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Harry K. Betros

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A. M. The family requests flowers please be omitted and memorial contributions be made to Trinity Episcopal Church. Funeral arrangements are under the direction of Steele-Black Funeral Home.



Mr. Harry Kalee
#159 Betros

MR. HARRY KALEE BETROS, 83, of 1111 10th Ave., Huntington, died Friday, March 3, 1978, in a local hospital after a six month illness. Funeral services will be conducted at 2 p.m. Sunday at Trinity Episcopal Church by the Rev. Robert Thomas. Burial will be held in Ridgeway Memorial Park. He was born Dec. 27, 1895, in Erna, Syria, a son of the late Kaleel and Thelge Betros. He was owner of the H. K. Betros Oriental Rugs, 1204 4th Ave., Huntington. He was a member of the Trinity Episcopal Church and Huntington Masonic Lodge #53 A. F. & A. M. Survivors include his wife, Helen Betros; one daughter, Mrs. Mary Dorval of Toronto, Ontario, one son, Kaleel G. Betros of Huntington, and six sisters, Fadwah, Fehdah, and Edna of Damascus, Syria, Somalia Charastan, Rasmayah Sayer, and Sayoud Sara of Montreal, Canada. Honorary pallbearers will be Julian Saad, Edward Saad, Ayoub Rahal, George Hanna, Eddie Rahal and T. A. Nasser. Friends may call at Kincaid-Mann Mortuary. Graveside service will be conducted by Huntington Lodge #53 A. F. &

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H. B. 4 March 1978

#159

Oriental Rug Retailer Dies In Huntington

Harry Betros of 1111 10th Ave., owner of H. K. Betros Oriental Rugs at 1204 4th Ave., died yesterday in a local hospital after a six-month illness. *March 3, 1978*

Funeral services will be conducted at 2 p.m. tomorrow at Trinity Episcopal Church. Burial will follow in Ridgelawn Memorial Park. He was born Assad Kaleel Betros in Arna, Syria, Dec. 27, 1895, a son of the late Kaleel and Theige Betros.

Betros, 83, came to America at the age of 15.

"I left home with a cousin who had been to America and had come home for a visit," he said in a 1975 interview. "The Turks ran Syria then and we were treated like peasants because we were Christians."

"I didn't have a dime when I got here," he said. "I went to an uncle's home at Rochester, Pa., and got me a pack and started peddling. I've walked all over the coal fields. I know West Virginia and Kentucky like the back of my hand."

A naturalized citizen since 1928, Betros claimed to have shaken hands with three presidents during his travels.

"I met Woodrow Wilson in Ronceverte, W. Va., William Howard Taft

in Portsmouth, Ohio, and Theodore Roosevelt in Hickory, N. C.," he said.

Survivors include his wife, Helen Betros; one daughter, Mrs. Mary Dorval of Toronto, Canada; one son, Kaleel G. Betros of Huntington; and six sisters, Fadwah, Fehdah and Edna, all of Damascus, Syria, and Somalia Charastan, Rasmayah Sayer and Sayoud Sara, all of Montreal, Canada.

Friends may call from 6 to 9 p.m. today at Kincaid-Mann Mortuary, with orthodox memorial services to be conducted at 8 p.m. Graveside services will be conducted by Huntington Lodge No. 53, A. F. & A. M.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that contributions be made to Trinity Episcopal Church.

Steele-Black Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.



ORAL HISTORY

GIFT AND RELEASE AGREEMENT

I, Harry K Betros, the undersigned, of
Huntington, County of Cabell, State
of W. Va., grant, convey, and transfer to the James E.
Morrow Library Associates, a division of The Marshall University Foundation,
Inc., an educational and eleemosynary institution, all my right, title,
interest, and literary property rights in and to my testimony recorded on
August 13, 1974, to be used for scholarly purposes, including
study and rights to reproduction.

- H.K.B. initial Open and usable after my review.
- initial Closed for a period of _____ years.
- initial Closed for my lifetime.
- initial Closed for my lifetime unless special permission
is gained from me or my assigns.

Date August 13, 1974

Harry K. Betros
(Signature - Interviewee)

1111 10th Ave.
Address

Huntington W. Va.

