

Reminiscing about coming to America

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Cini financially, who, before leaving Malta, worked in a hotel and for the government crushing stone for about \$4.05 for a 5 1/2-day week.

"I had the choice to go to Australia, the U.S. or Canada. I chose the U.S.," said Cini, who received his citizenship in 1940.

MARSHALL'S VIVID memories are of a little carefree girl making the ship bound for America her playground.

"From Casale to Genoa, it took a couple of weeks. I had a lot of fun running all over the ship. To me, it was just like being home. But I remember people in long, white robes and wondering who they were," she said.

Marshall also remembers how she learned to speak English. After avoiding the wrath of sea sickness that gripped most on board the ship, she sailed from Genoa to New York. Marshall spent her first days in America in a hospital with a burst appendix.

"I couldn't speak any English," Marshall said, recalling how hospital nurses doted on her and nursed her to health. "When I came out of the hospital, I spoke English."

The story of Marshall's family decision to emigrate to America has a homespun family flavor.

"My mom said my dad used to get together with his friends and gamble," Marshall said. Her father decided the only way to stop was to get away — to America. "And he never gambled again."

BUT MARSHALL, her mother, brother and sisters didn't immediately follow her father to America. Although her mother didn't want to move to America, she finally gathered up her family and made the move, Marshall said.

"He (Marshall's father) did say he did his own laundry and cooking so he could save money so we could come over here. When my dad became a citizen, the whole family did. I was about 7 or 8 years old," Marshall said.

Mekjian remembers landing in America armed with two gold pieces and two satchels of food for his brother, who already worked in the Oriental rug business in New York.

"Everybody was sick," Mekjian said of his fellow passengers on the ship that arrived in New York Harbor three days before Easter Sunday in 1912. Mekjian recalls feeling hungry, not wanting to touch the food his family sent for his brother.

When Mekjian arrived on Ellis Island for entry processing, he was feeling weak from not eating much on the 24-day journey. On Ellis Island, he said, "I put my suitcase out, and he (officially) said, 'Raise it up. If not okay (physically), they put chalk on your back and take you in the office.'"

AT FIRST, Mekjian stayed with his brother in New York, working as a rabbit skinner. Then he moved on to a machinery job in Brooklyn that paid \$5 a week.

He finally moved to Farmington in 1934, opened a cobbler's shop



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photos by RICK SMITH/staff photographer

Charles Cini left the island nation of Malta in 1934. "I had friends, cousins, here. I thought maybe I would get a good job here."

downtown and, in 1937, purchased the home in which he still lives on Wilmarth.

"I love this country. Yes, I'm glad I came here. Look what happened (in Armenia)," Mekjian said.

Hills man leaves mark on New York harbor

By Ann Chowdhury
special writer

The fourth of July celebrations at the renovated Statue of Liberty have taken on special significance for Farmington Hills resident A. David Kahn and employees at his Redford firm, Protective Partition Systems.

The company has helped ensure security during the celebrations in New York by making three bullet-resistant doors and the vision and transaction windows for the ticketing area.

Visitors will wait to buy their tickets for the ferry to Ellis and Liberty Island from the specially designed windows at Castle Clinton, in Battery Park at the south end of Manhattan Island.

Among these visitors will be Kahn, his wife, Marcia, and his son, Daniel, 7.

"My father took me to see the statue when I was young," Kahn said, "and I took Marcia when we were married. They were both memorable experiences to me, but little did I think I would one day have the chance to work on it."

KAHN SAID he will be sure to obtain photographs of his family purchasing their tickets.

He will also be conscious as he passes the doors of the ticketing area that underneath their stainless steel coating, hidden from view, are his own signature and those of the six men responsible for this special project.

They are Ron Craddock from South Lyon, the engineer who designed the products; Milford's Bob Funk who delivered them; Larry Baltes of Livonia who supervised and helped with the fabrication; Kevin Evanson from Drayton Plains, Ron Carpenter from Livonia, and Jerome Miller from Detroit who manufactured parts.

