



At Eurovision, Armenia comes in fourth with Sirusho

See story on page 17 [▶](#)

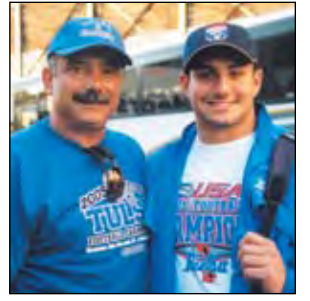
An Armenian tradition lives on in North Dakota

See story on page C8 [▶](#)



The newest addition to the NFL

See story on page 12 [▶](#)



Eastern U.S. Edition  
Number 66  
May 31, 2008

# the armenian reporter



Warplanes paint the colors of the Armenian tricolor in the peaceful sky over Sardarabad on May 28, 2008. Photo: Photolure.

## The victory of May 1918 is remembered at Sardarabad

The people of Armenia converge at a battleground where Armenia was reborn.

See story on page 1 [▶](#)

Reporter.am





# ON THE FIRST THRESHOLD OF A CENTURY OF DEDICATED SERVICE

## 1910 **ZOUARS** 2010

### **The Centennial Fund of the Armenian Relief Society**

**A** Centennial Fund for the Armenian Relief Society has been established in recognition of the oldest and largest Armenian women’s organization to further enhance its humanitarian activities around the world.

**R**elief being the middle name of the ARS, during most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ARS programs centered on the Armenian Diaspora in order to bring stability to a people devastated by the 1915 Genocide. In 1988, the much needed relief work in the aftermath of the earthquake that hit Armenia’s northwest expanded forever the mission and duties of the Society.

**S**ervice to Armenia soon developed to include assistance to Artsakh and Javakhq with various programs designed to restore and preserve Armenian presence – both physical and spiritual – in both of those historically Armenian inhabited regions, with numerous clinics, kindergartens, schools, community and social service centers, etc.

*Today, on the first threshold of its second 100 years, the ARS asks you to join those who have already contributed to the ARS Centennial Fund in recognition of the Society’s past work and in support of its Diaspora and Homeland-wide future endeavors.*

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*YES, I want to help the Armenian Relief Society, Inc. continue its service to the Armenian people by making a donation to the ARS Centennial Fund.*

\$5,000    \$2,500    \$1,000    \$500    \$250    \$100   Other \_\_\_\_\_

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

The Armenian Relief Society, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) organization. Your tax exempt donation will be deposited into the ARS Centennial Fund. All donations will be acknowledged by our headquarters located at 80 Bigelow Avenue, Watertown, MA 02472. You can call us at (617) 926-5892 if you wish to donate stocks, property, bonds or similar instruments. You may also e-mail us at [manager@ars1910.org](mailto:manager@ars1910.org).

***... Contribute Generously***

**Centennial Fund of the Armenian Relief Society**



## National

### Congressional delegation in Armenia, region

Reps. Adam Schiff (D.-Calif.), Allyson Schwartz (D.-Penn.) and Wayne Gilchrest (R.-Md.) visited Baku on May 24-25 and Yerevan on May 26-27, meeting with Azerbaijani and Armenian presidents and other officials, their offices reported. "We consider Armenia

an important partner and ally," Mr. Schiff said. The trip was the first visit to Armenia by members of Congress since 2005 and was organized through the ad hoc House Democracy Assistance Commission.

See story on page 2

## Community

### Diana Der-Hovanesian leads an ALMA audience through the art of translating poetry

On Sunday afternoon, May 18, at the Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA), lovely and haunting Armenian melodies accompanied an hour of discussing "The Art of Translating Poetry," Yvette K. Harpootian reports.

The forum, moderated by ALMA librarian Berj Chekijian, featured Diana Der-Hovanesian discussing

her approach to the challenge of translating Armenian poetry, and reading poems she selected as perennial favorites.

Besides moderating the discussion, Chekijian recited the poems in Armenian after Der-Hovanesian read them in English.

See story on page 6

## Community

### Glendale Police Department is reaching out to the Armenian community.

As they rush to hire new officers to fill a fast-depleting force, Glendale Police Department officials say they are on the lookout for Armenian-American candidates – so the agency can reflect the ethnic make-up of its city, Alex Dobuzinskis reports.

Police officials say their recruitment is always bound by the need to get the best candidates – and that they are competing with other police agencies for a small

pool of Armenian-American candidates.

But even as the department in the last decade has drastically increased its number of Armenian-American officers from three in 1998 to 15 this year, those officers make up only 6 percent of its force. Perhaps 40 percent of the city's residents are of Armenian descent,

See story on page 14

## Arts & Culture



A glimpse into the Bronx of the 1930s: A class picture of the Tourian Armenian School, with "the incredible Deegen Paboojian" standing on the far right. (The young Mary Zararian is seated in the second row, 6th from the left.)

### An Internet Café in the Bronx – circa 1935

Mary Zararian Liebermann recalls her Armenian school, her church, and the Armenian charcuterie in the middle of a huge open-air market in the Bronx. The store was the

Internet café of an earlier generation, where friends caught up on each other's news.

See essay on page C11

## Armenia

### Life is hard – and getting lonelier – in villages at Armenia's border with Azerbaijan

In the past five months, only one child has been born in Berekamavan village, on the border with Azerbaijan, not far from Georgia. She is a girl named Asia. Since Berekamavan is an aging village, for the past few years the number of people passing away is greater than the number of those being

born. Seven people have already died this year.

Tatul Hakobyan reports on visits to its nine border villages, where he found that emigration in search of work – to Russia and to Yerevan – is increasing.

See story on page 18



Dancers spread joy at Sardarabad on May 28. Photo: Photolure.

## The victory of May 1918 is remembered at Sardarabad

### "May 28 is the torch of freedom and independence"

by Armen Hakobyan

SARDARABAD, Armenia – The monument to the Battle of Sardarabad was draped in festive colors on the 90th anniversary of the fateful battle. On these very days 90 years ago, the Armenian people found the strength to resist the Turkish army, which had come to finish the last remnants of the Ar-

menian people in their native land. In life-or-death battles in Bash-Abaran, near Kara-Kilisa, and here in Sardarabad, Armenians not only prevailed and pushed back the Turkish army, which enjoyed superiority of numbers and materiel, but also restored Armenian statehood.

"Are you going to the Battle?" asked Vlad, the thirty-something driver of a Yerevan-Armavir minibus. Having gotten an affirmative answer, he volunteered, "I go to the Battle every year. I'd go this year too, but alas I am on duty. I'll probably go in the evening. It is, after all, my holiday, my real holiday."

Vlad complained that there is much injustice in life. "You know,

I love my country. If I didn't love it, I wouldn't go to war for it. I would have left it. I love my country. I just wish it would love me back a bit more! Whatever. Happy Independence Day, brother!"

Now powerful engines are rumbling overhead and warplanes fly by in the peaceful sky. They leave red, blue, and apricot smoke in their wake. Parachutists descend, unfurling a tricolor banner. It is a day of celebration.

Inspecting the military parade is the president of the republic, Serge Sargsian, former President Robert Kocharian, the Catholicos of

Continued on page 13

## Institute of Turkish Studies chair was ousted for acknowledging Genocide

### Middle East scholars protest Turkish government interference in academic freedom

by Lou Ann Matossian

MINNEAPOLIS – In a sharply worded protest to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the Middle East Studies Association on May 27 condemned the forced resignation of Donald Quataert from the chair of the Institute of Turkish Studies after Prof. Quataert affirmed in a book review that "what happened to the Armenians readily satisfies the U.N. definition of genocide."

"After the long lapse of serious Ottomanist scholarship on the Armenian question, it now appears that the Ottomanist wall of silence is crumbling," Prof. Quataert (pronounced KWA-tairt) had written in the August 2006 *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*. "Although it may provoke anger among some of my Ottomanist colleagues," he added, avoidance of the term *genocide*

in his essay "runs the risk of suggesting denial of the massive and systematic atrocities that the Ottoman state and some of its military and general populace committed against the Armenians." Describing Ottomanists as falling "into a camp of either silence or denial – both of which are forms of complicity," Prof. Quataert urged his colleagues "to take their rightful responsibility to perform the proper research" on 1915 and its aftermath.

"Dr. Quataert's relinquishment of his position came after he refused to accede to the request of ITS's honorary chairman, Ambassador Nebi Şensoy, that he issue a retraction of a scholarly book review he wrote about the killings of Armenians (1915-1918) in the Ottoman Empire," wrote MESA president Mervat Hatem in the open letter to Mr. Erdoğan. "We are enormously concerned that unnamed high officials in Ankara felt it was inappropriate for Professor Quataert to continue as chairman of the board of governors and threatened to revoke the funding for the ITS if he did not publicly retract statements made in his review or separate himself from the Chairmanship of the ITS," Prof. Hatem added. Prof. Quataert resigned in December 2006.

It was members of the Turkish Studies Association, "scandalized by the news of Professor Quataert's mistreatment at the hands of the Institute of Turkish Studies," who raised the issue at the TSA annual business meeting, which was held in conjunction with MESA's annual meeting in November 2007. The TSA board referred the case to MESA's Committee on Academic Freedom and expressed support for its response, the letter explained.

The ITS, a nonprofit educational foundation established in 1982, distributes the proceeds of a \$3 million endowment from the Turkish government to support Turkish studies in the United States.

"The reputation and integrity of the ITS as a non-political institution funding scholarly projects that meet stringent academic criteria is blackened when there is government interference in and blatant disregard for the principle of academic freedom," MESA declared. "A clear message is sent to those who would apply for ITS funds or participate in ITS activities that the board does not stand behind the principle of academic freedom, and that politics can vitiate professional standards."

Continued on page 3



## NATIONAL



by Emil Sanamyan

### Congressional delegation in Armenia, region

Reps. **Adam Schiff** (D.-Calif.), **Allyson Schwartz** (D.-Penn.) and **Wayne Gilchrest** (R.-Md.) visited Baku on May 24-25 and Yerevan on May 26-27, meeting with Azerbaijani and Armenian presidents and other officials, their offices reported. The trip was the first visit to Armenia by members of Congress since 2005

## Washington briefing



President **Serge Sargsian** greeting Reps. **Adam Schiff** and **Allyson Schwartz**. Photo: Photolure.

and was organized through the ad hoc House Democracy Assistance Commission.

Rep. Schiff, who represents the cities of Glendale and Pasadena, with the largest proportion of Armenian-American voters in the United States, told President **Serge Sargsian**, "We consider Armenia an important partner and ally. Consequently, we wish to as far as possible assist its political and economic progress."

In an interview with RFE/RL Armenian Service, Rep. Schiff said that he and other members were "concerned with the problems that occurred during the election [in Armenia], the violence that occurred after the election."

"We are here to try to assess the situation and talk with the Armenian government about how we can help move the government fur-

ther in the direction of democracy," Rep. Schiff added.

Rep. Schiff's delegation also met with aides to **Levon Ter-Petrosian**, the opposition figure and former president, who focused on the recent election campaign and its outcome.

While in Baku, the members of Congress heard criticisms of Armenia and the Armenian diaspora, with few details reported.

From Armenia the delegation flew on to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

### Georgian ruling party election sweep welcomed, protested

The National Movement Party led by President **Mikheil Saakashvili** swept the May 21 parliamentary election winning more than 110 seats in the 150-seat legislature,



Young Georgians protest the conduct of parliamentary elections. Photo: Photolure.

according to preliminary results made available via the Civil.ge news portal.

The remaining seats were won by the Nine-party Opposition Alliance (about 16 seats) led by **David Gankrelidze**, the Christian Democratic Party of former TV anchor **Giorgi Targamadze** (8 seats), the Labor Party of populist politician **Shalva Natelashvili** (6 seats), and the opposition Republican Party led by **David Berdzenishvili** (2 seats).

Three of the seats in parliament went to ethnic Armenians, as the *Armenian Reporter* reported last week.

The opposition alliance quickly called for annulment of results, pointing to electoral violations. It also launched several well-attended protest rallies and vowed it would prevent the new parliament from convening.

Western observers suggested

that the government's efforts to meet democratic standards for elections were "uneven and incomplete." (The observers gave a more upbeat assessment of the presidential election last January calling it "democratic." See this page in the January 12, 2008 *Armenian Reporter*.)

According to the observers there were problems with vote count in 16 percent of precincts inspected – about the same number as in Georgian, as well as Armenian, presidential polls earlier this year. Nevertheless, the U.S. State Department was "encouraged" by what it thought were "improvements" in election conduct compared to the previous poll.

Georgia has been possibly the most eager ally of the United State in recent years, sending one of the largest military contingents in support of U.S.-led Iraq operations. ❏

# Sarafian: Genocide deniers weaker today than ever

A full-length observational documentary, *The Blue Book*, which had its U.S. premiere in Pasadena, Calif., on May 29, tracks historian **Ara Sarafian** as he argues in the U.K. and Turkey against the official Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide. On May 28, **Vincent Lima** asked Mr. Sarafian about his work on the British Parliamentary Blue Book on the Armenian Genocide and about his research and advocacy work in Turkey and beyond. Mr. Sarafian is the director of the Gomidas Institute (UK). (Mr. Lima, the editor of the *Armenian Reporter*, is a former director of the Gomidas Institute.)

**Armenian Reporter:** In *Blue Book*, the documentary, we see you arguing forcefully for the authenticity of the British Parliamentary Blue Book that made the case for the Armenian Genocide back in 1916. Do you find that your scholarly and advocacy work regarding the Blue Book has had an impact?

**Ara Sarafian:** Yes, I think the Blue Book has had an impact, as has my other documentary work on United States archives. Whenever the issue of the Blue Book comes up in the United Kingdom, the "Uncensored" or critical edition of the work is cited as the basis of discussion. (James Bryce and Arnold Toynbee, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916: Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Fallodon by Viscount Bryce [Uncensored Edition]*, ed. and intro. Ara Sarafian.) Even in Turkey a number of scholars credit the critical edition in their discussions of the 1916 work.

This work has also had an impact by forcing old-time deniers, most notably **Sukru Elekdag** and **Justin McCarthy**, to make changes to their position. For example, the original 1916 work omitted some names of sources to safeguard them because they were still in the Ottoman Empire in 1916. This in-

formation was published in a separate confidential key in 1916. Until recently, deniers ignored the existence of the key and argued that the missing names were merely a ruse to hide the poor sources underpinning the 1916 work.

Since the publication of the critical edition in 2000, these deniers have "discovered" the confidential key, even though it has been available since 1916, including in libraries and archival collections cited by deniers over the past 30 years. They have been forced to change their position with this "discovery" because they could no longer simply deny the existence of the confidential key to support their accusations. Now that they are forced to acknowledge the existence of the confidential key, they insist that the content of the key supports their thesis. This is simply not true and their position is now more precarious, even in their own ranks.

The critical edition of the Blue Book has had a positive influence on debates and it serves as a textbook case of Armenian Genocide denial.

### Deniers are having a hard time

**Reporter:** As we can see in the documentary, you have long been a frequent traveler to Turkey, where you have done research as well as public speaking. Let me ask you first about your public engagements: Looking at various groups within Turkey – scholars, students, political activists of various stripes, the media, and the public at large – do you see any shift in attitude toward the Genocide?

**Sarafian:** Yes, I see a change in all of the groups you have mentioned. You only have to follow Turkish newspapers or television programs, or speak to students. The deniers are still there, but they are having a hard time. Turkey is a

much more open society now and this may paradoxically explain why there is still a continuous stream of anti-Armenian publications alongside more sensible ones in Turkish bookstores. This is not because the deniers are strong but because they are weaker today than ever. They need to reinvigorate public support for their position.

In my experience even some Turkish nationalists have shown a remarkable softening of their position toward Armenians regarding 1915, typically stating that "something terrible happened to Armenians in 1915," and that "Armenians have a right to be angry," but invariably insisting that we should not call all this "genocide." To me this is a fundamental shift, which, when genuine, is an opening for real dialogue; and if it is contrived, it is a more sophisticated form of denial that also needs to be understood and addressed.

**Reporter:** Do you find that your arguments are disseminated fairly through the Turkish media? When I look at stories involving you, your critique of Armenian scholars seems to get more play than your arguments about the Genocide.

**Sarafian:** I always make a point of calling the events of 1915 a genocide, both to the print media and television. Some Turkish journals ask me additional questions about the Genocide and quoted me talking about the issue.

Sometimes what is written in Turkish papers regarding what I have said is not correct, but more often it is correct. As a rule I submit my interviews in writing so that there is a record of what I actually said. Regarding content, it is not surprising that Turkish journalists ask me critical questions about Armenian historiography. The same is true for Armenian newspapers asking me questions about Turkish historiography. For example, I have nev-

er been asked about limitations to the Armenian Genocide thesis by an Armenian newspaper, but I have been asked about limitations to Ottoman archives.

**Reporter:** I do not understand the second parallel. In 1985 the Turkish prime minister announced that the Ottoman archives are open for the scrutiny of scholars and that any work on the Armenian Genocide must account for these archives. It is therefore wholly appropriate to ask you, as someone who has worked in Ottoman archives, whether those archives are truly open and what they show. In any case, you have chosen to publish on the matter.

On the other hand, why would a newspaper without an ax to grind ask you about "limitations to the Armenian Genocide thesis"? Have you published an article about any specific limitation that has been ignored?

**Sarafian:** I think the veracity of the Genocide is well established, but there are some important aspects of the events of 1915 that can be questioned. It depends on what you ask and how you ask it. For example, one could debate the role of Jemal Pasha and question whether he really was part of the so-called CUP triumvirate that organized the Genocide. I have my serious doubts and the issue can be debated. Did Ottoman officials try to destroy every single Armenian in the Ottoman Empire in 1915? Not necessarily, and the issue can be debated.

**Reporter:** The attitude of Armenian scholars for many years had been to avoid engaging debates about the veracity of the Armenian Genocide. The reasoning has gone something like this: people who deny the genocide are not bona fide historians in search of the truth, but agents of the Turkish state whose mission is to show that the Armenian Genocide is not settled

historical fact. By debating them, we're confirming that the Genocide is debatable. Do you accept this reasoning today?

**Sarafian:** I think we can discern the real deniers of the genocide from those who have genuine questions to ask, even if they appear naïve sometimes. It is our job as scholars to debate such people in an appropriate way, in an appropriate forum. I have found that many Turks today are interested in the genocide issue and are open to meaningful discussion even if they may not use the "G" word to start.

When they recognize the awful treatment and massacre of Armenians in 1915, I think one can take the conversation from there.

### "Scored an own goal"

**Reporter:** You had a very public exchange with **Yusuf Halacoglu**, the head of the THS, where you issued press releases and he granted interviews to CNN-Turk. You just attended a meeting in Oslo with Justin McCarthy and others. What, in your view, is to be gained from these encounters?

**Sarafian:** When I had my exchange with Halacoglu regarding a case study on Harput, the initiative came from me, and I framed the proposal. It was a fair, manageable proposal and the Turkish media gave it prominence by reporting on it. It was CNN-Turk which asked the critical question to Halacoglu regarding the Ottoman records at the heart of my proposal, and Halacoglu admitted to a Turkish journalist that the records I had asked to see did not exist (in Turkish archives today). I cannot overstate the importance of this interview in Turkey.

Similarly, one of the biggest names in Turkish journalism, **Mehmet Ali Birand**, commented on Halacoglu's words regarding

Continued on page 3 ❏



## INTERNATIONAL

## Sarafian: Genocide deniers weaker today than ever

Continued from page 2

the non-availability of the records in question under the headline "We Scored an Own Goal." Birand pointed out that while Turkish authorities have argued about the richness of Ottoman archives related to the 1915 deportations, the completeness of Ottoman records, and the unwillingness of Armenians to work there, we now have a scenario where an Armenian historian has publicly asked to examine these core records and he is told that they are unavailable. Birand's column was carried in several major Turkish newspapers.

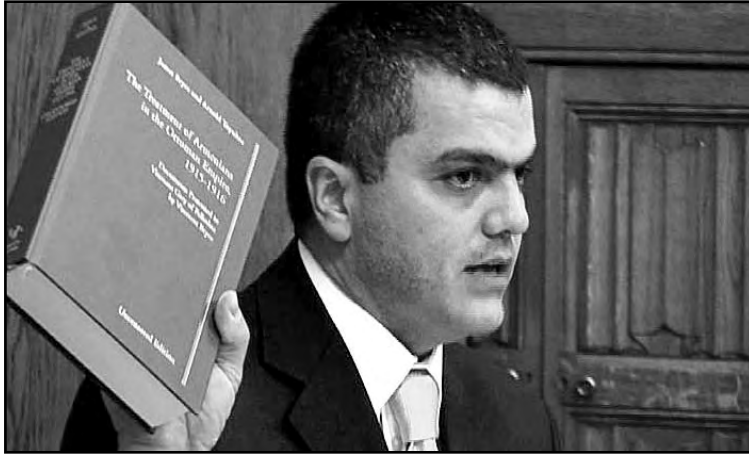
So what was gained? We learned that the Ottoman records are fundamentally lacking in some fundamental respects, we saw that there are some decent Turkish journalists, and we allowed the Armenian issue to be discussed in a critical way in Turkey. These are all positive developments.

Halacoglu then went on to state, in an interview to a Turkish newspaper, that I had pulled out of the Harput project because I was afraid of the Armenian diaspora. That explanation was not true because I had not said any such thing. The case study came to an end when Halacoglu stated that the relevant records, which he had initially agreed to use as the basis of the joint case study, were not available. I don't think any Armenian newspaper asked me how the whole affair ended, so Halacoglu's explanation was not refuted anywhere.

**Reporter:** But the *Armenian Reporter* ran an interview with you (March 10, 2007, p. A2) in which you announced that the affair had ended and you explained the circumstances.

**Sarafian:** Perhaps I missed it. I did not see any serious discussion about what Halacoglu said and its significance. Is it conceivable that records were not kept regarding the deportation and settlement of people in 1915, despite Ottoman laws and regulations? What were these laws and regulations? If such records were kept, is it conceivable that they all have gone missing from local and central archives? Do we take Halacoglu's word for any of this? Are there avenues whereby such information can be checked today independently of Halacoglu? After all, Halacoglu is the head of the Turkish Historical Society and not the archives.

Regarding the recent meeting in Oslo, that was something different. It was a closed meeting to see if there were any positive ways to move ahead on the Turkish-Armenian issue. The advantage of such meetings is that one could be more



Ara Sarafian in the new documentary, *The Blue Blue*. Photo courtesy: Ani Sounds.

frank in discussions. If anything substantial was decided, it would have been made public, and I certainly would have insisted on it.

### Genocide, in all its complexity

**Reporter:** Turning to your research in Turkey, you worked in Ottoman archives in Istanbul in the early 90s; you reported that in spite of lots of trouble with access, the documents you studied "corroborate Western accounts of the Armenian Genocide." You have now been back in Ottoman archives. What is your current experience?

**Sarafian:** I have not been back to Ottoman archives since being readmitted in 2006. It all has to do with funding, and I have none for working in Ottoman archives. However, I have kept up with published sources put out by the archives themselves (there is always interesting new material coming out), and I have been able to discuss developments with Turkish colleagues. My understanding is that Ottoman archives still corroborate the Armenian Genocide, but there is a caveat to my answer.

Ottoman records corroborate the Armenian Genocide thesis in all of its complexities, some aspects of which have been left out of discussions by mainstream Armenians scholars. Just to give you an example: we know that most deportees were killed during the deportations of 1915, wasted away in Der Zor, or killed outright at the end of 1916. However, it is also true that perhaps up to 200,000 Armenians were sent to western Syria in 1915. These convoys suffered a great deal from privations and disease, but they were not murdered as in Der Zor. As a consequence, many Armenians survived 1915 in western Syria and Jordan – though under awful conditions and with great losses. This episode of the Armenian Genocide, the deportations to western Syria, has not been incor-

porated into conventional accounts of the Genocide itself.

Such information about western Syria, combined with what Ottoman archives have to say, can be used to devastating effect by deniers of the Genocide. They can use such information to question the credibility of the whole Genocide thesis.

Only recently, Turkish Prime Minister **Recep Tayyip Erdoğan** stated that Armenian deportees were given pocket money in 1915. Technically, that is true: that is, there were instances where some deportees were given some money by some Ottoman authorities. This is even recorded in Armenian sources. See Vahram Dadrian's *To the Desert: Pages from My Diary*. However, it is also true that such cases were not typical by any stretch of the imagination, and even these caravans were liable to be robbed and massacred afterward.

Just to illustrate the point further, a member of the Turkish Historical Society stated that Armenian intellectuals who were arrested and exiled from Constantinople on April 24 were given money by the Ottoman authorities. He implied that such treatment was an indication of how well these prisoners were treated. He implied that these people could not have been massacred.

