.

It was obvious what had happened. The AGBU must have sent out word to all the Armenians and to all the Armenian boys and girls who had served to send in their details and their photos.

But, since this so-called "political" party was (and is, still) opposed to the AGBU, it obviously sent out the word to its people "Do not participate." How else explain the total omission of (at least Philadelphia) names who should be in the book?

One of the omitted was an airman who was awarded the nation's second-highest honor for valor who told me that he was not expected to survive the wounds he received. Another was a Genocide survivor who had come to this country and who became an army officer and was awarded a medal for valor. So, nowhere in the book do their names appear--neither among the survivors nor among the medal winners. Is this something that that so-called "political" party should be proud of?

Can you imagine how stupid were those who led that so-called "political" party to decree that none of the party faithful should co-operate and, equally (let us face it), the party faithful, (and Yes, the veterans themselves) that did not co-operate with the AGBU.

The world out there will not know that scores and scores of young Armenians who also fought (and maybe some of them died) are not in the book which will be seen as the definitive record of that period. It is not too strong a statement to say that this act of deliberately keeping out of the book their own sons was a crime against the Armenians. That the families--and, perhaps, their sons and daughters, as well--were willing partners in the crime does not lessen its wickedness.

This is the same so-called "political" party that divided the Armenians, divides it still, yet periodically demands "unity" (omitting the requirement that it be their unity).

No doubt the leaders of this unspeakably negative organization are pleased and satisfied with themselves that they have rendered into oblivion scores and scores of Armenian boys and girls who

~~proudly served this country and whose names will not appear in a book that was designed to honor~~
those who served. Whatever else the book did/does, it also serves to tell America that the
Armenians were grateful for the freedom and liberty and the opportunity to make something of their
lives and "here are our boys and girls who helped defend and preserve this country."

It is hard to believe that any group of Armenians anytime in our long history has so ill-served the
people. And yet, their successors live on, continue to ill-serve the Armenians, and pretend that the
rest of us should listen to their narrow views about the future of the Armenians and the Diaspora.

Why did I include all Armenians, in the first paragraph (above)? Because I don't recall hearing or
reading anyone anywhere commenting on this sad episode in our history. If there was a voice, I will
be the first to apologize and think that there may yet be hope for the Armenians.

But, if your mind is still in 19th-century Anatolia, where your body is apparently doesn't matter.

