

Dear residents of Ankara, fellow countrymen and women, dear guests, and my dearest father,

I would like to talk a bit about the old days, and then some about the contemporary. I have more than half a century behind me by now, and I must say I have mixed feelings about Turkey's progress. It sometimes gives me grief, and sometimes, joy. But every time I visit this house where all four of us as siblings were born, I feel a sense of security and peace about the distance Turkey had covered.

When I think about the olden days, I remember living in one of the rare houses with electricity. For our friends would eat their dinners under gas light. We lived through times where we had to use blackout blinds. There was, and still is even a shelter, which made me shiver when I had to pass nearby. The safe in our house was a place to keep quinine instead of jewelry, gold, or cash.

In the winter, food was scarce in Ankara. All the summer in the house would be spent with getting prepared for the winter. We would pick pears and apples and store –or as Ankarans would say, lay– them in the storeroom, to eat during the winter. Okras and eggplants would be put on strings, and left to dry under the summer sun. The apricot trees right there would decorate the place like crown on both sides of the mansion. We were able to preserve only one of them. We would pick apricots and make dried roll-ups with them. We would pick tomatoes and make tomato paste.

We only had a plain cabinet in the kitchen. My childhood memories are full of lips blackened with black mulberries, and hands brown with walnuts. My single most important duty was to scare the birds eating the cherries, by playing tin-can drums under the trees. The time of the day I loved most, on the other hand, was when I got to hold a corner of the cloth extended to gather the mulberries the butler would shake off the tree on the corner. I have countless such memories.

Yes, Turkey saw substantial progress, but it also lost its vineyards and gardens. In those days, the vineyards would be neighboring each other, yet it would be impossible to see other houses from yours. Unfortunately, population growth deprives the children of the day from such joys.

Thanks to our father, we were able to preserve this house. Mom would save even the smallest piece of fabric. In her memory, we established the Sadberk Hanım Museum.

Dad, on the other hand, would never throw away documents. Hence, we decided to gather those documents under a single roof, in this now rare example of orchard houses. Anyway, we have yet to convince him to donate the documents to his center, but I'm sure we will in time.

We set up this center within the framework of Vehbi Koç Foundation, with a view to present the documents on the life and achievements of my father, who was born in Ankara and who became a household name in the global business world, to young generations who wish to carry out research.

We believe in the idea of gathering all materials regarding Ankara, the city where Turkey's heart beats, to accompany those regarding Vehbi Koç. The institution may be a humble one at the moment, but it will grow and develop in time, just like Sadberk Hanım Museum did. Anyone who has some materials on Ankara's values we are about to lose, is most welcome to donate them to this center, and will certainly have our gratitude.

I wish you a good time, and salute you with love.