Yet Armenian sources, to their credit, also recorded that the April 24 deportees were given some funds by their captors. They also named and stated that most of these people disappeared while in state custody. Ottoman Turkish sources do not give the names of the deportees and they certainly do not say what happened to these people.

**Reporter:** I'm not sure I understand how the fact that Armenians survived in western Syria and Jordan could be used to undermine the Genocide thesis. Is there any controversy as to whether hundreds of thousands

of Armenians survived the Genocide? Vahram Dadrian's book, to take your example, was published in Armenian in the 1940s, no? These accounts are not secret. The issue, perhaps, is that scholars of the early-twentieth-century history of Asia Minor need to take responsibility for Armenian-language sources.

### Access to archives

On the subject of access to archives, what is the state of access to Armenian archives? Last week, the head of the Turkish Historical Society complained about closed Armenian archives and said he had offered money to help Armenians open them. You characterized this as a publicity stunt. At the same time, however, you noted that the archives of the Zoryan Institute and the Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate are not open. Could you describe your concerns?

**Sarafian:** The Zoryan Institute collected the private papers of individual Armenians in the 1980s. It also microfilmed materials from other archives. A few months back I was informed that these records were still not available for scrutiny, though the institute's oral history records have been digitized and are available by special request. This was disappointing news to me because of the importance of all archival collections related to the Genocide, as well as my concern that the Zoryan materials may well have deteriorated. Certainly I expected the Zoryan people to afford more attention to these records given ongoing debates about the Armenian Genocide and the importance of Armenian sources. If nothing else, the institute could have classified parts of its collection in an ongoing process. These records have been kept under lock-and-key for over two decades.

In the case of the Jerusalem Patriarchate's archives, these are of immense interest because many key records related to the genocide ended up there. A few Armenian scholars (most notably **Vahagn N. Dadrian** and **Richard G. Hovannisian**) have used documents from these archives without disclosing information about their physical condition, or the fact that they are not freely accessible. I have been told that these materials are now in very poor condition because of neglect.

I personally tried to gain access to these archives twice in the 1990s and was simply told that no such archives existed.

The current state of the Jerusalem archives does not seem to be an active concern amongst Armenian scholars. Perhaps they will show interest when Turkish historians

begin to make the Jerusalem archives into a political issue. I hope no records have been lost through neglect because the absence of documents will only play into the hands of deniers.

**Reporter:** You have been unsparing in your criticism of Armenian scholars. It is axiomatic that to maintain high standards, scholars must criticize each other's work. But we tend to see your critiques in the Turkish press. Are the normal avenues of scholarly peer review – book reviews, monographs, arguing in conferences – not working in Armenian studies?

**Sarafian:** I think you are exaggerating when you say I have been "unsparing" in my criticism. In the past 20 years I have reviewed or commented on the works of Armenian scholars in *Armenian Review*, *Armenian Forum*, *The Armenian Weekly*, and *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*. In each case I have tried to be balanced. Where I have criticized, I have done so in good faith, with argument, and with the knowledge that the people concerned can respond. In fact, I have welcomed such responses to my reviews. This is how scholarship works.

On the other hand, I have had Armenian scholars tell me I should not criticize other Armenian scholars, "because Turks will use such criticism against us." I reject such statements as a matter of course. I am against censorship, including self-censorship, especially in academia.

In recent years, I have also made remarks in the Turkish press when asked about scholarship and the politics surrounding scholarship related to the Armenian Genocide. My comments have been critical of some Turkish and Armenian authors and institutions. If I have been unfair to anyone, I am sure the appropriate people will respond to what I have said. I might even be shown to be mistaken, in which case I will take note and issue a retraction. That is all part of the scholarly process.

**Reporter:** What are you working on now? Any forthcoming publications?

**Sarafian:** I am working full time at the Gomidas Institute with several publications pending. My personal research focus right now is on the forgotten or silenced Armenian sources on the Genocide, especially those related to the deportations to western Syria in 1915–17. I hope to integrate this issue into a broader understanding of the Genocide, both for a better understanding of the Genocide itself, as well as to preclude the manipulation of such information by deniers.

**Reporter:** Thank you. #

## ITS chair was ousted for acknowledging Armenian Genocide

Continued from page 1

Such concerns are not new. In the Spring 1995 issue of *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, scholars **Roger W. Smith**, **Erik Markusen**, and **Robert Jay Lifton** exposed a long-standing arrangement by which ITS founding executive director **Heath Lowry** served the Turkish government in its campaign to discredit scholarship on the Armenian Genocide.

A professor of history at the State University of New York at Binghamton, Mr. Quataert chaired the ITS board of governors from 2001 until December 13, 2006. In 1985, as an associate professor at the University of Houston, he was among

the 69 Ottoman, Turkish, and Middle Eastern area scholars who petitioned against a House Joint Resolution that memorialized "the one and one half million people of Armenian ancestry who were victims of genocide perpetrated in Turkey between 1915 and 1923."

As he recalled the emerging Ottoman and Turkish area scholarship of the 1980s from a vantage point twenty years later, Prof. Quataert wrote in his book review, "the authors were not writing critical history but polemics" and "many of their works were directly sponsored and published by the Turkish government." To date, said MESA, most of the scholarship in this area still fails to adhere to the highest

professional standards "and as such serves neither the field of Ottoman-Turkish studies nor the interests of the Republic of Turkey and its citizens."

Nevertheless, both Prof. Quataert in his review and MESA with its 2005 Academic Freedom Award lauded the new wave of critical thinking in this field – specifically mentioning a conference held at Istanbul's Bilgi University "despite official intimidation and public harassment," as Prof. Quataert recalled. Prominent among the organizers and presenters of that conference were members of the Workshop for Armenian/Turkish Scholarship, including WATS co-founder **Fatma Müge Göçek**, a sociologist

at the University of Michigan.

Prof. Göçek, who did not sign the "69 scholars" petition, said she was surprised to learn from MESA's letter that she was still an ITS board member.

"One problem at ITS seems to be that neither the process through which who gets invited from among the associate members to review the grants, nor the proceedings of the Board meetings is shared with the rest of the ITS body," she wrote in an open letter to the other board members. If Prof. Quataert "was indeed punished in his capacity as the Board chairman for what he wrote in his capacity as a research scholar," she added, "then I would regard that as an infringement on

his academic freedom." Prof. Göçek confirmed for the *Armenian Reporter* that in the wake of MESA's letter, two ITS board members had already resigned and two more in addition to herself were considering whether to do so.

Addressing Prime Minister Erdoğan, MESA pointed out that "the attitude towards Dr. Quataert sharply contrasts with your government's recent call to leave the debate regarding the events of 1915 to the independent study and judgment of scholars." The organization called for Prof. Quataert to be reinstated and ITS endowment funds to be placed "in an irrevocable trust immune from political interference and infringement of academic freedom." #



## COMMUNITY

# Bayside parish discusses preservation of Armenian manuscripts

by Dr. Lynn Cetin

**BAYSIDE, N.Y.** — The Holy Martyrs Church Educational Ministry Program welcomed Fr. Columba Stewart to speak on “Preserving Armenian Manuscripts: The Work of the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library,” during a special program on March 25.

Fr. Stewart is chair of the department of Theology at St. John’s School of Theology in Collegeville, Minn., and also serves as the executive director of the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (HMML). He began his presentation in Bayside with an overview of the history of HMML, followed by a description of new projects related to ancient Armenian manuscripts. Fr. Columba spoke eloquently and passionately about the mission of HMML, and supplemented his talk with beautiful photographs and anecdotal stories from his travels.

The Hill Museum and Manuscript Library was founded 40 years ago by Benedictine monks, in response to the devastating loss of manuscripts and books during the two World Wars. Since then it has built the largest collection of manuscript images in the world, having photographed almost 100,000 manuscripts. Since the 1970s, HMML has been photographing collections of Eastern Christian manuscripts, and its collections of Armenian, Syriac, and Christian Arabic manuscripts are significant resource for the study of Eastern Christian manuscripts. The collection currently contains more than 1,300 microfilms of Armenian manuscripts,



Fr. Stewart, of the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, along with Holy Martyrs Church pastor Fr. Hovhanessian, members of the parish educational ministry program, and attendees at a special program on manuscript preservation.

with outreach efforts underway to several major Armenian centers.

(The library’s website, [www.hmml.org](http://www.hmml.org), gives detailed information on the history of the project.)

During the Bayside presentation, Fr. Stewart described HMML’s mission of preserving manuscript images as being driven by three considerations: respect for the rights of the manuscript owners to retain custody of manuscript

originals; the preservation benefit of having photographic “backups” of originals; and the benefit to scholars of having a “library of libraries.”

He told how manuscript preservation is done in phases. Phase one involves capturing high-quality images of the manuscripts with digital equipment. Because of the sensitivity issue of the manuscript materials to their

owners, HMML trains local people in the digitization process and technical support so that no one other than local personnel handle the manuscripts. Photographic studios are set up in each area where manuscripts are located to respect the local people who are providing the manuscripts to HMML. No manuscripts ever leave the communities, and copies of the images remain in these

communities so that no one can question the authenticity of the images in the future.

Phase two of the preservation of manuscripts requires archiving and cataloging of the digital images. This is a labor-intensive task which needs to be continuously updated as technology changes.

Phase three of the preservation of manuscripts involves the mission to provide a needed service to researchers and scholars of manuscripts, so that anyone, anywhere in the world can access these historical treasures. HMML is currently raising funds for Armenian-related projects in Lebanon, Turkey, and Syria. Rich collections in Italy and Eastern Europe are also in need of preservation.

Holy Martyrs pastor Fr. Vahan Hovhanessian expressed gratitude to Fr. Stewart for preserving manuscripts vitally important to the history and culture of the Armenian people.

For the evening’s program, a large group of interested students from St. John’s University Armenian Club were in the audience, and during the wine and cheese fellowship that followed the presentation, the young people continued discussions with Fr. Stewart about his work.

Fr. Hovhanessian and the parish’s Educational Ministry Program hold educational events throughout the year. For information, or to support the Educational Ministry Program, visit the parish website [www.holy-martyrs.org](http://www.holy-martyrs.org), or contact the church office at (718) 225-0235 or [office@holy-martyrs.org](mailto:office@holy-martyrs.org).

## Jack Soultanian dies at 90

**NEW YORK** — Jack (Hagop) Soultanian died on May 21, at the age of 90.

The son of Gulu Soultanian, and brother to Stephan, Elyse, Agvani, and Kevork, he was born in Istanbul in 1917, and came to America in 1933. He worked as a photo engraver, and served in the army during World War II, for which he was awarded the Purple Heart.

In 1946, he married Rose Hamarian, his wife of 62 years, who survives him. He is also survived by their children Takoug, Steve, and Jack, Jr., in-laws Ed and Silvia, and grandchildren Chad, Michelle, Stephanie, and Erica. Family members said he will be sorely missed.

In-lieu-of-flowers donations in Jack Soultanian’s name may be



Jack Soultanian (1917-2008)

sent to the Holy Martyrs Armenian Church of Bayside, and to the New York Armenian Home for the Aged in Flushing.

## At a Hovnanian School fundraiser, you gotta know when to hold ‘em

**NEW MILFORD, N.J.** — The Hovnanian School’s alumni association hosted a “Texas Hold ‘Em” poker tournament on the evening of Saturday, May 17, at the school.

A professional company provided tables and dealers, and food and drinks were also served to attendees, all in an effort to fundraise for the Hovnanian School.

Those who did not know how to play poker were able to enjoy games like backgammon and cards, as well.

The top five winners of the tournament received some great prizes — including a grand prize of \$2,500, won by the school’s kindergarten teacher, Tania Bakalian.

The alumni association expressed its gratitude to everyone who took part in the fundraiser, to the mothers who donated their time to make the food, to the prize donors, and to all the table sponsors. The poker tournament was another effort in the association’s continuing fundraising projects for the Hovnanian School.

## Physicist and teacher Barkev Bakamjian dies at 84

**TULSA, Okla.** — Barkev Y. Bakamjian, a dedicated teacher and an accomplished scientist, died on Friday, April 25, at his Tulsa home in the company of family members who had supported him during his valiant battle against cancer. He was 84.

Bakamjian was born August 17, 1923, near Beirut, Lebanon, the youngest child of Yeghia and Santoukt Bakamjian, survivors of the Armenian Genocide. He attended an English missionary orphanage grammar school led by his father, who taught him to place a high value on education. He moved on to a French secondary school before studying at the American University of Beirut, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in physics in 1944 and a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering in 1946.

In September 1946, Barkev traveled by ship to the United States along with his older sister, Veronica, a doctor, to start a new life. He earned a master’s degree in physics from Columbia University in 1947 and a doctorate in physics from Columbia in 1953. He and his Columbia faculty advisor, L.H. Thomas, published a paper in *Physical Review* in December 1953 titled “Relativistic Particle Dynamics, II” that has been cited in more than 200 other articles.

Also in December 1953, Barkev, married the former Grace M. Norian, and the two enjoyed a marriage remarkable tenderness and depth of love.

Prof. Bakamjian was an instructor or assistant professor of engineering or physics at several institutions during his first 15 years in the United States: at the New York

Maritime College, the University of Oklahoma, the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Minnesota Duluth, Northeastern University, and finally at Pennsylvania State University.

His passion for teaching was expressed in many less formal settings after he left academics for a career in industry. Bakamjian worked at the Schlumberger-Doll Research Center in Ridgefield, Conn., from 1961 to 72, guiding the mathematics department during most of his tenure there. After two years in research and development with Addressograph-Multigraph Corp. in the Cleveland, Ohio, area, he returned to the petroleum industry, working as a geophysicist at the Amoco Research Center in Tulsa from 1974 until his retirement in 1992.

He briefly served as a research associate at the University of Tulsa following his retirement from Amoco, and in 1994 participated in a U.S. Department of Energy conference in Armenia focused on the newly independent former Soviet state’s energy future.

An amateur violinist, he shared a love of music with his wife Grace, a pianist and piano teacher. They were active together in Tulsa’s classical music scene for 30 years.

While living in Pennsylvania and Connecticut, Barkev and Grace were industrious Unitarian-Universalists, playing instrumental roles in starting two U.U. fellowships.

They have been active supporters of Armenian causes, especially education and relief efforts.

He is survived by his wife Grace; a brother, Dr. Vahram Bakamjian of Port Washington,



Barkev Bakamjian (1923-2008).

N.Y.; his three sons, Ted and Tim Bakamjian of Tulsa, and David Bakamjian of Woodside, N.Y.; and three grandchildren, Josh, Allison, and Jeff. Barkev’s sister, Veronica Bakamjian, preceded him in death.

Family members related that Barkev Bakamjian will be remembered for his warm smile and generous spirit, as well as for his intellect and professional accomplishments. A service celebrating his life was held May 3 at All Souls Unitarian Church in Tulsa.

In-lieu-of-flowers donations may be made to the Armenian Missionary Association of America (31 West Century Road, Paramus, N.J., 07652); gifts in Barkev Bakamjian’s honor will be directed to the AMAA’s child education efforts.

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## Community

# St. Vartan Cathedral will honor its 40th anniversary with a concert and art exhibit

### “Art @ the Cathedral: Giving Form to Faith” will open June 19

**NEW YORK** — It was 1968 when St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral opened its doors to faithful, at the corner of 34th Street and Second Avenue in Manhattan. This uniquely beautiful edifice stands in New York City as an eloquent tribute to traditional Armenian architecture: the culmination of the dreams of Armenians who never lost sight of their vision to create a spiritual home and symbol for Armenians in the new world.

This year marks 40 years since the sanctuary’s consecration, and the cathedral -- along with the adjacent Diocesan Center and plaza -- has planned a series of celebrations to honor this significant milestone.

The first of these, scheduled for Thursday, June 19, will focus on the role of the arts at St. Vartan Cathedral.

The event will combine a program of music with the opening of an art exhibition, titled “Art @ the Cathedral: Giving Form to Faith.” The art exhibit will encompass the works of such Armenian masters as Arshile Gorky, Reuben Nakian and Hovsep Pushman, as well as numerous contemporary artists whose works are being displayed under the aegis of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America for the first time.

The opening reception is scheduled for 5:30 p.m., with remarks at 6:45 p.m.

### Classical and contemporary art

The exhibition was a result of the desire of Diocesan Primate **Archbishop Khajag Barsamian** to



Şahan Arzruni.

highlight part of the collection of the Diocese, and also to bring today’s artists to the attention of the community.

Exhibiting classical and contemporary art together illustrates the continuum linking the artworks of the past, present, and future. Various media, including painting, photography and video art, will be represented. A curatorial committee chaired by **Vicki Hovannessian** has selected and organized the works slated for display.

The musical program for June 19, put together by master pianist **Şahan Arzruni**, will take place in the cathedral sanctuary and is slated for 7:30 p.m. Among the performers will be veteran soprano **Lucine Amara**, gifted cellist **Ani Aznavoorian** and Mr. Arzruni himself on piano.

Lucine Amara is one of the treasures not only of the Armenian community but of the entire musical world, who has adorned the Metropolitan Opera for 41 consecutive seasons. Her elegant stage presence ranked her among the most distinguished and beloved stars during what has come to be known as the “Golden Age” of the Metropolitan Opera.



Lucine Amara.

In the words of *Time* magazine, Miss Amara has “brought to the stage the kind of dazzling vocal splendor that made the Met famous. By sheer longevity and her phenomenal vocal talent, she remains a dramatic artist of the highest order.”

Cellist Ani Aznavoorian, a native of Chicago, is in demand as a soloist and chamber musician with some of the world’s most recognized ensembles, including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Pops, the Tokyo Philharmonic, the Helsinki Philharmonic, the International Sejong Soloists, the Indianapolis Philharmonic, and the Juilliard Orchestra. Ms. Aznavoorian has also appeared as recitalist and chamber musician throughout the United States, Italy, France, Finland, Yugoslavia, Japan, Korea, Australia, Taiwan, and Canada. She was recently hailed by the *Los Angeles Times* as a “cellist who shows great sensitivity and great virtuosity at all moments.”

At the concert on June 19, she will perform Adam Khudoyan’s First Sonata for solo cello, Edvard Mirzoyan’s “Poem” and Alexander Harutiunyan’s “Impromptu.”



Ani Aznavoorian.

Şahan Arzruni, who will assist both Lucine Amara and Ani Aznavoorian at the piano, just returned from Istanbul, where he organized the cultural events celebrating the 175th anniversary of the foundation of *Sourp Prgich* Armenian Hospital. Mr. Arzruni was the executive producer on a compact disc recording featuring the music of some 15 composers who were born in Asia Minor during the reigns of Ottoman and Republic of Turkey. On May 1 and 2, two concerts were presented at the Turkish University of Bosphorus to introduce the music and artists featured on the CD. On September 28, Mr. Arzruni will present

a similar concert at New York’s Merkin Hall under the auspices of the Istanbul Hospital.

### Serene, mystical, mysterious

In an interview, Mr. Arzruni said he hoped that the June concert would rekindle the tradition of presenting musical performances in St. Vartan Cathedral. “The structure acoustically enhances the tone of stringed instruments, and shows off the voice to great advantage. The space is serene, mystical and mysterious.”

The June 19 concert is being made possible through the generosity of the Edward and Grace Alexanian Fund. Mr. Alexanian chaired the Bronx chapter of the fundraising committee that built the cathedral, and was also part of the groundbreaking ceremonies.

Chairing the 40th consecration anniversary commemorative events throughout the coming months are **Sandra Shahinian Leitner** and **Lynn Beylerian**, with guidance from **Fr. Mardiros Chevian**, dean of the cathedral.

Tickets for the concert are available by calling (212) 686-0710. The admission is \$20 for adults, and \$15 for students. The art exhibition is free and will run through June 24.

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## Community

# Diana Der-Hovanesian discusses the art of translating poetry

by Yvette K. Harpootian

**WATERTOWN, Mass.** — On Sunday afternoon, May 18, at the Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA), lovely and haunting Armenian melodies accompanied an hour of discussing "The Art of Translating Poetry." The forum, moderated by ALMA librarian **Berj Chekijian**, featured **Diana Der-Hovanesian** discussing her approach to the challenge of translating Armenian poetry, and reading poems she selected as perennial favorites.

Besides moderating the discussion, Chekijian recited the poems in Armenian after Der-Hovanesian read them in English. His strong and vibrant voice would crescendo and then subtly fade in perfect rhythm to the poems; and the accompanying Armenian music performed by pianist by **Ani Hovsepian** blended beautifully with the voices, making this a truly memorable afternoon.

The program began with a discussion of the challenges of translating Armenian poetry.

"Armenians are the only nation that has a church holiday called the Day of the Holy Translators," Chekijian said. "And since the beginning of Armenian literature, the finest poets have also been the finest translators." He turned to Der-Hovanesian and asked her to explain how she approached the demanding art of translating Armenian poetry.

She explained that first, the translator owes the poet the best possible translation into the second



At ALMA, Diana Der-Hovanesian (center) explains her translations of important Armenian poems, as pianist Ani Hovsepian provides a musical accompaniment. ALMA librarian Berj Chekijian (right) was on hand to recite the selected poems in Armenian.

language. After all, the poet's style and work can only emerge through the skill of the translator.

Second, the translator has a debt to the poem. "It has to be closest in music that he can get to the original. That means word order is often changed. Armenian is inflected, it has built-in rhymes," Der-Hovanesian said.

Third, the translator owes the reader the purest fidelity to the poem as the original poet wrote it -- which must override what the translator may want it to say. "The art of translation is the art of poetry, but it's someone else's poem you are crafting and giving a second life to," Der-Hovanesian added.

Diana began doing translations after a Bulgarian poet asked her to help him with an anthology of Bulgarian poetry. She realized, however, that before she could help him, she needed to offer Armenians an anthology of their finest verse; the only other effort, by Alice Stone Blackwell, had been long out of print.

Since its publication, Diana Der-Hovanesian's *Anthology of Armenian Poetry* has been integral in documenting and promoting Armenian poetry throughout the English-speaking world.

### Literal, but not poetry

She began her selection of readings with one of the oldest known poems in Armenian, about the sun god, "The Birth of Vahagn,"...*Yergir Yergir Yev*.

Continuing the theme of sun worship before the nation embraced Christianity was a poem by the medieval poet Koutchag: "Early in the morning the sun in my eyes / I met one more lovely than sun or moon rise."

Eventually, from such pagan themes of light came the light of Christianity, beautifully described in St. Gregory of Narek's prayer, "Oh righteous sun, blessed light, luminous image ... Creator Christ."

Pausing between reading the poems, Diana imparted that "Translating poetry isn't the same as

## Diana Der-Hovanesian

Author of over 23 books of poetry and translations, Der-Hovanesian continues to teach and write. She is president of the New England Poetry Club, and has received awards from the NEA and the Poetry Society of America, among others. Her most recent role as an ambassador of Armenian poetry came last November, when she was a guest at the Taipei Poetry Festival in Taiwan.

She has twice been a Fulbright professor in Armenia, and has published two new books of poems, *The Second Question* and her most recent translation, *The Other Voice: Armenian Women's Poetry*.



Diana Der-Hovanesian.

translating a simple sentence. It's putting it back into another poem. I translate because before I started, translations of our poetry were all by academics, not poets. They were literal, word for word, and correct -- but they were not poetry."

She defined the three main influences on modern Armenian poetry: ancient folk songs and poems, the chant, and the Genocide. Poets such as Siamanto wrote of the destruction of families and homes, typified by a sad, poignant poem often read at funerals: "*Apm mu mokhir*."

Another poet, Vahan Tekeyan, wrote a very bitter poem, "We shall say to God," recited with intense emotion by Diana and Berj. In contrast was a memorable love poem by Vahan Derian, "I love your dark and wicked eyes."

Der-Hovanesian also discussed several other poets, giving brief facts about their lives and how they wrote.

The program was rich and informative, enhanced by Hovsepian's playing and Chekijian's dramatic recitations. At the close of the presentation, Diana Der-Hovanesian graciously answered questions, sharing her insight and love for the world of poetry, and for Armenians and their poetry.

The modern poet she chose to conclude the program was Iranian-born Yeghishe Charents. His best-loved poem is "*Yes eem anoush Hayastani*" -- which Diana rendered as, "I love the sun-sweet taste of Armenian words." The poem and its sentiment were the perfect ending to a program devoted to the beauty of Armenian poetry and the art of translating it.

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## Community

# Holy Martyrs' Aradzani dance group performs the dances of Kharpert

**BAYSIDE, N.Y.** — On the afternoon of Sunday May 4, the Aradzani Dance Group of Holy Martyrs Armenian Church presented a program of Armenian songs and dances from the region of Kharpert.

Following Fr. Vahan Hovhannessian's prayer and welcoming remarks, the program proceeded with live music provided by the Tarpnian family, featuring John on the *oud*, his brother Jerry on *dumbeg*, and John's daughter Lisa on vocals. When Lisa sang *Hars ou pesa*, the Aradzani juniors danced behind the "bride" and "groom," played by Margaret Sakar and Armen Demirjian (the latter of whom was also celebrating his seventh birthday).

