

# LOOKING TOWARDS OUR CENTENNIAL

## From Marysville to Sacramento

By Edie Nicholau Delegans

I am the youngest of the Nicholau family from Marysville CA. I am honored to have the assignment of sharing memories of growing up in a Greek Orthodox family in the small town located 45 miles north of the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Sacramento. Some of my most treasured memories involve growing up in a home where Faith was first and foremost and everything in between. Our little Marysville did not have a Greek Orthodox Church. Therefore our geographical location presented certain worshipping challenges, but our unique circumstances only added to the wonder and meaning of it all. My sisters and I learned at an early age that celebrating the Divine Liturgy did not require cathedrals of stone and gold. Our liturgical life was formed from the inside out.

We had the great fortune of welcoming the Sacramento Annunciation priest one Saturday a month to perform the Divine Liturgy in a humble home that was turned into our AHEPA Hall which was located in a very modest part of town. Father Kermitis was the first priest I remember gracing our Hall with the Divine Liturgy once a month.

I can confidently speak for my sisters when I say one person in particular played a monumental role in our familiarity and love of our Divine Liturgy. This beloved woman was one of my mother's dearest friends and my sister Dorre's Nouna. Kay Efstratis. Kay took it upon herself to build a choir, be the director, and teach us all the choir music and the Divine Liturgy responses. Often rehearsing at her home or at the Hall. It matters not if you could sing or read music. She welcomed any and all with her customary open arms and loving smile. To this day I credit Kay Efstratis with my knowing many of our hymns by heart.

I grew up in such a rich community where people took a personal interest in their youth. For example my Sunday school teacher Diane Karnegas taught me how to pray. Pray with all the love and gratitude I could possibly ever muster every day. My other Sunday school teacher taught me (supporting my parent's beliefs) my faith and personal relationship with God would never leave me and be there for me in the best and worst of times. This beloved friend of mine was and still is Connie Keriotis. I still cherish the Bible she gave me as a young girl with an inscription inside that helped me through some challenging times long after my Sunday school classes with her were over. She had no idea the impact her kindness made on me during my college years. My mother was likewise a Sunday school teacher who took a personal interest in her students' lives as she included her Sunday school class with all of us for a field trip to Sacramento Annunciation church services. Imagine six Nicholau girls plus 4 to 5 more, piled into a station wagon... no seatbelts at that time... To get to the big church an hour away!

I learned about real community in this humble AHEPA Hall in Marysville. Much like a Hallmark movie the ladies would organize potluck baby showers and potluck wedding showers to support each other's daughters, granddaughters, nieces, sisters, etc., and even small scale festivals were planned and executed where a Greek dinner would be served and Greek pastries sold to our greater community at large. It was a huge hit in the area and many people ordered their pastries in advance of the big event. We even had our very own Christmas pageants with homemade costumes, many made by my mother, that were priceless. One year my mother was the director and all my mom can remember to this day about the endeavor was how the Efstratis boys were assigned the role of Kings and they were not happy! Typical boys, they wanted to be anywhere else!

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Imagine if you will, six girls, 10 years apart in age, one mother frantically trying to dress them in their Sunday best while the father patiently waited. That was the one Sunday per month venture to Sacramento. I would call “window!” “I called front seat!” “I call window coming home!” “Stop touching me!” “Mom, Edie’s leg is on top of mine!” Singing songs all the way to Sacramento. We would sing along with gusto to the top 40 radio station to pass the time. Until a song came on where the words were inappropriate for six young ladies, and then in mid-phrase of our belting out the lyrics, not having any idea of their true meaning, dad would abruptly change the channel leaving us confused. Filing into the church. Mom in front as the mother goose, her six goslings following one by one rank and file, with the proud gander at the rear. We always went to the right and got as close to the front as possible. To this day, I am a “righty”. My sister Terre has fond memories of the quarter we each received to give when the basket was passed. And Jamie, to this day catches herself standing as dad used to, arms crossed, in complete focus on the altar. Dad has vivid memories of some of the older members of the church often seated in the back of the church doing their stavros as we passed by... Most likely calculating the cost of six weddings, which might lie ahead for the father. Finally sitting in our pew, (we took up a whole one) being in complete and utter awe of a sound I could not quite ever get over. It mesmerized me and captivated my soul. The Sacramento choir! I was so charmed by Elaine Makris and Bill Bobolis. I wonder if subconsciously they were instrumental in my desire to try and sing myself. I do need to stress it was the choir as a whole that made such an indelible impression on this green little kid from Marysville. One Sunday after church mom decided to run into the local grocery store for a loaf of bread before heading home. She was constantly counting heads everywhere she went. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, OK let’s go. She told us to wait in the car as she would only be a moment. This particular Sunday well into the afternoon, she was in the middle of making sandwiches back at home, when Jamie walked into the kitchen still in her Sunday clothes. Mom irritated, asked her, “why haven’t you changed from your Sunday dress yet??” And Jaime said, “ I just got here. You left me at the grocery store and I had to walk all the way home!!!!”

We established a great Nicholau family tradition. After Anastasi service every year we would meet at Dessi and Jim Chuchas’ car and there we would tailgate with the best homemade home baked ham sandwiches on the planet. We could hardly wait for our tailgate party on either F Street or Alhambra Boulevard. And there, standing in the street sometimes freezing and always exhausted we enjoyed our breaking of the fast with such excitement and laughter and a “Xristos Anesti!” every few minutes or so.

One more parting thought... Father Angeles was such a huge part of my entire life. He was my spiritual guide and counselor for the whole of my life. And Father Dogias, I know for certain played an equally important role in the lives of my sisters who lived in Sacramento. How truly blessed my sisters and I have been to have had the God-fearing parents we had, the small-town community we had, and the spiritual fathers gifted us through our association with the Sacramento Greek Orthodox Annunciation Church!