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Community

Calls for organ donors intensify after Nataline’s death

by Lory Tatoulian

**LOS ANGELES** – According to the United Network of Organ Sharing website, there are currently 97,985 individuals in the United States waiting to have an organ transplant. In the past couple of decades, most organ transplants have become increasingly uncomplicated and routine surgical procedures. Compared to 30 years ago, when the life expectancy of transplant recipients was a few months at best, major strides have been made thanks to advances in surgical procedures and immunosuppressive drugs. Yet, in terms of organ transplants, the biggest challenge the medical field faces today is the fact that there aren’t enough people donating organs to ailing patents. Millions die each year while waiting for an organ because the demand for organs exceeds the supply.

The Armenian community has mobilized efforts in signing up with the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry. Yet, motivating Armenians to become prospective organ donors may be an awkward or uncomfortable issue for some. **Taline Altounian**, an undergraduate student, said that she has always thought about getting the pink dot on her driver’s license, but has always put it off when renewing the document. “I think it is a good cause to donate organs, because when you are gone, you are gone, and your unused body parts can save another life,” the English major said. “But I think, unconsciously, I put it off because it can seem like it might expedite my death, or something.”

The thought of transferring an organ from one body to another may make some people uncomfortable, but most religions and religious establishments, including the Roman Catholic Church, the Buddhists, the Jews, the Amish, and the Armenian Apostolic Church, support the procedure.

“The Armenian Church is not opposed to organ donation as long as the organs and tissues in question are used to better human life – i.e., for transplantation or for research that will lead to improvements in the treatment and prevention of disease,” Archbishop **Hovnan Derderian**, Primate of the Western Diocese, said.

Precious few efforts have been made in the Armenian community to encourage people to become organ donors. The most important Armenian organization dedicated to helping patients who suffer from life-threatening blood-related illnesses is the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR), spearheaded by Dr. **Frieda Jordan**. The ABMDR is based in Yerevan and has offices in Boston and Los Angeles. Another such organization is the Yolian Blood Transfusion Center in Yerevan, which has 1,500 registered donors.

The ABMDR’s services are specific and unique to Armenians because Armenians who are afflicted with a blood-related disease are seldom matched by non-Armenian bone marrow stem cell donors, due to their unique genetic composition. According to the ABMDR, transplantation is the last hope for people with blood diseases, most of whom are children. The probability of survival by transplantation is 40-50 percent among adults and 60-70 percent among children.

Dr. Jordan has run a successful campaign to save many lives since 2001, by finding matches for patients across the globe. Currently the ABMDR has 14,000 registered donors and has recently obtained a stem cell harvester, which is used to separate blood cells necessary for transplantation.

Nataline’s tragic loss

One life that ABMDR tried to save was that of 17-year-old **Nataline Sarkisyan**. When her leukemia went into remission in the fall of 2007, Nata-

line needed to undergo bone marrow surgery. “We found an unrelated match for Nataline, but we decided to have her brother **Bedig** be the donor because a relative is a better choice,” Dr. Jordan explained.

Nataline’s bone marrow surgery was a success, but postsurgery complications required her to have a liver transplant. In the end, the operation could not be performed because her health insurance company initially refused to pay for it. “We did everything we could to save Nataline’s life, but unfortunately there were other health factors,” Dr. Jordan said.

If Nataline had received a liver transplant, her doctors say she would have had a 65 percent chance of surviving for at least six months. Nataline’s parents, **Hilda** and **Koko Sarkisyan**, and brother Bedig have not only become advocates for healthcare reform, but are encouraging their family and friends to become organ donors. At the memorial meal for Nataline, her mother urged family and friends to register as organ donors and become proactive.

How to do it

The process of becoming an organ donor is simple. Most states have donor registries. In California, all one has to do is go to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), check a box on a piece of paper and get the pink dot on their driver’s license. Attorney **David Maseredjian** suggested that going to the DMV is the best way to become a donor. He added that he strongly advises against allowing for organ donations in one’s will. Instead, he said, the advanced health care directive “is a better option.” In the event that a person becomes unable to make a conscious decision about their health, an advance health care directive (a legally binding document that individuals can have on file) lets the



Nataline Sarkisyan, who received a bone marrow transplant and whose doctors had recommended a liver transplant.



physician, family, and friends fulfill the patient’s health-related wishes, including those pertaining to treatment and organ donation, at the end of the patient’s life.

“The DMV is the best way to go about it,” Maseredjian said. “Never put it in a will, because organ transplants are done in such a short period of time, there is no time to wait until the funeral to decide what should be done with the organs.”

Dr. **Ara Keledjian**, who is a heart and lung transplant surgeon in San Diego, explained how the transplant process works. The United Network of Organ Sharing keeps a list of American patients who need organ transplantation. For heart, double lung, pancreas, or cornea transplants, a suitable donor needs to be located from a recently deceased or brain-dead (cadaverous) donor. For heart transplants, for instance, the patient is contacted by a nurse coordinator and then the donor “heart is removed and inspected by a team of surgeons to determine whether the organ is a viable match.

A heart has to be screened for infections, and made sure that it is the right size and the blood is of same type as the transplant recipient.”

“Patients can receive a heart from any donor that is a viable match,” Dr. Keledjian said. “Heart transplants cross all racial, religious, and gender lines.”

Implantation cannot be delayed. There is a limited window of opportunity between removal of the organ and transplantation. If the process takes too long, the organ will become unusable. The maximum storage time for a heart is presently four to six hours.

“The most delicate part of a transplant is the aftercare and management,” Dr. Keledjian said. Since it is a foreign object that is being put into a patient’s body, most transplant recipients must continue medical treatment for the rest of their lives because of the immune system’s reaction to the new organ.

connect:  
www.abmdr.am

How to contact the bone marrow registry

Call 323-663-3609

3111 Los Feliz Blvd., Suite 206  
Los Angeles CA 90039

Taner Akçam, Richard Hovannisian, and journalist Steve Kurkjian will speak at the Dink memorial in Burbank on January 25

**BURBANK, Calif.** – The first anniversary of the murder of Hrant Dink will be marked on Friday, January 25, at 7:00 p.m., at the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America. This event will feature talks by Prof. Taner Akçam of the University of Minnesota, Prof. Richard G. Hovannisian of UCLA, and journalist Stephen Kurkjian, formerly of the Boston Globe.

The program is being co-sponsored by L.A.’s Organization of Istanbul Armenians, the Armenian Educational Foundation Chair in Modern Armenian History at UCLA, and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, and will take place

under the auspices of Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, the Diocesan Primate.

The murder of Hrant Dink stunned and horrified the world and prompted demonstrations in the streets of Istanbul and elsewhere. The January 25 program marking the anniversary of his death will pay tribute to Dink’s courage while giving meaningful perspectives on his life and his untimely death.

Prof. Taner Akçam, a close friend of Hrant Dink, will discuss his final conversations with Dink which took place only two weeks before his death. The author of A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Re-

sponsibility, has himself been a victim of the same persecution that ultimately resulted in Dink’s murder.

Prof. Richard Hovannisian, holder of the Armenian Educational Foundation Chair of Modern Armenian History at UCLA, will reflect on Hrant Dink’s legacy today and in the perceivable future. The author of countless books and articles, including the four-volume history The Republic of Armenia, Dr. Hovannisian recently co-chaired a special session on “On Hrant Dink and Armenian-Turkish Relations” at the Middle Eastern Studies Association 2007 annual meeting in Montreal.

Stephen Kurkjian recently retired from the Boston Globe after a career of more than 35 years, during which he won three Pulitzer Prizes and more than 20 other regional or national awards for his investigative reporting. In January of 2007 he traveled to Istanbul to cover the funeral of Hrant Dink and its aftermath, presenting his report in a Globe feature and a talk at NAASR, and later a lengthy article in April’s AGBU Magazine. He has continued to follow the murder investigation in Turkey and will give an updated report and personal view.

Simon Acilacoglu, president of the Organization of Istanbul Armenians, will give opening remarks, and Archbishop Derderian will of-

fer closing remarks and a prayer. Edvin Minassian, vice president of the Istanbul group, will serve as Master of Ceremonies. There will also be a musical performance by Salpi and Sosi Kerkonian, on flute and harp.

Information on the January 25 Hrant Dink commemoration in Burbank may be obtained from the following contacts: NAASR: (617) 489-1610, or hq@naasr.org; the AEF Chair at UCLA: hovannis@history.ucla.edu; the OIA: (818) 342-6378; the Western Diocese: (818) 558-7474, or info@armenianchurchwd.com.

The Western Diocesan Center is located at 3325 North Glenoaks Blvd., Burbank, Calif.

New York’s Saint Vartan Cathedral will commemorate the anniversary of Hrant Dink’s death on January 20

**NEW YORK** – St. Vartan Cathedral will hold a memorial service to commemorate the anniversary of the murder of Hrant Dink, on Sunday, January 20.

The day will begin with a celebration of the Divine Liturgy, followed by a service for the Repose of Souls and the blessing of *madagh*. Morning services will start at 9:30 a.m., with the *badarak* beginning at 10:30.

The Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America is orga-

nizing the event with the participation of the Armenian General Benevolent Union, Constantinople Armenian Relief Society, Diocesan Gomidas Choir, Esayan-Getronagan Alumni, Forest Hills Armenian Cultural Center, Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society, Armenian American Support and Educational Center, Knights of Vartan, Tibrevak Alumni, and Tekeyan Cultural Association.

After services in the cathedral, the public is invited to a reception and program in the Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium of the Diocesan Complex. A program honoring the legacy of the Armenian journalist who was cruelly gunned down in front of his Istanbul office last January will follow the reception.

The program will feature a presentation by documentary filmmaker Carla Garapedian, director of the award-winning *Screamers*. In the

midst of filming *Screamers*, Garapedian interviewed Dink in Istanbul and was able to spend time getting to know him. Her presentation will feature never-before-seen footage of her interviews with Hrant Dink.

Following the talk by Garapedian, Dr. Herand Markarian will present an audio-visual program highlighting some of the most important moments of Dink’s life and career.

“The goal of this event is to remember Hrant Dink, to better un-

derstand who he really was, and to try and piece together what his legacy means to us all today,” said Rachel Goshgarian, director of the Diocese’s Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center.