Date August 13, 1974

Timothy O'Leary
(Signature - Witness)



Harry K. Betros

- TO: 1111 10th avenue, Huntington, West Virginia. Mr. Betros was born December 27, 1895. He is an oriental rug dealer. Today's date is August 13, 1974. My name is Timothy Olson. Mr. Betros, where were you born sir?
- HKB: In Syria, in Arme, Syria, A-R-M-E.
- TO: Um, mmm.
- HKB: Syria.
- TO: Yessir, uh, sir you were born in Syria, how did you get over here to the United States?
- HKB: When I was a young boy my father was a farmer and, uh, I had a cousin he was in America and he went back to Syria and he went to our hamlet to bid my father goodbye coming back to America and he asked me if I wanted to go with him and I said yes. I use to go to school in their hometown and my father and mother thought I'm going, I'm going to the school in Arme. So they let me go, and I said I'm going to America and they thought I was kidding and they didn't think nothing of it. That's the way I come in, I came with my cousin. And we got to Marseilles, France and, uh, from there he couldn't, he couldn't bring me over with him to this country because I was too young and he had an American citizen he was suppose to be single man. And I was bout 10 years old and they wouldn't give me, uh, ticket to come in so I had to be detained there for bout 2 months till someone came back from, uh, our country and he made me his boy and I come in with him under his name. Oslad(?) Ferris David.
- TO: Huh. Well did you come by boat or plane or what?
- HKB: We come by boat, we come by boat from Beirut, Syria to Marseilles and from Marseilles we got on the train to Cherbourg, France, and from Cherbourg we got on the Whites Airline to Alice Island, New York, to New York City.
- TO: How did you get to Huntington?

HKB: Uh, 1913 I have relative here and I thought I come and see um and I came here, that's how come I came here. The Tweel is my relative, my mother is a Tweel.

TO: Um, mmm.

HKB: And I came here to see some of my relatives and I stayed down here for a while.

TO: Well why did you stay?

HKB: Huh?

TO: Why did you stay, did you like it here or...

HKB: I use to go out and travel and make this my head-quarter, I come back here. I traveled all over West Virginia and all over the country carrying merchandise, I use to pack peddle. I had a pack on my back and use to go over to the country and sell merchandise, sell jewelry, notions, cheap notions, cheap jewelry, and everything like that I use to make money. That's the way I made a living.

TO: What was your father's name, sir?

HKB: Kaleel, Kl-K-A-L-double EE-L.

TO: And what did he do for a living besides farm, did he, uh, did he sell [HKB: Our father?] little nicknacks too or did he just farm.

HKB: No, just farmer.

TO: Did your mother work too?

HKB: Yeah, all my people worked.

TO: Um, mmm. What kinds of crops did they raise in Syria?

HKB: We raised wheat, barley, chickapees, fruit, vineyard, we have fine grapes, all kinds of grapes, figs and

lots of other things we raised, [TO: Sounds like...]
lentils.

TO: It was a big farm then, let's see he lived. . .

HKB: No, we was a farmer on the "fifth," the land doesn't belong to us, we have, uh, much as land as we want.

TO: Could you explain that to me, sir? If he didn't own the land how could he farm it?

HKB: It belonged to, uh, a big, uh, rich, uh, official from Damascus and we, we raise crop there on the "fifth"

TO: Oh, I see, so the landlord would get his cut from the crops.

HKB: That's right, he get 5, fifth of the crop.

TO: I see, hum. How many of the other members were in your family besides you and your mother and father?

HKB: I had 6 sister and 1 brother.

TO: I bet you had your work cut out for you then. What were your du-what were your jobs before you came over here?

HKB: Didn't have no job, I was a young boy went to school for a couple of years and that's all, in an Arabic school. Different towns, not in my hometown because my town is just a small hamlet and, uh, we, uh, I go, went to school to 6 mile out_of town and another year I went 14 mile out of town [TO: Um, mmm.] just to beginner school.

TO: Sounds like your father could afford to send you to school.

HKB: He don't have no money there, nobody paid anything for the school [TO: Oh, the schooling was free?/] the school was supported by the Russian Christian. They

was there for the Christians [TO: Uh, huh, I see.]. Cause Mohammadism doesn't support us and the Turk government was against the Christian there. They don't, uh, care whether they educated or not. We use to be under Turkish mandata, the country was under Turk rulers.

TO: Um, mmm.

HKB: And we have, uh, to get out from the country you have to smuggle your way throught, you have to go, uh, to the, uh, port by smuggling. All the country was to be Syria then, those days when I left the country Lebannon, Syria, Palestine, Iraq, it's all Syria, it all was Syria [TO: I see.]. One country and was under the Turkish rule.

TO: And you had to smuggle yourself out of the country?