The Holy Martyrs Junior Choir under the direction of Shoushan Saraydarian and Talar Aydin sang a medley of songs from the Kharpert region, and ended the program with the patriotic song, *Yerk Bantkhoutian*.

A novel dance called the *Chayda chira*, or the candle dance, was performed by the senior members of the Aradzani troupe.

The seniors group also danced two versions of the *Chnkoush Halay*, which is said to embody the "soul" of the Armenians. One version was taught to the group by



The junior members of Bayside's Aradzani dance group surround the "hars" and "pesa" (Margaret Sakar and Armen Demirjian) during a May 4 performance

Aradzani member Shakeh Hartunian, who learned the steps from her father.

Thanks to instructor Robert Haroutunian's extensive research the group mastered five variations of the *Tamzara*, including the "couple

version" from Palu featuring the hands joined behind the back at waist level and a triple turn. According to the late Arsen Anoooshian, an authority on Armenian folk dancing, the name "Tamzara" is derived from "Tammuz Ara," an

ancient fertility divinity of pagan Armenia.

The Aradzani dance group performs the pre-1915 Armenian dances in their original state, without choreography. Robert Haroutunian provided extensive background in-

formation for the performance, and set up a display of historic pictures from the Kharpert region. The program, both entertaining and educational, showed that the songs and dances of Kharpert still resonate deeply in Armenian culture. #

**ART @ THE CATHEDRAL**  
GIVING FORM TO FAITH

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## Panossian to speak at NAASR

**BELMONT, Mass.** — Dr. Razmik Panossian, of the International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development in Montreal, Canada, will give a lecture titled "Change without Transition: Politics in Post-Soviet Armenia" on Monday, June 9, at 7:30 p.m., at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) Center, 395 Concord Ave., in Belmont. Dr. Panossian's lecture will be co-sponsored by NAASR and the Armenian Relief Society Summer Youth Program.

Panossian's lecture will examine the challenges contemporary Armenia faces in its post-Soviet transition. It will focus primarily on the political processes that have led to regime changes, including problematic elections and violence, the long-term consequences of the Karabakh conflict, and the role of the diaspora.

Dr. Razmik Panossian is the author of *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (Columbia University Press), which traces the evolution of Armenia and Armenian collective identity from its beginnings down to the present day. Panossian received a Ph.D. from the London School of Economics and Political Science. His dissertation won the 2001 Lord Bryce Prize for Best Dissertation in Comparative and International Politics, awarded by the UK Political Studies Association. He is currently the director of Program and Policy at the International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development.

Admission to the event is free (donations appreciated). Ample parking is available around the building and in adjacent areas. The lecture will begin promptly at 7:30 p.m. Information on the lecture is available by calling (617) 489-1610, or by e-mailing [hq@naasr.org](mailto:hq@naasr.org). #

## ART @ THE CATHEDRAL: GIVING FORM TO FAITH

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- Linda Ganjian
- Aram Jibilian
- Haig Kocharian and others...



## Community

# Armenia Tree Project will co-sponsor a forum on sustainable development strategies

**WATERTOWN, Mass.** — The Armenia Tree Project (ATP) and a number of co-sponsoring organizations will host a public forum on Thursday, June 19, titled "Sustainable Development Strategies for Armenia's Future," at the Armenian Cultural Foundation, in Arlington, Mass.

According to studies by international forestry experts, Armenia is one of the vulnerable countries with a forest cover of less than 10 percent. As a result, Armenia faces challenges caused by erosion, landslides, water management, climate change, and desertification. A number of factors have contributed to this crisis, some of which are related to geopolitics, poverty, corruption, and poor land management practices.

Since 1994, Armenia Tree Project (ATP) has been working to imple-

ment solutions to these problems by planting trees at hundreds of urban and rural areas around the country.

The June 19 forum will highlight the next phase of this work. It program will begin with the screening of a recent documentary film by Vem Media Arts of Yerevan, followed by a presentation by ATP executive director Jeff Masarjian and Zachary Parisa of the Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

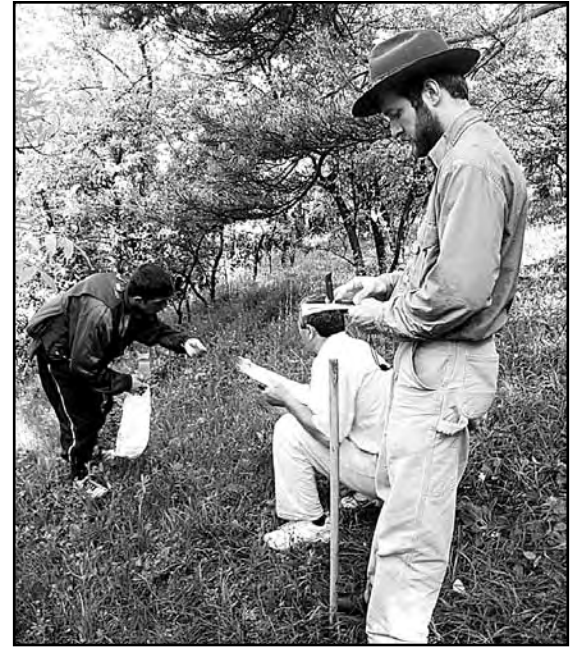
Mr. Parisa has done field work in the forests of northern Armenia, near ATP's 15-acre Mirak Family Reforestation Nursery in Margahovit Village, and he is drafting a sustainable forestry manual for Armenia.

This event is being co-sponsored by the Armenia Tree Project, the Armenian Assembly, Armenian Cultural Foundation, Armenian

Environmental Network, Armenian National Committee, and Vem Media Arts.

"We are very excited to be collaborating with these organizations, all which have recently partnered with ATP to spread the message about sustainable development and the threat of deforestation," said Masarjian. "It is our sincere hope that the list of organizations grows in the coming years as we advance our reforestation programs in Armenia."

The Thursday, June 19 event will begin with a complimentary reception at 6:00 p.m., followed by a public presentation at 7:00 p.m. The Armenian Cultural Foundation is located at 441 Mystic Avenue, Arlington, Mass. Seating is limited, so RSVP by June 13 by calling (781) 646-3090, or by e-mailing acf.hmh@verizon.net.



Zachary Parisa (right) from the Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies has done field work in Armenia's forests near ATP's Mirak Family Reforestation Nursery and he is drafting a sustainable forestry manual for Armenia.  
Photo: Kathryn Howard.

## Sandi Bedrosian turns jazz into pizzazz

by Tom Vartabedian

**ANDOVER, Mass.** — Over the past quarter century, vocalist Sandi Bedrosian has performed at dozens of venues from the posh Ritz Carlton Hotel to the rollicking Spirit of Boston cruises.

She's starred in numerous musical productions like *Fiorello*, *Carousel* and *Die Fledermaus* and opened for national acts like Barbara Mandrell, Sheena Easton, and Gary Charrone of Van Halen.

She credits her musical influences to Julie Andrews, Cecilia Bartoli, Andrea Bocelli, Nat King Cole, Ella Fitzgerald, Judy Garland, Sting --- and her parents. Her logo reads: "Dedicated to Musical Excellence."

Whether performing solo or with her Sandi Bedrosian Trio, this 46-year-old diva has conquered the world of music in a big way and her career knows no bounds, whether it's jazz, classical, contemporary or rhythm and blues.

Bedrosian owns a voice studio in Andover and works as a teacher and vocal coach to new and professional artists when not singing herself. (Check out her website: sandibedrosian.com.)

In this interview, the woman behind the microphone talked about her role.



Vocalist Sandi Bedrosian.

had the opportunity to join the Yerevan Choral Society conducted by Fr. Oshagan Minassian when I was just 16. That exposed me to these brilliant Armenian works and singing in Armenian.

**TV:** What type of music do you prefer most?

**SB:** I have always loved the music of the '30s and '40s. Perhaps I'm a throwback. It seems to suit me -- singing Gershwin, Berlin and Ellington. The music is timeless. However, I'm also very drawn to Motown and Mozart. How contrary!

**TV:** Where does Armenian music rank?

**SB:** It still flows through my veins as though I am cued the moment I hear the minor keys and Middle Eastern rhythms. I've made a promise to myself that my future performances and next CD will embrace my Armenian heritage. The music is brilliant and quite profound. It can express the emotional journey and resounding spirit of a people so driven to survive.

**TV:** How did you start singing and who inspired you?

**SB:** I can't remember ever not singing -- in the car, the shower, my room, the backyard. But I sang very quietly. My mom would always say, "Can you please sing a little louder so we can hear you, too?" She was lovely and truly amazing. Dad encouraged me, too. "Now don't force your voice. Let it out naturally," he used to say.

His tenor voice was beautiful. But they were not professional singers. They ran a small dry cleaning business.

**TV:** Where did you go from there?

**SB:** No one really knew I could sing until I was in my late teens. Aside from my parents, I was greatly influenced by Nat King Cole, Ella Fitzgerald, Judy Garland and Julie Andrews to name a few. I sang my first paying job at a wedding ceremony as a church soloist when I was 17. Hmmm? Maybe that's where it all began?

**TV:** Tell me something about your Trio and the Baboian Quartet connection?

**SB:** My jazz trio has been performing around New England for the past 12 years, keeping the music of the great American songbook alive. My musicians are some of the best in Greater Boston and it's a joy for me to work with them. I am grateful for their artistic talent and musical camaraderie.

John Baboian and I met on a gig about eight years ago and were both astonished that our musical paths had never crossed. He's a brilliant musician whose guitar skills are stellar. I love working with him.

**TV:** What are some highlights of your 25-year career?

**SB:** In the 1990s, I shared billing with some headline artists such as Barbara Mandrell, Sheena Easton, and Gary Charrone. That was exciting! Their level of talent, up close and personal, exceeds any notion you may have in your mind.

**TV:** Any disappointments?

**SB:** Being in the performing arts always brings some disappointments. You can't please all of the people all of the time, as they say. So you continue to do what you love and do the best you can.

**TV:** Why are you so passionate about music, and what does it do for your life?

**SB:** Sometimes I think music chose me. When I was very young, I spent a lot of time doing very artistic things like drawing and singing and listening to famous recording artists -- trying to emulate them to unravel their artistic qualities and what made them so amazing. Somehow, I found a wonderful creative vehicle -- a way to express myself through music and lyrics. A song becomes my canvas.

**TV:** How do you prepare yourself for a gig? And what's your most challenging role?

**SB:** There are many things a singer does to prepare, depending on the venue, repertoire and the singer. Generally, there are vocal warm-ups, hydrating with lots of water and finding some calming way to relax and compose yourself, maybe say a little prayer. Personally, I do all of the above, and it actually helps.

**TV:** How demanding is opera, say, to jazz or Broadway?

**SB:** I have sung a lot of light classical, liturgical and some opera. Preparing to sing a soprano aria with my mezzo soprano range was somewhat challenging for the part of Rosalinda in *Die Fledermaus* when I was in my 20s.

I am moved by Andrea Bocelli's voice because he does what I have always said I would do. That is, transcending vocally from the classical realm to contemporary or pop effortlessly and authentically. If I were asked to choose one genre of music and sing only that repertoire, it would be sad. I thrive on versatility.

**TV:** What was your most meaningful encounter with a diva or some other recording star?

**SB:** It would have to be Tom Sullivan. I sang in the late 1990s with a jazz quintet that was hired to play at a wedding reception. The uncle of the bride happened to be Tom Sullivan, a well-known vocalist/pianist from the 1970s. Mr.

Sullivan was an idol of mine from the time I was a little girl. His musicianship was unparalleled, soulful and riveting. I screamed out his name as he walked by with his seeing-eye dog. He seemed quite flattered. Later, we sang together and he told me his next project was to take up skydiving. I'm not kidding. The man was remarkable.

**TV:** Your favorite piece of music?

**SB:** It would have to be Gershwin or "*Panis Angelicus*" ("Bread of the Angels") or "How Great Thou Art." Or my absolute favorite Armenian song, "*Eenchoo terrard yev heratzahd.*" Oh, gosh! Is that even a title?

**TV:** What's ahead? Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?

**SB:** No huge visions of grandeur, just to be the best I can be and successful at it. As a young aspiring singer, I've always strived for perfection but I've never been very competitive. However, I truly appreciate how supportive and receptive people have been over the years and plan to finally finish my jazz CD for release by year's end.

**TV:** Anything else you wish to add?

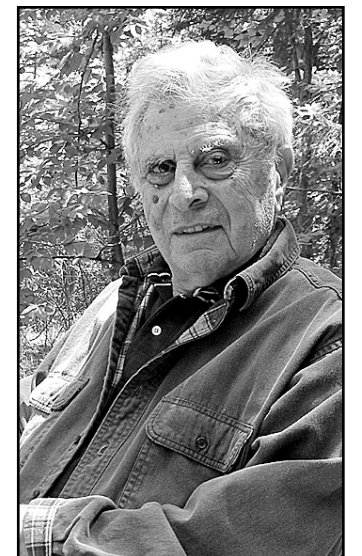
**SB:** I really owe everything I am to my late parents. I am very grateful that somehow, someway I have been able to do something I love. I thank God for that.

## Family and friends celebrate 90th birthday of Kourken Daglian

**TENAFLY, N.J.** — Kourken Arshag Daglian celebrated his 90th birthday last week, surrounded by more than 35 relatives and friends.

According to Krikor Daglian, Kourken and his parents, Elise and Parnag, came to America from Turkey in 1923 to start a new life after the horrors they had witnessed in their homeland.

For more than 50 years, Kourken worked as a dentist and oral surgeon in New York City. He also served in the 101st Airborne Division as a captain during World War II and the Korean War. Mr. Daglian has made his home for the past 45 years in Tenafly, where his four children were raised.



Kourken Daglian.



## Community

# The anxiety over college admissions

## Parents and students face daunting choices

by Sylvie Tertzakian

Two girlfriends and I have made a tradition to get together for monthly lunches. Of course, the food is secondary. What matters is the substance of our conversations. We cover every possible topic under the Southern California sun: our kids, politics, vacations, etc. The last two lunches, however, have been focused around the topic of college admissions. I must say that since my children have already joined the workforce, most of the discussion took place between my two friends. I was merely an observer, interjecting a few questions and comments.

Both friends have bypassed the public-school system and have instead opted to send their kids to the same exclusive private school. They have done so to offer them the highest standard of education, in smaller-size classes under strict supervision, as well as to protect them from the environment of drugs, alcohol, and sex. Furthermore, both mothers believe that the move will ensure that their children excel and compete for the limited spots in the top universities of the nation. Does this mean that the public schools offer substandard education? Are the public schools in the danger zones of the above mentioned-risky elements? In my observation, many students who have graduated from public schools have made it to the top universities; they have resisted the above-mentioned temptations. In my opinion, parental involvement and guidance are the key elements.

The topic of financing their kids' education never came up. Luckily for them, that was a non-issue. While the governor of California is proposing to slash higher-education funding by about 10%, tens of thousands of qualified students

will not be admitted to the state system. The plan will reduce the number of enrollment in the state system by 27,000 in the next two to three years (*Los Angeles Times*, April 17). In addition, given the rise in tuition costs and the exorbitant tuition that private universities charge, the near future does not bode well for the incoming freshmen. The only factor that mattered for my friends is their kids' admission into the top public/private universities.

To respect their privacy, I will call them Linda and Alice. Linda's older child is graduating next month from one of the Ivy League universities. The younger one has to make her decision, by May 1, as to which university she wants to say yes to. The most difficult deadline – March 31, 5:00 p.m. eastern time, when the students got their final yes/no answers from the universities – has come and gone.

Alice's two kids are still in high school; her oldest will be a senior this coming year. The anxiety level at the table made me question if it was fair for them to involve me in their angst-driven conversation. I listened to them with both admiration and horror. Admiration, because they are 100% involved parents who help their kids with every step of the admission process: they stay up late at night while their students study, they help them out with their applications, they find them internships, etc. Horror, because Linda's child, who has a very high GPA and a SAT score very close to the perfect 2400, was not admitted to the top college of her choice. This, despite the fact that she has all the APs and many college credits, has done fundraising for a project in Armenia, has done local internships for the elderly and for disabled children, and she has won state competitions in music. Please, don't misunderstand me. While she was admitted at a multitude of top-tier public (with scholarships) and a few Ivy League universities, she was disappointed when she did not get in to the university of her choice.

Alice's child is in a similar situation. He has a very high SAT score and GPA, has acquired college credits, and been involved in varsity tennis, music, etc. However, Alice is not sure if her child will get in to UCLA. "You are joking" I said. "Sylvie, you don't understand, this year and the next [next year being the peak], are the baby-boom years for college admissions. About 55,000 students applied to the freshman class for the fall quarter of 2008 at UCLA, about 4,700 students will end up attending the freshman year. Out of 27,000 who applied to Harvard, close to 1,600 got in." Out of these numbers, the colleges allocate percentages to minority students and students with financial, family, or personal challenges. The top-tier universities take applicants from 7,500 high schools from 135 countries. That is not a joke!

As their conversation got more heated, I decided to ask them a few questions and share their thoughts with my readers. According to Linda, "You feel sad for your children because they have worked beyond and above all possibilities. At 17, they are expected to be perfect students with perfect portfolios. They have not enjoyed their childhood, and we as parents have felt the pain. Raising children is the biggest challenge for parents. It's important to instill in our kids the value of high character, so they resist temptations." Sensing the sadness in her voice, I felt bad, both for her and her child. However, she was also the radiant and proud parent who couldn't count on her fingers the endless list of colleges her child has been admitted to. "Whether it's the college of her first choice or not, the caliber of education she will receive will be excellent," she said. "In fact, how she applies her education in the real world will matter the most." She was right on. One comes across entrepreneurs and appointed high-level government officials who may be neither college graduates nor graduates of the top US colleges. Luckily, the system offers opportunities to those who are ready and eager to face challenges.

Alice's child will graduate high school at 17. "He is too young to go

far away, he is only a kid," she said. "I want him to attend UCLA, where he can get an excellent education, and at the same time he will be close to home." That was an Armenian mother speaking. She was not keen on the idea that her child attend a university outside California, so that they, the parents, would continue to give him the much-needed love and guidance. I remembered when I bade farewell to our son at Georgetown, the first day of his freshman year eight years ago; I had tears in my eyes. However, I knew he had made the right choice: to be away from home. It made him grow up and make friends outside his high-school circle of friends. I remembered my own experiences as a parent with college-bound kids: waiting for that admissions envelope to arrive in the mail. Even at that time, it was a challenge in the competitive world of college admissions. Yet it was not as cutthroat as it is now.

Another factor that weighs into the formula is the colleges students get admitted to. This is about a status symbol for parents and students alike. The name of a prestigious college is a testimony to the good job parents have done raising their kids. It becomes the center of conversation at parties, even many years after the students have graduated from that university.

Of course, Linda and Alice, these two educated mothers, are lucky. Most immigrant parents have neither the language skills nor the knowledge about the admission process. Neither do they have the financial means to think of sending their children to the top-tier universities. Their kids apply to two-year colleges (where tuition is almost nil), with the hope that if they excel, they will get admitted into the UC or California State system. However, this is not limited to the Armenian community. Most ethnic groups and many whose parents were born in the US face similar challenges.

The food on our plates was getting cold and the aroma was enticing. However, my friends barely noticed the arrival of their meal. It seemed the only item on their plates was

their intense and anxious discussion about college admissions.

The subject shifted to dating and marriage. Should their children date within their culture and religion? Alice was adamant that her son date an Armenian girl when the time is ripe. According to her, dating should not divert him from his focus to pursue his degree. Linda was more flexible, but she agreed with Alice that marriage within the same culture and religion increases the chance of a successful relationship in the long run. Thus, yet another dimension came to the play in their discussion of college admissions. Which university has a large Armenian student body, where their kids can interact with other Armenians?

Let them continue to pursue their highly heated discussion, and bade them goodbye. As I was driving to my next venue of the day's agenda, I was thinking: Wouldn't it be great to have an Armenian university in the US? After all, the Mormons, the Catholics, the Japanese, and the Jews have theirs. In fact, the Armenian community of Beirut, Lebanon, has the Haigazian College. However, sustaining an Armenian university will be a major undertaking. It will add yet another burden to the Armenian community, which is overwhelmed with supporting projects in Armenia and sustaining local schools, churches, organizations, and programs. It will also create an isolationist mentality in a country based on integration.

As I got further and further away, I was happy that the challenge of college admissions is behind me. In fact, the process of college admissions does not start in the junior year of high school. It starts in kindergarten. Which kindergarten prepares the child for a sound foundation for quality education? It's a long process that parents and their children experience from kindergarten on to graduation from high school.

The food was delicious. However, the thought of what will be on my friends' plates this time next year, when we will continue to get together for our monthly lunches, lingered on in my mind. ☞

# L.A. organizations will join forces to fundraise for an epic film on Armenian history

**LOS ANGELES** – On Sunday, June 22, the producers behind the forthcoming film *East of Byzantium* will stage a show-stopping fundraiser sponsored by several Armenian organizations.

The event will help support the production of a film about Armenia during the last days of the Roman Empire, which its producers call a cross between *Braveheart*, *The Passion of the Christ*, and *300*.

*East of Byzantium* is being planned as a state-of-the-art special effects film helmed by writer/director **Roger Kupelian**, whose film production company, Fugitive Studios, specializes in award-winning visual effects – including such recent credits as the films *Cloverfield* and *Charlie Wilson's War*.

At the June 22 event, **Alex Kalognomos**, director of the Arpa International Film Festival, will serve as master of ceremonies. The event will unveil brand new footage of the film and present special guest speakers, entertainers, and the film's cast and crew, which includes **Vahe Berberian**.

According to Kalognomos, "The characters of *East of Byzantium* are epic men and women of Armenian

history – Gregory the Illuminator, Vartan Mamigonian, and the great warrior goddess Anahita. We hope film audiences worldwide will embrace them as heroes of humanity as well as heroes of a blockbuster Hollywood film."

The Armenian General Benevolent Union's Young Professionals group of Los Angeles (AGBU-YP LA), the Kaiser Permanente Armenian Association (KPAA), and the Arpa Foundation for Film, Music and Art (AFFMA), are among the organizations leading the joint effort to fundraise for *East of Byzantium*. The goal for the evening is to raise \$50,000 in donations, which will go towards pre-production costs like hiring a top screenwriter, casting director, and actors.

According to the producers, **Serj Tankian** of the rock band System Of A Down has confirmed that he will score the soundtrack for the film, and top Hollywood agencies have been meeting with *East of Byzantium* filmmakers to develop and package the film.

## Community effort

**Fr. Andon Saroyan** of the St. Gregory Armenian Church, who



Promotional artwork for the planned film, *East of Byzantium*.

hosted an *East of Byzantium* fundraiser in April, said of the project: "Vartan Mamigonian and his predecessors portrayed during the 150-year arc of *East of Byzantium* fought for spiritual ideals that are still pertinent today." He added: "Kupelian has gathered a team of dedicated professionals from every cultural background who find value in this story of fighting for one's identity."

During last month's commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, St. Gregory's A & M Hovsepian School principal **Shah Mankerian** referenced the film project to teach his students about the issue of Armenian survival. "I wanted my students to do something posi-

tive for the sake of their identity. Supporting *East of Byzantium* is part of that."

Mankerian introduced the producers to his students and made a donation to Kupelian's film by purchasing the painting "451: The Last Stand." As a method of fundraising, Kupelian commissioned an exclusive series of limited edition prints based on *East of Byzantium* concept art. (The paintings and other items inspired by the film's heroic characters and by landscapes of Armenia are available for viewing at [www.itsmyseat.com](http://www.itsmyseat.com), or by calling (323) 666-6626.

The June 22 event is the third major *East of Byzantium* fundraiser staged in Los Angeles. "We are

making this film with the support of our community," said Roger Kupelian. "We stage these events not only to fundraise and share our vision, but also to unite our community so we can accomplish this goal."

"Our first fundraiser was attended by over 400 guests on Oscar night. We hope to have 800 people attend this event and learn about our work," added Kupelian.

"This is a significant time," noted Alex Kalognomos. "The Hollywood industry is supporting the burst of talent and creativity of Armenian filmmakers working in our community. It's a major movement lead by Roger Kupelian and his vision for *East of Byzantium*."

The *East of Byzantium* film production fundraiser (sponsored by AFFMA, AGBU-YP, and KPAA) will take place on Sunday, June 22, at 6:00 p.m., at 3229 Casitas Avenue, in Los Angeles. Tickets are available at [www.ItsMySeat.com](http://www.ItsMySeat.com) (for a tax-deductible donation of \$40 pre-sale, or \$50 at the door). For information, or to volunteer for the event, visit [www.EastofByzantium.com](http://www.EastofByzantium.com), or call (323) 666-6626. ☞



## Community

# The wonderful vocational world of Karen Sarkisian

by Tom Vartabedian

**Haverhill, Mass. ▣** – When it came to achieving a solid vocational experience, Karen Sarkisian has always held her students and faculty in her heart.