"They always do a good job, but they really put their hearts into this one," Kahn said.

KAHN ADDED that the men like to sign the

more unusual jobs they do, such as safety features his firm manufactured and installed for the NBC studios in Burbank and protection systems guarding a bank vault of gold nuggets in California State Park's Empire Mine Museum near Sacramento.

Protective Partition Systems' bullet-resistant windows have been installed in banks, colleges, universities and foreign consulates since the early 1970's and have been credited with helping to reduce bank robberies.

Most local people don't realize that this area spearheaded the bullet-resistant partition industry and that most of the testing and proving was done here, Kahn said.

In New York, the bullet-resistant products will remove the attraction of the ticket windows as a target for robbers and serve the security needs of the ticket agents and buyers, he added. Since crowds of 5 to 8 million are expected during the celebrations, security is a major concern.

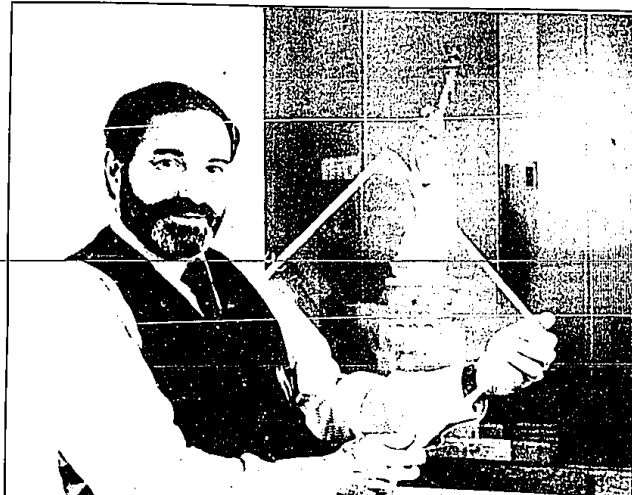
The FBI will coordinate the Secret Service, the Navy, the Coast Guard, the National Park Service and the New York Police Department during the four-day weekend.

KAHN IS particularly pleased to be involved with the renovation of the Statue of Liberty because of its significance to immigrants. His mother came from England in her early childhood and his father, originally from Austria, was from New York.

Kahn is a former vice-president of Southeast Michigan Mensa, an organization of persons who have scored in the top 2 percentile on Intelligence Quotient tests.

An entrepreneur, he also created Data Way Electronics, specializing in computer voice response technology.

He is on the board of directors of St. Dunstan's theater in Cranbrook and has acted in local productions.



ANN CHOWDHURY

Farmington Hills resident A. David Kahn, with a sample of his bullet-resistant glass.

Michigan seat belt law helps to save lives



RICK SMITH/staff photographer

The severity of traffic injuries has been reduced since the mandatory seat belt use law took effect, says Farmington Hills Police Sgt. Pay Cranston.

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not include points on a driver's record.

MORE THAN 1,500 people die on Michigan roads each year, but less than half are buckled up. Comparing the first 11 months of the mandatory seat belt law with the preceding 11 months, 125 fewer people were killed on Michigan roads, findings show.

"Statewide, we're down 56 traffic deaths when comparing Jan. 1 of 1985 through June 22 of this year to the same period last year — 686 to 600," said W. Howie A. Cox, Traffic Safety Association of Michigan Detroit Operations executive director.

He attributes the reduction to not only the seat belt law but also greater adherence to the 55 mph speed limit on freeways and greater awareness of driving defensively to combat drunks.

Immediately following the seat belt law's enactment, compliance was 58 percent statewide. It has since fallen to 43 percent. But that's still more than twice the percentage of those who had buckled up regularly six months earlier, says the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute.

"Interestingly," Cranston said, "we're finding that more drivers are arrested for being drunk had taken the time to put their seat belt on."