For more information on the memorial event, call Rachel Goshgarian or Artur Petrosyan at (212) 686-0710. The St. Vartan Cathedral is located at 630 Second Avenue (corner of 34th Street) in New York City.



Community

Abril Bookstore turns 30

The venerable bookstore is a bona fide cultural destination

by Shantal Der Boghosian

Abril Bookstore is the oldest Armenian bookshop in Southern California. Located at 415 East Broadway Avenue in Glendale, California, it is part of the ground level of a two-story brick building shrouded with luscious greenery. It is a welcoming site, with vivid green ivy twining through iron columns along the storefront. For some, it might be a feat to spend more than a half hour at a bookstore, but Abril is a book lover’s paradise. It carries such an abundant variety of books that one can easily lose track of time while browsing.

This was my first time at Abril. Upon entering, I was greeted by the store’s owner, Harout Yeretsian, who was busy assisting a customer. As he went to the back to find a book she requested, I turned to the customer to ask her a few questions about the bookstore. “I’m not a customer,” Rita Demirjian told me with a smile. “I’m actually the manager of Sardarabad Bookstore, just a few blocks away from here.” Good-natured and witty, Demirjian happily directed me to a friend of hers who was perusing through the wide selection of Armenian books. “She is a customer here and at Sardarabad as well. Ask her all the questions you’d like!” Demirjian said.

I approached her friend and asked her to share her experience at Abril. “I like to come here because I love to read, and Abril carries a wide variety of books,” she said.

Part of a series on Armenian bookstores in southern California

“You can find all kinds of books here, and I like to come and look through them.” Knowing that she was friends with Demirjian, I asked her what the difference was between Abril and Sardarabad. “Abril is very good if you are only coming to buy books. Sardarabad has more arts and crafts, and has a homier feel to it,” she said. “I come here because I enjoy reading so much, and there is a large selection of books. Whenever I want to spend the day somewhere, or I want to purchase arts and crafts as well as books, then I go to Sardarabad.”

Looking around the store, I saw English and Armenian signs designating the various sections: Art, History, Music, Language, Children’s, Literature, Cookbooks, and a non-labeled section of books written in Armenian. The music section was impressive because it carried books about musicians as well as music scores for classical Armenian music, such as those by Aram Khachaturian. The audio section consisted of Armenian opera, classical, and folk music, reflecting Yeretsian’s passion for the arts in general and serious Armenian music in particular. At Abril, the spaces not covered by bookshelves are lined with posters of upcoming concerts and performing arts, making it easy to stay abreast of Armenian events.

A tradition steeped in arts and letters

Abril Bookstore, which was established in 1978, was an outgrowth of an Armenian-language arts magazine of the same name, published by Harout Yeretsian and his late brother, Noubar. “My brother and I immigrated to Los Angeles from Armenia, and in 1977 we started a cultural magazine we called Abril,” Yeretsian said. Given the magazine’s considerable success, the brothers eventually opened a print shop to streamline opera-



Harout Yeretsian. Photos: Shantal Der Boghosian.

tions. As the publishing business thrived, the Yeretsians became increasingly aware of the burgeoning Armenian community’s growing demand for Armenian books. “People wanted to read books in Armenian, and my brother and I wanted to be able to provide that for them.” Yeretsian said and added that in those days there wasn’t a single Armenian bookstore in Los Angeles.

With the launch of Abril Bookstore in 1978, Yeretsian started importing books of all kinds from Armenia, where he had studied theater and still maintained relationships with artistic and literary circles. The bookstore initially opened in Hollywood, where much of the Los Angeles Armenian community was centered at that time. Twenty years later, as Glendale had turned into one of the most important hubs of the Armenian diaspora, Abril made the move to its present location.

Abril Bookstore is celebrating its 30th anniversary this month by giving every customer a commemorative William Saroyan calendar – 2008 marks the centennial of the author’s birth. Each month is depicted by a drawing of Saroyan, and on the bottom of each page there is a quote from one of his literary works. The last page of the calendar contains head shots of

the artists, including Harout Yeretsian himself.

Abril has grown by leaps and bounds in the past three decades. Apart from catering to the general public, the company sells books to high schools and colleges in the Los Angeles area and bookshops across the United States, and continues to publish fiction and nonfiction by a variety of Armenian authors.

If you’re searching for a very rare piece of work, Abril might be a good bet. Even if it doesn’t carry the title, Yeretsian will try to locate and order a copy from Armenia (or anywhere else). The bookstore stocks books published as far back as in the 1930s and 1940s, books published in Venice, Italy, and even classic Armenian works such as those by Movses Khorenatsi, translated into English. The bookstore continues to be renowned for its sprawling collection of Armenian art books, with hundreds of illustrated titles on painting, sculpture, architecture, and the history of Armenian culture. Abril also buys rare books, though it doesn’t accept book exchanges.

**Literary gatherings**  
Twice a month, Abril Bookstore transforms itself into a full-fledged literary salon, accommodating up to 60 guests for book signings and readings. On January 10, Profes-



The view from Broadway.

sor Simon Payaslian will be signing copies of his newly-released work, The History of Armenia. The following event is slated for January 24, when Aram Saroyan will be presenting his new book, Complete Minimal Poems.

“Although Abril has a children’s literature section, we do not host any children’s readings or book signings,” Yeretsian said. However, the bookstore carries a variety of games and puzzles to help children stay fluent in the Armenian language. Abril also sells gift items such as posters, stickers, and mouse pads in the shape of miniature rugs.

A significant portion of Abril’s clientele is non-Armenian. “Many Americans purchase language and history books to learn more about the culture and heritage of Armenians, and to also impress their Armenian significant others,” Yeretsian said with a smile.

Abril Bookstore turned out to be an absolute gem. The very fact that such a store is in existence brings me a sense of comfort. Yeretsian’s passion for the arts is contagious, and it is difficult to visit the bookstore and not want to expand your knowledge of Armenian art and literature.

connect:  
www.Abrilbooks.com

Six Days, 600 kilometers

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his mid 20s, as he sought to get more involved in the community, one of the conduits he came across was the Armenia Fund, in whose work and ideals he found much to admire.

Massis was also an avid cyclist in his youth. He never competed professionally, but maintained his hobby just for the joy of riding. “It was something I did for myself,” he says.

In the last few years he picked it up again, alongside his finance job in Toronto. As for the idea of riding to raise support for a cause, he says it came to him one morning when he woke up and decided, “I want to do something that’s going to challenge myself. It’s a little bit on the extreme side, but why don’t I try to ride out to Montreal? It’s around 600 kilometers... Why don’t I do it for the Armenia Fund? It would make it more meaningful.”

Though the idea came to him over a year and a half ago, he began training in early 2007. As the winter weather prevented him from riding outside, he started off by riding his bike in a stationary position indoors, for about 30 minutes a day, three times a week, and gradually increased it to five to six times a week, three hours a day, in order to build strength for the distance.

Massis and his supporters began raising money just a few weeks before he began his ride. They approached all the various segments

of the close-knit Armenian community to raise awareness. They put up flyers and posters, distributed e-mail announcements, launched a website, and began collecting pledges.

**From church to church**  
His route was simple: ride from Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Toronto to Saint Gregory the Illuminator Church in Montreal.

Along the way, Massis stopped off in different cities like Cobourg, Picton, Gananoque, Morriburg, and St. Zotique, where he met supporters. His website allowed them to track his progress.

Though he could have completed his journey in a shorter amount of time, Massis opted for a six-day ride for a specific purpose. It gave supporters the chance to send him off in Toronto on Sunday, and cheer his arrival in Montreal on Friday. It also made time for two or three extra days to draw in pledges.

**On the open road**  
On a typical day of his journey, Massis got up around 8 AM and began his strict diet of whole grains and pastas mixed with proteins. Even during the weeks leading up to the event, he loaded up on these staples to prepare his body for the immense physical effort that cycling entails.

Massis started riding between 2-3 PM to avoid the blazing sun. He rode for about three to four hours a day – approximately 100 kilo-



Massis Kesisyan rides along.

meters. Throughout his ride, Massis constantly ate bananas, bagels, snacks, and energy bars. By loading up on carbs, he maintained the caloric intake his body needed.

The biggest challenge was the excruciating heat – hovering around 40 degree Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) each day. “The heat emanating off the pavement made it worse,” Massis recalls. “That was the toughest part of the ride.”

While enjoying the scenery around him, Massis stayed focused on pedaling and his riding technique. He kept himself occupied by listening to music. The Red Hot Chili Peppers, dance music, and Armenian and Greek music comprised some of the playlists on the

iPod prepared for the trip by his friends.

Each day, Massis was followed by a different person riding beside him in a car. “It makes a big difference when people do it together,” Massis explains. Receiving encouraging text messages from supporters helped him pull through during training and the actual ride.

Massis’ fondest memory was riding into Montreal in pouring rain. “After five days of 100-degree heat, that was the best part of the whole thing,” Massis says. “I couldn’t see where I was going, I couldn’t see anything... I just kept going.”

His favorite part of the experience was not just overcoming a personal challenge, but seeing the

response from the Armenian community. “I thought it would raise some awareness and people would be interested, but I did not expect to receive the attention that it did,” Massis says. “A lot of people were planning support, sending e-mail messages... there was a lot of positive response from the community.”

In the end, Massis had a positive impact on his community, raised awareness of the Armenia Fund, and raised money for Armenia and Artsakh.

**Looking Ahead**  
“I want to do something in 2008 where we can get more people involved,” Massis says. In addition, he hopes to get an even larger group to join him this year. “We can do it again in Toronto, Montreal, or other cities with large Armenian communities, with more riders,” he adds.

“The idea of 100 k a day is doable,” Massis says. “If we do it again this year, we want people to grasp the idea and not have it overwhelm them. Someone may look at this and say, ‘I think I can pull of 100 k a day.’”

“You have to train to some extent to do this,” Massis continues. “if you prepare for it, train for it, and go at your own pace, it’s doable. Now my challenge is to get people to believe they can do it. I honestly think that anyone can do this.”

