

## **A Brief History of Leisure Activities Through Three Generations**

Andrew Jackson Robinson was my maternal great-grandfather. He was born near Fargo, Georgia in about 1880 and died in 1961. Jack was one of 17 children. His parents died when he was very young. He and two brothers went to live with an older sister who was married and had children of her own. At mealtimes, Jack and his brothers were not allowed to eat with the family...they were sent outside to eat behind the woodpile.

Jack left the sister's house when he was 6 years old and began working at a sawmill where he carried water. Once he was old enough to obtain "real" employment, he began working for the railroad. After being injured in 1930, he left the railroad and began his career as a full time farmer. Jack raised cotton, peanuts, tobacco, cows, hogs, and chickens.

Sara Elizabeth Tomlinson was my maternal great-grandmother. She was born in Clinch County, Georgia, near Homerville in 1882 and died in 1972. Sara was one of 6 children. Unlike her husband, Sara was educated and could read (her father was a circuit-court judge and a mail carrier-- education was valued in her household).

Jack and Sara's leisure time was limited to when there was not work on the farm. Like most farmers, if it was not time to plant the crops, it was time to harvest them. Many activities that people pursue as leisure today were utilitarian chores on a working farm in the 1930's. Sara quilted, knitted, canned produce, made featherbeds, prepared foods for freezing, and worked in her garden. Jack butchered livestock, cooked sugarcane, and ran the farm.



Utilitarian Quilt, Sara Elizabeth Tomlinson, 1945. (detail of quilt on right)

Leisure time, though limited, was spent visiting relatives, cemeteries, and going to tobacco auctions. Jack and Sara went to town on Saturday and bought groceries and other food items. Neither Jack nor Sara could drive, though they owned a Model-T Ford in which to travel and a truck for work on the farm. When she turned 16 and received her license, my mother would drive her grandparents where they needed to go.

The evenings were reserved for listening to news broadcasts and entertainment shows on the radio. Both Jack and Sara would sit around the fire at night telling stories or “spinning yarns” about people and situations. Both were master storytellers who could make even the most mundane situation into a hysterical comedy.

In 1951 they moved into a house with central heating and indoor toilets. Jack and Sara were close to 70 by this time, and what leisure time they had was spent in social atmospheres.

Phillip Kandel was the Father of my Maternal Grandfather. He was born in Austria in 1873. He immigrated to America by himself when he was 12 years old in order to avoid mandatory conscription into the German army at age 13. Phillip made his living as a hat-maker. No one in my family knows his leisure activities. He died in 1922.

Francis Clara Orgel was the wife of Phillip Kandel. She was born in Austria in 1878 and immigrated to America as an infant with her family. She died in 1952. Francis was the first woman to become an insurance agent in the Savannah, GA area. She loved to play cards (bridge especially, though many other games as well) with “the girls”, an informal social group who shared cards, tea, and biscuits. Francis was an excellent cook and baker. She crocheted, sewed, and knitted. There was always a Victrola in her house and loved to listen to Al Jolson records. She was very active with volunteer work within the Synagogue in Savannah and served the Jewish Community in many ways.

Emmanuel Kandel was my Mother’s Father. He was born in 1901 and died in 1982. He was one of 3 children. Born in New York City, his family moved to Savannah, GA in his youth. Manny was very active in sports (basketball and football) throughout his school-days and played on teams in Savannah and Atlanta. He had just begun college at Oglethorpe University in Atlanta when his father committed suicide in 1922.

By 1937 Manny was an independent sales person making his living by selling pots and pans, quilts, blankets, candy, and misc. merchandise out of the back of his car. During prohibition, he transported bootleg whiskey from Georgia to New York and legend has it that he worked for Dutch Schultz (the Gangster). Ironically, in 1948 he began his career as a city marshal collecting taxes on liquor, beer, and wine. By 1958 he was working as an accountant until mandatory retirement from the City of Savannah in 1972.

Woodworking was a lifetime activity for Manny. He made (and sold) furniture and fishing rods and melted down scrap lead to cast into fishing weights. Manny was an avid fisherman up until the time he could not put a boat into the water by himself. He hunted for ducks and marsh hen and spent many hours in the outdoors. In 1965 my Grandparents bought a travel-trailer and camped a lot. Manny took his wood carving tools and fishing poles with him and used them extensively at the campgrounds.

Manny began making and selling wood birds and fish after seeing woodcarvings by a Mr. Copeland in the Fitzgerald, GA area. In 1979, he enrolled in woodcarving courses at the John Campbell Folk School at Brasstown, NC. where he learned to carve feet and wings.



Wooden birds made by Emmanuel Kandel, 1977 (L), 1980 (R)

Manny liked to watch sports on television and read mystery novels. He played bridge and other card games. Manny was a gifted musician, able to play any instrument, but did not own any instruments of his own. Emmanuel Kandel died while camping at Hunting Island State Park in South Carolina.

