

Sam Mekjian

WWI veteran was loyal to the end

He was one of Michigan's oldest World War I veterans and a fixture in Farmington's Memorial Day presentations.

Sarkis "Sam" Mekjian, 95, of Farmington died March 7 in Sinai Hospital of Detroit. Last April 16, he received a birthday card from Presi-

dent Ronald Reagan.

Mekjian was the last surviving charter member of the American Legion Farmington Post 346. He was part of every Memorial Day observance in Farmington since moving here in 1934 from Detroit. During last year's observance, he placed a

wreath at Farmington's Veterans Memorial.

The Armenian native immigrated to New York in 1912, coming through Ellis Island. He landed in America armed with two gold pieces and two satchels of food for his brother, who worked in the Oriental rug business in New York.

"Someone told me to get out of country," he told the Observer in a July 1986 interview about his life during the Turkish massacre of the Armenians. "If you paid Turks 50 gold pieces, you don't have to be in the army."

"They asked me if I would fight for this country. I said, 'Sure. You betcha. I would fight. The Turks killed my people.'"

AFTER WORKING as a rabbit skinner and a machinist in New York, Mekjian moved to Detroit, then to Farmington in 1934, where he opened a cobbler's shop downtown that he and his late wife, Mary, operated.

Avid fishermen, they often posted a "Come Fishing" sign on the front door so customers would know where they were.

Mekjian had lived on Wilmarth Street near downtown Farmington since 1937.

"I love this country," he said last July. "Yes, I'm glad I came here."

Services were held Friday in St. John's Armenian Church, Southfield. Burial was in Woodview Cemetery, Detroit. Korkeian Funeral Home, Royal Oak, handled arrangements.



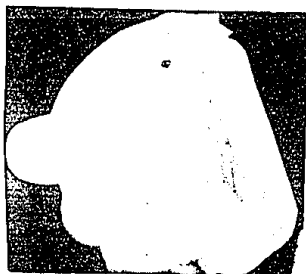
The photo

World War I veteran Sarkis "Sam" Mekjian of Farmington always participated in local Memorial Day ceremonies. He's shown last year placing a wreath at the Veterans Memorial.

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obituaries

BETTY NIEMISTO

Mrs. Niemisto, 71, of Farmington Hills died March 7 in William Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak.

Mrs. Niemisto was a homemaker. Survivors include her son, Richard; a daughter, Nancy Foss; sister, Ann Mattson; two grandchildren.

Services were March 10 at the Heeney-Sundquist Funeral Home, Farmington, with the Rev. Carl Pangel of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Livonia officiating. Burial was in Pelkie Cemetery, Pelkie, Mich.

ANN LaFOND

Mrs. LaFond, 77, of Cheboygan died March 7.

Mrs. LaFond was a homemaker.

Survivors include her sons, David, Michael, Clifford and Tim; daughters, Jeanne Houghton, Patricia Juilin and Bobbie Peto; sisters, Babe Barber, Beatrice Pressau and Loretta Pruitt; 23 grandchildren.

Services were at the Christian Funeral Home, Cheboygan and at St. Mary Catholic Church, Cheboygan. Burial was in Mt. Calvary Cemetery, Cheboygan.

DAGMAR A. PEDERSEN

Mrs. Pedersen, 94, of Farmington died March 10 in Farmington Nursing Home.

Born in Aalborg, Denmark, Mrs. Pedersen was a homemaker.

Survivors include her son, Donald; a daughter, Evelyn Pedersen; three grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

Services were March 13 at the Thayer-Rock Funeral Home, Farmington, with the Rev. Brian Tweedie officiating. Burial was in Oakwood Cemetery, Farmington.



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