To see Massis’ route or if you’re interested in joining the ride, connect: hyerideforkids.com



Community

The Melikian family helps to preserve Armenian manuscripts

■ Story starts on page B1

along with cathedral buildings of medieval Europe. I’ve been doing this sporadically, and whenever we got something exciting, we called Thom to see it.” Dr. **Thom Loughman** is the museum’s curator and would be hosting the tour of the manuscript gallery that evening. He had asked **Harout Yeretzian**, from Abril bookstore in California, if he were to come out to Los Angeles looking for old books whether there would be any available. “I was told that maybe a few individuals would have manuscripts. But nothing like I have. Prof. **Peter Cowe**, who holds the Narekatsi Chair at UCLA and will be coming to the dinner this evening, also said a few individuals might have manuscripts in California, but I don’t know what quality,” explained Melikian as he pulled into the restaurant’s parking lot.

We were scheduled to meet **Ana Almedia Melikian**, his wife, for lunch as well. Ana had been running around with the rest of the Melikian family getting everything ready for tonight’s dinner: from preparing the center pieces to picking up the menu from the printers. Ana has also been involved in helping James accumulate his collection. The two were a pair of history scavengers, completely mesmerized and enchanted by what time decided to leave behind.

As we sat our table, the two were recounting stories and tales of some of the clerical artifacts they’ve been able to recover along with stories of objects lost to foreign, non-Armenian, buyers. He recounted a recent story that involved the Armenian Church in Jerusalem and his trusted dealers, **Krikor Markarian**. “There were these two pairs of old Armenian medieval doors. Wooden doors for churches. Two of its kind in the world and Krikor was going to buy them. But he was told by the Church not to. They had someone, an Armenian from London, lined up to purchase them. The Armenian from London didn’t end up buying them. None of the other Armenians bid because they were told not to by the church. So, this wealthy Canadian family, which is non-Armenian, bought them. And it’s still with them. Now it’s worth 10 times what they paid 10 years ago. The Church in Jerusalem is telling Krikor to go get them, but the family won’t sell.”

Then the Church is also actively involved in looking for these artifacts? James shook his head no. “The church doesn’t have the money or the interest to go out of their way to buy them,” he clarified, “and they don’t push Armenians to buy or preserve these historic relics. And when they do it’s too late.” The objects are then sold to foreign buyers. Melikian said that oldest chalice the church has is from the 1930s. “I have one going back to 1642!

“I don’t think Armenians don’t want to buy these things. I think the wealthy Armenians who live in big cities want to stay away from Armenian things. Instead they invest in other cultures’ art,” he replied. In other words, no. Not really. Although there have been prominent individuals in the Armenian diaspora that have invested in collecting art like **Calouste Gulbenkian** and **Alex Manoogian**, but Armenian culture has not been a central theme in their efforts. For example, Alex Manoogian had an extensive collection of 19th century American paintings, but nothing Armenian. As for Mr. Gulbenkian, the museum that houses his artifacts sits right next to his foundation in

Portugal, but only a small section is dedicated to Armenian artifacts.

“But the speciality of my collection,” says James, sneaking another bite of his lunch between sentences, “has been silver artifacts from churches.” Most of the silver covered bibles in his collection that are on display were bought from Krikor Markarian. “I came across his website by accident and saw all these Armenian manuscripts with silver covers. I had been buying bibles all this time, and I’ve never seen one with a silver cover.” In Krikor’s travels to Turkey, James says, he’s found silver covers with the pages completely burned inside. “They saved the silver because it was valuable,” says Ana as she scoops a spoonful of guacamole on her plate, “They had no use for the books.”

The comment reminded Ana of a story about a manuscript that was too big to carry: “During the atrocities there was a bible too big to carry for one person. The clergy cut the text in half. One half was buried near the church that was later destroyed. The other half was taken away and carried out of Armenia.” Fifty years later, the family who had the first half of the manuscript traveled back to Turkey as tourists and went to the site where the church used to stand. Though the building was incinerated to the ground, they were able to dig up the missing half of this ancient bible and reunite the two pieces back into one text. The manuscript is now being preserved and kept in Matenadaran in Armenia.

“There all these beautiful stories about people running for their lives, but still managing to take with them things from their culture and saved them from complete oblivion,” said Ana almost forgetting the drink she was holding in her hand.

“We have one item,” James chimed in, “an oil lamp that was found by a Kurd.” It seems that this person was excavating a site in the mid-90s that previously had an Armenian Church built on it. As they were digging up the site to build another structure, a Kurdish construction worker found an oil lamp with Armenian inscriptions. “The lamp is burned, but you can still see the inscriptions, that date back to 1818. It was already 97 years old when it was hanging inside the church when it was burned during the Genocide,” said James.

Since there were so many churches in Western Armenia that were destroyed, one wonders how many of these objects were rescued and how many were lost to the fires and chaos of that time. How many people risked their lives to save them and how many of these cultural items still lay buried underneath a century of dirt and dust waiting to be unearthed.

The Turkish government even claims Armenian artifacts as their own. “In 2006, two objects came up for sale,” James started, “one was a Gataya bowl.” This type of pottery was made during the Ottoman Empire by Armenians. Gataya was the name of the village these pottery was made. Starting in 1600, Armenians, and even a few Greeks, were making these decorative pottery. But the vast majority were made by Armenians. However, Turks, Greeks, and Armenians collect these items when they go up for sale.

“The Turks call it Turkish art. They have a museum in Istanbul full of this stuff on display. A few of them are marked in Armenian, and those for Armenians are very valuable,” explained James. The bowl that came up for sale had both Armenian inscriptions and had pictures of the twelve disciples. “It was made for the patriarch in



1598 Evangelary, End of Days.

Jerusalem in 1725, or something like that. It was sold for \$100,000, probably bought by an Armenian.” But the Armenian Church in Jerusalem, he continued, called up their trusted resource Krikor Markarian, and told him to stop the auction because the item belongs to them. “You know, Krikor tells them all the time, he sees Armenian objects sold on every corner. There are Church things for sale! And when the Church doesn’t do anything about it, it goes into public domain, and becomes available for purchase.”

Ana turned in her seat to say with a hint of sadness in her tone, “Most of the objects that are found and sold are from churches that don’t exist anymore. It’s sad, but at least these few objects are being rescued.” Which is why James’ private collection is a wide range of clerical items: from several crosses to 14 chalices, and an impressive solid crystal staff, the only one of its kind. The most recent addition to his collection is a pair of church cymbals dating back to 1635, purchased from one of his trusted dealers, **Sam Fogg**. “Sam Fogg said that Armenians have two categories where they rival with the best of the world. Their architecture before 1700 and their illuminated manuscripts,” said James.

At the Phoenix Art Museum:

The sun dipped behind the low mountain range and cast shadows over the desert as friends of the Phoenix Art Museum, esteemed scholars, and faculty members of Arizona State University, as well as dear friends of the Melikian family came to see the illuminated manuscripts on display.

Arriving at the museum I was uncertain what to expect from this exhibit. There was only a vague perception of what these books might look like but it was hard not to be brimming with excitement and be swept away by James Melikian’s exuberance as he waited for the Illuminated Manuscript Gallery to open. This was a private viewing for selected guests. Everyone waited as Thom Loughman ushered the guests into the exhibit and began the tour. The gallery was solemnly quiet as we entered. Our footsteps and whispers echoed as we passed through a wide corridor of glass display cases showcasing pages of the Saint Johns manuscripts. The exhibit also included pieces from the Walters gallery, which Lough-



Silver Cover of 1868–92 Bible (front).

man gave a quick tour of, until we reached the Melikian collection. Loughman handed the mike to James and asked him to say a few words about this exhibit. James took the cue and began talking about the pieces and their individual history.

The first manuscript in his section was handwritten in Aramaic, the language that Jesus spoke. “It’s a 1,000-year-old New Testament. Complete. Now, you know who speaks Aramaic?” asked Melikian engaging the crowd. “It’s the Assyrians who live in Northern Iraq, who often intermarried with Armenians. It’s the first Aramaic New Testament that came up for sale in 10 years. Handwritten. 450 years before printing was invented. This is from the book of Acts, I believe,” he said referring to the pages the book was open to. “This was made in Nineveh, which is the old capital of Assyria, Northern Iraq.”

It was surreal. There was only a thin sheet of glass between us and Jesus. It is a mysterious blessing how this book could have survived for so long. Its mustard yellow pages intact, and its fire-like script rising off from the parchment it was inked on, like ancient dust when it’s disturbed. “My wife, Ana, thought I was nuts. She said, ‘It’s not Armenian!’ And I said, ‘I know. But it’s going to make the collection.’” Sitting in the same case, beside the biblical text was an Armenian manuscript. “This is the earliest of Armenian writing. Going back 1,000 years. Called, ‘iron cast’ writing.” The script was angular and severe compared to the flame-like figures of the Aramaic text.

One of the most interesting objects in the exhibit was an Armenian scroll, dated 1710, 24 feet long with 19 pictures overall. “Very high-quality pictures,” Melikian emphasized with a hand gesture. “The scroll would be carried around the person, in a leather sack, and in this case, since the scroll is in good condition, it must have been carried in a silver case,” he went on to explain, “It was for personal devotion. The owner would have the names of relatives or people he would pray for written within the lines of scriptures....It would be worn around the person, partly magical, to ward off evil.” The curator of the museum, Thomas Loughman, mentioned that some would wear the scrolls under their clothes or armor before going into battle. There is something so intrinsically mystical about physically being wrapped in prayer. One wonders

how many people it protected before it became orphaned.

But the most special of all the pieces on display was an Armenian illuminated bible, cased in silver, that was housed separately from the rest and in its own display case. “It is a complete bible in excellent condition,” as Melikian went on to say, “It has 12 or 15 pages of illuminations, paintings of the life of Christ and about 110 side illuminations. As a bonus,” Melikian said, shifting his weight, “in 1675 when the priest who this book was made for had commissioned a silver cover for it, it was made in Byzantine.” Melikian took a moment and gazed admiringly at the manuscript. The book was opened to a page with two illuminated paintings. “Armenians didn’t make icons,” he mentioned, “so these paintings were their icons. That’s why they’re such high quality, and considered the better end of illuminated manuscripts.”

It was a beautiful work of craftsmanship. From the silver casing to the fine artistry and gold leafing on the pages. It was breathtaking to say the least, the amount of care and time and devotion the author of this manuscript took to produce this piece of art. Leaving the museum, there was an overwhelming sense of pride that surfaced from within. These Armenian clerical artifacts are revered as some of the best in the world in artistry and craftsmanship. A clear physical reflection of Armenian heritage that even outside communities can appreciate. At the same time, they placed the Armenian people in a historically global context. “Isn’t it interesting to you that the Armenians introduced the first printing press to the Middle East? They have the highest quality of illuminated manuscripts that rivals any European made text, and on top of that we were the silversmiths of the Ottoman Empire!” James confided after he ended the tour, and people were settling down for the dinner.

