

Edward L. Haroutunian, Chair of the Representative Assembly

Ed Haroutunian was recently sworn in as the chair of the Representative Assembly, the final policy-making body of the State Bar of Michigan. My task, as Ed's wife, is to write a short article telling all you lawyers out there just who he is. What an opportunity for abuse of privilege! Tempting as it is, however, I feel compelled to take the task seriously, and so . . .

Ed was born and raised in Pontiac, Michigan, graduating in 1961 from Pontiac Central High School as president of his class. He has one sister, Judy, who also happened to be a Pontiac Central class president in 1959 (I'm not sure, but could there be a little competitiveness here?), and who now lives in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

After high school, Ed attended the University of Michigan for his undergraduate degree and then Wayne State University Law School, where we met. We were married after we both had graduated from law school. We make our home in the Rosedale Park area of Detroit.

"Giving back" is a strong force in Ed's life, and he participates in many civic, partisan, and non-partisan groups, as well as neighborhood and foundation groups. Being a member of the Board of Directors of the International Institute Foundation, whose function is to reach out to the next generation of immigrants, means the most on a personal basis. It is important to Ed because his dad, Louis Haroutunian, was an immigrant to the United States.

Louis was eight years old in 1915 when the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Turkish Empire took place, killing 1.5 million Armenians (about 50 percent of the Armenian population). Most members of the Haroutunian family were killed, but Louis and his brother, Michael, were able to escape into the mountains. With the help of



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an American orphanage organization known as the Near East Relief, as well as that of their oldest brother, Armenag, who was already here, they ultimately made their way to the United States. In 2001, Ed assisted in bringing about the passage of legislation in Michigan, which recognized the Armenian Genocide with a week of remembrance in the month of April of each year.

Ed's mother, Nevart Ohanesian, is from the Grand Rapids area. Her mother, Araxe, and father, Megerdich, were also Armenian immigrants to the United States. What both of Ed's parents emphasized to their children

was the necessity of getting a good education. Following that path, Judy became a teacher, and Ed became a lawyer, something he wanted to be from about the age of 15.

This brings us to the core question: "What does being a lawyer mean to the current chair of the Representative Assembly of the State Bar of Michigan?" First, it means sharing a practice with our daughter, Krista, who is also a member of the Representative Assembly, in the firm Haroutunian Licata Haroutunian, PC, in Bingham Farms in Oakland County.

Second, it means having the opportunity to work with other lawyers. Ed has always felt fortunate over the years to be practicing law with some exceptionally fine lawyers who not only knew the law, but practiced it with integrity and character, and in addition, to have worked with opposition counsel who were in the same category. He believes that the role of the lawyer is of the utmost importance in a civilized society, the goal being to rationally look at an issue and work with other lawyers toward a resolution that the parties were not able to reach themselves. It is this intellectual interaction between lawyers and the practical resolution of problems where Ed finds great satisfaction. It is participating in making the legal system function, as it should, for the public good, that creates for all of us a feeling of pride in being a part of that system.

Third, Ed is a generalist in a time of increasing specialization. His practice revolves around family law, wills, trusts, probate, real estate, and commercial litigation. He has written articles and lectured on divorce taxation and other family law issues, as well as real property and environmental law issues. He has served as a mediator, arbitrator, special master, hearing panelist for the Attorney Discipline Board, and as a special investigator for the Attorney Grievance Commission. He has also acted as a special assistant attorney general representing the Michigan Department



Ed Haroutunian, Susan Licata Haroutunian, and Krista Licata Haroutunian

of Transportation, and as a Wayne County public administrator.

He brings all of this wide-ranging experience and knowledge to any problem. His great strength is the ability to bring together widely separated positions because he can see the pieces that are held in common and form a basis for resolution. Ed's ability to bring people together, along with the breadth of his background, should prove to be a positive influence for the continued growth of the Assembly and its functioning as a vital voice on behalf of the lawyers of our state. ♦

Susan Licata Haroutunian is an attorney practicing family, probate, and real property law in Detroit. She is of counsel to the firm Haroutunian Licata Haroutunian, PC, in Bingham Farms and is a member of the Representative Assembly.