"Our biggest job is proving the seat belt law has value," Cox said.

WEARING A seat belt belt is no safeguard from death. Since the seat belt law's enactment, 243 people who buckled up have died. But the number of people killed in vehicles equipped with seat belts has dropped

by 19 percent, when comparing the first five months of 1986 to the same period of 1985, Michigan State Police records show.

To illustrate the reduction in severity of injury accidents in Farmington Hills, Cranston pointed to statistics for May of 1985 and 1986.

In May 1985, there were 109 injury accidents locally. That compares with 110 such accidents during May this year.

"The difference is that the number of 'A' (most severe) injuries dropped from 13 to seven," Cranston said.

There were 288 injury accidents through the first five months of 1986, 21 more than during the same period the previous year. Yet the number of 'A' injuries dropped from 51 to 35, Cranston added.

Cranston favors making violation of the seat belt law a primary offense. Making it a primary offense would let officers stop a vehicle when they notice the driver or front-seat passenger isn't buckled up, even though no other offense was committed.

SAYS CRANSTON: "The purpose of the seat belt law is to reduce the risk of injury. And drivers have a better chance of avoiding a collision when they stay behind the wheel."

"Slaying behind the wheel not only reduces the risk of severe injuries to themselves but to everyone else in the car."

An unbelted driver and front-seat passenger could fly into one another during a collision, further heightening the risk of injury, Cranston said.

And, he said, there are economic factors to consider.

If you plow into a car and maim or kill the unbelted front-seat occu-

pants, the victims' insurance companies could face major payouts and your insurance company could face having to foot part of the cost.

"The economic loss could snowball — keep getting bigger and bigger," Cranston said.

Studies show that your chance of being killed is much greater if thrown from a vehicle. And your chance of going through the windshield or being speared by the steering column is much greater if unbuckled, said W. Howard Cox of the Traffic Safety Association of Michigan.

"Once people start wearing a seat belt, they'll realize they have greater control of their vehicle because the belt will keep them in position when they're forced to stop or turn suddenly," he added.

THE NUMBER of tickets being issued for failure to heed the seat belt law has risen, Cranston said.

Through the first months of 1986, Farmington Hills officers issued 3,484 tickets for hazardous violations, including non-compliance with the seat belt law. That compares with 3,721 through the first five months of this year.

In comparison, the number of tickets being written for non-hazardous violations has decreased.

"The shift reflects more tickets being written for hazardous violations, including failure to wear a seat belt," Cranston said.

Buckling up isn't the only factor that reduces severity of accidents.

"As traffic congestion increases, the number of collisions goes up, but the severity of injuries is reduced because of typically slower speeds," Cranston said.

IN FARMINGTON, officers have found that more people involved in accidents have their seat belts buckled, Department of Public Safety Deputy Director Gary Goss said.

As a result, the number of severe accidents has dropped somewhat.

Through the first five months of 1986, Farmington logged 51 traffic accidents, up five from the same period the previous year.

The number of injuries increased from 65 to 73. The number of "A" injuries increased from nine to 11, but this year's figure includes three pedestrians, leaving eight in-vehicle injuries. The number of "B" injuries decreased from 24 to 18.

Goss, who confides he didn't buckle up regularly until it became mandatory, also favors making violation of the seat belt law a primary offense.

"I'm not sure making it a secondary offense gets across the message that you want people to wear seat belts. If a person thinks they're going to be ticketed, they're more apt to buckle up. You want people to take every precaution they can," said Goss, a former accident investigator in Detroit.

Direct enforcement of the law would deliver more of an impact, in Goss' view: "It would be like getting a report card."

FARMINGTON OR Farmington Hills officers who don't comply with the seat belt law face disciplinary action, say Goss and Cranston.

"I think our officers are getting better and better about wearing seat belts," Cranston said. "I think the public feels better when they see an officer wearing a seat belt. It's a good way of education by example."