For 18 years, she stood by them, with them, and among them as superintendent-director of Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School.

She will soon bid adieu to an institution that has achieved high prestige under her leadership – a school which has achieved the top MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) scores, and the highest rate of college acceptances among others of its kind in Massachusetts.

A packed house turned out for her retirement on May 7, to express a heavy dose of sentiment and pride in the affable Armenian-American educator.

Most school superintendents don't last 18 years on the job, and rarely do so in the same district. But Sarkisian had that kind of staying power at Whittier.

"She thrived that long because she's done the job with consistent integrity and with only one overriding goal: to do what's best for the students," said School Committee chair Michael Gilbert.

When she first arrived on the scene in 1990 at the age of 37, sweeping changes were in order. A discipline code was strictly enforced. Incompetent teachers were replaced by others more suitable.

Sarkisian added foreign language classes, college preparatory courses, and expanded bilingual services for students.

She instituted a reorganization plan sought for years by the School



Karen Sarkisian, the outgoing superintendent-director of Whittier Vocational Regional Technical High School in Haverhill, smiles after 18 years at the helm.

Committee that revamped and streamlined the school's administrative structure while overseeing a budget of \$20 million.

She appointed an advisory board composed of civic and business leaders meant to improve the school's structure in the district's 11 cities and towns.

An article published in 1990 said how Whittier's reputation in the community had deteriorated from a failure by administrators to keep up with the trends and developments in vocational education.

According to Sarkisian, the school was "a sleeping giant." But without some major changes, the school was headed for a disastrous dead-end.



Karen Sarkisian with members of her family, parents Harry and Aghavnie of Watertown, and brother Paul.

The achievements during her tenure were legion.

The school started a SkillsUSA program, which encourages students to compete in their technical areas at the state and national level.

It promoted a high, positive placement rate for students. In follow-up studies one year after graduation, more than 80 percent of Whittier students are either in college, working their trade, or in the military.

The school now has an outstanding athletic program, with a no-cut policy and free transportation, and an equally outstanding theater arts program, which features an annual musical and holiday concert.

Under Sarkisian's leadership a strong adult education program was created, which trains and provides courses for licensing adults in trade and technical areas.

And add to that the building of a new restaurant for culinary arts students, a student bank and retail stores, along with a new athletic field.

### Round the clock, seven days a week

On the all-important MCAS end, Whittier was used as a prototype for other schools by the Massachusetts Department of Education. Whittier was one of only six schools in the state to have 100 percent of its junior and senior population pass the exam – a tribute to Sarkisian's ingenuity and persistence.

Under her direction, five new state-of-the-art labs were constructed to prepare students for the academic testing.

She is also proud of the fact that Whittier is an anti-vivisection school. Sarkisian did away with the dissection of animals for biology classes during her first year as superintendent. She found no need to cut up animals when models and computer programs were just as compatible. And much more benign, too.

In short, it's been a career that couldn't have been better designed by an architect.

"It's been round the clock, seven days a week," she said. "But I've en-

joyed it immensely." But, she adds, "I would recommend people doing it the last 10 years of their career, and not the outset."

Before coming to Whittier, Sarkisian was a guidance counselor and assistant principal at a technical high school in Lexington. She was also executive director of Occupational Education for the Cambridge schools.

It all adds up to 30 years.

At sporting events, Sarkisian's vocal side remains obvious. She's known to sit on the bench and encourage the athletes, confront officials on a bad call, even design plays of her own. Not every coach would endorse the meddling – but that's Karen.

The Armenian in her remains feisty. Enter her school and you'll see the tricolor flying from the rafters. She grew up in Watertown, the daughter of Harry and Aghavnie Sarkisian, and was a product of St. Stephen's Church. She attended Armenian and Sunday school, and was deeply involved as a child in her ethnicity, along with other members of her family.

"We're proud of the manner in which she has maintained her heritage," say her folks. "No doubt, she drew upon it to become a successful administrator."

During one graduates program at St. Gregory Armenian Church in North Andover, Sarkisian addressed the high school graduates and told them that education can't be bought, but needs to be learned through hard work and diligence. The message was well taken.

So what will tomorrow bring for this woman who knew no other future during her tenure?

"Whatever the day may bring," she said with a smile. ☐



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## St. Leon Church's annual picnic will feature live music by Onnik Dinkjian

**FAIR LAWN, N.J. ▣** – On Sunday, June 1, Fair Lawn's St. Leon Armenian Church will hold its annual picnic on the church grounds, from 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m. rain or shine.

The parish is pleased to announce that the picnic will feature a special guest appearance by singing great Onnik Dinkjian.

The live band featuring Dickie Barsamian (on oud and vocals), Ara Dinkjian (keyboard), Harold Hagopian (clarinet), and Chuck Yegian (*dumbeg*) will keep the day's events moving with the rhythms of traditional Armenian folk music.

In the spirit of a traditional Armenian *tashtahantes* ("open-country feast") the food will include

several varieties of kebab, salads, and other homemade Armenian delicacies.

Admission is free, and children, friends and neighbors are welcome to share the rich Armenian heritage. For information, contact the church office at (201) 791-2862. St. Leon Church is located at 12-61 Saddle River Road, in Fair Lawn. ☐



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## Community

# Still undefeated – on the gridiron and in life

### The amazing story of NFL great Garo Yepremian

by Ed Barmakian

**Avondale, Pa.** – When he came to the United States in 1966 at the age of 22, Garabed Sarkis Yepremian couldn't speak English, had never seen a football game, and didn't even have a high school diploma.

Today, the man from Cypress has authored three books, carved out a career as a motivational speaker, and is famous for his feats as a professional kicker in the National Football League. He's also a budding artist and has formed a foundation to fund brain tumor research.

The Giants' 2008 Super Bowl victory this year ended the New England Patriots' bid for an undefeated season – and left Yepremian and his 1972 Miami Dolphins to retain their remarkable distinction as the only team to complete a perfect NFL season. Every year that passes without an undefeated team makes what Miami did 36 years ago seem more special. And, in turn, brings into focus the career of Yepremian – unquestionably the most accomplished Armenian ever to play professional football.

"This year was very memorable, because it ended a quest for an undefeated season," Yepremian said. "I watched at the home of my son's in-laws with about 25 people in one big room. The last couple of minutes, there were no bathroom breaks, and everyone was on the edge of their seats. When it was over, it was like New Year's Eve all over again."

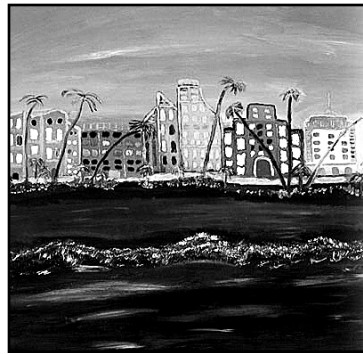
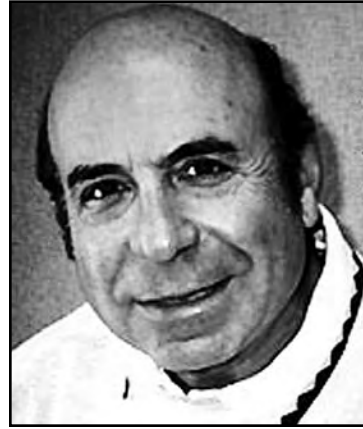
"If the New England Patriots couldn't do it, I don't know if anybody can go undefeated again," he said. "The game is over and you think about being part of a team that did something so special. One of the greatest teams to play the game couldn't do what we did."

Perhaps just as remarkable as Miami's 1972 season is Yepremian's personal story, and how he taught himself how to play, made the kick that won the longest play-off game in history, and developed into one of the best kickers ever in the NFL.

Yepremian's brother, Krikor, starred for the Indiana University soccer team in the 1960s and noticed that Pete Gogolak, a native off Hungary, and his brother, Charlie, were making their names as the first "soccer-style kickers" in the NFL.

"Everyone was bragging about how good the Gogolak brothers were, and my brother knew that I was known on the island of Cypress for my strong kick; I could score from almost anywhere on the soccer field," Garo said.

Krikor, who later proved that he had an eye for talent when he be-



came the general manager of the New York Cosmos soccer team, sent for Garo. The idea was for Garo to obtain a college scholarship to kick for the Indiana University football team. But the 22-year-old Garo hadn't graduated from high school, and was ineligible.

"When one door closes, another one opens," Garo said. "As it turned out, I was a genius. I didn't have to go to college."

Krikor coached his brother, teaching Garo to kick. In six weeks, the 5-foot 7-inch, 142-pound Garo learned how to kick a football and was ready to try out for the NFL. On a Wednesday he tried out for the Atlanta Falcons and they offered him a contract. The next day the Detroit Lions liked what they saw, too, and gave him a second choice.

### Oscar and Felix – meet Garo

"I felt Detroit was the better place for me because they had a great Armenian community," Garo said. "I signed with Detroit on a Thursday. Spent Friday at the immigration office getting my Green Card, and on Sunday I was in Baltimore playing in a game against the Colts."

"It was the first football game I ever saw, and I played in it," he recalled.

"We were losing and I went in and kicked an extra point and I came off the field with my arms raised and I'm celebrating. A teammate of mine, Alex Karras, asked me what I was so happy about and I said: 'I keek touch-down.' That's the title of one of my books, and there were a lot of jokes made about that."

Karras repeated the story on the Johnny Carson show, and Yepremian parlayed that one line into an appearance on the *Odd Couple* TV show, and also was invited to do a bit on a Bob Hope Special in 1975.

"I was the first to speak Armenian on a nationally televised program," Yepremian said. "On the Bob Hope show, comedian George Gobel asked me the questions and I would answer in Armenian. He asked me how I got into kicking, and I would say that when I was born, the first thing I did was kick something out of my mother's hands and it went 50 yards."

But Yepremian, despite his comical start and all the jokes at his expense, turned into a very serious kicker. In his fifth game of his first season in 1966, he set a single-game NFL record (since broken) when he booted six field goals in a 32-31 victory over Minnesota. After two years with the Detroit Lions, Yepremian was going to be drafted into the Army. The Lions told him to return to Cypress to avoid serving and then come back for the next season.

"I said no, I wanted to make this my home, so I entered the Army reserves," said Yepremian, who became a U.S. citizen in 1971. "When I came back, someone else had taken my job. I sat out a year, and then I went to Miami and had to fight for a job with the Dolphins."

In 1971, Garo led the NFL in scoring with 117 points. In his 14-year career that ended in 1981, he kicked 210 field goals, making 67.1 percent overall, and connected on 444 extra points for 1,074 career points. He also played in three Super Bowls with Miami.

### Kicker of the Decade

Perhaps the signature moment in Yepremian's career was Christmas Day, 1971, when his 37-yard field goal gave Miami a 27-24 AFC playoff victory over the Kansas City Chiefs. The game, which lasted 82 minutes and 40 seconds, is the longest game in NFL history. It also marked the final football game played at Municipal Stadium in Kansas City. The Dolphins went

on to reach the Super Bowl that year.

With 35 seconds left in regulation, Jan Stenerud of the Chiefs had a chance to win the game with a field goal, but missed. Ironically, Stenerud is the only kicker elected to the NFL's Hall of Fame, even though Yepremian was named the "Kicker of the Decade" for the 1970s by *Sports Illustrated* and the Pro Football Hall of Fame. He also kicked five field goals in the 1974 Pro Bowl, where he was named the MVP of the game. Yepremian also put together a streak of 20 straight field goals made one season.

"That's the big question everyone asks: why I'm not in the Hall of Fame and Stenerud is," he said. "I tell everyone I'm a shoe-in. My shoes from the longest game are in the Hall of Fame. I don't worry about it anymore. There are a lot of players in the Hall of Fame, but only 45 athletes who can say they were on an undefeated team. And I'm one of them."

Yepremian is also notorious for his part in the most recounted play of Miami's 14-7 Super Bowl victory over the Washington Redskins that completed the Dolphins' 17-0 season in 1972.

Miami was leading 14-0 late in the game, when Yepremian was sent out to kick a field goal. The kick was blocked, but Garo picked up the bouncing ball and made the ill-advised decision to attempt a pass.

The "pass" went straight up in the air and when it came down Garo batted it with his hand, allowing Mike Bass of the Redskins to grab the ball out of the air and take it in for Washington's only score of the game. The play brought laughter to what had been a dull game to that point, and became the most remembered highlight of that historic triumph.

Yepremian is still receiving dividends from that play, which can

Far left: Yepremian during his days with the Miami Dolphins. Left top: NFL great Garo Yepremian today. Left bottom: One of Garo's paintings, a passion he developed in response to a family tragedy. A foundation Yepremian established raises money for brain tumor research.

be seen on YouTube and is tagged: "Garo's Gaffe." Most recently, he was hired to act in a commercial produced by Reebok at the Super Bowl before the Giants-Patriots game in Arizona.

"We go to the Super Bowl every year and I work for whoever wants me" said Yepremian, who lives in Avondale, Pa., a suburb of Philadelphia.

In the commercial, Garo huddles with his former Miami teammates in a touch football game and jokes about his Super Bowl moment: "So guys, I'm the QB." Former quarterback Earl Morrall replies: "No, you're the kicker, remember?"

Yepremian returned home the morning of the Super Bowl to watch the Giants-Patriots game on television with friends and family. He now makes his living as a motivational speaker, telling his incredible story. He even was the keynote speaker at the Football Hall of Fame one year.

"I talk about values and the crazy things that have happened in my life," Yepremian said. "I make them laugh, I make them cry."

### Activism born of tragedy

Yepremian always has been loyal to his Armenian heritage and America, the country he has made his home.

"The Armenian nation will always survive because there are Armenians all over the world," he said. "I love this country. It's the greatest country in the world. It doesn't persecute me for being Armenian or Christian. That's why I still do work for the USO. I visited our troops in Bosnia after 9/11 and I still do work for them."

In recent years, however, Yepremian has expanded his interest, setting up a foundation to fund brain tumor research and getting into oil painting. Both passions arose out of a personal tragedy.

"My son was dating an Armenian girl and when she turned 20 they found out that she had a brain tumor and gave her six months to live," he said. "My son, Azad, decided to marry her and take care of her. He helped keep her alive for six years."

Debby-Lu Yepremian (nee Tashjian) died in 2004. But the foundation Yepremian runs is still raising money that goes to research at Thomas Jefferson Hospital in Philadelphia.

"Debby-Lu was a wonderful person, and because of her we're doing some good work."

While Debby-Lu was fighting her illness, Yepremian woke up one day and decided he would paint.

"My wife would be crying and something told me I should start painting," he said. "I do a lot of abstract stuff. Colors excite me. It's all happy stuff. When you look at my work, you're not going to find anything depressing. In the last four years, I've done 370 paintings. Anything I get for them will go to the foundation." ■

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## Community

# The newest addition to the NFL

**Linebacker Alain Karatepeyan becomes free agent with the Dallas Cowboys**

by **Tenny Issakhanian Avanesian**

**DALLAS, Texas** — Armenians are about to increase their representation in the NFL as Alain Karatepeyan joins its ranks. The Los Angeles-born, Oklahoma-educated linebacker just signed a three-year free-agent deal with the Dallas Cowboys after graduating from the University of Tulsa in May 2008 with a degree in business management.

On NFL Draft Sunday, Alain was expecting the call from Dallas that he would get picked up in the 6th round in the end, as a scout had assured him. However, a recent injury and the team's sudden change in its needs compelled it to pick someone else. Instead, the team called Alain the next day and signed him as a free agent.

But he prefers it that way. "With a draft, if you get picked by a team, you have no choice," he says. "That's the team you go to. But as a free agent, you can decide which team you want to join, where you fit best." And Alain has had plenty to choose from: the San Francisco 49ers, Houston Texans, New York Jets, Kansas City Chiefs, and Dallas Cowboys.

So why the Cowboys? "I fit perfectly into their defense," Alain explains, rationally considering the contribution he can make to the team. Teamwork aside, Alain adds, "And it's the Dallas Cowboys. Why not go to a team that had a very good chance of winning the Super Bowl the last couple of years and is the most televised team in the NFL?"

According to Alain, every year, a team drafts six-seven players and offers free agency to another 15-20. Fortunately, he need not compete against all 15-20 of the Cowboys' free agents for a place on the 53-member lineup that dresses at each game of the season or for a place on the 80-person roster. "I'm not competing against anybody right now. I'm the only rookie guy who's a linebacker," Alain says. "So I'm competing to earn a spot by taking somebody else's spot, somebody who's already in there." And the prospects look good. "I'm just competing with someone who's only been in the NFL for one year, but he's also new to the team... He didn't play at all last year."

### Sport of choice

Alain's initial exposure to football was a fluke, a challenge that he accepted. "I always played basketball. I never played football," he says. But all that changed when his childhood friend encouraged him to try out for football. Alain initially dismissed the comment. "And my friend said, 'Yeah, you don't look like a football player anyway.'" Alain recalls fondly: "I didn't like that comment, so I went out there and made the team." Until today, his friend will not let him forget who awoke in him his dormant talent for the sport.

Nearing his high-school graduation, Alain was recruited by numerous PAC-10 schools, including USC. But after he tore his knee during his last game and had reconstructive surgery, "Recruiting



Alain is a local hero with many fans in Tulsa.



Alain Karatepeyan (#44) plays defensive linebacker in a game against Tulane University.



Alain Karatepeyan and his biggest fan and father, Levon Karatepeyan.



University of Tulsa's championship rings when it won Conference USA in 2005.

went away," he explains. "They knew I couldn't play so a lot of teams backed down. But Boise State stayed with me."

Alain matriculated there. Due to his knee injury, he was a red shirt his freshman year and did not play the entire season. When coaching changes occurred, Alain left Boise State, went to a junior college, played one year there, and became All-American. "If I was to transfer to another four-year university from Boise State, I would have had to sit out that whole football year, whereas if I went to a junior college, I could still play that year and get recruited to play somewhere else the next year," he explains. A successful year of play, combined with Alain's coach's connections at Tulsa, earned him a full scholarship and a spot on the University of Tulsa Golden Hurricane team.

### The Tulsa years

During his three years at Tulsa, Alain was named "Player of the Week" several times at Conference USA, his team won the conference championship game twice, and at the last game of his college career he became "Defense Player of the Week."

Alain and his team played and won the Liberty Bowl back in 2005. They also played in the Armed Forces Bowl and the GMAC Bowl. The GMAC Bowl was particularly rewarding. "The score was 63-7. It was the largest margin in college history," Alain announces proudly. That game also earned him an individual record. "I needed three tackle-for-losses [TFL] to take the school record. I got six that day, so I took the school record with 22 TFLs," he says. "So that was a nice honor to have."

All this glory has come at a price, of course. In his short seven-year ca-

reer, Alain has had total reconstructive surgery on his right knee and suffered an assortment of shoulder and neck injuries. "I've been in constant pain for the past seven years," he admits, quite amused. "Through the season you're in constant pain because you don't have time to heal. As soon as the game is over, the next day, you practice again. There is no recovery time."

But like a true champ, Alain refuses to let these temporary setbacks cloud his focus. "I'm not trying to get hurt, but if you try to avoid getting hurt, you'll get even more hurt," he ponders wisely. "So I just go out there and play and just do what I do."

And that he does. A particularly memorable game for Alain was that against the University of El Paso. The score was 31-12 in El Paso's favor. "So I go out there, third down and long, I hit the quarterback, and, when I hit him, the ball pops up in the air, I catch it, and score a touchdown," Alain remembers. Even though this moment was years ago, the exhilaration of it all has not waned in the slightest. He continues, "After that touchdown, the momentum shifted and we just came back and scored and scored and scored." Perhaps the turning point of that game is sentimental for another reason: Alain's father.

### A father's prayer

At the very moment that the ball popped up in the air at the game against El Paso, Alain said a prayer to himself. Little did he know that his biggest and most devoted fan, his father, did the same.

Alain's father, **Levon Karatepeyan**, preferred basketball for his son. Nevertheless, he was always unequivocally and absolutely supportive of Alain's choice. "I mean, there were times when I doubted going into the NFL. I said, 'I don't know if I want to go. I don't know if I can go,'" Alain remembers. "So when he passed away, I decided that I have to go. I would do whatever it takes. I don't care if I have to break something to make it there." It was that sheer will and determination that caught the eye of the NFL and earned his current contract and opportunity with the Dallas Cowboys.

During Alain's first year at Tulsa, although Levon was bat-

ting cancer, he flew out to every single game without exception. "I didn't know he had cancer at the time," Alain says. "I found out after the last game of my first year. He had to tell me because his hair was starting to fall out." During Alain's second year at Tulsa, his father's hip began to give out but he was undeterred by his use of a wheelchair. "And he still came. Yeah, he still came," Alain states, referring to his home games that year. Even before Alain's matriculation at Tulsa, Levon was always there. "He went to every game, basketball, football, even showed up at practice."

The big El Paso game that stands out in Alain's mind was another bonding moment for him. "After the game, when I told my dad that during the game's turning point, I prayed to God to help me do something out there, he told me that he prayed too at the same time," Alain says. "He didn't know I was praying. When he told me this, it just started making me cry because that was also the first time I ever saw my dad in a wheelchair."

### Looking ahead

With the support of the Armenian community, his family, and a guardian angel named Levon, Alain counts his blessings and appreciates the journey so far. He also looks ahead and anticipates the great things it will do for him and his family. And it already has.

"Football has done a lot for me," he says. "It's just kept me straight, kept me in school... It's brought my family a lot closer and I love that." Alain is mature beyond his years, perhaps because of recent life circumstances, or perhaps because he is a role model to his two younger brothers. In any case, he admits, "Football has built my character. So I really appreciate what I have."

We appreciate what he has too, both in terms of values and athletic talent. To get a first glimpse of the budding football star as he prepares for the upcoming NFL season, be sure to catch him on HBO's "Hard Knox" in early August, when the show documents the Cowboys at their training camp in Oxnard, California. If all goes well there, Alain will be dressed and on the field on August 8 for the pre-season game against the San Diego Chargers. Stay tuned!



# ARMENIA

## The victory of May 1918 is remembered at Sardarabad

Continued from page 1

All Armenians, **Karekin II**, Prime Minister **Tigran Sarkisian**, Speaker of Parliament **Tigran Torosian**, other officials, foreign diplomats, and visitors from the diaspora. The visitors from the diaspora are especially excited and proud.

Everyone climbs up, approaches the bell tower, and places wreaths, bowing in memory of the heroes of Sardarabad, the founders of the Armenian republic.

### This is our land

There are people from every part of Armenia here. There is a large banquet table for each province of the Republic of Armenia, and one for Artsakh. All are invited to partake of the food and raise a glass to the republic. In minutes, the food is all gone, but the party continues with song and dance.

**Artur Avagian** is the chef for the Artsakh banquet table. He came in from Stepanakert, the capital. "We have come to celebrate our most important holiday, to celebrate the restoration of our statehood, and to provide hospitality to people with our traditional, true Armenian foods, *korkot*, *zhengialov hats*.... For us, this is a big nationalistic holiday. Congratulations!"

**Fenia Shaboyan**, 60, has come from Russia. "I am from Anipemza [in Armenia], but I live in Russia. I have come to see my sister, who lives in Shenavan. We are here with her sons and daughters-in-law, to pay our respects to our heroes. This is the most important holiday. And all of us want to participate because we all want to see Armenia good and prosperous. Why should we stay in Russia? That isn't our land. This is our land. We want to come back, but there is no drinking water in Anipemza. No school. We are waiting for it. We live in hope, son."

The sun is burning hot, but the river of people does not let up. **Hrach Poladian** is walking with his two sons, Arshak and Aram. They are wearing a military costume. It turns out that they are studying Tae Kwon Do and were part of a show. "It is a wonderful holiday. We can call this the second Avarair," he said, referring to the well-known battle of 451. "It is a celebration of the salvation and rebirth of our nation. It has great educational significance for our generations," he says.

Schoolteacher **Anna Danielian** has come with her two daughters. "This holiday is very significant. We have gone over this lesson with the kids and we have come to express our gratitude to the memory of the people who were able to reach victory and maintain, create a state for us. That's the most important thing."

Col. **Poghos Abrahamian** is in dress uniform and his battle medals command respect. He notes, "For me, May 28 is the torch of freedom and independence. I think we must emphasize more the aspect of the establishment of the national state. After a break of a few hundred years, we were able to restore our statehood, we got a new chance. God gave us the chance to find ourselves again. And thanks to God and to Aram Manukian's talent and leadership and to our finding our national spirit, we were able to establish a state again. Independence lasted for a very short time, and we must understand why."