HKB: That's right.

TO: How did you do that, I mean. . .

HKB: I came to my cousin's home Urna(?) when we was home and then from there we left cross Mt. Truuman(?) bout 5 o'clock in the afternoon and we came to a town named Maskara(?), uh, bout morning. We drove all, we caravan all night, no driving, you know, mules, just mule and donkey and horses. There was bout 18 people. We went to Maskara(?) and we slept all day right by the river there and the nex-, and the same evening we drove on and we went to Beirut and we was in Beirut, I was free to go anywhere cause I was young, but the rest of um was hiding.

TO: Oh, I see. So you, you could go out and get groceries and things for the others.

HKB: No groceries, nothing. They eat there where they was and this, uh, place, this, uh, commissioner who brings them over there he gets commission off of um he had a hotel and provide for them and everything. I use to go out and just eat ice cream and run around the streets.

TO: So this commissioner would smuggle people out of the country?

HKB: Yeah.

TO: This is a big business then?

HKB: Yeah, it's big business. He gets his cut, I came to Marseilles free, he paid my tuition because he was working with my uncle /TO: Uh, huh./ . My uncle go and solicit people to come to Beirut from the country /TO: I see./ and that's what, way we get out from the country. You can't get out in those days because we was under Turkish rule and the Christian, they're not allowed even in the Turkish army and they're not allowed to leave the country. They're just a peasant, poor people.

TO: Was it very expensive to be smuggled out of the country, did it cost alot?

HKB: There was no money in those days, uh, five, uh, one English pound would smuggle you all over the country.

TO: Well how did the people afford to be smuggled then, what did they pay with, did they barter?

HKB: They sell, they sell their crop, you know, they sell wheat and raise herd, cattle, calf, horses, they raised crops and cattle and they can get, borrow the money and pay, when they get here they send the money back.

TO: Um, mmm.

HKB: Cost me \$75 to get here.

TO: Well that's pretty reasonable (laughs).

HKB: Well took me 20 days to get here and 2 months in France. See I take 10 days from Cherbourg to New York on the Whites Airline.

TO: I see. Well tell me sir, uh, you said that you raised pigs and fruits and lentils, and you, you definately ate

your own crops /HKB: Yeah./ What kinds of foods did your mother fix, what, what kind of, uh, . .

HKB: We baked our own bread and we had meat, we have, uh, preserve meat and you, mostly meat we eat is, uh, mutton and lamb meat and, uh, we have, uh, we grind our wheat, boil it and grind it and make (inaudible) out of it. We have olives, we have figs, we preserve figs, we preserve, quinces, we have syrup made of grapes and we have raisins, we have everything we like, We preserve our, uh, supply of food from, from the summer and all through the winter /TO: Um, mmm./ No grocery store there, no can goods in those day, nothing.

TO: How did your mother preserve them, how, what did she use to preserve them?

HKB: She boiled the, uh, figs, we boil it and put sugar with it and make preserves out of it and put it in ca, we can it up.

TO: Oh, I see.

HKB: And we dry it, we dry figs and then we have dry figs and grapes the same thing, we have raisins, we have bushels of raisins. We dry the raisins in the summer and have it all winter and we have chickapees and we, uh, uh, I can't explain to you how we, we, uh, grill it and make candy out of it. We have everything, we had plenty.

TO: What time did you get up in the morning?

HKB: Well all depend, when we want to go to work we get up six o'clock in the morning. But I very seldom went to work, I went to work for bout a month, I use to plant corn behind my oxens, my father's oxen.

TO: Well since your family was Christian, uh, you have a different slant on things than the rest of the Syrian people?

HKB: What'd you mean, uh, different, uh, . .

TO: Well since you weren't Moslem were there alot of Christians there in Syria?

HKB: 8 family of Christian in this hamlet where we use to live in and bout 120 Moslem family but they always nice, they pretty nice people. We haven't had no trouble with nobody, we was highly respected by everyone. But we never, my ancestor was born in Arme, Syria, they was born in Arme and I was born in Arme and we moved to this hamlet when we got acquainted with this land area, it's very fertile land.

TO: Um, mmm. Was the land irrigated or [HKB: No, no, no.] was just rain water?

HKB: It was a dry summer in the country, we have dry summer, we have a dry winter, uh, winter, 3 month winter, seasonal temperate. 3 month winter, 3 month fall, 3 months spring, and 3 months summer but the ground is moisture. It's all the summer you can grow, grow your feed, it's a moisture ground and the moisture and the dew raise the crop and it's rich, it's very healthy.