Arlia Mae Robinson was married to Emmanuel Kandel. One of four children, she was born in the Fitzgerald, GA area in 1910 and died in 1995. Arlia grew up in town, and went to school, finishing high school at age 16. She worked in an office for 3 years in order to save enough money to enter nursing school. Arlia did not finish at this time due to pregnancy and the demands of motherhood. In 1962 (33 years later) Arlia went back and finished nursing school. Arlia worked as a school and public health nurse until retirement from the school system in 1975.

A lover of travel, Arlia jumped at the chance to travel to Europe in 1967. She knitted afgans, hats, Christmas stockings, and sweaters. Arlia sewed clothes for all of her children while they were growing up. Arlia played bridge and many other card games, gardened extensively, and volunteered. She was the state president of the Georgia PTA and Treasurer of the Georgia Nurses Association.



Knitted Afghan made by Arlia Mae Robinson Kandel, 1980 (detail on left)

Arlia enjoyed writing letters to keep in touch with friends and family. She visited with friends extensively. Arlia was an avid reader of mystery and romance books and loved to watch *Perry Mason* on television. She and Manny (and the kids) went to the beach every summer. Camping in North Carolina, Florida, and Myrtle Beach was common. Arlia and my grandfather continued to camp for the rest of their lives and took trips to the Southwestern U.S. where they visited the Grand Canyon, New Mexico, and Arizona. After the death of Manny, Arlia continued to travel. She took a tour to Nova Scotia and continued to visit their favorite spot at Hunting Island State Park in South Carolina.

Harris Kandel Lentini is my mother. She was born in 1938, one of three children. Harris grew up in Savannah and spent time each summer on her Grandparent's farm in Fitzgerald, GA. She worked at private summer camp on the waterfront in 1954. (Harris went to the camp to be a water ski instructor, but when she arrived at camp she found out that they had no motors to pull their boats!) She attended the national Red Cross convention in Atlantic City, and then visited New York City. In 1967 she visited Europe with her mother.

Harris taught high-school biology then went back to school, obtaining a masters degree in science education. Harris taught biology and math, and then went into supervision as a science coordinator in Northeast Georgia. Harris was awarded a Ford Foundation grant for a year spent visiting schools and leading curriculum projects. Harris went back to school and received a doctoral degree in curriculum and supervision.

Harris married, raised 2 children, and went back to work as Curriculum coordinator in 1986. During this time she led staff development workshops for science teachers in Hawaii, the Bahamas, and Russia. She directed an outdoor education facility from 1991 until her retirement in 2001.

Since retirement Harris has traveled back to London, gone on an Elderhostel trip to Australia and New Zealand that focused on cultural and political history and geography. Harris drove to the west coast of the

United States on an extended 2 month camping trip, traveling into British Columbia, Canada. Harris has read for pleasure throughout her life and loves to play card and other games.

Harris began making paper crafts in 2001 when a co-worker showed her some greeting cards made with rubber stamps. This began a rubber stamping hobby which has evolved into paper and fabric marbling, and most recently bookmaking.

In 2002 Harris took a workshop in Paper Making at the Arrowmont School in Gatlinburg, TN. This was followed by a paper marbling workshop, a class in surface design, and a class in copper enameling at the John Campbell Folk School. Fabric dyeing/marbling classes came later, followed (most recently) by a workshop in book arts.



From Right to Left (top): Marbled Fabric Landscape, Greeting Cards, Marbled Fabric Purse, (bottom) Marbled Fabric, Handmade Books. All made by Harris K. Lentini, 2004

Harris is currently attending classes in pottery and ceramic sculpture at Armstrong Atlantic State University in Savannah. Through the 62+ program, Georgia residents age 62 and older can enroll in classes at accredited state institutions for free. Harris is an active volunteer for the American Association of University Women, the PTA, and was an Alderman on the city council in Savannah.

The data in this paper come from conversations relating to family history I had with my Mother, Harris Lentini. It is my attempt to outline the lifestyles of my relatives and how those lifestyles affected their leisure activities. I believe that leisure plays a very important role in the lives of all

people. By balancing work with leisure activities one can manage to lead a very full, rewarding life. Many things were happening in American History that affected the lives of my relatives. The Civil War made it necessary for my Great-Great Grandfather to go fight, but to come home when the crops needed harvesting. Prohibition made bootlegging a profitable and tempting career for my Grandfather. Pregnancy and intolerance made it necessary for my Grandmother to drop out of Nursing School.

Even though social circumstances sometimes make it impossible to do the things one wants to do, solid leisure activities can make the days go by a little faster, make the weights of the world a little lighter, and make it possible for one generation to positively influence following generations.



Andrew teaches Jackson the Ukulele