### Citizenship is a great honor

"Our country will have a bright future, but the government alone cannot be responsible for creating



Scenes from the celebration on May 28. Photos: Photolure.

tomorrow. Every child of our nation has a role to play. Being a citizen of the Republic of Armenia is a great honor; serving our people, a great mission," said President Sargsian.

"The two and half years of the first Republic of Armenia compressed excitement and sadness alike, achievements and painful losses, and seared in our collective memory three permanent lessons," the president continued.

"First, the importance of national unity. Our state born nine decades ago was the result of our collective national will. Unity, the absence of which became one of the main reasons for the collapse of the first Republic of Armenia. Today we do not have the right not to be united. More than ever, we must maintain the united spirit of 1918.

"Second, consciousness that the state is irreplaceable. There is no structure that can replace the state for us. No ideology, that is above the interests of the state. If our country gets weaker, no one of us gets stronger, no one of us benefits. We all lose.

"Third, the confidence to confront challenges with our own powers. No one can solve our country's problems in our place. No one can defend us, develop our economy,

strengthen our democracy, and make Armenia a progressive state. We must do all that ourselves. Work not to please other but ourselves. History has shown that no one has a greater interest in Armenia's rise than we, the citizens of Armenia."

### And a protest

About a thousand of those citizens had come to Sardarabad to hold a protest rally, not against the state but against the head of state. Yelling, "Levon, Levon," "Freedom," "We have won," they held a rally at the monument. Former President **Levon Ter-Petrossian** arrived at about 1 p.m., accompanied by fellow oppositionists **Stepan Demirchian**, **Hovhannes Hovhannisian**, **Aram Z. Sargsian**, and others.

They placed flowers at the monument. Mr. Ter-Petrossian intoned, "You must fight until you reach the goal. This is not my issue. It is absolutely not my issue. Whatever you do, you do for your children. Stand till the end."

The former president's detractors are as passionate as his supporters. An older woman with medals from the Second World War on her chest looked at the former president with disgust and said, "Oh Levon. Have you no shame showing your face among people?"





## Community

# A changing police force

## The Glendale Police Department is reaching out to the Armenian community

by Alex Dobuzinskis

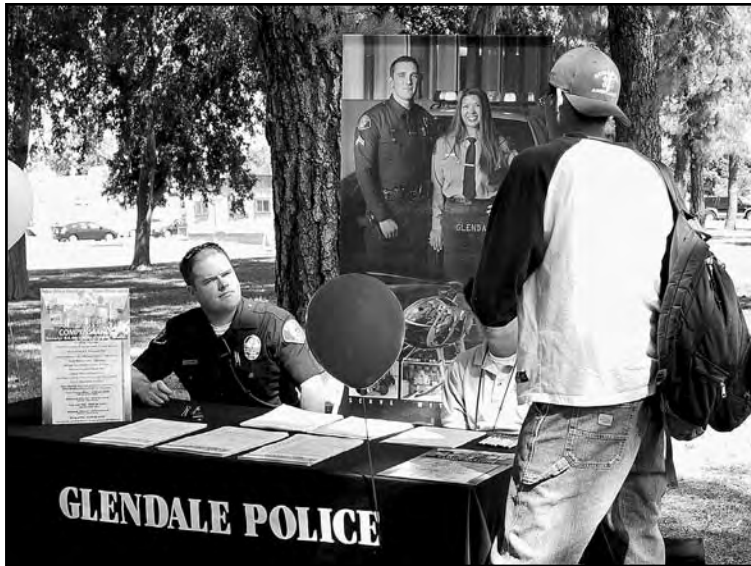
**GLENDALE, Calif.** — As they rush to hire new officers to fill a fast-depleting force, Glendale Police Department officials say they are on the lookout for Armenian-American candidates — so the agency can reflect the ethnic make-up of its city.

But even as the department in the last decade has drastically increased its number of Armenian-American officers from three in 1998 to 15 this year, those officers make up only 6 percent of its force.

In a city where an estimated 40 percent of the residents are of Armenian descent, the Police Department has taken steps to recruit Armenian-American officers and to reach out to the community. But police officials say their recruitment is always bound by the need to get the best candidates — and that they are competing with other police agencies for a small pool of Armenian-American candidates.

"The department has recognized that in order to serve this community, we have to reflect this community," said police Capt. **Kirk Palmer** of the Administrative Services Division. "So I can tell you, from the chief on down, we're committed to doing that."

As part of its effort to increase its number of Armenian-speaking officers, the department has created a special hiring category for candidates who speak a second language. Those candidates are evaluated separately from the larger pool of candidates who only speak English, which means that applicants



Thinking about a career in law enforcement? The Glendale PD may have a job for you.

who speak Armenian or Korean get looked at first, officials said.

City Councilman **Bob Yousefian** said the department has changed in recent years by working hard to recruit Armenian-American candidates, despite a rigid civil-service code that makes for slow change.

"I think it's a far cry from what it used to be in the past," Yousefian said. "I'm actually happy about that at this point."

But Yousefian said he remains concerned that the hiring process is not completely transparent, especially at the oral-interview stage of the evaluation.

"It's a very subjective matter, and that's the problem I have with the testing process," he said. "A bunch of police officers get together and they decide who's going to be in and who's going to be out."

At the request of the City Council, city auditors examined the Police Department's hiring process between 2003 and 2005. The audit report found no evidence of discrimination against minority candidates, but it dissected a rigorous screening process that resulted in a hire rate of only 2.7 percent for

all candidates, said Jason Bradford, principal internal auditor.

Seven Armenian-American officers were hired during that time out of 173 who applied, which came out to a hire rate of 4 percent, Bradford said.

The three-officer interview panels that evaluate candidates typically have minority or female officers on them, said Lt. **Todd Stokes** of the Professional Services Bureau, who added that the interview process is fair.

"I've been to Armenia, I've studied the Armenian language, and I'm in a good position, being in charge of police personnel to oversee things and make sure there isn't anything biased happening in our hiring process," Stokes said.

The department's efforts to recruit Armenian candidates come as the department has lost many officers to retirement in recent years. With 248 officers in total, the department has ten vacancies and it's competing with other Southern California police agencies for a limited pool of candidates.

As the department has sought to increase its number of Arme-

nian-speaking officers, it has also hired more Armenian-Americans to work in support-staff positions. The department has at least a dozen Armenian-American employees who are not police officers, Stokes said.

The department has many young Armenian-Americans work as cadets, thanks to a program that allows Glendale Community College (GCC) students to work for the department while going to school full-time, officials said. GCC has a large population of Armenian-American students, and officials say that program has been especially successful in recruiting candidates from the Armenian community.

But the department continues to be on the lookout for Armenian-speaking candidates to fill positions in communications, jail custody, and records — because those employees interact with civilians who often speak only Armenian.

"We've probably been more successful in the cadet program than some of the other [positions], but we're rapidly gaining ground in those other areas," Stokes said.

The department has taken other steps to reach out to the Armenian community.

Armenian-speaking officers regularly appear as guests on Armenian-language community-access cable shows in Glendale.

The department is also in the process of creating an English-language outreach video about law enforcement and police-officer careers, which will be shown on Armenian cable shows.

Within the department itself, officials have undertaken sporadic efforts to train officers about Armenian language and culture, although the department has not done a department-wide training program specific to any one ethnic culture, Palmer said.

An Armenian-American police sergeant with the department taught officers under his watch some Armenian terms during daily

briefings, and the department recently had a one-day seminar for about 35 officers that covered Armenian history, the Genocide, and the significance of April 24.

As officers have interacted with the Armenian community in recent years, they have encountered one problem often associated with immigrant groups — the under-reporting of crime because of a distrust of police, Stokes said. But he added that the department has gained more trust in the Armenian community by providing good service.

"We realize it takes time, but there's been a lot of progress, I'd say over the last ten years, where I don't have the same feeling that many, many crimes are going unreported," Stokes said. "Our work isn't done in that area, but we've come a long way."

Another hot issue for Glendale's Armenian community in recent years has been resident complaints against banquet halls, many of which are owned by Armenian-Americans. But despite the criticism the banquet halls sometimes receive, Officer **John Balian**, a spokesman for the Glendale Police Department, said officers have been called to respond to only a couple incidents of fighting at banquet halls in the last year.

Officials said that as they continue to build on the department's rapport with the Armenian community, the recruitment of Armenian-Americans will be a key priority, because community members expect the department to have Armenian-speaking officers.

"These individuals are looking for a police department that is responsive to their needs, that can speak the language when necessary," Palmer said. "In an emergency, mom might be at home and can't speak the [English] language, and in those cases it's good when we can deploy someone who speaks the language and understands the culture." ■

# Carrying the cultural torch through dance

## Hamazkayin Yeraz Dance Company to hold annual performance on June 8

by Alene Tchekmedyan

**ORANGE COUNTY, Calif.** — Inspired by classical Armenian dance, **Pearlene Varjabedian** always instructs her dancers to adopt a sense of *naz* on stage and in their daily lives.

"I always say to them, 'When you walk into a room you, will know what it is to have *naz*,'" she said, describing it as an aura of coyness and modesty portrayed not only by twirling one's hands but also through one's posture and personality.

For the past two months, students of the Hamazkayin Yeraz School of Armenian Dance have been rigorously rehearsing *nazbar* and other classical dances for their annual performance, which will take place on June 8.

Under the direction of Varjabedian and guest choreographer **Ara Melkonian**, the 2008 recital is themed "We Are the Future," implying that to pass the art of Armenian dance to the youth is to preserve history and culture for future

generations of Armenians. "We are today's Armenian youth," Varjabedian said. "We have respect for what our people have been through and we have pride in what we are. My dream for my children and for all Armenian youths is to carry on the torch. I want to transfer my passion to today's youth."

Founded in 2003 by Varjabedian, a former dancer of the Sayat Nova Dance Company of Boston, Yeraz has grown from an independent dance group of 15 dancers to a branch of the Hamazkayin Armenian Cultural and Educational Association, with 35 dancers. Varjabedian explains that merging with Hamazkayin was a decision based on the shared vision of promoting Armenian culture among the youth.

The upcoming performance takes what Varjabedian describes as a "new age" approach to dance. Her choreography juxtaposes classical and modern techniques, which reflects the development and evolution of Armenia and Armenian culture since independence. "I implement movements that are coy and proud," she explained. "My inspiration comes from not only what is in the past, but also the future. This is what we were, this is what we are, and this is what we will be. Whatever it is we will be, we will always maintain what we were and are because we are proud Armenians."

Along with classical pieces, Yeraz will be performing a hip-hop



The Yeraz Dance Company on stage.

variation to a song titled *Yerazank* — by the group Arevig, an Armenia-based children's choir. "In the middle of the song you hear *duduk*, which gives it a new twist," Varjabedian said. "[The choreography has] some hip-hop movements and you see classical Armenian movements. There is a New-Age rhythm and compilation of music." For this piece, the dancers will be dressed in cargo pants, tank tops, and rhinestone belts.

These costumes are in sharp contrast to those of the rest of the show. For the traditional dances, the costumes are fully embroidered with gold fabric, lace, and headpieces. The girls add hair extensions to create long, thick braids to fall down the front of their dresses. "For each dance, the costume is appropriate for that dance," Varjabedian said.

The costumes correspond to the traditional meaning behind each

dance. "The meaning of each dance is powerful," Varjabedian continued. "The girls feel exactly what they mean because when I teach, I tell my students what [the dances] mean."

Varjabedian said she has a strict style of teaching, intended to instill discipline. "They are taught posture, how to walk, bow, to keep their shoulders down, arms up, and stomachs in," she said. "The discipline transfers on to other things in life. [The students] are taught [to develop a sense of] pride and self-esteem and to work hard."

Based in Orange County, Yeraz has faced challenges in terms retention, due to the fact that the local Armenian community is geographically scattered. Unlike in Glendale, where there are over 20 dance groups within close proximity, students of Yeraz reside far from one another. "Some of my students

drive 45 minutes to get to rehearsal because we are in such a spread-out Armenian community" Varjabedian said. "It is hard to maintain because everyone has different activities and it is not a close-knit Armenian community due to the distance."

Among other challenges are the busy schedules of the youth, as each dancer is involved in a variety of extracurricular activities.

Two months ago, Yeraz added a male element to the company. The boys' dances are choreographed by Melkonian. "He has strong Armenian technical movements" Varjabedian said, commenting on her collaboration with Melkonian, who is also the director of the ARA Dance Studio in San Fernando Valley. "The partnership we have is a wonderful mix," Varjabedian continued. "Each of us has been trained differently, but we work very well together and share our visions. Both of us are working toward the same goal."

Melkonian believes community support is crucial for fostering a more serious environment for young dancers. "[The students need to] learn about their roots and culture and become closer to their culture," he said. "Every Armenian in every art form should go down to the roots." ■

connect:  
(714) 403-0875.



# Community

## Ara Project raises funds for summer camp in Gyumri

by Lory Tatoulian

**GLENDALE, Calif.** - In a cool jazz setting at Glendale's Notta Luna Restaurant, tucked away in a nondescript alleyway, music lovers and supporters of the Ara Project gathered on May 24 to raise funds for a summer camp in Gyumri while listening to the wild piano riffs of master jazz pianist **Tigran Hamasyan**.

"We're here tonight to continue our series of events that help us raise money to fund the Endanik Summer Camp in Gyumri," Ara Project Chairman **Vasken Khanjian** said.

The Ara Project is a nonprofit organization that was founded by a group of family and friends of the late **Ara Baran**, who was a 23-year-old medical student when he suddenly died of a pulmonary embolism nearly seven years ago. In response to the tragedy, Ara's friends became proactive and formed an organization that would help disadvantaged Armenian children in memory of their beloved friend. As the grassroots organization gained steam over the years, the number



Scenes from the Endanik Summer Camp. Campers enjoying watermelon and ice cream.

of volunteers grew along with the number of dollars raised.

Since its inception, the Ara Project has hosted a number of fund-raising events to benefit many of its humanitarian outreach projects, ranging from buying boots, winter clothes, and Christmas gifts for children living in extreme poverty to sponsoring a summer camp program for orphans living in Vanadzor.

In 2005, the down-home organization sent over \$3,000 to assist

children in Gyumri. In 2006, the Ara Project increased its financial support five-fold by sending \$15,000 to the Endanik Summer Camp. At this year's event, over \$5,000 was raised to once again underwrite the costs of sending children to camp.

"Instead of building a statue or plaque to memorialize Ara, we wanted to create a living memorial," Khanjian said. "These programs really encapsulate what Ara was about, his love for life, his compassion for helping others,

and his firm belief in the Christian faith."

The project's primary focus has been its support of the Endanik Charity Society in Gyumri, a program that helps over 1,500 individuals, including disabled youths, orphans, and underprivileged families living in the region. The Endanik School also offers an afterschool program where children have the opportunity to learn skills such as dance, computer design, theater, journalism, jewelry design, foreign languages, and woodworking.

The summer camp is regarded as the highlight of the children's experience at Endanik. The Ara Project sponsors nearly 150 children to attend the camp. The camp is divided into two weeks. The first week is geared towards children from poor families; the second is designed to cater to children who are physically disabled.

"We really make sure the kids get the full camp experience and enjoy themselves," Khanjian said. "They put on elaborate performances, they make arts and crafts, they eat great food, the children really have the time of their lives."

In addition to the camp, the Ara Project launched its Endanik Child Sponsorship program, through which children are provided with basic living necessities for a dollar a day.

"Fifty percent of the sponsored money goes to home needs and the other half goes to support the Endanik School," Ara Project Treasurer **Ani Jambazian** said. "All the money that is raised goes straight to the kids."

Guests enjoyed the copious buffet of Armenian food while relishing the thundering piano compositions of Hamasyan, and made donations between jazz sets.

Hamasyan, who has gained international fame after winning the much-coveted Thelonious Monk Jazz Award, felt a special connectedness to the event, as he is a native of Gyumri.

"I am glad that something like this is happening," he said. "Many of these kids are so talented and they deserve to have the chance to be fully supported in their talents." ❏

connect:  
araproject.com

## Calendar of Events

### New York

**JUNE 8** - OUTDOOR PLAYDATE AT ARMENIAN SOCIETY OF NY, 12 noon - 4PM at 39-03 Little Neck Pkwy. Kids 2-5. Info: 646-734-0610.

**JUNE 8** - NEW YORK ARMENIAN HOME'S ANNUAL PICNIC ON THE HOME GROUNDS AT 137-31 45TH AVENUE, FLUSHING, NY. MUSIC BY John Yarpinian, Souren Baronian, Jerry Tarpinian, and Chris Marashlian, vocals by Elias Sarkar. DELICIOUS FOOD. PARKING IS AVAILABLE. STARTS FROM 1:00 PM - ? FOR INFO CALL 718-4611504.

**JUNE 19-24** - ART @ THE CATHEDRAL: GIVING FORM TO FAITH Art exhibition and concert in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the consecration of St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral, presented by the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern). The exhibition will highlight the collection of the Diocese, including works by Arshile Gorky, and showcase a range of works by contemporary and emerging Armenian-American artists. It opens at the Diocesan Center, 630 Second Ave., New York, N.Y., on June 19 at 5:30 p.m. and continues through June 24. Admission is free. An opening night concert, featuring Lucine Amara, soprano; Sahar Arzruni, piano; Ani Aznavoorian, cello; will begin at 7:30 p.m. Call 212-293-1270 to order concert tickets (\$20 adults; \$15 students).

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featuring Lucine Amara, soprano, Sahar Arzruni, piano, Ani Aznavoorian, cello, will begin at 7:30 p.m. Call 212-293-1270 to order concert tickets (\$20 adults; \$15 students).

**SEPTEMBER 13** - ANCA Eastern Region Annual Banquet in New York. Mark your calendar for the Second Annual Banquet sponsored by the Armenian National Committee of America, Eastern Region. Cocktails and silent auction followed by dinner and special awards program. The Grand Hyatt, 109 East 42nd Street at Grand Central Terminal, New York. Tickets \$250. Mention "ANC Banquet" for special hotel room rate (limited availability). More details to follow.

**SEPTEMBER 27-28** - 59th Annual Artists' Ball, presented by NY ASA. Two-day art exhibit. Gallerie Icosahedron, TriBeca, NY. ASA looking for new artists to join show. Application due May 30, 2008. Go to [www.asainc.org/newyork/artistsball](http://www.asainc.org/newyork/artistsball) or email [ArtistsBall@gmail.com](mailto:ArtistsBall@gmail.com).  
**OCTOBER 24** - CHILDREN OF ARMENIA FUND's 5th Annual Save a Generation Awards Dinner at Cipriani 42nd St., NYC. [www.coafkids.org](http://www.coafkids.org).

### New Jersey

**MAY 31** - Celebrating 90th Anniversary of The First Republic of Armenia Organized by ARFDRO Gomideh of New Jersey. Featured performers include Sayat Nova Dance Group of Boston, Nersik Ispirian and Salbi Mailyan from Los Angeles, Akh'tamar Dance Ensemble of St. Thomas Armenian Church,

NJ Hamazkayin Nayiri Dance Group, and NJ Hamazkayin Children's Choir. 7pm. Felician College, 262 S. Main St. Lodi, NJ 07644. Admission: \$50, \$35, \$25. For tickets or more information please call Mari Keshishian 201-227-9884, ARF Office 201-945-0011 or [Arfdro@gmail.com](mailto:Arfdro@gmail.com).

**JUNE 1** - Annual St. Leon Armenian Church Picnic -- KEBAB & KEF -- Live Music with special guest appearance by ONNIK DINKJIAN. Great food and great fun for the whole family - FREE ADMISSION - Sunday, noon - 5:00 p.m. Rain or shine. For info call Church Office, 201-791-2862. At St. Leon Armenian Church, 12-61 Saddle River Rd. Fair Lawn, NJ

**JUNE 1** - AAHPO MEDICAL WORKSHOP. The Armenian American Health Professionals Organization welcome all to attend this workshop and meet and learn about various health issues from health care professionals. At St. Gregory The Enlightener Church in White Plains, NY. 12:00 noon immediately following badarak.

**JUNE 7-8** - St. Mary Armenian Church - 2 Day Food & Music Festival, Food, music, kids activities Saturday, noon-8 pm; Sunday, noon-6 pm, 200 W. Mt. Pleasant Ave. Livingston 973-533-9794

**JUNE 14** - HOVNIANIAN SCHOOL ANNUAL DINNER DANCE. Honoring the Class of 2008. Sponsored by the Hovnianian School PTO. Please save the date.

**JUNE 14** - Father's Day Eve DINNER DANCE sponsored by St. Thomas Armenian Church, Saturday, 8:00 PM; Corner of

Rt. 9W & E. Clinton Avenue, Tenafly, NJ 07670; Music by MOSHE & Company. Adults \$50 per person, Children 11 & under \$20. Includes Full Mezze, Dinner, Dessert, Soft Drinks & Coffee! Cash Bar Available. For reservations contact: Sylva Torosian, (201) 894-0143, Tanya Vartanyan (201) 941-6764, Rosine Hovsepian (201) 265-1275 and Church Office (201) 567-5446.

**JUNE 22** - AGAU Alumni Assoc 46th Annual Scholarship luncheon. Sunday. At the Landmark II, E. Rutherford, NJ Donation \$35. For reservations call Rose Kirian at 201-791-5886.

**SEPTEMBER 25** - River Vale, NJ. Sts. Vartanantz Church 6th Annual Golf Outing. River Vale Country Club. Lunch, Dinner, Golf and More. Shotgun start at 12:45pm. For reservations or more info please call : Mark Alashaian 201-483-3200, Rich Krikorian 201-664-6885, Sarkis Shirinian 201-307-0825 or the Church Office 201-943-2950.

**OCTOBER 3 & 4** - Save the Date! Hamazkayin of New Jersey presents: For the 40th Anniversary of NJ Chapter and 80th Anniversary of Hamazkayin - Cultural Seminar - Armenian Movie Screening, Literary Competition, Identity and the Armenian Youth

**OCTOBER 25** - Gala celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America under the jurisdiction of the Great House of Cilicia and the 110th anniversary of the establishment of the Armenian Church in America. Marriott at Glenpointe, Teaneck, New Jersey. Details to follow.

### California

**MAY 31** - "AN AFTERNOON OF CULINARY ART." Presented by San Gabriel Valley Ararat Guild. Featuring Chef Gerald Isacson. Saturday, 11:00 a.m. Altadena Town & Country Club, 2290 Country Club Dr., Altadena, CA. Donation: \$35.00 For tickets contact Alice Mgrublian, (323) 255-3769.

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## Community

ROAD LESS TRAVELED

### Skin deep and oceans wide

#### Entrepreneurial sisters take on the world of cosmoceuticals

by Mariette Tachdjian

Three continents. Two devoted sisters. One flourishing business. For Irma and Carla-Maria Khanjian, having oceans between them has only catapulted their success to new heights. With operations divided between Montreal and Geneva (with a foothold in Asia as well), their biotechnology company, Befutur, is up against some of the biggest players in the cutthroat industry of cosmoceuticals. Part global businesswomen, part scientists, and part cosmetologists, this tenacious twosome exemplifies success born out of sibling devotion and fierce perseverance.

As CEO and executive director, respectively, of Befutur Suisse, Carla-Maria and Irma never imagined becoming leaders in the field of skin care, let alone owning a whole biotechnology company. In fact, the word "biotechnology" never even entered their vocabulary as they were growing up. The sisters, who were born and educated in Beirut, studied economics at the American University of Beirut – Carla-Maria earning a Master's and Irma a Bachelor's. After escaping the Lebanese civil war and immigrating with their family to Montreal, Irma excelled in human resources and recruitment while Carla-Maria worked in various high-level positions in China, Europe, and the Middle East.

As fate would have it, Irma's personal life took her to Switzerland.

In Geneva she joined an investment firm whose clients included the founder of Befutur Suisse, a cutting-edge Swiss biotech company that specialized in cell and tissue engineering. Soon the two sisters were asked to join the corporate ranks of Befutur Suisse as project specialists, to help develop and launch a new line of skin-care products. Teaming up with an elite laboratory and renowned scientists, the company developed new methods of harvesting human skin cells, which in turn were sold to top skin-care companies for

cosmetological testing. After a number of years building experience and professional relationships, the sisters began to strategize a business partnership together. By 2002, after tireless efforts, sleepless nights, and a shared vision, they bought out Befutur Suisse, becoming its sole owners.

The relentless work, which combined years of marketing skills and financial strategies, finally paid off when they licensed and launched Befutur's own, proprietary cellular complex as a skin-care line. La Peau (which, appropriately, means "skin" in French) was marketed as a line of skin creams that claims to outperform some of the leading brands with its antioxidant and anti-wrinkle agents. Mostly through word of mouth, interested buyers soon emerged, ranging from medical and scientific circles to beauty-product retailers. But the sisters' work did not stop there. They continued their efforts in heavy marketing and public relations, hitting markets in Asia and the Middle East. With only two pairs of hands and little financial backing, the sisters have seen a small company reach global appeal with very limited resources, believing you don't need millions to realize your passion. "When we bought the company, the

product line was just a concept," Irma says. "Our merit lies in the fact that, yes, although we inherited a concept, we made it happen by our own means."