TO: I see. Well what would you eat in the morning, I mean did you eat . . .

HKB: Bread and cheese and, uh, alisha(?), [TO: Alisha?] yeah, alisha(?) is made from the cheese. You put lemon juice or something in the, in the mut, in the milk and you make alisha(?) that's, alisha(?) just the same as cheese, but it's soft cheese. And we have, uh, (inaudible) and syrup from the grape and that's what we eat in the morning. Very seldom we eat eggs.

TO: What did you drink?

HKB: Water, water, water. Nothing but water.

TO: Oh, okay, uh, how many meals did you have a day?

HKB: 3 meals, one in the evening and the one at noontime, in the morning.

TO: Just like over here.

HKB: Yeah.

TO: Well what changes, when you came over here did you have a hard time adjusting to the things the people ate over here?

HKB: Well not much, I had people to help me along but I, I went on my own anyway. I had a uncle here in Rochester, Pennsylvania, my people, after I got here, they come to Ireland and they thought I better come back home and my uncle here is rich he can give me a hundred dollars I can go back home, you know, my uncle, uh, when I came here he made a remark that why does so many people like that. He had a job and house, he use to sell notions to those peddlers, you know, and that way I, I followed the step of the people / TO: Um, mmm. / who use to come from the old country and don't know nothing and buy this merchandise and my uncle ship it to them from the port to port and they travel all over the country wandering just like gypsies and we did business and the country was good and nobody bothered us, everything was nice, this country was different altogether. Cause with them you sale was glad to see you, you go to any house in the country if they have a room for you, you can sleep, you can eat, you can drink not, nobody bothered you.

TO: Hum. Too bad it's not like that now.

HKB: Huh?

TO: Too bad it's not like that now.

HKB: Now, it's terrible now I tell you the, the people something wrong with their heads. Now just like that yesterday in, uh, Ashland, Kentucky this man slashed the lady's throat and he kicked her boy and he killed her that's, that's even, even in the wilderness of Africa you'll never find people who dare do things like that, they don't. It is law and now the law is

in the hands of the lawyers in the United States and that's terrible. The man like that given, he should be persecuted. I believe some time, you know, we get so hurt with hearing unusual criminal crimes in this country make you feel like, uh, you should go to the Moses law, [TO: Um, mmm.] "eye for eye," and "tooth for tooth."

TO: Almost.

HKB: Now they give um too much freedom in this country, even the criminal they say, "well go ahead we, you burden on the government if you in jail." That's not good. And you get a good lawyer and you have money you can do anything in this country, that's not good. But eventually I think things will be corrected and people will wake up to the greediness, and the, greediness and the, uh, the commercial and the, uh, uh, people who in big business. The big business and the in this country is trying to, uh, domineer and, uh, burden on the poor people. They don't care for the poor people, they just care for that dollar and that's greediness, the people's so greedy especially when it comes to this corporation, big corporation like the oil company, like the chain store, like them American are 100%, 200 and 300% they make profit here and profit here. Just like the advertisement you see on this, uh, television. You see a advertisement that Exxon oil people spent a 16 billion dollar and they repeat it half a dozen times on the television every, every program. What for? Just to make the innocent people feel like those people sincere with the country and they just absolutely pulling the wool over the eyes of the people because they're dodging the taxes and they say we spent 16 billion they put it on the tax, they deduct it from the tax and that's every corporation doing the same thing. I hate to mention Exxon by theirself, there's alot of Exxons in this country [TO: Um, mmm.] and Nixon the same thing. Our president does the same thing, he dodge the taxes and that's not good for the country. The people should be honest. There is no honest people in America today, very few and the few honest people to other people think they absolutely, uh, inno-

uh, simple, they don't know nothing. You try to go along with a crook and he'll think that well we'll take advantage of um anytime.

TO: Um, mmm. What was it all like in Syria, it wasn't like this, was it?