As a final thought for the evening, James said, “I’m a historian recovering not only things unknown to the general public, but unknown to Armenians!” And somehow before leaving the museum and the gallery it seemed reassuring and almost fitting to have these Armenian treasures unearthed and rediscovered in a city named Phoenix. ■

connect: Phoenix Art Museum 1625 N. Central Avenue Phoenix, Arizona 85004 Phone: (602) 257-1222 www.phxartilluminated.org



Community

Hamazkayin organizes second annual mosaic concert

In celebration of Hamazkayin’s 80th Anniversary, the Mosaic II concert will kick start the New Year by showcasing up-and-coming and diverse music that reflects Armenian culture.

Following the successful Mosaic concert of 2007, Mosiac II is set to take place on Saturday, January 26, 2008 at the historic Alex Theater in Glendale.

This year Hamazkayin plans to feature a range of young musical talents, including, last year’s performers Zulal and Visa, along with new musicians, Sonya Varoujian, Ochion & Areni, and Cantus Capella. Actress and playwright, Lory Tatoulian, and comedian, Ara Basil will be hosting the event.

Since 1928, Hamazkayin has made significant efforts in promoting educational and cultural advancement within the Armenian community. In recent years these efforts have evolved into various programs that embrace a new generation of Armenians who incorporate contemporary elements with traditional cultural heritage.

Hamazkayin’s mission is to support the *mosaic* of young Armenian talent.

The creation of an annual “Mosaic” concert is part of Hamazkayin’s goal to develop programs that will attract the interest of young Armenians and encourage their participation, while instilling in them a cultural identity. The first Mosaic Concert in 2007 was able to introduce to the community the musical talents of our youth and provide new talent the great exposure that has already proven to benefit their future success.

According to Hamazkayin the objective of the Mosaic concert is also to celebrate the diverse sounds of our culture and introduce and pro-

mote the broad range of talented Armenian youth.

“[The evening is] to celebrate the diverse sounds of our culture and its progression today by introducing to our community the hidden musical talents of young Armenians and their interest in their roots,” says Tamar Abkarian, a member of Hamazkayin Educational and Cultural Society’s Western Regional Executive got involved with Hamazkayin because of her passion for the arts and culture.

“Mosaic is an opportunity to promote and instill cultural appreciation through the integration of melodies,” she adds. “Music and lyrics from the past with revolutionized means of expression.”

The evening has been arranged to display the mosaic of musical genre and style, in both Armenian and English. Within the framework of a single concert, the program will include the comedic charms of Tatoulian and Basil and sounds ranging from folk, experimental, to rock.

Whether it is the historic lyrics of ancient shepherds’ songs of love arranged acapella style by Zulal, or the 21st-century fusion created by world music phenomena, Visa, who incorporates the ancient duduk as easily as an electronic keyboard, this borderless yet ethnic presence, created by young Armenians from various generations of immigrant families will come to life in a celebration of Armenian sound.

“I think it’s an exciting opportunity because I’ve been performing in Armenian, London, and New York and have never actually played for an audience in Los Angeles, so I’m looking forward to it,” says singer/songwriter and first time Mosaic performer Sonya Varoujian who’s optimistic about working with her fellow musicians.



Sonya Varoujian, who will be performing original contemporary Armenian folk songs along with some of her songs in English.

Varoujian will be performing original contemporary Armenian folk songs along with some of her songs in English. Much like most diasporan communities, her music is a cross between cultures that fuses modern world music with traditional Armenian music.

After spending time in 2005 volunteering with children in the village of Martz, Varoujian began writing songs in Armenian. “I write my own songs, lyrics, and music,” she says. “I write about love in all shapes and forms, including of love of homeland, love of people, and love of life.”

“I’ve performed [my songs] in Yerevan and I’m excited to be able to do it again here in Los Angeles,” says Varoujian. “The diasporan Armenian community will really con-

nect to the material. It is almost a fusion of living in England and the United States that comes out in the music.”

Last year, Zulal received the biggest response and loudest applause of the night. The New York-based Armenian a cappella folk trio featuring Teni Apelian, Yeraz Markarian, and Anais Tekerian received a well deserving standing ovation.

By combining culture with music, the singers took turns before each song to explain the roots of the song, the story behind the lyrics, and how they discovered differing dialects and melodies for the songs they presented. “Zulal’s original arrangements pay tribute to Armenia’s folk roots while forging imaginative harmonies that add a fresh energy to traditional

repertoire, using the simplicity of voice to capture the heart of Armenia’s rural music,” says the trio’s myspace page.

The organizing committee begins planning and preparing one year in advance.

“We begin by finding a group of individuals that are knowledgeable or have interest in music, production and the arts to form a committee,” says Abkarian. “Once the committee is formed, a theme is decided based on the purpose of the concert and the search for performers begins based on the theme.”

The most difficult part, says Abkarian is finding a group of performers that will satisfy the intent, be diverse enough for the audience and bring cohesion to the program.

“The acts are chosen through genre and style of music,” says Abkarian. “They must be diverse and yet cohesive throughout. The program must satisfy the various tastes of the spectators, while introducing a broad range of musical talents.”

“Our criteria is to provide well deserved exposure to up and coming performers with originality in their presentation of music, who otherwise might remain unnoticed, not because of lack of talent but of opportunity,” adds Abkarian.

Considering that the target audience is a younger than at typical events, promoting is done mostly via the Internet. Through new media outlets, such as Facebook.com and MySpace.com, organizers link with musicians and bands to fans who will eventually come to the show.

connect:  
alextheatre.org  
myspace.com/mosaic\_concert  
818-562-0177

CRIME BEAT

Jerry Hovsepian, model citizen, helps his neighbors

by Jason Kandel

**TUJUNGA, Calif.** - Trouble paying rent? Got a neighborhood dispute? Want to organize a community event?

See Jerry Hovsepian. Not that he’ll pay the rent for you, but he could help guide you to community resources and will take time to listen in this fast-paced, dot.com world of ours.

Mr. Hovsepian is the de-facto community advocate in Tujunga, a guy who goes out of his way to help somebody else in need.

When he’s not running his store, Commerce Produce and Deli, that caters to a growing ethnic community, he’s helping translate for Armenian-speaking residents or bridging the cultural gap at Neighborhood Council meetings.

The lean six-footer is the recognizable face in the neighborhood, a humble man who greets people on the streets by name and gives them a friendly hello.

Jackie Keene, a field deputy for Los Angeles City Councilwoman Wendy Greuel said Mr. Hovsepian contributes to a Mayberry Lane-like atmosphere to the neighborhood. She calls him a great resource and appreciates that he cares so much about the neighborhood he lives in and works.

“When I talk to Jerry I rarely pick up the phone,” she said. “I go and buy dried apricots and produce from his shop. He’s kind of the eyes and ears on Commerce Avenue.”

When hooded gunmen robbed a group of Armenian men late last year at Little Landers Park, they didn’t go to the cops. They went to

Mr. Hovsepian’s store a half a block away. He called 911 for them and translated when police arrived.

In a city that struggles to get witnesses of crime in general to cooperate, Mr. Hovsepian, 51, was there for men he says were once like him, new to the country and struggling to learn a new language and customs.

He grew up playing soccer in the streets of Tehran. His father was a mechanic; his mother a homemaker. During the Iranian revolution in 1977, he emigrated to the United States.

In 1985, he moved to Tujunga and has seen the demographics change from that of mostly white to a growing number of Armenians and Latinos, due to more affordable housing.

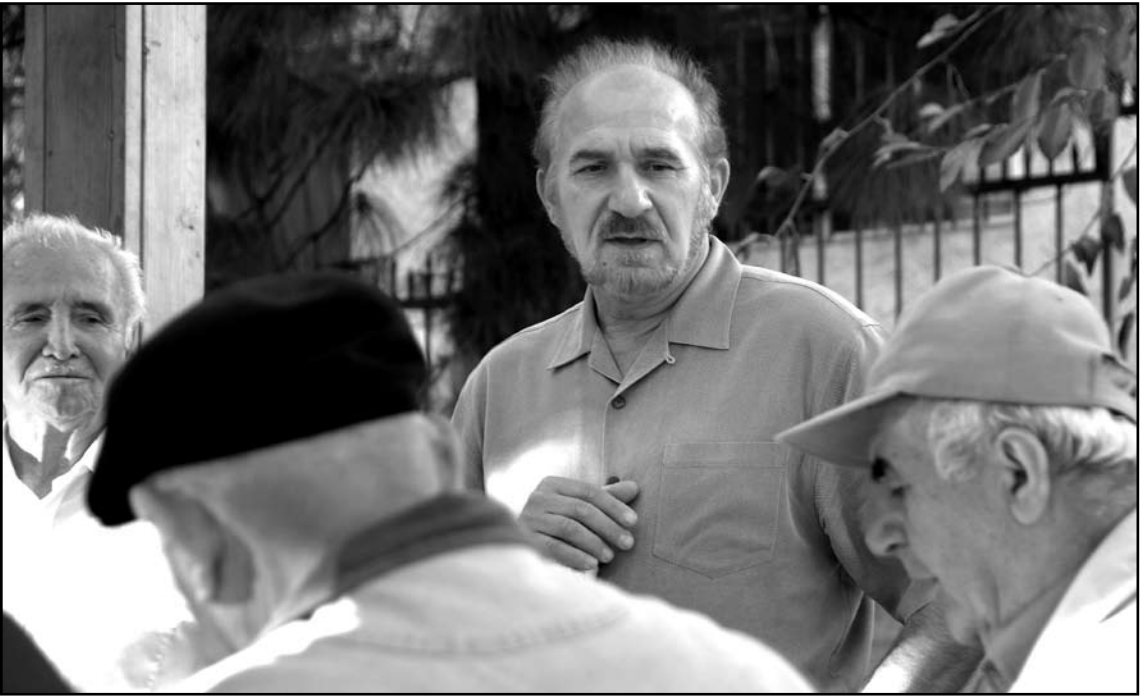
He was the first generation of his family to go to college, to the Columbia Broadcasting School in Hollywood.