Gaining rave reviews at a steady rate, their product has now begun penetrating celebrity circles. Singer/songwriter Gloria Estefan is among their newest clients, as is actress Susan Sarandon. The dynamic duo's motto, "You promise, you deliver," can be heard loud and clear in their voices. Their sense of integrity and uncompromising work ethic resonate through their tremendous energy and excitement for a product which has been developed to represent quality and good health.

In 2007, Carla-Maria was honored as one of three nominees for the Earnst & Young "Entrepreneur of the Year" award in Canada. The Khanjian sisters' story has also appeared in various publications, and La Peau has graced the pages of *Elle*, *Marie Claire*, and *Cosmopolitan*, among others. But their most critical test was passed when they gained acceptance and respect from the world's most finicky connoisseurs of scientific-grade skin care, the Swiss themselves. Their next step is to partner with an investor or distributor to market and distribute their products on a larger scale.

Despite the distance that still keeps them apart, this sisterhood thrives on its unique working styles, which complement each other. "Carla sometimes is more of a risk-taker, I am more down to earth. We learn from each other," Irma explains. Not surprisingly, they say they were over-achievers in school, both in academics and competitive sports. To this day they both still compete in athletics. Carla-Maria has participated in multiple triathlons and Irma is an avid swim-



Irma and Carla-Maria Khanjian.

mer and runner. The term "wonder woman" comes to mind.

One message Irma and Carla-Maria would like to pass on to the reader is that exercise and sports may just be the best coping mechanisms for surviving some of life's worst hardships. The sisters have empowered and mentored numerous women through professional networks as well as community outreach programs – which have included mentoring of immigrant women.

As proud Armenians, Carla-Maria and Irma feel blessed to have been raised by loving parents "who instilled trust, hard work, and ethics." The sisters were always active participants in girl scouts and Armenian clubs. They said they feel

very proud of being Armenian and always emphasize that they are Lebanese/Canadian sisters of Armenian origin. Perhaps it is that flexibility and adaptability that has helped manifest their dreams into reality. Indeed, Carla-Maria's dream of someday being on the cover of *Forbes* doesn't seem so far-fetched. After all, they have already paved a unique path for future female entrepreneurs. We look forward to watching their stars rise higher and higher.

An interesting tidbit: Irma and Carla-Maria are cousins to another successful woman, actress Arsinée Khanjian.

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## Creative Citizen's path to green

#### Argam DerHartunian and Scott Badenoch turn their passion for environmental preservation into a global initiative

by Jon Alexanian

**LOS ANGELES** – In 2007, Argam DerHartunian was in his final semester of law school at Pepperdine University when he decided to take the path less traveled. Though he finished the year at the top of his class, after attending a few interviews at large law firms he decided practicing law was not going to give him the personal fulfillment he desired. DerHartunian's passion for the environment was cultivated at a young age. Now, as an adult, he is determined to spark a global "green" revolution via his Web platform, CreativeCitizen.com.

Prior to law school, DerHartunian graduated from UC Berkeley with a degree in political science. An avid follower of Armenian affairs, he interned at the ANCA offices in Washington, and participated in Birthright Armenia projects by working for USAID in Yerevan and the Land and Culture Organization in Karabakh.

In his last academic semester at law school, DerHartunian developed a business model with his partner, Scott Badenoch, and eventually created CreativeCitizen.com. In a nutshell, the website incorporates member input, creative thinking, and analytical calculations, in order to find environmentally sound solutions for people to adapt to their everyday life.

Global warming is no longer the only major environmental issue. Carbon emissions are only one component of the equation. "We have smog in the air and mercury in our water, deteriorating forests, and much more," DerHartunian says. "To create a community that doesn't abuse the world's resources and to rethink the way things are done. That's where Creative Citizen comes into play."

Creating a user profile on the easy-to-navigate CreativeCitizen.com is similar to many social-network websites. DerHartunian is optimistic that the synergy of multiple users will help spawn efficient plans to better preserve and save the environment from further deterioration. The concept behind the site was made simple in order to effectively expand the amount of contributors. Even in its early stages, the site has already generated a lot of attention. CreativeCitizen.com was selected as a sponsor of events such as Vernare's Green Showroom in Los Angeles and the EcoCities Digital Be-in in San Francisco.

"Once you start breaking down small tasks that can be done to conserve resources, it almost



Co-owners Argam DerHartunian (right) and Scott Badenoch.

becomes contagious," DerHartunian says. "From something as large as cutting down pollution emitted by vehicles to something as small as making sure none of your faucets in the home leak water, there are tons of ways to help out. Our website serves as a forum to share this content and actually will actually run a valuation on the amount of benefit it will provide to society."

For example, if you think of a new way to reduce the amount of water wasted in your household by two gallons a day, you may submit your idea, which is termed as a "creative solution," and Creative Citizen will quantify the impact it will have on the environment, then assign the user an amount of "greenage." Users can subsequently track their progress as citizens and see how much they have saved in terms of waste, water, emissions, energy, and money.

Greenage will be tied in with philanthropic contributions. A significant amount of the company's revenue will consist of contributions from causes that share the same values as the online community, with contributions growing in proportion to greenage generated by users. The more greenage, the better.

After creative solutions are submitted, site members will have opportunities to rank, edit, and critique them, in essence making the site function like a "Green-Wikipedia." DerHartunian explains, "The concept is to allow humans to govern their own ideas, and this in turn will bring about the most efficient ways to save the environment. If you think about it, global economies and businesses operate the same way. The 'free market' dictates the direction of business as the 'free ideas' will dictate the direction on ideas on CreativeCitizen.com.

As the administrator of the site, I really won't impose anything more than my own personal opinion as any user would."

The concept of zero resources is something businesses are already trending toward and looking at as the future. "Essential Living Foods is a company that created organic products that are also made with zero resources," DerHartunian says. "Rainwater is used to grow crops and provide a very holistic approach. This is the type of eco-friendly production that society needs to adopt." DerHartunian adds that the opportunity to improve global environmental conditions is more significant than ever and it will take a shift in the way things are done to truly produce sustainable conditions.

Creative Citizen represents a significant paradigm shift. Instead of continuing down the same path of global unawareness and consumption, a Creative Citizen helps reduce worldwide problems through daily, personal solutions.

"It's time to be the creators instead of the takers," DerHartunian says. "With the input of the global population, we can find tangible ways together. Our goal is to help each person see how little acts have truly big effects."

CreativeCitizen.com is always seeking to add to its talent pool and staff. Internship opportunities are also available. For further details or questions about the website, contact argam@creativecitizen.com



# Armenia

## From Armenia, in brief

### ARF switches ministers as World Congress concludes

The 30th World Congress of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation concluded on May 26. If the delegates – representing party units in Armenia, Karabakh, Georgia, and the diaspora – had misgivings about the policies adopted and actions taken by the party's executive body, the Bureau, over the last four years, there was no evidence of that in the formal results of the congress. Seven of the nine members of the Bureau were reelected. The Bureau was expanded to eleven members. The three ARF members who are members of the government are among the new members

of the Bureau. **Hrant Markarian** remains the the Bureau representative.

The three ministers, Agriculture Minister **Davit Lokian**, Social Security Minister **Aghvan Vartanian**, and Education Minister **Levon Mkrtchian**, resigned from the government. Under the coalition agreement, they will be replaced by other ARF designees.

In an announcement, the World Congress confirmed that the party had intended to enter the opposition after the presidential elections but remained in government in the interest of maintaining stability in the tense – and bloody – post-election situation. The party may review its continued membership in the government on a periodic basis.

### North Atlantic Council members pleased

Armenia's progress in the process of implementation of its Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO was discussed on May 28 at the session of the North-Atlantic Council, Mediamax reported.

Foreign Minister **Eduard Nalbandian** confirmed Armenia's commitment to the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. He also noted Armenia's continued readiness, without preconditions, to establish relations with NATO member Turkey. Both points are IPAP principles.

Defense Minister **Seyran Ohanian** discussed the process of military reform, steps taken toward

a Strategic Defense Review (SDR), and measures aimed to the increase of interoperability of Armenia's armed forces with NATO forces.

### Sefilian may be denied citizenship

**Jirair Sefilian**, a Lebanese citizen who moved to Armenia and attained prominence in the liberation of Shushi – a turning point in the Karabakh War – may be denied Armenian citizenship because of a criminal record. He is currently serving an 18-month prison sentence. In late 2006, he was arrested and charged with sedition. He was acquitted of that charge but found guilty of possessing an illegal firearm – a gift from **Samvel Babayan**,

the onetime commander of Nagorno-Karabakh's Defense Army.

The police last week moved to have him deported at the end of his prison sentence, but the petition was rejected by the court. Under Armenian law, a person who has custody of minors cannot be deported, and Mr. Sefilian is the father of two minors.

Asked about the case of Mr. Sefilian, who was in the ARF during the Karabakh War, but has long since parted ways with that party, Bureau Representative (and fellow Karabakh veteran) **Hrant Margarian** said, "We believe all Armenians are entitled to citizenship and that applies to Jirair Sefilian as well." ❏

See more briefs on page 20

## At Eurovision, Armenia inches closer to the top

### Sirusho takes fourth place

by **Betty Panossian-Ter Sarkissian**

YEREVAN – In its third year in the Eurovision Song Contest, Armenia took an important step closer to pleasing a wider European audience. At the finals which took place in Belgrade, Serbia, on May 24, **Sirusho**, accompanied by the backup vocals of Armenian pop singers **Tigran Petrosyan** and **Razmik Amyan**, ended up at in 4th place out of 26 participants. Armenia took 8th place last year and the year before.

Eurovision is Europe's most famous music festival, which is supposed to produce new hits for the European music market. "Qele-Qele," meaning "C'mon, c'mon" (lyrics by Sirusho, music by Der-Hova) definitely became one.

"I was very much surprised to see the audience sing every word of 'Qele-Qele,' and not just the English words," said Sirusho during a press conference after her return to Yerevan. "They were actually singing the Armenian opening 'Yes im mair hoghitys yela verrev...' (I emerged from my mother earth.) Every word of it!"

Sirusho did bring home an award, one of the four Official Eurovision Fan Awards. "We received an award for best stage presence and performance, and I consider it the unison of all the other awards," said Sirusho.

### How much did diaspora voting count?

"Qele-Qele," an up-tempo Eastern-ethnic pop song, was a clever



Sirusho, who performed "Qele-Qele" in Belgrade and took fourth place in Europe's Eurovision Song Contest. Photo: Photolure.

choice, a definite crowd pleaser. A youthful and beautiful Sirusho had a dynamic performance and with her flirty short-skirt dress, semibelly dancing, absolutely turned some heads at every corner of Europe.

How much of her success did Sirusho owe to the Armenian diaspora in Europe? In the past two years, it was a much easier guess. This year Armenia received votes from such countries as San Marino and Montenegro, where some Armenians may live, but an organized Armenian community does not exist. As in previ-

ous years, Armenia received high scores from France, Greece, Russia, Turkey, and Spain, among other countries.

Diaspora voting, as always, did count for almost all participant countries. Neighbors voted to neighbors, enemies ignored each other. Viewers in Turkey gave the highest 12 points to Azerbaijan, a first-time participant. Azerbaijani viewers reciprocated. Armenia received nothing from Azerbaijan but generously gave it two points. Georgia too, another first-time participant, gave its highest scores to Armenia.

As in previous years, the representatives of Public TV argued that Armenia was among the best not solely due to the efforts of the diaspora. But both Public TV officials and Sirusho herself repeatedly thanked Armenians in Europe (including Armenia) for their support.

"Unlike previous years, this year we received scores from most of the voting countries," said **Armen Arzoumanyan**, the executive director of Armenia's Public Television Channel.

### "Eurovision has just begun"

Going to Belgrade definitely made Sirusho a favorite young female singer in music circles in various countries in Europe.

While in Belgrade, Sirusho ex-

panded the horizons of her career even before the final contest took place. She wrote the lyrics and composed the music of a song for the participant representing Romania. "It was the first time in the history of Eurovision that before the contest a participant wrote a song for another participant," said Sirusho and added that the given song was first presented to the public during the party following the contest and that it was well received.

"According to me, the most important achievement for Sirusho at Belgrade was to gain the interest of major music record companies," said Mr. Arzoumanyan. He revealed that Sirusho has received an offer from the Greek branch of EMI Records to record the Greek version of "Qele-Qele." "This is a great opportunity. Only through the gates of Eurovision Song Contest could a singer from Armenia receive such a proposal from a global record company," claimed Mr. Arzoumanyan.

Other future projects for Sirusho are tours in various European countries following her successes at the song contest. "To me Eurovision did not just end, but it has just begun," said Sirusho. "I will simply continue to work with the same vigor." ❏

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## Armenia

# Life is hard – and getting lonelier – on the border

by **Tatul Hakobyan**

**TAVUSH MARZ, Armenia** – In the past five months, only one child has been born in Barekamavan village: a girl named Asia. Since Barekamavan is an aging village, for the past few years the number of people passing away is greater than the number of those being born. Seven people have already died this year.

**Hovik Gharakeshishian**, the head of the village, is concerned about Barekamavan's future.

"At this rate, in 15 to 20 years Barekamavan will end. A few decades ago the village had 1,000 residents. Today the number is 330. There was a time when the village school had more than 200 students; today the number is 44. At best, three or four children are born each year," says Mr. Gharakeshishian.

Barekamavan has no godfathers. Even during elections, candidates fail to visit the village – an index of just how neglected and ignored this border village has become. "During the presidential elections, when **Serge Sargsian** came to Noyemberian on his campaign, they asked us to take some people from our village for a meeting with the presidential candidate. We took 60 people to Noyemberian. All officials ostentatiously visit the fertile villages of the Ararat plateau. No one visits these parts," says the village headman.

**Serjhi Gharakeshishian**, one of the remaining residents of Barekamavan, complains that only Nagorno-Karabakh occupies the center of the state's attention – even though Barekamavan is also Karabakh.

"During the years of the conflict, up to 160 people were armed from this village, while today, the number could only be 20 to 25," he complains, presenting these figures as evidence that no other village in Armenia is as neglected, ignored, and poor as Barekamavan.

To the northeast of Armenia, where the Armenia-Georgia border ends, the Armenia-Azerbaijan border begins. Tavush marz has about 20 Armenian settlements scattered along its 100-mile border with Azerbaijan. In this section of the border, some villages are directly in the enemy's line of fire. In the wake of the May 1994 ceasefire, this remains the most unstable section of the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. Dozens of peaceful residents and soldiers have fallen victim to snipers.

Barekamavan has an eight-kilometer long border with Azerbaijan. Four hundred hectares of the villages' arable lands and orchards have not been cultivated for the past 15 years, as they are on the border and have been mined. The residents of Barekamavan can cultivate only 55 hectares of land – a very small area even for a village of 330 residents.

"First of all, everything must be done so that the remaining 20 to 25 young families of the village continue living here, otherwise the village will completely vanish," the head of the village says, with a grave tone.

### Under enemy control

Berkaber village – which, unlike Barekamavan, is not secluded from the main highway – is also aging. Today, only 53 students study in a village school that had 165 students in 1990. Berkaber village head **Suren Khudaverdian** notes that a new wave of flight from the village is noticeable this year. Leaders and citizens of the nine villages we visited confirmed this year's increase in the number of people fleeing their hometowns.

Incidentally, if in the 1990s people preferred to emigrate abroad,



Hovik Gharakeshishian. Photos: Armenian Reporter.

mainly to Russia, today they are moving both to Yerevan and Russia equally. Hikes in the cost of living pushes people out of the border towns, while construction employment in Yerevan is a lure to able-bodied residents.

"What are these authorities building? Yerevan and the Northern Avenue. People are leaving the village because of the continuous price rises. They either find work in construction in the capital city, or in Russia. A villager must cultivate land and keep animals. The lands of this village are under the control of the enemy. Until this latest price rise it was still possible to exist, but now it is impossible," says Mr. Khudaverdian.

The 800 hectares of mostly fruit bearing orchards of Berkaber – which shares a 10-kilometer border with Azerbaijan – are under the control of the enemy. The remaining lands are dangerous for cultivation. Berkaber is separated from its neighboring four Azerbaijani villages by the Joghaz reservoir, constructed in 1970 for irrigating Armenian and Azerbaijani lands. The main part of the reservoir covers Armenian lands, but in order to use it the Armenians must pass through two Azerbaijani villages, which is impossible.

And so, for about 20 years the reservoir has not been used, even for fishing; for as soon as the Armenians from Berkaber approach the shore to fish, the Azerbaijanis fire.

The Armenian army is considered the most efficient in the region. A strong army is one of the principal guarantors of the defense of Armenian lands from the encroachments of neighbors. But the Armenian soldier is more courageous when he feels support from the land-cultivating, lawn-mowing, tree-planting villagers. Land is kept

first of all though cultivation – but if the current hopeless situation continues in the border regions, keeping those borders secure will become harder. An Armenian soldier, especially a border-guard, is more valiant with the support of his family.

Voskepar village became the center of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict in 1990–91. Today, 50 of the 250 village houses have been locked shut for the past 15 years. **Mekhak Stepanian**, one of the young people still living in Voskepar, says that the government ignores the residents of the border village. There is no seed, fuel is very expensive, and the only available agricultural machines are leftovers from Soviet times.

"The residents of those 50 locked houses will never return, as they have settled in Russia. That is where their children and grandchildren were born," says Mr. Stepanian. "Of the remaining 200 houses, 80 of them are inhabited by the elderly. Those houses are also going to be locked up in 15 to 20 years. There was a time when the village school had more than 300 students, while today there are only 135. This year a new wave of emigration has started. Leaving Voskepar and settling in Russia, the youth see that life is easier and happier there, and so they remain in Russia."

### An atmosphere of fear

While confirming the latest wave of emigration from the border villages, residents give different reasons for the flight. For example in Baghanis village, African swine fever – a disease infecting pigs – is considered the main reason for emigration. Because of this disease there was an unprecedented drop in the numbers of pigs registered in Armenia. In Baghanis, because of the



Left: On the left side of the reservoir is the Azerbaijani village of Mazamli. On the right, is the Armenian village of Berkaber. Armenian Reporter maps by Grigor Beglaryan.

disease, about 500 pigs either died or were slaughtered. Head of the village **Arthur Ghukasian** says that a few youngsters who used to keep pigs left for Yerevan or Russia, as they could not find work anywhere, apart from the luxury construction going on in Armenia's capital city.

"According to the veterinarians, pig farming will be impossible in the upcoming five years. Even during the Soviet years this village was mostly occupied with animal husbandry. Cultivating lands is not profitable, as our lands are not fruit-bearing and are directly in the Azerbaijani line of fire. Last year a tractor could only cultivate two hectares of land before the Azerbaijanis would fire, and so the arable land remained uncultivated. People do not have money to buy fertilizers, although the state allocates some subsidized fertilizers. For example, the market price of one sack is 5,000 drams, but they sell it at 3,700 drams," says the head of the village.

Even during the Soviet years, people from Baghanis's neighboring village of Voskevan used to leave in search for work. The main reason was the shortage and infertility of its lands. However, when the war started, the villagers started to cultivate their lands in an atmosphere of fear. People were willing to cultivate their infertile lands, rather than die from the enemy's bullet.

"Many things have been left to the Azerbaijanis' whim. They can fire on and kill the farmers at any given time. Sometimes they fire and sometimes they do not. Our side can fire on their farms too, but they usually do not open fire," says agriculturist **Hrachik Antonian** from Voskevan.

In the past few years life had taken a turn for the positive in the border villages of Tavush. But the latest price hikes and animal deaths has placed the villagers in a difficult situation. Unable to find a better alternative, some of them leave the village temporarily – or forever.

The recent presidential election and the post-election developments "encouraged" the emigration. According to official data, former President **Levon Ter-Petrossian** has a high reputation in the Tavush marz. But after the March 1 events, the first president's trusted representatives are being hounded throughout Armenia – including Tavush. This fact has had an additional negative impact on the general disposition of the people.

Koti is one of the villages where Mr. Ter-Petrossian beat President Serge Sargsian. Apart from being

famous for being the birthplace of Ter-Petrossian-era Interior Minister and fugitive **Vano Siradeghian**, this village is also famous for having a 38-kilometer long border with Azerbaijan. For this reason only 500 hectares of Koti's 1,500 hectares are being cultivated. Currently less than 2,000 people reside in the village, which used to have about 3,000 residents. **Felix Melikian** notices that even though there is no emigration, the number of people, especially the youngsters, working abroad has increased.

In recent years the cultivation of tobacco has been revived in this village. The Grand Tobacco Company signs contracts with the villagers and pledges to buy the tobacco. This year about 25 hectares of tobacco have been planted. The IFAD project is implementing the construction works of the Koti irrigation water project. According to Melikian, this is a major project and a few hundred hectares of non-irrigated land will have water.

### The price of war

Different projects are being implemented in Koti, as in the rest of the border villages, with assistance from the government or international organizations. However, as yet they have not improved the villagers' lives. Many villages are simply lagging behind in the development which has been registered elsewhere in Armenia over the past few years. Whenever, for example, Yerevan's development is obvious, then one can be sure that the border villages will continue to be poor. In some ways Yerevan's development has had a negative impact on the villages, where the already small number of younger residents aim to go to the capital city with the hope of work and a better life. Some of them settle in Yerevan, and as a result Armenia's borders are weakened.

The problems and difficulties in border villages vary. It is even more difficult for people to live in those settlements where the lands are not fertile and are close to the enemy's line of fire, and where the villages are secluded from the main highway or are far from the marz centers.

However, residents of the border villages have one thing in common: they all want peace, even though they are the ones who have suffered the most during the Armenia-Azerbaijan war. Their perception of war and peace is completely different from that of people in Yerevan. The residents of the border villages attach a greater significance to peace, as they have personally suffered, and are well aware of the price of war. ■



## Armenia

# IFAD helps village economies grow

by Armen Hakobyan

SEVAN, Armenia – Among the major projects supporting Armenia's rural development are two agricultural loan programs sponsored by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Bank. The IFAD program was launched in October 2005 and the World Bank program in 2006.

The programs are coordinated and monitored by the Rural Funding Structure, headed by **Ara Muradian**. He said in an interview that around \$6 million out of \$8.9 million allocated by IFAD has been loaned, and 315 farms, farmers, or processing companies in the least developed mountainous regions of Armenia have received low-interest loans.

The World Bank in turn has allocated \$5.3 million, Mr. Muradian said, of which \$2.2 million has been loaned. Around 40 farms have received credit.

### Another way to get on their feet

Beyond the bare figures are real people who wish to find the economic opportunity to stand firmly on their feet on their native land. Over the last year and half, **Arthur Smbatian**, 36, has tried to revive the once-powerful Sevan Poultry Factory, which belongs to the firm Basis Sar. Mr. Smbatian is the main shareholder of Basis Sar, and he acquired the poultry factory in 1993.

He said in an interview that the factory at the time had 30 huge hen coops that were desolated. In 1994, he said, "in those bad years, those terrible years of the Armenian National Movement's rule, I brought 30,000 birds from Pyatigorsk, Russia, by air. They were good, egg-laying hens. In 1997 I was forced to shut down the factory because they



Arsen Zadoian and his hothouse tomatoes.

were bringing in cheap eggs from Iran. We faced bankruptcy," he said bitterly.

He had now restarted, investing in the renovation of one of his hen coops and 20–25 hens. He employs 25 people from Sevan and neighboring settlements. His firm has received an IFAD loan, with which he expects to double the capacity of his factory.

"Having learned about this loan program I submitted a loan application to Inecobank, and took an \$85,000 five-year loan at 12 percent," Mr. Smbatian said. "I took the loan last spring and renovated another hen coop with that money. Part of the money we invested in the birdseed kitchen and we bought Ford and Gazel vehicles for egg delivery. The equipment for the hen coop I bought with my own money. This new hen coop is for 35,000 birds. I am going to buy chickens, mostly egg-laying, and I expect to raise monthly output from the current 400,000 eggs to 1 million. By the

way, during the last year, we already paid off \$15,000 of the principle," he added.

This loan is his first ever. "I would be able to reach this level in five years without the loan; with the help of the loan, I have reached it in 1 year," he noted.

### A fertile greenhouse in one year

In a greenhouse not far from Arzni village, a bumper crop of tomatoes is ripening. The greenhouse belongs to Rasfood. The executive manager, **Arsen Zadoian**, notes that the greenhouse was built only a year ago. Mr. Zadoian's father is a former minister of agriculture.