HKB: Never, if you, if anybody get killed in Syria it, it's terrible. Anybody get kill and somebody shoot nobody in those days, never, in those days never. But today, I don't know about today. Today the, well the people, the, uh, Syrians they never harm one another but we have a problem in that country. We have instigator from outside the country trying just to corrupt this country. And to corrupt the living in this country. They want to make a modern people of poor peasant people haven't got any money and how the people going to live when you raise the prices so high and you don't pay no attention and the government shouldn't support those people who have alibis and sick, uh, part of the government I have a bad disease giving me trouble or anything like that the government should investigate that before they give um any money. See you got to many people burden on the government and the government has to pay and the government can not pay unless they collect tax and that's what put the country in the rut. This is great country, God give this country the most blessing of any other corner of this earth. I want to tell you why. You go to Africa today the people dying from lack of rain, thousands and no rain in that country for years. We have the same thing in Syria, Southern Syria when I was in Syria 20 years ago for more than 4 years that Southern section of Syria never had no rain at all and there was a drought in the country and the people had to flee away from water, they have to drink, they have to eat, you see they all gathered up in the northern part of Syria. Same thing with this Bangladesh, Banga, / TO: Bangladesh. / Bangladesh today that's the second flood they had in the last 3, 4 years. See it poured rain there or they go dry, one of the two. This country has every once, every two, three

weeks we have a rain. Summer, winter, everything and that, when the rain come and the sun shine the earth comes up with the, uh, with the wealth, greatest wealth nobody else has except America. And all we need in this country is to be thankful and work our land and be good to one another and be honest, honesty is the foundation of all blessings. Now suppose, let's think from now into a couple or 3 years from now this country will be hit like Africa with no, no rain summer and winter for a couple of years. You'll forget the, uh, gasoline and, uh, and the cars and everything, you running to find somewhere where you can get a drink of water / TO: Um, mmm. / . Well you're not going to get it cause God's watching us. We keep on like this maybe we get it, you see very seldom we had , uh, size rains like we have this year, very seldom we have floods, very seldom we have a drought in Iowa and less food cause we got too much food and we don't thank God for it. We should be thankful, this is the greatest country on God's earth and I'm always for America a hundred percent, I'm a American citizen and I'm proud of the American citizen and I'm proud of the people of America. They, there is energy in this country and there is people but there is some people pulling the wool over the simple people eye and trying to leech, they'll suck their blood. I'm talking too much, that's gone too far (break in tape).

TO: When did you first get in the linen business (break in tape).

HKB: Went in the linen business in 1924 / TO: Uh, huh. / . I went to New York with a friend of mine, his name Willy McCoy from Winston-Salem, South Carolina, he's passed away now. And he encouraged me to get in the linen business and quit this cheap merchandise. So we went to (inaudible) it's a big importer and, uh, give me credit for \$300 and \$50. I got \$350 worth of linens from them and I went to another house with this brother and I went, I went back, I bought bout 3, \$400 and then I went to George Brothers there in my hometown and they give me 600 and some odd dollars of merchandise all on credit / TO: Um, mmm. / .

I come out and I started selling and that's way I started the linen business. Then after it, 1928, I was in New York one day and a fella, his name Eli Cory, God rest his soul, he use to be with the custom house and he carry, he had the control of the Persian rugs and he called me into his office and he said, "I've got 6,000 feet of rug here for \$6,000." I didn't have \$600 (laughs). I said, "I can't buy 6,000 feet of, at \$1.00 a foot." He says, uh, get me somebody to buy and I give you commission. I had a man from Canton, Ohio, he was in New York then and he, he's, uh, big dealer. I went and got him and I recommended Eli Cory to him that he had this pile of rug he want to sell. It's all in one pile 6,000 feet. Well he walked in there and I introduce them, Mr. George, and he started picking rugs. He picked 10 rugs and brought um aside and he said I'll take those 10 rugs. Eli Cory looked at him so funny and he said, "By heck you wouldn't take a piece you damn well don't buy any." So the man said, "Come on let's go." He walked out and I walked behind him and Eli Cory was looking at me and he motioned to me to come back. I went back and he said, "I like you, why don't you get in the right business?" I said, "I don't know nothing about it and I don't have no money." He sayd, "You don't have to have no money." "Where you live?" I said, "Canton, Ohio." He said, "Okay, give me your address and I'll send you those 10 rugs this man picked and I'll charge a dollar a foot for um." "I'll sell um to you but I'll never sell um to him." "And when you sell um you pay me." And that's the way I started the oriental rug business. First week I went up I sold 3 of um to one lady for nearly double and then they recommend me to another lady in Lansdale, Pennsylvania, the lady's name Mrs. Katie who brought my rug and I went to Lansdale, Pennsylvania there was a bone setter there, his name, uh, Dr. Greene, and I sold him 3 rugs. And I paid for the rug and that's why I like the rug business and I started, that's where I started automatically, accidentally.