He wanted to go into business and eventually bought his store after seeing a need for a market in a community that would cater to newly arrived immigrants.

“It’s the old-country way of doing things,” he said. “If they have a problem with their landlord, they come to me. They come to me with any problems because I take the time to talk to people. It’s like the good ol’ days.”

He has helped organize cultural events, concerts, and movies in the park, which he says go a long way toward “breaking the ice.”

This is a guy who says he models himself after former California Governor Deukmejian. In fact, he said he even shadowed the former governor, “documenting history” with a recorder and a camera back in the day.



Jerry Hovsepian. Photo: John McCoy.

“I learned from him,” said Mr. Hovsepian, a former real estate agent and former producer for an Armenian television channel. “He was low key. When he talked, he did things. It was not about him.”

He learned a few things about city government.

Two nights after the robbery in the park, Mr. Hovsepian went to a Neighborhood Council meeting to urge the panel to have cameras installed there. The next day he got a visit from Ms. Keene, who said she was going to look into it.

She told Mr. Hovsepian that two years ago, the park was remodeled with bond money and there were funds available for two cameras. He

was elated, but will not take credit. “It’s not about me. It’s about others. It’s about people.”

Lloyd Hitt, the president of the Little Landers Historical Society, said Mr. Hovsepian is a major representative of the Armenian community.

“For one thing his English is pretty good,” Hitt said. “He’s educated. He’s a defuser. He’s really kind-hearted.”

He cares so much because he too was once a newly arrived immigrant in a foreign land. He was once homesick. He didn’t speak the language. He encountered culture shock when he first came to the United States, in Irving, Texas.

Garnik Galostian, 72, a former watch maker from Iran, was one of the men who was held up in the robbery. At first, he assumed it was a joke when the men in hoods approached, but when one of the guy’s was pistol whipped, he knew it was serious.

Mr. Galostian was stunned. He and his friends were robbed in a place they consider their second home, a place where twice daily they hang out, play cards and talk politics.

Galostian was glad Mr. Hovsepian was around, otherwise he and his friends wouldn’t have been able to report the crime to the cops. He’s glad Mr. Hovsepian is around.



Community

A picture is worth a thousand eyes

by Alene Tchekmedyian

Commercial photographer Lonnie Duka describes his experiences in Armenia with the Armenian Eye Care Project

**LAGUNA BEACH, Calif.** – After an initial sojourn in Armenia to document the progress of the Armenian Eye Care Project (AECPP) for his close friend and the project’s executive director, Dr. Roger Ohanesian, commercial photographer Lonnie Duka returned to the United States a changed man.

“I thought I would go once and my mission would be to create some photography that would help them fundraise and communicate, but I ended up going back several times in the past five years, and it has been a very rewarding experience,” Duka said.

During his visits across Armenia and Karabakh, the photographer witnessed Armenians at various levels of poverty and economic instability, but noticed that they all had one thing in common: a sense of optimism. “I always come home a little wealthier,” he said. “The way in which they interpret life and live life, where everyone gets together for dinner, and has time to talk with you and to sit with you, I found so heartwarming that in some ways it was an equal trade-off of emotions.”

Duka’s photography captures this nationwide optimism and hope. “The Eye Care Project has decided not to do overly dramatic photos of people with severe diseases, but really capitalize on the ongoing improvement in the quality of life thanks to the evolution of Armenian eye care. Almost everyone photographed had some eye disease, but the photographs are somewhat optimistic and I think

that sort of reflects what is felt in Yerevan,” he said. “There is so much optimism about all the changes that are coming, and I think you see that in the health care system too,” he added.

Duka created and donated a photography book, which illustrates his experience in Armenia, for a silent auction at the AECPP banquet, held in Newport Beach, California, on November 17. His photos have also been distributed throughout Armenia. They are sent to the AECPP, which in turn distributes them to patients.

Although Duka has documented the struggles and achievements of many AECPP patients, he was particularly struck by the story of a family in Karabakh. “There was this one man who was holding this little girl, and the depth of sadness on his face was remarkable. I could not communicate with him right away,” Duka recalled. With the help of an interpreter, “the man reluctantly agreed to be photographed, and then, after we took a few shots, he asked us to stop,” he continued. Duka and the AECPP doctors soon discovered that this young child was the victim of a land mine. The explosion had killed her brother and left her seriously injured. “The girl had a little piece of shrapnel in her eye. She lifted her shirt up and it turns out her whole body was full of shrapnel,” Duka said. “It was just a stunning story. It was great that we were there because we took her back to Yerevan, where surgeons removed the shrapnel and took pretty good care of her.”

The emotions felt in Karabakh were among the most extreme, for the patients and Duka alike. The AECPP was able to treat patients in Karabakh through the project’s mobile eye hospital, which was established in 1998. “[Karabakh] is very primitive, but the residents

knew in advance that the mobile eye hospital was coming and there were people lined up all day to have an eye exam,” Duka said.

Duka noticed that residents of Karabakh were willing to have their picture taken, and their emotions reflected their life experiences. “Everyone was pretty open, maybe because they have lived in a state of war already. The only difference I found in shooting in Armenia and shooting here was that the men are a little more reluctant to smile in Armenia. I think they are a little bit more serious because their life has been a little more serious,” he said.

Although Duka does not look or speak Armenian, he has always felt welcome in Armenia and Karabakh. “In some strange way I never really felt out of place,” he claimed.

With each successive visit, Duka has seen fresh signs of Armenia’s ongoing and significant development. “In the five years we have been going, it has changed unbelievably,” he said. “Yerevan has become much more cosmopolitan and sophisticated.” Duka has also noticed a sharp contrast between Yerevan and surrounding areas. “If you travel out of Yerevan for an hour or so, you get into regions that are very poor and don’t have a lot of medical facilities. It is a dramatic change when you leave Yerevan and go to the countryside, in terms of what is available to the doctors,” he continued.

Another Armenian characteristic that has left an indelible impression on Duka, whose professional engagements have taken him to several countries in the Middle East, Africa, and East Asia, is a certain bond among Armenian people, he said.

“There is a strong sense of identity between Armenians everywhere,” Duka commented. “There is some



Lonnie Duka.

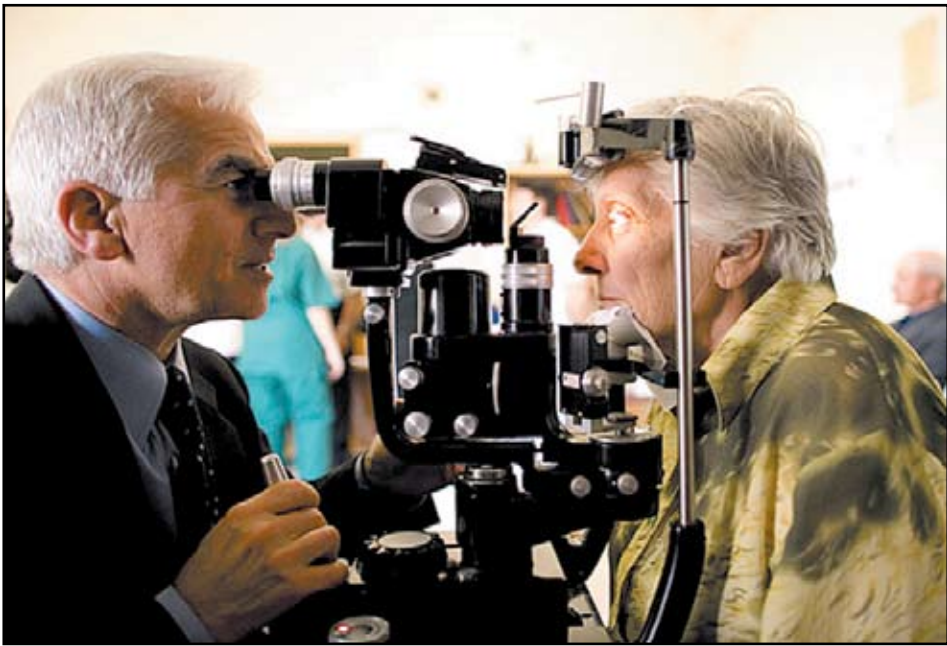
definite cultural identity and loyalty that seem to be unique to the Armenian culture. I was touched by a sense of humanism that transcended one’s economic level. There was a desire to give back for any kindness that you showed them, so you couldn’t help but feel inspired when you were on the receiving end of that.”

Duka also experienced a number of culture shocks in Armenia and Karabakh. He was especially surprised to see that the Soviet mentality was still ingrained in the lives of the older generation. “When we wanted to do something special, such as photograph a doctor in a subway sta-

tion, the amount of paperwork that needed to be approved by multiple layers of bureaucracy seemed extremely old-fashioned,” he said.

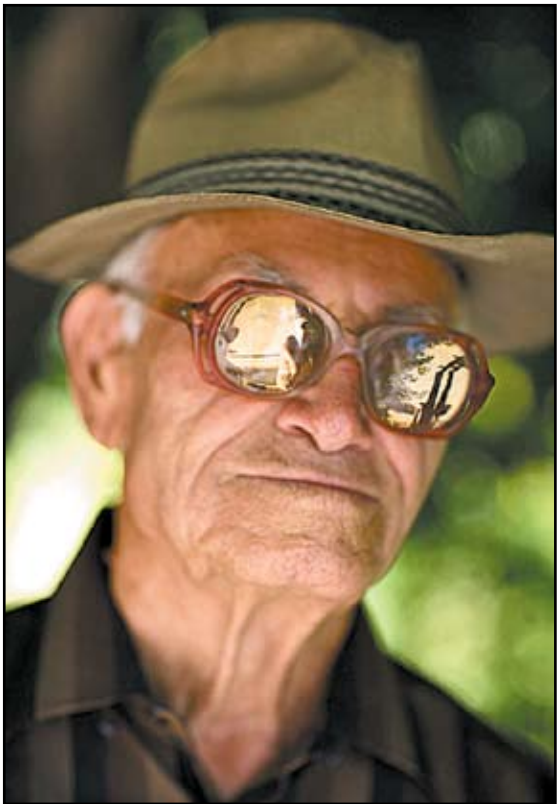
Still, Duka witnessed an decided change in the mentality of the youth. “Among the young people, there is a tremendous sense of optimism. The younger people seemed extraordinarily vibrant and very interested in the world and ready to throw back some of the impressions that the Soviets left on them,” he said.

connect:  
dukaphoto.com  
eyecareproject.com





Community



A portfolio of photographs taken for the Armenia Eye Care Project. Photos: Lonnie Duka.



