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## PARK AVENUE PEOPLE PROFILES:

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Joseph was a Pilot  
in the Greek Air Force

### Joseph Hovsepian of Mile-End

By Jim Brown

Joseph Hovsepian's father & mother were born in Turkey in 1915 and fled the Armenian Genocide (1915-1923) to Greece. Joseph was born in Athens in 1939 on the eve of WWII. Because of the war he was a child of the heartbreak of the war. He began his working life at age ten collecting glass and metals and selling them. His second job was as a shoe shiner. "Because we were very poor I had to go to school and out to work at the same time."

At the age of seventeen he had decided that he wanted to come to Canada. His sponsor told him that he was too young, like a child yet, and would have to wait. "I was so upset and angry that I went to downtown Athens and volunteered for the Royal Greek Air Force. That was in 1957. It was very rigorous but meaningful training which I believe changed my entire life. I was trained as a pilot and in all aspects of Air Force work but I decided to become a wireless engineer because of my love for electronics." He served in this capacity in an elite unit for 28 months.

"When I still had two months left in my tour I received a notice from my sponsor in Canada telling me that I had to come right away. If I served my remaining two months I would lose the opportunity. I was very distraught and decided to write Queen Phretheriky about my plight. One morning when I went to the hall for the daily roster briefing and the Wing Commander read a message from the Queen. It said that 'Joseph Hovsepian was to be granted two months grace from his tour so he could be relieved to go to Canada.' At this point I acquired a very deep sense of how a great leader respects the citizen, in this case her subject. This impressed me so much that it



Both Mr. Hovsepian's sister and daughter have established their own businesses on Park Avenue over the years. As a member of the Protestant faith,

Joseph became very much involved in teaching classes at Temple Baptist Church at the corner of Durocher and Bernard streets in Outremont. He instructs young and old alike. "Four or five years after I began teaching I started preaching as a lay preacher in the late 1960s. Because of my acute sense of feeling injustice I began working closely with refugees and at the church we serve about 200 refugees. This entails everything from food and furniture to shelter and spiritual reinforcement. I was often the one who had to appear for them in front of adjudicators as well, since as refugees they had no understanding of the essential procedures they were being put through."

Twenty-five years ago when large sectors of the English community began leaving Quebec the head office of the Baptist Church decided to close Temple Baptist and sell the assets. "I persisted that this was a ministry that should continue and it should continue to serve people of every race, colour, nationality and creed. About one year of great turmoil followed this but finally the head office recognized us and said: 'OK. It's up to you. Do whatever you want to do but don't come to us for any help to bail you out when everything fails.' That was 25 years ago. Since then our ministry has been blessed. I was ordained as Baptist minister and accepted the position of pastor on the condition that I did not receive any salary at Temple Baptist Church." Since then he has been serving as a volunteer, pastor, and teacher as well as running his business successfully. He has never stopped being in love with his community and its affairs. He is fluent in Armenian, Greek, Turkish and English and speaks a limited amount of French and thus is able to work & serve people of many nationalities. He says that each one of us regardless of our background, nationality, or religion should be treated and served equally.

"I am devastated. I feel as though someone has removed one of my kidneys." He told this writer in reference to the changing of the name of Park

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became a principle assimilated into my very being and a rule of thumb for my own life."

In 1960 Joseph arrived at Pier 21 in Halifax. He took a train for a day and a half and departed the train in Montreal where he was taken to his new home by his sponsor. He still remembers walking through the door of 5864 Park Ave. at midnight. "It was directly across the street from my present electronics company. Within two days I started a job at \$1.00 per hour. At the end of the week my pay amounted to \$36.00 as the deductions came to \$4.00. When I got home my landlord demanded my \$30.00 rent for the month so I had \$6.00 left from my first week's work at the end of the day."

A short time later Joseph applied for a position in Canadair and was accepted. He worked there for about three years during which time he began his own electronics business -Radio Hovsep- on Park Avenue (just below Van Horne Ave) simultaneously devoting his free time to establishing it on a solid footing. After three years he quit working at Canadair and "... ran my own business full time. The company has done very well and I have bought some properties. I soon became very active in the Protestant School Board. I was the Chairman of the Parents' Committee for Edward VII School for 7 or 8 years and became a member of the Central Parents' Committee of the Montreal School Board."

Avenue by the City Hall gang. "Park Avenue is home for five generations of my family. After I came over my mom and dad arrived within two years -in 1962- and shortly after that my grandparents came as well. My children and grandchildren were all born here. It was my grandchildren who came to me and told me "They are changing the name of Park Avenue Grampa.' Besides being emotionally and spiritually attached to Park Avenue I feel that I have invested my life and my money to make Park Avenue what it is. And I feel that our leaders should care about how we feel when they decide to surgically remove part of our lives."

As a member of the Park Avenue Merchants Association Joseph Hovsepian is "... disappointed in our borough Mayor Mme Fotopulos and Mayor Tremblay for their initial decision to change the name of our street..." He went on to add that later even though our borough Mayor Fotopulos and her colleagues changed their minds and showed some remorseful understanding, the mayor and his circle showed no respect or willingness to listen to our pleas. "The Queen of Greece showed more compassion for people."

Above Photo by SusanMossPhotography.com of Montreal



**New Canada Party Candidate Selected**  
[~NCP pushing "Unity Slate" for upcoming elections!~](#)

## Park Avenue People Profiles:

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