TO: Uh, do you sell many rugs now?

HKB: Yes I do.

TO: About how many rugs a week do you sell?

HKB: Oh-o-o, you can't tell nothing bout this business, sometimes you sell couple of rugs a week, sometimes couple of rug in two months. You don't sell rugs everyday. This merchandise you have to learn customers and you have to get the merchandise. We don't sell rugs because the people like um, we sell rug if they fit. In this business you have to be honest with your customers and you guarantee your customers your merchandise. If you sell a rug to anybody and they keep it many years as they want and if they don't want it you can always adjust it and give um full credit on the trade for the rug and maybe more / TO: Um, mmm. / . There is a rug like that I sold 9 to 12 salute. I sold it for 675 bout 35 years ago. I got it back just 2 weeks ago in trade, I give the man \$850, he used it 35 years. Now I sold it again, it's sold, the people coming after it Thursday to pick it up.

TO: How much?

HKB: 1100 / TO: Gosh. / . But it cost \$1200 today in New York and 1300, but I'm selling mine for least and it's in perfect condition. Never been exerted or, or damaged or nothing. This merchandise is advancing because it's scarce, they quit in Persia. This was merchandise made with Persian wool and the Persian wool sometimes stronger than any wool on the universe. And it's hand-matted, Corby's Knot and when the rug hand-matted and it's a true color, true dye and good wool and clipped perfect it's precious today because the people they got so much of our American dollars they quit weaving. They sending their children to school who use to work from 5 year old up with, uh, matting rugs. Now they got, uh, different system, they have plenty of money from the Abdon oil, we buy out their oil see and we give um money, they don't know what to do with the money today. They've got more money then they ever have they don't want to

buy nothing from this country. They've been collecting even the rugs who was sent to this country 34 years ago and taking um back, they're paying dear prices for um. They much rather buy a rug in America with our green back then to buy a car for 7, 7, 8, 9, \$7,000.

TO: Why do they want to buy the rugs?

HKB: Cause this is like a painting, it's art and this takes 15, 20 years to make a rug like this. This is 11 x 15 carpet takes at least 15 years single-handed to make it. So that's the only thing they can buy it's still cheaper to them here then to buy anything else in this country. Our television 5 and \$600 they can buy from Japan for \$108. Everything come from Japan for this country even for the television and maybe alot of the cars and everything they's cheaper. Our shoes are made in Italy now, no St. Louis anymore.

TO: This rug here is, uh, you said it took 15 years to make this rug?

HKB: At least 15 years, this is very elegant rug, This is small design, it's a Kerman and the, and uh, it's a fine quality and you have to change threads for every design in this rug. See look at the mythic flowers in that rug, / TO: Um, mmm. / it's very elegant. And this, that takes more time to change the thread to every color to make picture color and make a even, even pattern in the rug.

TO: Tell me what kind of dye did they use on this?

HKB: This is, uh, this is vegetable dye, the other one anelian dye, the other one made after the first world war and it's a German dye, it's fast color, never fade / TO: Um, mmm. / This rug will fade to better colors in age / TO: Um, mmm. / We have rugs here (break in tape).

TO: You were saying sir that you have rugs . . .

HKB: We have rugs here over 100 years old, 150 years old

and they're dated, date in um and the name of the people who weaved in it.

TO: Where did you find that sir, is it woven in. . .

HKB: We collect um, we buy um, I buy um from different places / TO: Where . . ._/ . To find the name you mean?

TO: Where, where on the rug would you find the name or. . .

HKB: Well it be, this rug doesn't have a name. But I have many of um with the name.

TO: Um, mmm.

HKB: But the people who weave this rug maybe 75 and 80 years old. They, they didn't know Arabic, they never went to school, never in school. I, I never went to school but very little time in the old country and this country I didn't have a chance to go to school, I went to night school one time Canton, Ohio and I only learn how doorknob. I use to call the doorknob a door hinge and Mrs. S. Arthur Wills, she was my teacher, and she said this is a doorknob. Following Wednesday I went to the night school and nobody was there, they close the school, nobody came in see so the school, I just went one night of school in America and after bout 11, 12 years I was selling linen and I was up here on Kanawha Boulevard, Kanawha Terrace. And I was selling linens to a lady by the name of Mrs. Henshaw and she called Mrs. S. Arthur Wills from upstairs and she bought some hankerchiefs from me. I kept looking at this, looking at this woman and I thought well I know this lady. And she kept looking at me too, she bought bout \$1100 worth of linen and she tell me to give her my name so she can make me check, she lives in the upstairs in that apartment. So I give her my name and she say, "Oh Harry, you are my star (laughs) school attendant in Canton, Ohio." Her husband worked at the Appalachian Power Company, S. Arthur Wills and, uh, they moved him from Canton to here and

they was living here on 10th avenue, on the corner of 10th avenue and Kanawha Street in an apartment. After that I sold her some rugs, Mrs. Wills she passed away in this town and her husband pass away. I have some of her rugs just as I sold her, I got um back.

