

## La dernière demeure de Kirk Kerkorian

Le journaliste Manouk Akopyan a fait un pèlerinage sur la tombe du milliardaire américain Kirk Kerkorian :

“What is the name of your loved one?” asked Norma, the operator who answered the phone when I called the Inglewood Park Cemetery to ask about the gravesite of Kirk Kerkorian. I considered for a moment what an odd question this was.

Kerkorian, a beloved Armenian-American and one of the most instrumental figures who shaped Las Vegas, had never met me in the 98 years of his extraordinary life, did not know who I was and very likely never knew that I even existed. But I felt that I had grown to know him very well. It was not the time to overwhelm poor Norma with information she could not care less about. I jotted down the details—Pacific Slope; Lot 633; Grave E—and promised myself that I’d soon make the one-hour trek to Inglewood from my North Hollywood abode to pay respects to a stranger I’d come to know so much about throughout my life.

Over the holidays, I gifted myself [the recently published biography “The Gambler,”](#) a 414-page book that dives deep into the life of Kirk Kerkorian, an eighth-grade dropout who became a respected deal maker and at one point amassed a personal fortune estimated at \$18 billion due to shrewd business decisions in the airline, automobile, movie and casino industries. There was a time when I would to comfort myself after losing money at in the Sin City playgrounds that he built. To ease the guilt, my family and I would joke, “It’s OK. We’re ‘donating.’ He’s done so much for Armenians around the world.”

Reading the book, however, masterfully written by *Los Angeles Times* journalist [William Rempel](#), created a far more genuine connection. It intricately details Kerkorian’s fascinating life as one of the most influential capitalists in American history with anecdotes and stories from previously published materials and information straight from sources closest to Kerkorian—sources I had interviewed myself in the past. The biography was largely the reason why I was compelled to visit his grave. I devoured the book in a handful of days because so much of the material was extraordinary, yet also relatable (save for the fact that Kirk was a casino-building billionaire and I am a journalist—the pay gap between the two is nothing to scoff at). Some highlights include:

—His entire family history dating back to when Kerkorian’s grandfather Kasper immigrated to America in 1890 before the Armenian Genocide;

—How Kerkorian’s father Ahron built, lost and then rebuilt an agricultural empire around The Great Depression;

—Arriving in Los Angeles from Fresno as a farm boy who only spoke Armenian and learning English on the streets before dropping out of school altogether to provide for his family;

—Working for 40 cents an hour as a day laborer at MGM Studios in the 1930s, only to then buy and sell the company three times after he had amassed his fortunes;

—“Rifle Right” Kerkorian’s days as a boxer, as well as a pilot for the Royal Air Force when he faced near-death flying experiences during World War II;

—Flying out Bugsy Siegel last-minute for a quick meeting in Vegas, two days before Siegel was murdered;

—Successfully building his business empires with uncanny ability and cutthroat vision even though he was shy and hated the spotlight;.....



source : The Armenian Weekly