Community

Argentina’s Armenians retain their identity on faraway shores

by Alexa Millinger

**BUENOS AIRES** – In a land better known for its world-class steak,, its economic problems, and the Tango, thrives one of the largest Armenian populations in the world. Buenos Aires, the capital city of Argentina, has an Armenian population estimated at 80,000, whose members have created a prominent, influential, and highly respected community, despite being so distant from their homeland.

Alexa Millinger, a student at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., spent her fall 2007 semester at the the Universidad Católica in Buenos Aires.

The majority of Armenians arrived in Buenos Aires as a consequence of the Genocide, led by the promise of an established Christian country with an up-and-coming economy. Later, in the 1950s and 1960s, another immigration wave from the Middle East united many families that had been separated in the wake of the Genocide.

Today, large Armenian communities exist not only in Buenos Aires but also in the surrounding cities of Cordoba, Rosario, and Mendoza, and to the West across the River Plate in Uruguay.

Armenians in Buenos Aires have worked to maintain and foster their culture in their South American home by establishing seven privately run Armenian primary and secondary schools, where the focus

is as much on learning Armenian culture through language, dance, film, and music as it is on traditional academics. The community has also established five churches, a cultural center, a newspaper, five performing arts groups, and numerous restaurants and bakeries serving Armenian cuisine.

One way Armenians have found to promote their culture in Argentina is through food. Sona Guezikaraian arrived in Buenos Aires from Turkey in 1957, when there was only one Armenian restaurant in the city. Setting out to “teach the Argentines about Armenian food,” she opened the doors to her own Arab-Armenian restaurant, “Garbis,” about 10 years ago. The restaurant was such a success that she quickly opened several more, and

now Garbis is a popular chain with four locations across the city.

Although Armenian cuisine uses many more spices than the traditionally bland Argentine food, “Argentines have always been very open to Armenians and their culture,” said Guezikaraian.

Some of the Armenian institutions in the city go even further to promote the Armenian culture. Buenos Aires’ oldest private Armenian secondary school, UGAB (the Spanish abbreviation for AGBU), opens its doors every Friday night not as a school but as an Armenian restaurant, with the school’s students serving traditional dishes cooked by their mothers and grandmothers. The revenue from this venture goes to fund the students’ annual educational trip to Armenia.

Shining stars, fading language

However, despite the progress the Armenians in Buenos Aires have made, there remains a serious problem of the loss of culture – especially in recent years.

According to Rosita Youssefian, director of Armenian language at the UGAB secondary school, much of the local Armenian population does not know the Armenian language. She also believes the Armenian community to be culturally fading through the increasingly common phenomenon of mixed-marriages.

While some see the Armenians as losing culture on the personal level, this past year the Armenian community of Buenos Aires has seen significant advancement in the so-

South American states conclude an important year of Genocide recognition, activism

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay

– On November 19, 2007, deputies from Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay -- all members of the South American parliamentarians’ coalition known as MERCOSUR -- adopted a resolution recognizing and condemning the Armenian Genocide, during a meeting held in Montevideo.

The acknowledgement coming from South America’s largest intergovernmental organization was another milestone in a year of important developments on the continent revolving around the Armenian Genocide. Influenced by the events of 1915, Argentina’s government had previously named April 24th a “national day of tolerance and respect among groups,” and in June the Senate of Chile likewise recognized and condemned the Armenian Genocide.

In the same week as the MERCOSUR meeting, a major international conference was held in Montevideo, titled “The Armenian

Genocide: History and Present Day.”

Organized by the Uruguay Armenia Cultural Association (ASCUA), the Political Science Institute (UDELAR), and the Human Rights Program (CLAEH), the conference was co-sponsored by the University of Montevideo, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Tourism, the Press Association of Uruguay, the Municipality of Montevideo, Amnesty International-Uruguay Section, and the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia.

The Toronto-based Zoryan Institute also participated by sending its director of Genocide Research, Prof. Vahakan Dadrian, to speak at this and another conference in Buenos Aires.

The latter was organized in Buenos Aires by the Luisa Hairabedian Foundation, a group dedicated to the preservation of universal human rights, with a special interest in the Armenian Genocide. The Buenos Aires gathering was attended by students, lawyers, his-

torians, sociologists, anthropologists, and members of Argentina’s Armenian community.

Prof. Dadrian’s work on the legal aspects of the Armenian Genocide was especially interesting to the Hairabedian Foundation, which is engaged in a unique legal procedure in Argentine law regarding a “truth trial” on the Armenian Genocide. Instituted as a method to uncover the truth about the human rights abuses of Argentina’s recent past -- especially the “forced disappearances” -- truth trials do not require the prosecution of a defendant. The country’s federal court has accepted the Genocide case and sanctioned the initiation of legal proceedings. The lawyers involved are assembling materials, including a mass of authentic and verifiable official documents, for which they are receiving assistance from Prof. Dadrian and the Zoryan Institute.

Prof. Dadrian’s presentation in Montevideo was on the conflict



Prof. Vahakn Dadrian, speaking at a Nov. 2007 conference on genocide in Montevideo, Uruguay.

between the near-universal recognition of the Armenian Genocide and its persistent denial by past and present Turkish officials. His analysis suggested that Turkish denial would not cease because of foreign pressure on the Turkish government, but rather only by pressure from the Turkish popu-

lation itself, which, as part of its democratic movement, will require the state to recognize its own falsifications of history and remove its limitations on the freedoms of speech and conscience.

Dadrian also delivered a public lecture on “The Significance of the Ottoman-Turkish Official Documents Dealing with the Armenian Genocide.” His subsequent Buenos Aires lecture was titled “The Armenian Genocide and International Criminal Law.” (Many of the points Dadrian presented in his South American lectures are put forward in a forthcoming book he will publish with Prof. Taner Akcam, on their collaborative archival research into the sole official record of the military tribunals prosecuting the perpetrators of the Armenian Genocide.)

In April of 2008, the Argentinean publisher Imago Mundi will release a Spanish translation of Dadrian’s classic work, *The History of the Armenian Genocide*.



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Community

Argentina’s Armenians retain their identity on faraway shores

cial and political arenas. Probably the most prominent of these was the success of Argentine tennis star David Nalbandian, who is of Armenian descent on his father’s side. This year Nalbandian made history by winning both the Madrid and Paris Master’s Tournaments, on the way defeating tennis elites Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal. He is currently the pride of the Armenian-Argentine community, as the world’s Number 9-ranked tennis star.

On the political side, this year, in a nod to its recognition of the Armenian Genocide, the Argentine government under former President Nestor Kirchner established April 24th as a “national day of tolerance and respect among groups.”

Argentina has officially recognized the Genocide on several occasions, including in 2004 under the same president.

MERCOSUR, the regional trade coalition comprised of Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay, also passed a resolution in late 2007 “recognizing and condemning” the Armenian Genocide.

Members of the Argentine Armenian community recently launched a website to organize the community and collectivize its concerns and issues. The site is called IAN (www.ian.cc). Through that new venue, as well as through traditional church and community cultural events, the Armenian heritage continues to be upheld, and held high, in Argentina.



One of Argentina’s five Armenian churches. Photos: Alexa Millinger.



One of several flourishing Armenian restaurants in Buenos Aires.

Argentina’s Armenian soccer club scores points for national pride

by Antranig Dereyan

**BUENOS AIRES, Argentina** – Along with the usual institutions revolving around religion and culture, Argentina’s Armenians have one other outlet for their patriotic passions: sports. Armenians in Buenos Aires have proved successful in combining their love for the homeland and for soccer – “futbol” (football) in the vernacular – through “Club Deportivo Armenio De Futbol.”

Jorge Margosian, head of the Armenian Club of Soccer, and other members of the Armenian community came together to form Club Armenio De Futbol in 1962 as a way to remember their roots, with an aspiration of one day having a free and liberated Armenia with a red, blue, and orange flag.

Two years later, Club Armenio De Futbol changed its name to “Deportivo Armenio” when the club joined the Argentina Football

Association (AFA), and the name has held strong since that time.

However, though the club name changed, its results on the field didn’t. Club Deportivo Armenio started in the Primera D Metropolitana (Division 5), and at present they are in Primera B Metropolitana (Division 3). The club had a great run in the 1987/88 season, when it went all the way to the Primera (Division 1). The club’s greatest victory came in that same season, when it defeated River Plate, one of the strongest, most feared teams in all of Argentina.

Deportivo Armenio may not be in the Primera now, but their league status is not the sole reason the club is held in high regards. The club is largely Armenian from top to bottom, from boosters to stadium to office personal. Walking into Estadio Armenio (the team stadium) is like walking on the streets of Armenia: the stands are painted in the colors of the Armenian flag -- red, blue and orange -- signifying



Club Deportivo Armenio De Futbol vs Sarmient, 2006.



Club Deportivo Armenio De Futbol vs Defenders, 2007

the independence of the Republic of Armenia in 1991. The national anthem sung before every game is the Armenian national anthem. The supporters who come to watch the home games wave their Armenian flags every chance they get, to show solidarity not only for the club, but for their home country.

Even away from their home field, Deportivo Armenio brings Armenia and its Armenian supporters with them. The away colors for the club are a red, blue, and orange shirt, orange or red shorts, and red or orange socks -- just to show the opposition who it’s up against.

The opposing side usually understands that it is not facing just another team; it’s facing a team with a tradition and rich history that will never be forgotten. Likewise, the club members feel they are not playing only for themselves or for their supporters, but for an entire nation that has scattered communities all over the world.

The players who put on the Club Deportivo jersey may not come from Armenia – these days, some are not even Armenians -- but they understand the story behind the club, from the supporters who cheer them on, the songs sung

in the stands, and the waving of the Armenian flags that surround them everywhere they play.

Club Deportivo Armenio is another story of how the Armenian community, once torn apart, still proves enduringly strong, able to hold on to its past in creative and unexpected ways. The history of Deportivo Armenio is more than about just winning or losing football games: it is about giving strength to a group of people, who through this club can feel proud of their homeland -- even though they are living half way round the world from it.