The founders of the company, Arsen Zadoian said in an interview, learned about the loan programs, and knowing that he has experience in greenhouse work, decided to take a loan and construct a greenhouse. This loan came from the World Bank.



Artur Smbatian's chicken coop.

"The greenhouse occupies territory of 2,000 square meters. The company took also a \$140,000 loan for a 6-year term and 11 percent interest from Inecobank for equipment when we started construction work here. After receiving the loan we worked on a larger scale. This greenhouse was started from scratch. Now we cultivate hothouse Dutch tomatoes here. Around 4,500 plants were put here with the expectation of up to 10 kg crop capacity from a plant in 1 year," Mr. Zadoian said.

The greenhouse provides 4–5 jobs in Arzni with average monthly salary of 60,000 drams. The company is planning to build more greenhouses in its 1 hectare of land and to buy more land.

### Due diligence

What kind of due diligence do the lenders perform? Mr. Muradian said potential borrowers apply to one of eight approved banks. The bank considers the application and

if it is satisfied, forwards it to the coordinating office. If it agrees to fund the loan, it forwards the funds to the bank, which becomes responsible for repayment.

Then, within three months, the coordinating office begins monitoring visits to ensure that the loan is being used as intended. If the funds are being misused, the office demands repayment in full from the bank. It may also suspend the bank from the program.

Mr. Muradian said that loans more than 90 days overdue make up 2.1 percent of the total.

A large share of IFAD loans go to border villages, Mr. Muradian notes. (See adjacent story by Tatul Hakobyan.) In Gomk village in the Vayots Dzor province, a loan allowed a dairy to increase cheese production. That led to loans to local farms to increase their milk production and improve their milk storage capacity, Mr. Muradian noted with pride. ■

# A skin-care specialist takes her family and practice to Yerevan

## A permanent move

by Betty Panossian-Ter Sarkissian

YEREVAN – **Vicky Odeh** is one of many Iranian-Armenians who have chosen their historic homeland as a suitable country in which to settle permanently. Already a full-time resident of Armenia for five years, Vicky talked to the *Reporter* about the rewards of living in the homeland, as well as the little difficulties that complicate everyday life.

### Moving to Yerevan

Back in Tehran, Vicky cherished hopes of becoming a musician and a choir conductor. But in the late 1970s, political circumstances pushed her out of music school and she devoted the ensuing years to her family and children.

By the early 1980s, however, Vicky did manage to make use of her knowledge in music and conducting. "Back in those days, there was a sharp need in Tehran to provide a modern rhythmic interpretation to our patriotic and revolutionary songs. The ARF Central Committee assigned several of my friends and me to carry out the task. I must say that my work as a choir conductor was not professional, since I had not completed my education in music," recalled Vicky.

The result of this initiative was Potorik, a choir famous in the diaspora especially in the 1980s for its

dynamic interpretation of Armenian patriotic songs.

Vicky says that around a decade ago, she embraced a family tradition of practicing skin-care, and took courses at the offices of a famous French brand specializing in skin care. In 2002, she spent some months in Paris to qualify as a practitioner in the field.

"By then we were already considering moving to Armenia," recalled Vicky. It was a step her family had always wanted to take, following the independence of Armenia.

"We had several motives, but the basic one was to satisfy our need of completely belonging to a place. We wanted to put an end to our temporary belonging to a place." She and her husband also wanted their kids to spend part of their growing years in their fatherland.

### Settling down

One of the first things Vicky did after moving to Yerevan was to rent a space on Pushkin Street and open her own skin care center, called "Vitak" – referring to a valued glittery fabric in Armenian. Vitak was a warm and cozy corner operating with the French approach of offering professional skin care to the residents of Yerevan.

The facility in the heart of Yerevan operated for four years, during which Vicky succeeded in gathering a clientele that appreciated the novelty and the professional approach Vitak brought to the city.



Vicky Odeh.

By that time, her children were enrolled in public schools. Soon, her daughter graduated from high school, and enrolled at the French University in Yerevan to study law. She will graduate this summer. Vicky's teenage boy will soon graduate from high school and plans to continue his studies at the Polytechnic Institute.

Toward the end of 2007, Vicky moved her practice into the premises of Shoonch, a yoga and spa center owned by two of her friends. For the past two months, she has been offering courses in "face yoga" to her clients – another novel approach to skincare in Yerevan.

Back in 2003, Vitak was one of the very few high-quality skin

health centers in Yerevan. But five years later, deluxe centers with lavish interiors operate at almost every corner in the downtown area. Despite the increased competition (or maybe because of it), Vicky's center continues to keep faith with her original approach. "My center has never been for the elite, or for those who seek a brand name behind the service they get," she said.

Vicky said that in establishing her small business in Yerevan, she has not encountered any unusual difficulties. But she's quick to mention some aspects of Armenia's tax code that hinder the expansion of the business.

"I may see a brand in the market with a suspiciously low price," she said. "That means the given product reached the market through some illegal path. This dishonest competition makes it difficult for many, including me, to import new brands for our business – simply because after paying all the taxes, it becomes impossible to sell it with a price even close to the one in the market," says Vicky.

Over the past five years, Vicky has tried to suggest a new way of understanding skin care. "One of the main problems I encountered in my profession after moving to Yerevan was the attitude of people toward skin care. Unfortunately, routine care is not yet part of the lifestyle of women in Armenia. To make matters worse, obsolete approaches have settled deep in the mindset of people, and skin care is

often confused with facial makeup," said Vicky.

She considers it a challenge to try to changing that mindset – and when she succeeds, it's the appreciation of her efforts that drives her forward.

Anyone moving their family to another country can expect to encounter difficulties. Before moving to Yerevan, Vicky and her family would visit Armenia once a year; but she said that the *real* difficulties became apparent to her only after settling down.

"The foremost was the integration of the children into their new environment, and getting adapted to their new world," she said.

She was philosophical about the more general challenges to adapting to an entirely new setting, with its own existing problems. "When you try to understand those problems and their causes, it becomes easier to overcome them," she said. "Of course, there are several shortcomings in our fatherland. But what we can do is either patiently wait for their solution, or act to have whatever positive impact we can have in our country."

"If one considers the fatherland as a possession, then it cannot be abandoned, even after seeing its weak points."

"I think Armenia is the final home for our family. I cannot decide for my children, but my hope is that they stay here. My husband and I do whatever we can to make our children inclined to establishing their lives in our homeland," concluded Vicky. ■



# Armenia

## Market update

by the Cascade Investments team

### A. Rates and bonds

#### Rates

The Central Bank of Armenia (CBA), announced on May 5 that the CBA Board had raised the refinancing rate by 25 basis points to 6.75 percent from 6.50 percent. The board justified this move with reference to inflationary pressures, noting that in April, 12-month inflation had reached 10.7 percent, which was 4 percentage points higher than in 2007. Further tightening policy might be favored in the short-term: "The Board agrees that the inflationary pressures will persist, and gradual tightening of monetary conditions is aimed at moderating secondary impacts and inflation expectations conditioned by external developments."

The tightening of the rates so far has impacted short-term yields, which is explained by the uncertainty in world commodity price trends in the medium term.

Maturity	YTM 23/04/2008	YTM 26/03/2008	YTM Change (bps)
6 month	7.0000	6.7500	25
1 year	6.7500	6.6000	15
2 year	6.3935	6.3935	0
5 year	7.8922	7.4125	48
7 year	9.1028	9.1265	-2
10 year	10.684	10.710	-2

Source: CBA

#### Exchange Rates

There were no significant changes in the USD/AMD rate compared with the beginning of the year. On the other hand, the EUR/AMD pair was much more volatile and the euro appreciated by almost 5-10 percent since the beginning of 2008, along with general strengthening of currency in international markets associated with European Central Bank's decision not to cut rates. USD/AMD movements are more associated with currency re-

mittances, financial accounts, as well as the population's preference for holding dollar-denominated assets, whereas EUR/AMD fluctuations can be substantially impacted by trade flows (around 50 percent of exports go to the EU).

The average weighted rates indicated in April at Armex were 309.18 against 1 USD and 486.43 drams against 1 EUR.

#### Corporate Securities

The average weighted yield of corporate bonds in April has increased by 30 basis points as compared with the previous month. This was associated with the expectation that the base rate would increase.

#### Indexes

Cascade Business Sentiment Index (CBSI)

The Cascade Business Sentiment Index for the months of April-May 2008 is 5.0, which is a slightly decrease over the last month. The main concern of market participants is the uncertainty in the world economic outlook as well as the rise of commodity prices (which has already resulted in high

inflationary expectations).

The Cascade Business Sentiment Index is our approach to forecasting sentiment about Armenia's business trends. The Sentiment Index is based on a survey, the respondents of which are a group of individuals who own or operate stable and growing businesses in Armenia. The survey measures the business owners' expectations for the near future by addressing to them questions and calculating the weighted average of their replies

on a numerical scale (from 1, the most pessimistic, to 10, the most optimistic).

Cascade Commodity Index (CCI)

The Cascade Commodity Index for April-May 2008 is 18023. The index indicates a monthly increase in the last few months (7.5 percent as compared with the last month). However the CBA is making an effort to resist inflationary pressures; thus it is expected that in the following month the main commodity prices will be stabilized.

The commodities tracked by the index are (1) petroleum (20 liters); (2) steel (100 kg); (3) pork (10 kg); (4) flour (10 kg); (5) corn oil (10 liters).

#### Major Events

"Finances, Loans, Insurance, and Audit Expo-2008" launched in Yerevan at the beginning of May

Over 25 organizations participated in the exhibition "Finances, Loans, Insurance, and Audit Expo-2008" organized by LOGOS EXPO Center Company.

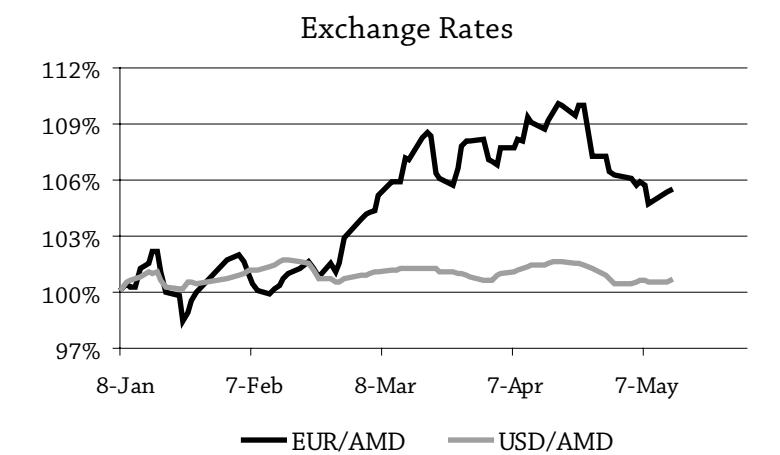
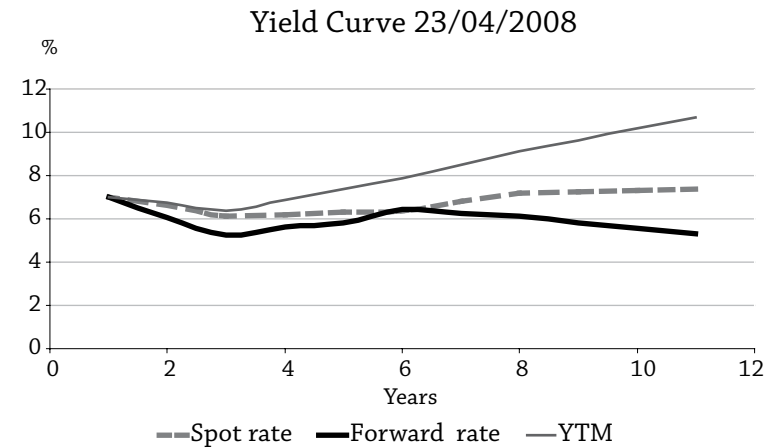
The following sections were presented at the exhibition: banking; banking services for legal entities and individuals; mortgage crediting; crediting of small and medium enterprises; consumer express-crediting; car crediting; financial consulting; investment management; insurance; realtor and assessment services; audit services.

"The exhibition is meant to improve the understanding of the society on the financial service provided in Armenia. The organization of such events is an important step from the point of view of securing transparency of the financial system and protecting the rights of consumers of financial services," **Artur Javadyan**, deputy chair of the CBA, stated at the exhibition.

Russian AFK "Sistema" confirms interest in acquiring a bank in Armenia

The Moscow Bank for Reconstruction and Development (MBRD) intends to acquire a bank in Armenia.

The chair of the Board of MBRD, **Sergey Zaitsev**, said this in an interview with Interfax. According to him, in 2008 MBRD plans to invest in deals on acquiring about \$570 million in banking assets. The main shareholder of MBRD, among the 50 largest banks of Russia in



Source: CBA

terms of the volume of capital and net assets, is the AFK "Sistema" Corporation. AFK "Sistema" already owns large assets in Armenia: an 80 percent share of the Armenian "VivaCell" mobile operator belongs to MTS Company, which is affiliated with "Sistema", and another company of the holding, "Comstar-OTS," owns the Armenian "Cornet-AM" Internet service provider.

Fourteen banks and 1 credit organization entered the list of 300 largest taxpayers in Armenia

The largest taxpayer in the banking sector of Armenia in the first quarter is Ardshinvestbank. The total sum of the taxes paid by the bank was 578.7 million drams. Ardshinvestbank occupies the 22nd place in the list of 300 largest taxpayers of Armenia.

The 30th place in the list is occupied by ACBA-Credit Agricole Bank, which paid 501.3 million drams in taxes. The 51st place is occupied by HSBC Bank Armenia (302.7 million drams).

The 259th place in the list is occupied by Finca Universal Credit Organization (58.4 million drams).

"HSBC Bank Armenia" wins Global Finance and The Banker magazine awards

HSBC Bank Armenia won the "Best Bank in Armenia" award in Global Finance magazine's "Best Emerging Market Bank in Asia" competition for 2008.

The press service of HSBC Bank Armenia reports that the criteria for choosing the winners included growth in assets, profitability, strategic relationships, customer service, competitive pricing, and innovative products. The selection was made based on the opinion of Global Finance editors, as well as the expert conclusions of competent specialists.

HSBC Bank Armenia also received the award Bank of the Year in Armenia - 2007 from The Banker magazine.

## More Armenia briefs

### Defeated in soccer

The Under-19 national team of Armenia suffered a 2-1 defeat from the Turkish team on May 22 in the opening match of a UEFA European Under-19 Championship Elite Round Group 7 tournament hosted in Armenia, May 22-27.

The Armenians first conceded a goal to Turkey's **Sercan Yildirim** in the tenth minute. They equalized just before half-time thanks to **Tigran Voskanyan's** effort. But **Erhan Senturk** struck just past the hour, and the score remained unchanged until the end of the match.

The two countries' main teams are drawn in the same World Cup 2010 qualifying group and are due to start their campaigns with a game in Yerevan in early September. Before that, the two countries' under-21 teams will play in a Euro-2009 qualifier also in Yerevan on August 20.

Meanwhile, Ukraine beat Armenia 0-1 and Spain beat Armenia 2-4.

With no points at all Armenia is at the bottom of the group of countries which are qualifying for European under-19 championship.



Armenia vs. Turkey. Photo: Photolure.

### Aram Karapetian released

**Aram Karapetian**, the leader of the New Times Party, who has been in pretrial detention since late February, on May 26 was released on the strength of a pledge not to leave the country. He had been hospitalized on May 16 with heart problems. He is accused of disseminating false accusations of criminal wrongdoing. The charges stem from a DVD accusing top officials of complicity in the assassination of the prime minister, the Speaker of parliament, and other officials on October 27, 1999.

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## COMMENTARY

## “Character makes the man and woman”

## An address to graduating students

by Dr. Vartan Gregorian

I want to pay tribute to Clark University for not abandoning Worcester, for not walking away from Worcester; for not giving up on K-to-12 education but providing models for its renewal; for not giving up on local communities but rather forming productive partnerships such as Clark Park; for Clark's conviction that democracy and excellence are not mutually exclusive.

Commencements are special, symbolic, solemn, and joyous occasions marking the end of one phase of life and the beginning of another. As I look out today, I am delighted that there are so many people to celebrate this wonderful day with you. In 1958 when I graduated from Stanford University, I had no family in this country, and indeed I had no one to attend my graduation ceremony. So I did not march. In 1964 when Ph.D. degrees were awarded, I was teaching. I had once again no opportunity to attend that ceremony either. So today it is with envy, great enthusiasm, and admiration that I am participating in your commencement, and, for the first time, my sister and brother-in-law from Iran and my nephew from Boston are attending my graduation.

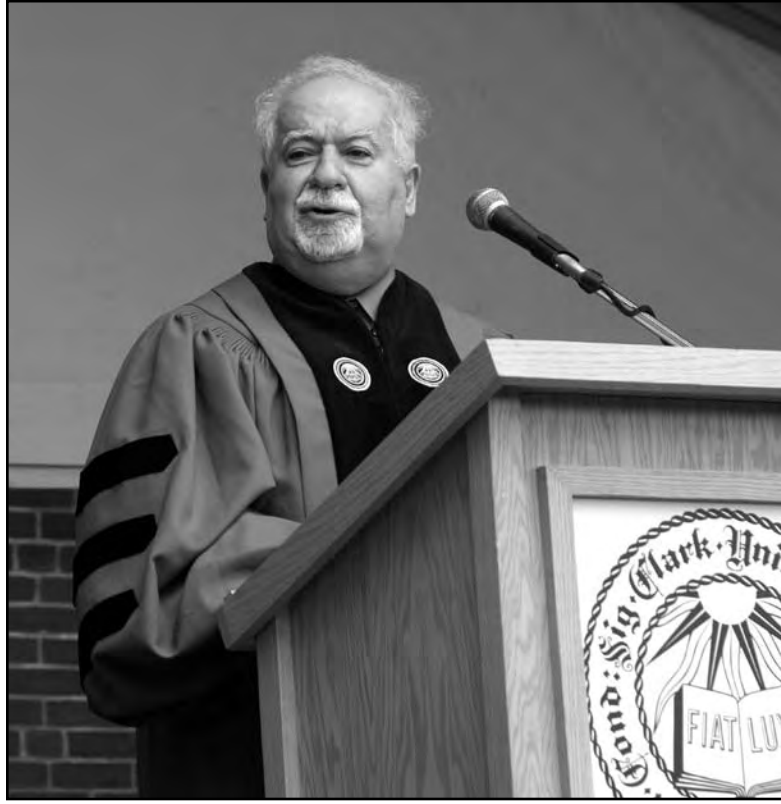
Rest at ease. I am not a politician in search of votes or in need of yet another platform to “clarify,” once again, my previous positions on a variety of issues. Thank God I am not one of those who is famous for being famous. I am here as an academic, to witness this solemn day of your commencement, your new beginning that marks the sacrifice of your parents, dedication of your professors and, most importantly, your own sustained hard work, faith, determination, and accomplishments.

Commencement speeches mark a rite of passage. While I am honored to be part of your celebration and the class of 2008, I have no illusion about my role. After all, hardly anyone remembers their commencement speech, or even who gave it, unless it was a celebrity like Jennifer Aniston, Quentin Tarantino, Bruce Willis, Orlando Bloom, Oprah Winfrey, or even the President of the United States.

I checked to see what have been the most memorable commencement speeches ever given so that I would not be off the mark. Looking back half a century, I was astonished to find that, according to *The Washington Post*, there were three unforgettable commencement addresses: one was given in 1947 by U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall, who announced the legendary U.S. plan to rebuild Europe after World War II. Another was given in 1963 by President John F. Kennedy, who announced a moratorium on nuclear weapons tests. The third one, however, which had no news value at all, was given in 1997. It featured my late friend Kurt Vonnegut. It began with a famous line: “Ladies and gentlemen of the class of '97. Wear sunscreen.” Other bits of advice included injunctions to “floss,” “sing,” “stretch” and “don't mess too much with your hair.” My favorite line was: “Remember compliments you receive. Forget the insults. If you succeed in doing this, tell me how.” Thank God the so-called “Vonnegut Speech,” which set a new tone for commencement speeches, turned out to be an internet hoax.

I have also come here today to pay tribute to American higher education and one of its exemplary institutions, Clark University, to Clark's amazing legacy, its outstanding faculty, its remarkable leaders. I am here to pay homage to you, students, to your growth as educated, cultured citizens, to your metamorphosis into the kind of people-human beings who have developed the ability at least to try to comprehend the incomprehensible; to make sense out of confusion; wrestle some logic out of the illogical; and challenge

Dr. Vartan Gregorian is the president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and a distinguished historian, educator, and author, whose personal memoir, *The Road to Home: My Life and Times*, was published in 2003. What appears here is a transcription of the commencement address he delivered at Clark University, in Worcester, Mass., on May 18.



Vartan Gregorian at Clark University.

even ugliness to show some glimmer of beauty somewhere deep within its core. You have spent the last four, five or six years at Clark University in order to learn how to analyze, synthesize and systematize information and knowledge; to separate the chaff from the wheat; subjectivity from objectivity; fact from opinion; public interests from private interests; manipulations from influence; and “spin” from corruption.

I hope you have learned to be flexible in your thinking, adaptable in your analysis of issues, and appreciative of the complexities that comprise almost every aspect of daily life—both on the human and global scale. I'm sure you don't yet realize just what an extraordinary skill you have developed, how well it will serve you in the future, and how desperately the world needs people who are not paralyzed by complexity but welcome the opportunity it brings to think new thoughts, develop new ideas, and find new ways to solve problems. I am sure you are, and always will be, mindful of the great American humorist H. L. Mencken's warning that: “there is always an easy solution to every human problem: neat, plausible ... and wrong!”

I am sure your Clark University education has prepared you to begin to understand the relationship of the unique and individual self to the social, political, and cultural world around you. I hope it has also given you the courage to think those big, imponderable thoughts that are our companions throughout our lives, such as: what is our relationship to universal order? What is our place as a human being amongst the great sea of mankind? Though you may never answer these and other questions for yourselves, and perhaps they will always be unanswerable, they will help you create a framework for the way you live your lives.

In this difficult time when many of us worry about our country and its direction, about its values, its promise and its future, I'm still convinced that while America is not perfect, it is still perfectible. It is still a land of opportunity for immigrants and for international students, not only Americans alone. Many of you in the audience today are proof of that as well. It's amazing, isn't it, that until recently two-thirds of all students studying abroad have been attending American colleges and universities?

But with the opportunity we have all had to study at America's great institutions of higher learning, comes responsibility, as well. What we have learned in school we must find ways to put into action. We cannot retreat from the big issues of society and the world and our time into the pygmy world of private piety. Nor can we become cynics paralyzed by our own disdain, and we must not become—we cannot afford to become—social, political and moral isolationists.

That is especially true for those of us who are foreign or current international students. Whether we remain here or to return to our native countries, we have the obligation to build bridges between our nations, our societies and the United States, and vice

versa, especially now. And those who come from developing countries have yet another obligation, and a very weighty one, to work toward creating a better quality of life for those at home and to advance the opportunities that are available to them. After all, you represent their hopes for a better future.

For those of us who were born elsewhere but were educated here and then became American citizens, we have reason to be doubly grateful. One, because we received our education in America, not to mention financial support. And two, because America granted us the privilege of citizenship in a country whose [Declaration of Independence] proclaims that “we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

These are lofty aspirations. Remember, however, that America has always been and will always be a work in progress. Every generation has and must contribute to that ongoing progress. As John Gardner once said, it is important to be both a loving critic and a critical lover. America needs all of us to be both.

And now let me come back to you! Clark marks the beginning of your latest wonderful, arduous journey. It has provided you with the means to be on your way. It has given you not only an education, a profession and all the skills and confidences you need to do well in the world, but it has also given you choices and the ability to choose. Sometimes you may find you have so many choices that all the possibilities available to you will be overwhelming. This morning I'd like to share with you three lessons I have learned that may — I stress may — assist you in making your choices.

The first lesson, actually, is a well-known one. I believe, if I'm not mistaken, it was Sir William Osler, professor of medicine at Oxford University in the early years of the 20th century, who said that young men — and women — should be careful in the selection of their ambitions because they're likely to realize them. Since you have the education, the knowledge and the training to realize your ambitions, be as sure as you can that your ambition also reflects what you really love to do.

Speaking of your ambition, sometimes you may be masters of it, but watch out. Sometimes you may be its slave, and watch out. Other times you may be a victim of hubris. No matter what, try to bear in mind the next lesson: don't confuse a job with a career. In the past I used to say to students that in your life, you will have many jobs but only one career. Now, however, if we keep on the way we are going in terms of how long we can expect to live, many of you will be octogenarians, some of you may even be centenarians, so you may have not only many jobs, but also many careers as well. I haven't quite reached either age category as yet, but I have worked in a number of fields, as it

was mentioned—academia, libraries and now philanthropy — and I can share with you the fact that people often ask me, “Which job did you like best?” But they're asking me the wrong question. I've never considered any of the positions I've held as jobs. In fact, I even think of them as more than careers. To me, they have been missions in which teaching and learning are primary ingredients, with me as the primary student.