TO: Where do you get your rugs sir?

HKB: I got my rugs from New York, the importer in New York, there is 95% of the new rugs comes from New York.

TO: Um, mmm.

HKB: And the antique rug you have to collect um, pick um up here and there.

TO: Where, where do you find . . .

HKB: You can not buy um from New York, I can sell um to New York.

TO: Um, mmm. But, uh, how do you go about finding an old rug, do you make trips . . .

HKB: Well I have customers, I have customers who have a market for new rugs. They change decor and they don't want the old rug, some people pass away and their children don't want the old rug and that's the way we pick um up. Sometime you go through an attic and find some old rugs in the attic, people don't care for um, we pay for um and we buy um, pay dear price for um. That's the way it works.

TO: Hum. What would you say that the oldest rug you have is.

HKB: I have a rug here that's 1132 Mohammed days, that is 13 and 99. That's Mohammed (inaudible) date.

TO: So it's about 300 years old?

HKB: That's about 253, 54 years old.

TO: And that's dated?

HKB: Yeah, it's, the date's in the center of it.

TO: Woven in the center?

HKB: Yeah, date woven in it.

TO: And the name of the people who did it too?

HKB: No, just the date, TO: Just the date. date in the center of the rug.

TO: Well what kind of rug is it?

HKB: It's a Kosack.

TO: Kosack.

HKB: Yes sir.

TO: And this is a wool rug?

HKB: Yeah, all wool, all wool and it's a geometrican design, it's here.

TO: Is it a very big rug?

HKB: Well a 3 x 5 (break in tape). See this rug I have on-hand today?

TO: Um, mmm.

HKB: I had one here 12 x 20 and I have one 12 x 18, I have, uh, 10 x 15, 12 x 13, 12 x 15, I have 9 x 12. No 8 x 10, I don't have one today and I have alot of small work TO: Um, mmm. in 5 x 10, 6 x 9 all that stuff. We, we don't, uh, stock rug unless we have customer for it. Now I have a customer for a rug I don't have and I know where to get it. I get on the phone and get from New York, it take a week to get the rug that's all TO: Um, mmm. I can get you any rug in New York and we have connection and we have good credit. They send us

any rug that we want on, on approval.

TO: I see.

HKB: That's the way we do business.

TO: Do customers come to your store from along ways off to get rugs from you?

HKB: Oh yeah, I sold a rug to San Francisco, I sold rugs to everywhere. I sold a rug just recently to San Francisco, a woman went to New York, I have a 9 x 12 here and she walked in and asked me the price of it I said \$1700, she said I was ridiculous, this price was too high. So she went to New York and she was moving from New York to San Francisco and she was there for 3 weeks and she shopped for rugs, She went to different places in New York and she found her rug at Sloan they want \$3300 for it. So, / TO: She came back. / she came here rushing she want the rug, it's Saturday afternoon and I had the rug out on the hill on approval. So I called the lady I said I have a customer for the rug and I'm going to pull it out. She said we haven't decided on it yet, I said that's allright I give you another one someday. So I went and got the rug and sold it to her and she took it with her to San Francisco, \$1700.

TO: Hum. Well tell me then if they come, people come from so far to buy rugs from you and other rug dealers must know you pretty well.

HKB: Oh yeah.

TO: Then you're a very tight organization, what's the closest rug dealer to you here in the, is there another shop say in, uh, Columbus or. . .

HKB: No, no, no I don't deal with them. I deal with New York only.

TO: New York only. But, uh, are there other rug dealers

near this area?

HKB: There is rug dealers here, they's one in Charleston, Rahall and George's Furrier in town there's rug dealers.

TO: Um, mmm. Are, are they good shops?

HKB: No shop.

TO: They're, they're not good shops?

HKB: Yeah, uh, in Charleston I think he has shop, this boy he operates from his house.

TO: Um, mmm, I see. But they deal in oriental rugs too?