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RESTAURANTS

Fury Sushi Restaurant and Lounge: Heating up Orange County's palate with a talented Armenian chef

by Lucie Davidian

**NEWPORT BEACH, Calif.** – Cooking is the best form of giving; it is the simplest way to give something to someone without expecting much in return. As a chef, all you can expect is that they love your food and that's the best form of gratification you can ask for. Ever since I have known **Chef Sevan Azarian**, he has always been a generous, passionate and hard working individual but more so he has been a giver. He has always prided himself on satisfying those around him, be it his family, his friends and for the past 12 years the clients who's palates he's enticed with his culinary talent.

When I first heard that Sevan had decided to go to culinary school after we graduated high school, I was really surprised; I thought "which Armenian guy goes to culinary school?" However after thinking about his personality and all I had known of him since childhood, it all made sense.

One thing to consider is that our generation's parents haven't been ones to encourage their children toward the arts, the abundance of lawyers around me is a clear indication of that, sorry guys. We are generally encouraged to study those things that will help us make good money and the arts are not a great means of making money. So my initial surprise of Sevan's decision quickly turned into happiness, "good for him," I thought, "how many Armenian chefs do we have out there and why shouldn't we tap into that industry?" Sevan was also one of the first people I called as soon as I was accepted into culinary school; he gave me a long, encouraging but realistic lecture of what I was about to get into and it made a huge difference in the direction I took.

Born in Los Angeles in 1976, Sevan Azarian learned to cook from a young age by helping his mother with her catering business. During high school, he worked as a waiter in several restaurants including Pi-



Chef Sevan Azarian. Photos: Eric Lamph.

not Café in Downtown, owned by Joachim Splichal of the famous Patina group. After graduating Seven decided that this was his calling, and in an effort to understand all aspects of the restaurant business, he decided to go to culinary school and become a chef. While attending culinary school in San Francisco, he worked in the kitchens of several famous fine dining restaurants including Jardiniér and Rubicon, two of city fs best.

After graduating he returned to Los Angeles and to the Patina group, where for three years he worked directly under Splichal and his wife alongside a team of talented young chefs. Sevan continued his culinary education by training in France, Italy and Spain and showcased his knowledge by becoming a chef instructor at the California School of Culinary Arts in Pasadena. Soon after, his love for surfing and the beach took him to Laguna Beach where he co-founded the Laguna Culinary Arts School. His decision to start the school was a result of his beliefs towards teaching others, it's his way of giving back and helping aspiring chefs live out there dreams. In 2004 he sold the school and began to work for the next couple of years as a private chef for high profile clien-



Wood Fired Alaskan Halibut.



Wood Fired Seared Scallops.



Cucumber Crab Lollipops.



Sexy Hand Roll.

tele as well as celebrities like James Gardner and Adam Sandler.

In July of 2007, Orange County business owners **David Gonzales** and **Brian Schillizzi**, impressed with Sevan's energy and creative menu concept brought him on as the Executive Chef for their new restaurant and lounge in Newport Beach called **Fury**. The concept was simple, a Sushi restaurant with an extensive Pan Asian menu amidst a lounge reminiscent of those in Las Vegas. With full bottle service and VIP areas, Fury gets packed on the weekend and has become one of the few Orange County lounges to feature fine dining. The lounge is beautiful, the red bar sits in the middle of the room with Asian in-

spired décor surrounded by large booths set up for dinner and bottle service after 10:00p.m.

A few weeks before the opening of the restaurant I received a phone call from Sevan asking me if I would like to join his team and be his Pastry Chef, I happily accepted. It was a perfect opportunity for me to be in an environment where I could learn as well as contribute to creating a great dessert menu, dessert was not my forte at the time. I was naturally concerned as well, I had never worked with him before and working with a friend sometimes could be more difficult than one would expect. Luckily for me, he ended up being the ideal person to work for, his infectious passion for

food coupled with his laid back surfer attitude helped me execute the dessert menu night after night without feeling the enormous pressures that kitchen life can bring on. The best part for me of course was eating all the sushi I could, as well as being able to work simultaneously as both a pastry chef and line cook.

The Asian inspired menu Sevan created is elegant, tasteful and very diverse; it's Sushi and Pan-Asian cuisine on a higher level prepared with the freshest and highest quality ingredients. Appetizers include Wood Fire Seared Scallops that sit on top of a bed of Pesto Risotto and are served with Blood Oranges and Korean Cantaloupe. The Dragon Summer rolls are stuffed with ginger, cilantro, daikon (Japanese radish), and carrots served with a Ponzu dipping sauce.

The Sushi and Sashimi menu is extensive and has an incredible array of fresh Crab, Blue Fin, Ahi and Yellowtail Tuna. With specials like the Sexy Hand roll, which is Ahi Tuna Tartare roll with avocado and Shiso leaves (a mint like leaf used traditionally with Sashimi) topped with a spicy aioli and a sweet Japanese sauce. The Hamachi Sashimi is a delicate dish, the thinly sliced Hamachi is paired with Pea sprouts, Shiso leaves and a spicy Japanese condiment called Togarashi. The Cucumber Crab Lollipops are unique way to serve crab, the crab is rolled into a cucumber log and is held up by a toothpick and served with a Miso and Serrano Chile glaze. My personal favorite is the spicy

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Community

Fury Sushi Restaurant and Lounge: Heating up Orange County’s palate with a talented Armenian chef

Continued from page B10

Tuna roll topped with avocado, a spicy Sriracha and sweet eel sauce and thinly sliced strawberries. It sounds like a strange combination but the sweet taste of the strawberries perfectly compliments the spicy tuna and buttery avocado. The main courses are comprised of dishes like Wood fired Alaskan Halibut served on a Polenta cake with seasoned vegetables and a delicious, creamy Red Bell Pepper Coulis. At least once a week, I could not help but eat the incredible Miso Braised Short Ribs; cooked in a Shi-take Mushroom Demiglaze, the short ribs melt in your mouth as they sit on top of Wasabi Mashed Potato puree and are topped with

crunchy Shoestring Carrots. Another favorite is the New Zealand Rack of Lamb which is served with Haricot Verts (French Green Beans), Cioppolini Onions and a Pomegranate Soy reduction. The dessert menu has a trio of Crème Bruleè with the three flavors being Chocolate, Vanilla and Green Tea as well as a Banana Macadamia Nut Cheesecake and a Chocolate Molten cake served with fresh fruit compote. Fury’s menu exhibits Sevan’s diversity and talent as a chef, he has a wide knowledge of different cuisine but above all he is talented and very driven. He’s been the recipient of several awards such as that of Excellent Food & Wine Pairing from the Wentle Vineyards in

Livermore California. He has also been a featured guest speaker numerous times at his former high school while his culinary achievements have also been featured in numerous newspapers and magazines such as L.A. Times, the OC Register, Laguna Independent as well as this month’s issue of Riviera magazine. His first cookbook is set to be released by the end of 2008, it will be a collection of his recipes of cuisines from around the globe. Sevan’s real success as a chef and as a person has been his uncanny ability to give back. Working with him really allowed me to have a better insight of him as an individual; as an employer he was very hands off yet encouraging, which in turn inspired me to perform at my best.

He is not selfish, he wants to share his knowledge and that’s the reason he became a chef to begin with, to extend himself to others through food. His plans for the future are not just to cook but to follow in the footsteps of many chefs who have incorporated philanthropy into the world of food. As chef’s, we are in the business of nourishing people but what makes Sevan unique is his understanding that nourishment does not stop in the kitchen, it is a requirement of his career but mostly it is a reflection of his heart and soul. As a friend and a fellow chef, I am both proud and happy that Sevan is living his dream and doing it with such dignity and grace, but more so I am inspired by his tenacity and generous spirit.

**contact**  
www.furyoc.com

**location:**  
4221 Dolphin Striker Way  
Newport Beach, Ca. 92660

**phone:**  
(949) 756-8800

**Hours:**  
**lunch**  
Tuesday – Saturday  
11:00 am – 2:00 pm  
**dinner**  
Tuesday – Saturday  
5:00 pm – closing  
**lounge**  
Tuesday – Saturday  
10:00 pm – 2:00 am

Calendar of Events

California

**JANUARY 13-** WORLD MUSIC ACADEMY’S 2ND ANNUAL CONCERT. The World Music Academy is proud to present their 2nd annual concert at the Glendale Public Library, 222 Harvard St., Glendale. Admission is \$10.00. For more information please call (818) 248-9010.

**JANUARY 13-** BENEFIT DINNER/CONCERT. Karkatch TV & Friends of Angels present a benefit dinner/concert featuring a unique collaboration of young, talented Armenian singers, musicians, and dancers. Proceeds of the event will be donated to help 120 underprivileged kindergarteners in Gyumri, Armenia. The event will be held at the MGM Banquet Hall, 119 S. Kenwood St., Glendale, at 5:00 p.m. Admission is \$35.00. For more information please call Seta Kvrryan at (818) 500-0903.

**JANUARY 13-** AGBU YOUNG PROFESSIONALS HOLIDAY PARTY. AGBU Young Professionals is hosting a Holiday Party at Nees Park Place Club House, between First and Milbrook on Nees, Fresno, at 1:30 p.m. Entrance code is 099. Admission is free. For more information please call Arev at (559) 349-7859.

**JANUARY 13-** FILM SCREENING OF “THE VOICES.” The Ararat-Eskijian Museum will be screening Apo Torosyan’s “The Voices” at 4:00 p.m. The museum is located at 15105 Mission Hills Road, Mission Hills. Admission is free. For more information please call (818) 838-4862.

**JANUARY 17-** MARCH 9 - BARON GARBIS. The WhiteFire, 13500 Ventura Blvd., Sherman Oaks, will be showing Vahe Berberian’s “Baron Garbis”, a play in Armenian. The play will run from January 17th – March 9th with shows every Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 8:00 p.m. and Sunday at 3:00 p.m. Tickets can be purchased at the theatre or through itsmyseat.com. For more information please call (818) 397-7392.

**JANUARY 17-** VISA LIVE! Listen to your favorite Visa songs, old and new, acoustic style at the Neomeze in Old Town Pasadena, 20 E. Colorado Blvd. Doors open at 8:00 p.m., show begins at 9:00 p.m. Cover charge is \$15.00.