So even though this is probably the last thing you want to hear today, I want to remind you that whether you like it or not, in order to survive and thrive, you will have to be lifelong students and lifetime learners. And yes, there are and always will be difficult times when you will think you have come to a dead end in your life or in your career, even an apparent point of no return, but let me tell you as one who has experienced those events once or twice, when that happens, think of what the author Gabriel Garcia Marquez once said when he spoke of the condition that human beings are not born once and for all on the day their mothers gave birth to them, but that life obliges them to give birth to themselves over and over again. Time, experience, knowledge, education, love, one's values, all these can and do affect us and change us, and enable us to reinvent ourselves. I have invented myself many times and I'm sure you will do the same thing.

For me, Marquez's words have a particular resonance because they reinforce values that were taught to me by my maternal grandmother, an illiterate peasant woman. She raised me. My grandmother was an illiterate peasant, a poor one at that. I don't believe that she knew where Greece was, nor Rome, nor the United States. She certainly did not know who Plutarch was, but even so she taught me the same lesson as Plutarch highlighted in his celebrated *Lives* almost 2,000 years ago, when he said, essentially, that character makes the man and woman. My grandmother was my first teacher. She instructed me in the moral lessons of life and the “right way,” through her sheer character, stoic tenacity, formidable dignity, individuality and utter integrity. She was for me the best example of what good character means. In spite of many adversities and tragedies, wartime ravages, poverty, deprivation and the deaths of her seven children, she never became cynical, never abandoned her values and never compromised her dignity. Indeed, it was from my grandmother that I learned that dignity is not negotiable. Your reputation is not for sale and must not be mortgaged as a down payment on your ambitions. It was my grandmother's living example that shaped the very foundation of my character. Between what I have learned from Plutarch and my grandmother — a combination of forces I would dare anybody to challenge! — I feel confident in telling you that in the coming years you will meet people who are more powerful than you, richer than you, smarter than you, even handsomer or more beautiful than you, but what will be your distinguishing mark will always be your character. And what will define your character? Your conduct, your ability to live by principles you believe in, even if that means fighting tenaciously for what is right over what you know to be wrong.

Nobody goes through life without encountering obstacles, disappointments, and problems. Nobody can keep from making mistakes or taking a wrong turn. Nobody can escape illness or avoid the specter of failure. Let me point out that coping with success is easy. How you deal with adversity, with failure, and with setbacks will reveal your true character. How nimble you are about getting back on your feet after some large or small disaster or defeat will help you to determine just how far those feet of yours will take you in the world.

But that's where your upbringing, the texture of your education and your values will help you to develop a distinctive attitude toward life, an attitude that persistently seeks meaning and perspective, an attitude that exudes adaptability and resilience in a relentlessly changing and perplexing world, an attitude of moral courage and steadfastness in the face of overwhelming human need and suffering. How to develop and maintain such attitudes in an age where

Continued on page 23



## Editorial

the armenian  
reporter

## Commentary

### Letters

#### The sources of happiness

Sir:

I enjoy reading Maria Titizian's "Living in Armenia" columns, especially her reflections on people's daily lives which bring the realities of Armenia closer to home. In her commentary titled, "What is Armenia's Gross National Happiness?" (Apr. 19) she kept her focus and comments on the issues that will bring some happiness to the people of Armenia.

We seldom read, talk, or write about the daily life-issues facing the people of Armenia. Most of the time, the topics revolve around the Armenian cause ("hay tad"), Armenian demands ("hayagan bahanchadeeroutin"), our just rights ("mer artar eeravoonkneruh"), our lands ("mer hogheruh"), recognition of the Genocide, national ideology ("askayeen kaghaparakhosoutin"), etc.

Our "intellectuals" (sometimes I wonder if they exist, given that rhetoric and partisan demagoguery has been the norm) spend more time glorifying our past, and sometimes our past failures as successes, rather than concentrating on today's "bread-and-butter" issues that affect the daily lives of the people of Armenia.

The political leadership hasn't fared any better. Providing happiness is as important as any one of the economic indicators, whether macro or micro. Here is a quote from a *Boston Globe* article titled "MIT professor named top economist under 40" dated June 15, 2005, that at the time I first read about in the *Armenian Reporter*:

"[Daron] Acemoglu's groundbreaking work in explaining that gap between rich and poor nations recently helped him win the John Bates Clark Medal, awarded every two years by the American Economic Association to the nation's top economist under 40.... In particular, the association cited as 'especially innovative' his recent work, which concludes that political and social institutions, rather than geography, are the key factors determining why a nation is rich or poor. Acemoglu's institutional theory challenges a widely held notion that the wealth of nations is guided by geographical features such as proximity to seaports, the availability of rich farmland, or climates less conducive to disease."

I don't think professor Acemoglu, who has a doctorate from the London School of Economics, had Armenia in mind when he developed his economic theory. But it fits like a glove.

Very truly yours,  
**Zohrab Sarkissian**  
Toronto, Canada

#### What is the problem?

Sir:

Several Armenian-American and non-Armenian newspapers published an article in March by investigative journalist David Boyajian ("Blue Cross has unhealthy relationship with No Place for Hate") that exposed the fact that Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts gives money to the No Place for

Hate (NPFH) program of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL).

Apparently, Blue Cross executives who are also top members of the Anti-Defamation League brought this about. Boyajian is, of course, the person who initiated the NPFH issue.

Pennsylvania's NPFHs are also sponsored by that state's Blue Cross.

The ADL still denies the Armenian genocide and lobbies against Congressional resolutions on the Armenian genocide.

I believe that the Armenian activists and organizations that did such a wonderful job in getting 13 Massachusetts towns and the Massachusetts Municipal Association to cut ties to NPFH should now make sure that Blue Cross does the same.

The Armenian fight against the ADL's genocide denial, should long ago have spread from Massachusetts to the many other states, such as New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Colorado, and California, that have NPFH and other ADL programs.

New York has many "No Place for Hate" chapters and is home to thousands of Armenian-American activists. They should have pounced on this issue, which for nearly a year has made international news (see [www.NoPlaceforDenial.com](http://www.NoPlaceforDenial.com)).

And what is happening to the NPFH/ADL issue in California, home to huge numbers of Armenians as well as ANCA and AAA? What is the problem?

Very truly yours,  
**Berge Jololian**  
Cambridge, Mass.

#### Mikael Danielian's attacker should be brought to justice

Sir:

The Armenian Gay and Lesbian Association of New York would like to express its dismay at the recent news concerning the armed attack in Yerevan against Mikael Danielian, president of the Helsinki Association.

Mikael Danielian has been a staunch supporter of human rights in Armenia for several decades now and as such is an invaluable asset to the country and its people.

We hope that the Armenian government and police will open a full and fair investigation and bring his assailant(s) to justice.

We would also like to remind the government of Armenia that it is only by guaranteeing all its citizens their full civil and human rights that the country will remain a true democracy and abide by the Council of Europe laws and regulations that it's sworn to uphold.

AGLA-NY is part of a worldwide series of Armenian gay and lesbian associations dedicated to educating the public about issues of importance to Armenian lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people, and to creating safe spaces for them to express themselves freely and openly.

Very truly yours,  
**Christopher Atamian**  
President, AGLA-NY  
New York, N.Y.

# Academia and the Armenian Genocide

In August 2006 Donald Quataert, a professor of history at Binghamton University and specialist in Ottoman labor and industry, asserted in a book review that "after the long lapse of serious Ottomanist scholarship on the Armenian question, it now appears that the Ottomanist wall of silence is crumbling."

To avoid the term *genocide* is to run "the risk of suggesting denial of the massive and systematic atrocities that the Ottoman state and some of its military and general populace committed against the Armenians," he added.

Professor Quataert's statement was remarkable for two reasons. First, in 1985 he was one of 69 Ottoman, Turkish, and Middle Eastern area scholars who signed onto a petition against an Armenian Genocide resolution in the House of Representatives. Second, he was, until recently, the chair of the Institute of Turkish Studies, which distributes Turkish government funding to support Turkish studies in U.S. universities.

With the publication of the book review, Prof. Quataert was forced to relinquish the chair of the ITS.

### Area specialists protest

At the behest of the Turkish Studies Association, the Middle East Studies Association this week wrote to the prime minister of Turkey to protest Prof. Quataert's dismissal, to demand his reinstatement, and to call for ITS endowment funds to be placed "in an irrevocable trust immune from political interference and infringement of academic freedom."

The MESA letter added: "The attitude towards Dr. Quataert sharply contrasts with your government's recent call to leave the debate regarding the events of 1915 to the independent study and judgment of scholars." (See story on page 1.)

This episode, which is not yet over, is an indication of the changing academic climate regarding the study of the history of Asia Minor in the First World War.

At the time of the petition of the 69 scholars, practitioners of Ottoman historiography were faced with a choice: If they wrote about the Armenian Genocide, they could be denied access to libraries and archives in Turkey – a career breaker for an area specialist. Senior scholars were so implicated in Armenian Genocide denial that their junior colleagues would find their career paths blocked if they faced the facts of the Armenian Genocide. And so, many did their work pretending the elephant of the Armenian Genocide was not in the room. Imagine the challenge, by way of analogy, of writing a history of the United States in the first decade of the 21st century without ever mentioning the Iraq war.

### Much work to do

The emergence of modern Turkey cannot be properly understood if the deliberate elimination of the Armenian population of Asia Minor is not fully taken into account. Integrating the Armenian Genocide narrative into this larger narrative has yet to be done. Likewise, there is much more to learn from case studies of various Ottoman localities. In short, there is much still to do.

A welcome aspect of the progress in Ottoman studies is the increased dialogue among scholars who specialize in Armenian history and those who specialize in Turkish history. When Turkish history was dominated overwhelmingly by Genocide deniers, dialogue was difficult as it could be seen to imply that the veracity of the Genocide was somehow debatable.

This increased dialogue is helping scholars of all stripes to set aside any siege mentality and to be more open to mutual criticism in the interests of maintaining the highest standards.

It is also helping increase recognition of the Armenian Genocide in Turkish society. Of course, the Turkish state is still active in denial and ultranationalists still engage in publicity stunts; there are still traps to avoid. The change in the Ottomanist field, while welcome, is not irreversible. Restrictions in place in Turkey, the pressure brought to bear in cases like that of Prof. Quataert, require continued political pressure.

And dialogue is no replacement for continued research. The Armenian-American community has invested in two generations of scholars, and is entitled to have high expectations.

### Sharing sources

Further progress requires sharing of sources: in recent years, a large body of primary sources has been published, making such sources more widely available. The Internet allows further sharing of sources.

When resources are tight, preserving and cataloging musty old files is not always a priority. But it is important for institutions that have files from almost a century ago to make those files available for serious scrutiny, seeking outside support if necessary. This is especially important where the institutions solicited and accepted documents from people who wanted them preserved for future generations and used by researchers.

In short, the progress we see in Armenian Genocide scholarship should not lead us to rest but to increase our perseverance. ☞

*Armenian Reporter* (ISSN 0004-2358), an independent newspaper,  
is published weekly by Armenian Reporter LLC.

**Gerard L. Cafesjian, President and CEO**

**Publisher Sylva A. Boghossian**

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**Assistant to the Editor Seda Stepanyan**

**Copy editor Ishkhan Jinbashian**

Periodicals postage paid at Paramus, N.J., and additional mailing offices.  
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to PO Box 129, Paramus, NJ 07652-0129.

**Art director Grigor Hakobyan**

**Layout assistant Nareh Balian**

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## Commentary

# Broadening the Armenian circle, part 2

## An African activist who supports Armenian Genocide recognition

by Anoush Ter Taulian

NEW YORK – Last November I wrote a commentary piece titled “Broadening the Armenian circle” (Nov. 17, 2007) which argued that in order for the Armenian Genocide to be recognized around the world, it’s important for Armenians to build coalitions with other dispossessed groups and progressive movements. Doing outreach, having one-on-one discussions with people of different cultures, and finding points of contact can gain new supporters for the Armenian cause.

This article is a follow-up of sorts, to show the kinds of connections that can and should be made to strengthen that cause.

For the past six years I’ve attended the “Conference on the Status of Women at the United Nations” (the most recent gathering met for two weeks this past March), where I have done a lot of cultural solidarity work, reporting to the other participants about Artsakh women and the Armenian Genocide survivors I have interviewed.

One of the things you take away from such gatherings is the knowledge that many other nations have experienced mass death and denial. The catastrophes may take on different forms; but the common element is the unwillingness of political authorities to deal with the tragedy around them. We know how that affected Armenians in 1915; in today’s Africa, on the other hand, diseases like AIDS have decimated a large part of the population, with little or no help or even acknowledgement coming from the authorities.

What I’ve found is that the more Armenians show concern about other people’s problems, the more they will care about ours. To gain allies we need to open communication channels with other marginalized peoples and learn from each other’s struggles to gain justice.

At the 2008 Status of Women conference in March, I became reacquainted with Kelebohile Nkhereanye, an AIDS activist from Lesotho, Africa, who throughout the years has also helped spread the word about the Armenian Genocide. Through her connections, I was invited to an African meeting where I spoke about the Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide. Reciprocally, I have supported Kelebohile’s organization LESSAIDS and have offered my help when she has needed it.

In the following interview, Kelebohile Nkhereanye discusses some of those factors, as well as activities going on in Armenia to help combat and raise awareness of AIDS. Kelebohile currently lives in New York, where she has founded a non-profit organization, “LESSAIDS,” which supports grassroots organizations in Lesotho that are fighting AIDS, and helps Africans in New York obtain ac-

Anoush Ter Taulian is an activist and writer in New York.



AIDS activist Kelebohile Nkhereanye.

cess to AIDS testing, treatment, and other resources.

**Question:** How did you find out about the 1915 Armenian Genocide?

**Kelebohile Nkhereanye:** I first found out about Armenia when you gave a talk at Salsa Soul, a women-of-color group in New York. Considering its long history, Armenia has been too invisible in America. It’s hard to find out about the true history of the world, and especially the real history of indigenous peoples. I believe in multi-cultural solidarity and education.

At a cultural night I was glad to do a bilingual Armenian/Sesotho reading of a poem on the Armenian Genocide. One of the lines – “She escaped by hiding in a ditch of corpses” – translates in the Sesotho language as “*O ile a tonyeh a ka hoipata le batho ba shoelleng.*” [Sesotho is the native language of Lesotho – Editor.]

People should realize we all have a right to reclaim our cultural heritage, and a right to our cultural freedom of speech to express who we are. When a group of Jewish women forced a map of Armenia and other areas to be taken down from the women-of-color tent at a New England Women’s Retreat because it mentioned Palestine, I signed a protest letter with Suhir Blackeagle, an African-American/Blackfoot, and Shoshanna Rothaizer, a Jewish woman, to have the Armenian map reinstated.

**Q:** How would you compare the AIDS problems in Lesotho and in Armenia?

**Kelebohile:** Both are small countries engulfed in poverty that have instituted diagnostic and treatment programs to combat this epidemic. According to the UN World Health Organization, 48 percent of those with HIV are now women, and in Africa 57 percent are women. Lesotho has the fourth highest rate of AIDS in the world. Some women in Lesotho get HIV from their husbands who have been with prostitutes; because of the high unemployment rate some men had to



Kelebohile Nkhereanye during a South African hate crimes protest.

migrate to South Africa where they worked for 11 months in the mines. Other women get HIV from multiple partners, and many people can’t afford protection. Domestic violence like rape and battering also forces women into unprotected situations, and husbands make the decision to use protection or not.

Armenia has its own migratory, domestic violence, and poverty issues. Right now only one percent of Armenians are HIV positive, compared to 23 percent of Basothos; but if there is no AIDS education the numbers will grow and will become uncontrollable. The transition to capitalism saw an increase in sex workers and injecting drug users, which account for 54 percent of HIV in Armenia. At all women’s conferences in Armenia they should invite “unheard” women such as prostitutes and women living with AIDS – to speak about their problems and needs.

The Women Against AIDS tour sponsored by the UN development program, the Global Coalition of Women on AIDS, and the AIDS info-share program visited Armenia on May 29 and 30, 2007. In Yerevan they joined with local organizations such as People Living With AIDS to talk about stigma and discrimination and the consequences – including losing custody of their children, being thrown out of their homes, and losing their jobs. AIDS survivors are not treated like cancer survivors. Sometimes even health care workers are prejudice against AIDS survivors. People who test positive need love and support and everyone at risk needs to get tested.

**Q:** How has your faith influenced your work?

**Kelebohile:** I am a Christian and a humanitarian. I want to increase awareness about hate crimes, which are crimes based on not liking who you are. There is news of how in Russia some skinheads are murdering Armenians just because they are Armenian. That is racism: that idea of being superior and wanting to destroy people you believe

are inferior. Every country must pass and enforce laws against hate crimes against a person’s race, gender, religion, ethnic origin, or sexual orientation.

I helped organize a vigil at the South African Consulate protesting the July 7, 2007, brutal murders of two South African lesbians, Sizakele Sigasa and Salome Masooa, who were AIDS activists. Non-governmental organizations and faith-based institutions fighting HIV and domestic violence choose silence or refuse to address homophobia. But people have a right to be who they are, without being afraid of being killed. Who out there is teaching tolerance, love, and acceptance?

Through such interactions, I’ve come to feel that the Armenian people, who have lost so many through genocide, must be cautious not to lose people to worldwide epidemics, and that the Armenian community could benefit from more education about diseases like AIDS.

The issue has also affected me personally. A few years ago, I learned that my childhood friend Gary was in the hospital, and though I made several efforts to see him, his mother insisted that he not have any visitors. It was only after he died that I discovered that Gary had died of AIDS, and that his mother had been trying to conceal that fact by forbidding visitors. I can only imagine the loneliness that must have accompanied my friend’s final days; and of course, I still regret that I was deprived of the opportunity to say goodbye to him.

The episode was a personal reminder to me of how the stigmatization and discrimination associated with AIDS can have costs, not only for the sufferers themselves, but for friends and family as well. AIDS is now a leading cause of death worldwide, which takes an especially terrible toll in so-called Third World countries. Many factors contributing to that reality are issues of concern in other locales of the “emerging” world – including Armenia.

## “Character makes the man and woman”

Continued from page 21

“individualism” has become a cult and celebrities, icons-where people are famous for being famous-is not an easy task. We must be reminded time and time again that we are not mere consumer/entertainment/socio-economic/socio-biological and information units, to be processed. We are not numbers. We are unique, rational, spiritual and social beings full of competing sentiments, insatiable yearnings, dreams, imagination, quests and ties that bind us to the past and the future.

It might be helpful to remind ourselves that it was Alexis de Tocqueville who in the 1830s coined the word “individualism,” to describe the self-reliant character of Americans. But he also went on to extol Americans’ generosity, their proclivity to create voluntary citizens associations

and the fact that volunteers and altruists have played a critical role in preserving and strengthening what he called the modern world’s first nation that did not have a ruling class. In that way, he made clear that both the private and public realm, private good and public good, are interdependent. One without the other will diminish the bonds of community and creativity. Some 125 years later, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. put it more succinctly: “We may have all come in different ships but we are in the same boat now.”

Today we must be reminded that what is unique about each of us should be celebrated and cherished, that we must not forget that we also belong to a larger community, society and, indeed, humanity. As Americans and as human beings we have an obligation to contribute to the well-being of our communities; hence, to the public good.

I hope as you climb the ladder of success, you will always remember the dictum “From those to whom much has been given, much is expected.”

In conclusion, I would like to offer you just one last thought about our shared human condition. Today information floods over us, and a millisecond later in comes another flood of data and information, and then another and another. Images of pleasure and pain, fear and joy, love and hate assault us from all the angles. The world around us is full of raucous chatter and noise. Amid all this cacophony, it’s hard to see ourselves as part of a larger whole, a continuing eternal harmony, that music of the spheres that the ancients thought we would hear only in our inner ear. Well, today I would like to remind you of your connection to history. Try to listen with your inner ears to those who went before you,

parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and on and on, who all wanted to be good ancestors to you.

As an historian, educator and a fellow student, I feel bound to remind you that the time has come for you to return the favor. You have to learn to be good ancestors to the future.

Today’s commencement marks the beginning of many other beginnings for you, many other commencements in your life. Many mornings, many beginnings are before you. The future is waiting for you with open arms. I wish you good luck, great success and great humanity. Thank you very much.

Maria Titizian is on vacation. Her “Living in Armenia” column will resume in two weeks.



# SUMMER MEMORIES AWAIT



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### IMPORTANT DATES FOR 2008

- Sat. July 5<sup>th</sup> Camp Nubar opens & First session begins
- Sat. July 19<sup>th</sup> First session ends  
Second session begins  
Trial session begins
- Sun. July 27<sup>th</sup> Open house  
Trial session ends
- Sat. August 2<sup>nd</sup> Third session begins
- Sat. August 16<sup>th</sup> Last day of camp

AGBU

# camp nubar

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# Ensuring the Future of Armenia's Past

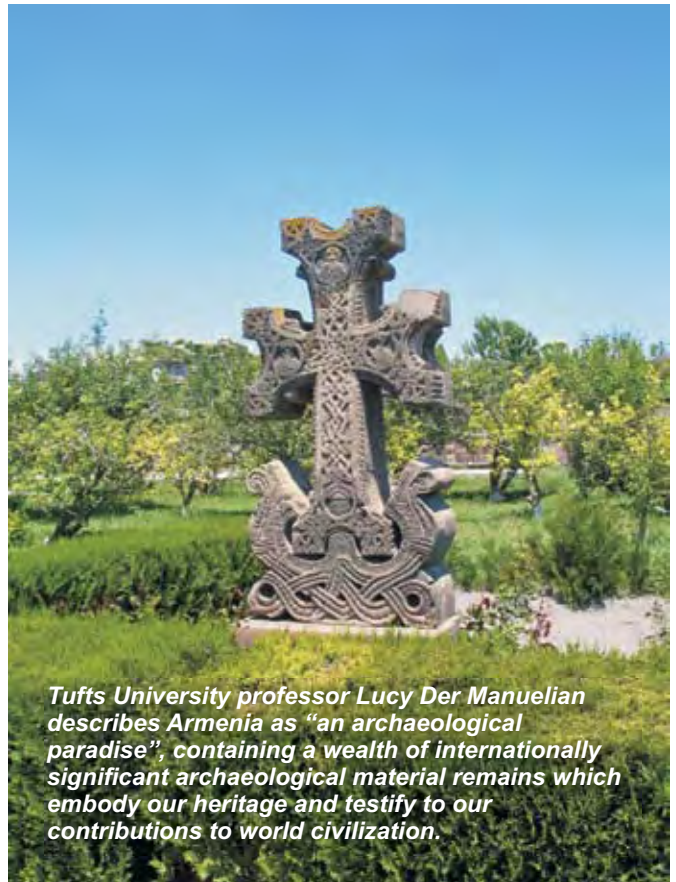
**Project Discovery!** is dedicated to the discovery and preservation of Armenia's archaeological and cultural legacy. Armenia has a long and continuous past that is both culturally rich and historically significant. And yet, our history is largely unknown to the academic community outside of Armenia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



**Project Discovery!** was organized to meet this challenge. We have supported archaeological excavations, attendance by Armenian scholars at international conferences, publication of books, scientific journals and museum catalogues, websites, libraries and laboratories.

We are unique, in that we are the only public charity dedicated to supporting Armenian archaeology. We are joined in our mission by an Academic Advisory Board of eminent scholars, both Armenian and non-Armenian, from prestigious universities and research institutions across the US and around the world.

*At a time when exciting discoveries in Armenia are attracting the attention of scientists from the international community, it*



*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 Armenia, the first website of Armenian archaeology and history, among many, many other projects.

**The past is a heritage we all share.** Won't you join us in our commitment to preserve one of the world's earliest civilizations? Please send your tax deductible contribution to ensure the future of Armenia's past.



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

**Project Discovery!**  
*Ensuring the Future of Armenia's Past*





# Homenetmen 33rd Navasartian Games/Festival

## FESTIVAL AND ATHLETIC COMPETITION

Thursday July 3, 4 PM - Midnight

Friday July 4, 8 AM - Midnight

Saturday July 5, 8 AM - Midnight

Sunday July 6, 8 AM - Midnight



Honorary Presidents of the  
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### VICTORY BALL

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**Great Food**  
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Sunday July 6, 4 PM

**Thursday**  
**Karnig Sarkisian**  
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### Birmingham High School

17000 Haynes St. Van Nuys CA

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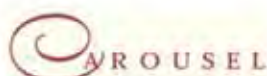
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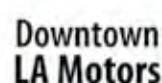
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