HKB: Yeah, they deal in oriental rugs too. They dealer, they get their rugs from New York and they try to see um they have customers I suppose.

TO: Um, mmm.

HKB: All my customers are in Lexington, I sell, I sell more rugs to Lexington than anywhere else.

TO: You don't sell many rugs to Huntington then?

HKB: Yeah, I do sell but I have no trouble selling rugs in Lexington. See I have, I can get the rug, they's more money there. Here the people, the homes in this town, the people here they generally retiring people, the young generation doesn't have big money and over, down in Kentucky they got this old, colonial home and old home and everything and they want old rugs and you can find them no trouble to sell.

TO: Hum.

HKB: If the, see I've been working 25 or 30 years down in Lexington so no problem there.

TO: If the business is so good in Lexington why wouldn't you move your shop to Lexington?

HKB: My wife wouldn't move from here.

TO: Do you like it here in Huntington?

HKB: We like Huntington, it's not confused.

TO: How many rugs do you have in stock here now?

HKB: Oh, difficult to answer you, I have about, uh, I have bout 150 pieces I guess.

TO: Is that as many as you ever keep, do . . .

HKB: No sometimes I have 2, 300, 400 pieces other time I don't, it's, they go up and down. Sometime I can find rug and bring um over here, now in the fall I'll have more rug here.

TO: Um, mmm.

HKB: I'll go to New York and I'll ship rug here. Today in the summer we don't buy, we don't indulge in the summer to find anything and in the winter this is better business in the winter.

TO: I see, I see then your turnover is pretty rapid then?

HKB: Um, mmm. Well it's hard to tell you this is, this is hit and run business. This is not everyday business sometime you get a customer and other time you don't.

TO: What's the most expensive rug you have in the store now?

HKB: This one here.

TO: This one? And how much would you sell this one for?

HKB: That's worth \$5000, I'm selling it for \$3000.

TO: Are you selling it to . . .

HKB: This belonged to New York TO: Um,mmm. I'm selling

it to New York.

TO: Um, mmm. I see. This rug is worth \$5000 right.

HKB: Right.

TO: Then if you are selling it for \$3000 you obvious didn't pay \$5000 for it, how did you get this rug, or can't you tell?

HKB: I bought it.

TO: Sir?

HKB: I bought it.

TO: Uh, huh. From, from an individual or from a dealer.

HKB: I bought it from, uh, I traded for it for another rug from a individual home.

TO: I see. Do you ever get rugs with really strikenly unusual designs, I mean I've seen alot of prayer rugs and floral rugs in your collection but I've not seen many rugs with animals or humans depicted on it.

HKB: They are hard to get now. 20 years ago it was easy, today nobody has um. They're Persian and very few on the market to ask any price for um.

TO: Really?

HKB: Yeah. It's hard to get um.

TO: Well if they're in such new demands how come no new rugs are woven?

HKB: The world's getting, shrinking and everything is done on fast time. Nobody going into take time to weave a 4 x 6 rug and spend 2 years on it.

TO: I see. I see.

HKB: Yeah, this is all new merchandise any size you want and it's open stock, that's from India / TO: Um, mmm. / . But this merchandise is Persian is practically vanishing out.

TO: Um, mmm. Uh, there no new Persian rugs then, are there few?

HKB: Yeah there is alot of new Persian rugs but, uh, not the quality they use to weave 34 years ago / TO: Um, mmm. / . It's different quality today, different dye.

TO: Do you think the Persian rug would ever get to become better quality, would they ever?

HKB: God know, I don't know.

TO: I see. Then you don't think then there's any hope for the Persian rugs today it's all going to be Indian from here on out or?

HKB: Well the following poor people India, Pakistan, everything they's millions of people, there's really hunger and this merchandise belong to America. They dye the wool and they give them the yarn, everything and they give um pattern to weave and weaving rugs in India and Persia French design, out of some French design because that's what the American wants, the people who have the looms in that country. You know they're out of schools there, they get um to schools 7, 800, thousand, 8000 see and they weave and, uh, hang their loom and they start weaving they're weaving according to the specifications of the bosses in America. They give um pattern you have to weave according to the pattern. Less design open field, less design it doesn't take work, doesn't take, uh, time like it's rush, rush, everything rush / TO: Um, mmm. / and they make rug with a heavier thread so you could, not as fine as the real fine Persian and what you're talking about the animal rug and everyone / TO: Um, mmm. / like that but that's passe / TO: I see, I see. / okay.