**JANUARY 17-** FIRST ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING FORUM. The Armenian Graduate Student Association of UCLA will be holding a Professional Networking Forum at the Kerckhoff Grand Salon at

the UCLA campus. The event is all to graduate students and professionals. Admission is free. For more information please call (626) 372-4630.

**JANUARY 18-** AGBU YOUNG PROFESSIONALS POST HOLIDAY MIXER. The AGBU Young Professionals of Orange County are hosting a Post Holiday Mixer at Kimera Restaurant Lounge, 19530 Jamboree Rd., Irvine, at 8:00 p.m. Admission is free. For more information please call (949) 261-1222.

**JANUARY 19-** PAREGENTAN BALL DINNER/DANCE. St. Vartan ACYO welcomes you aboard its annual Paregentan Ball, “Sail the Seas with the Cruise Ship theme.” There will be gourmet Armenian food, music by Khatchig, Silent Auction and Raffle. The event will be held at the St. Vartan Social Hall, 650 Spruce St., Oakland. Admission is \$15.00-35.00. For more information please call (925) 437-0243.

**JANUARY 20-** FILM SCREENING “DESTINY.” King Cultural Productions will be holding a screening of the film “Destiny”, by Vage Khachatryan, at the Alex Theatre, 216 N. Brand Blvd., Glendale, at 2:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Tickets cost \$20.00-30.00. For more information please call (818) 913-2299.

**JANUARY 24-** CONCERT HONORING SARKY MOURADIAN. The International Academy presents an evening honoring Sarky Mouradian. The evening will be hosted by well-known Armenians and feature performance in both English and Armenian. Admission is between \$25.00- \$100.00. The show begins at 7:30 p.m. and runs approximately 3 hours. For more information please contact the Alex Theatre, 216 North Brand Blvd., Glendale.

**JANUARY 25-** USC AGSA’S 6TH ANNUAL DINNER-DANCE GALA. Save the date. The event will be held at Deukmejian Grand Ballroom, Ararat Home, 15150 Mission Hills Rd., Mission Hills. More information to follow.

**JANUARY 26-** MOSAIC II CONCERT. Hamazkayin presents Mosaic II- A Celebration of Sound, at the Alex Theatre, 216 N. Brand Blvd., Glendale, at 7:00 p.m. Tickets cost \$20.00-100.00. For more information please call (818) 562-0177.

**JANUARY 27-** ZULA LIVE. St. Andrew Armenian Church Cultural Committee and Homenetmen Santa Clara Ani Chapter will be presenting a “Zula” performance at the Cubberley Com-

munity Center Theatre, 4000 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto, at 6:00 p.m. For more information please call (408) 257-6743.

**JANUARY 29-** “VISIT ARMENIA, IT IS BEAUTIFUL”- 5th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION. The United Armenian Congregational Church Men’s Fellowship cordially invites you to the 5th Anniversary Celebration of “Visit Armenia, It Is Beautiful” project, with participation by UACC’s 2007 Armenia Mission Team, AGBU, AYF, and Glendale College “Study Abroad in Armenia.” The event will take place at the UACC Hall, 3480 Cahuenga Blvd., Los Angeles, at 7:20 p.m. Admission is free, but RSVP is required. For more information or to reserve a place please call Ara Boyadjian at (818) 566-1782.

**JANUARY 31-** MELINEH KURDIAN IN CONCERT. Melineh Kurdian will be performing live with her band at the Hotel Café, 1623 ½ N. Cahuenga Blvd., Los Angeles, at 7:00 p.m. Admission TBA.

**FEBRUARY 1-** TRADITIONAL COSTUME FESTIVAL. Friends of JULFA proudly presents a Traditional Costume Festival at the Ambrosia Banquet Hall, 6410 San Fernando Road, Glendale, at 7:30 p.m. Admission is \$70.00. For more information please call (818) 662-0404.

**FEBRUARY 2-** “9 TO 1 GALA.” The Knights of Vartan and the Daughters of Vartan will be hosting a fund-raiser Gala. The organizations have secured a partnership with the World Bank in which the World Bank will match the funds raised by 9 times. The goal is to raise \$100,000.00 which will translate to \$1,000,000.00 and will go directly to Armenia. The money raised at the event will be used to build schools in Armenia. More information to follow.

**FEBRUARY 2-** KEF NIGHT 2008. Saro Dance presents Kef Night 2008, at the Great Caesar Banquet Hall, 6723 Foothill Blvd., Tujunga. The night will feature full course dinner with mezza, open bar, and cocktail hour. A portion of the proceeds will benefit the Western Prelacy Project. Entertainment provided by 3 Brothers DJ. Admission is \$55.00. For more information please call (818) 324-0979.

**FEBRUARY 3-** HAMAZKAYIN’S 80TH ANNIVERSARY. Hamazkyin Nigol Aghbalian Chapter is celebrating the 80th Anniversary on February 3rd. Save the Date. More details to follow.

**FEBRUARY 9-** ANAHID FUND ANNUAL DINNER DANCE. Come and support the Anahid

Fund, which is dedicated to aid in the socioeconomic conditions in Armenia. This event will take place at the Taglyan Cultural Center, 1201 Vine St., Los Angeles. A suggested donation of \$75.00 is requested. For more information please call (818) 409-0655.

**FEBRUARY 15-** AGBU WINTER GALA. Save the date for the annual AGBU YPNC is holding a Winter Gala February 15th- 18th. More information to follow.

**FEBRUARY 16** – ARS FASHION SHOW. For the past 21 years the ARS “Sepan” Chapter has been organizing the Fundraising Fashion Show Luncheon at the Glendale Hilton Hotel, 100 W. Glenoaks Blvd., Glendale, at 11:00 a.m. Admission is \$60.00. For more information please call (818) 425-6464.

**APRIL 26** – “CHILDREN HELPING CHILDREN WITH LOVE” -- AMAA Orphan Child Care Luncheon, Fashion Show and Silent Auction. 11:00 a.m. At the Beverly Hills Hotel. For more information, call Elizabeth Agbabian, (310) 476-5306.

**ARMENIAN DANCE CLASSES:**  
An 8 week fund-raising program, costing \$40.00, to learn Armenian, Greek, Country Line Dancing, Arabic and other fun dances. Different Armenian

Organizations throughout the Los Angeles Area have each sponsored a different night in a different location in order to accommodate numerous people. The dance class schedule is as follows:  
Beginning:  
**JANUARY 2-** Every Wednesday the ARS Talin Chapter will host a 2 hour dance class at 2633 Honolulu Ave., La Crescenta. For more information please call Chakeh at (818) 653-1005.  
**JANUARY 10-** Every Thursday St. Gregory Armenian Catholic Church will host a 2 hour dance class at the church, 1510 E. Mountain St., Glendale. For more information please call Dalila at (818) 957-4212.  
**JANUARY 15-** Every Tuesday the ARS Araz Chapter will host a 1 ½ hour dance class at 361 E. Magnolia Blvd. Suite C, Burbank. For more information please call Jeanine at (818) 434-3389.  
**JANUARY 21-** Every Monday the Homenetmen Ararat Chapter will host a 2 hour dance class at 3347 N. San Fernando Rd., Los Angeles. For more information please call Verjik at (818) 434-9397.  
**FEBRUARY 1-** Every Friday the ARS Meghry Chapter will host a 1 ½ hour dance class at 11719 Moorpark St., Studio City. For more information please call Maral at (818) 339-8636.

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# Ensuring the Future of Armenia's Past

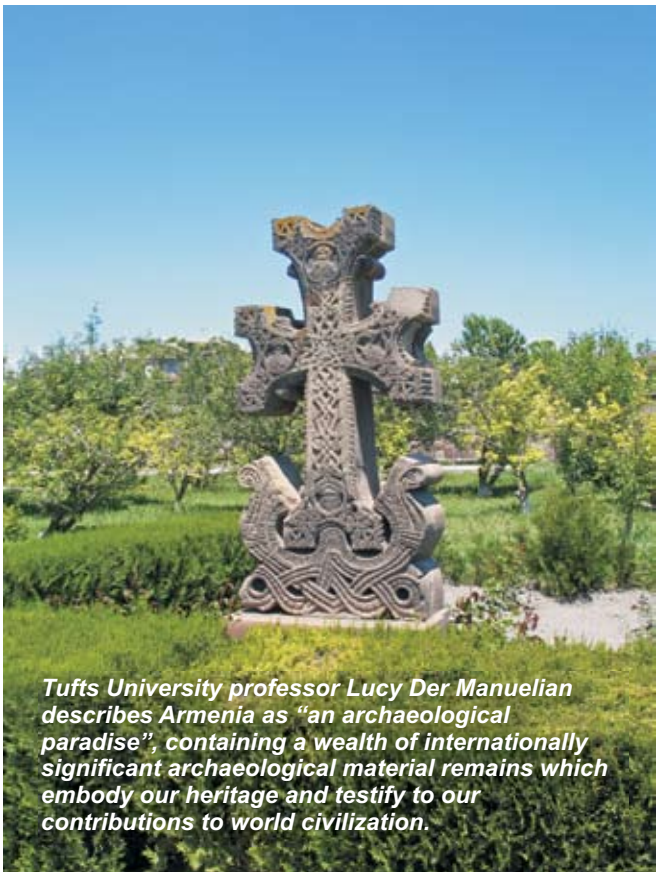
**Project Discovery! is dedicated to the discovery and preservation of Armenia's archaeological and cultural legacy.** Armenia has a long and continuous past that is both culturally rich and historically significant. And yet, our history is largely unknown to the academic community outside of Armenia primarily due to lack of funds available to Armenian scientists.



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*Tufts University professor Lucy Der Manuelian describes Armenia as "an archaeological paradise", containing a wealth of internationally significant archaeological material remains which embody our heritage and testify to our contributions to world civilization.*



*has never been more important to develop and support the infrastructure of archaeology in Armenia.*



**We are proud of the contribution we are making to discover and preserve the archaeological and cultural legacy of Armenia.** Your enthusiastic support over the past several years has enabled us to achieve major accomplishments – such as the establishment of a research and conservation laboratory at Yerevan State University, the publication of *Aramazd: Armenian Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, and *Terra Armenica*, the first website of Armenian archaeology and history, among many, many other projects.



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*"Detail of Vishap" c. 1,500 B.C.*

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