

# Sarp Akalim

See that man on Kemal Ataturk's left shoulder? That's my great-great-great grandfather. His name was Osman Ercan, and along with the other people in the picture he helped enable the implementation of the reforms in the newly founded Republic of Turkey.

This photo is important to us because all Turks respect Ataturk and even being in a photo with him is a very important thing. He was Turkey's George Washington. He founded the independent Republic of Turkey out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. He implemented reforms to modernize Turkey. That picture was taken in Antalya in 1930.

I am like my great-great-great grandfather because he was passionate about his ideas, he didn't give up easily, and he loved reading books and researching to learn new things. After the national war in Turkey was over, the country was in a difficult situation and my great-great-great grandfather contributed to the implementation of educational reforms (the new, modern alphabet, the acceleration of the literacy movement, and the education of girls) in the area that he lived. He experienced pushbacks from others living in the area while working to bring the reforms to life but he didn't give up. He tried different ways to get more support to enable the change.

I am unlike my great-great-great grandfather because I am privileged to live in an environment that provides me opportunities to make myself grow, whereas he was living at a time where resources were scarce.

The most valuable piece of information I learned from connecting with this photograph is to not give up and follow your dreams. My great-great-great grandfather had a dream for Ataturk's educational reforms to come alive, he had some challenges, but in the end, his dream came true. He just had to work hard (okay, very, very hard).

