



Armenian Cultural Conservancy NEWSLETTER



PHOTO BY ALAIN EKMALIAN

Author Stepan Partamian (right) autographed his book at the March 28 Conservancy event.

Editor's Reflections

by Mary Mirigian Ekmalian

The Armenian Cultural Conservancy had a busy spring. March 28 ACC and the Tekeyan Cultural Association brought publisher, music producer, and talk-show host Stepan Partamian from Glendale to speak on segments of his book *THE ARMENIAN IN AMERICA*. The photo essay documented significant Armenian landmarks and public signs with references to the Armenian people. Stepan's presentation was followed by a book signing of his several works, including his latest, *YES, WE HAVE WOMEN*.

During the month of April the ACC created their second display window at the Woodward Park Library featuring Armenian-American Inventors and their contributions. We received many compliments from library visitors. Thank you to Ron Mortanian for loaning his Zildjian cymbal, Varoujan Der Simonian for loaning several framed articles on famous inventors, and Jane Knar Lanas for suggesting the theme. Also in April our local PBS station aired the film *They Shall Not Perish – The Story of the Near East Relief* while Conservancy members answered the phone banks.

On April 25, the short film *Shesh Besh* was shown to an overflowing crowd, again at the Woodward Park Library. This short documentary by director Anahid Nazarian was filmed at JC & Son Automotive, an auto garage in Fresno where a group of Armenian men and other locals gather daily to play backgammon and catch up on the local gossip. Many of the featured characters were present and were introduced by program organizer Michael Kilijian.

The premiere screening of the long-awaited documentary film by Bared Maronian, *The Women of 1915*

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Armenia Today: Three Perspectives

by Garbis "Chuck" Moushigian

The panel brought together three different, yet complimentary perspectives about Armenia today. Dolares spoke about life in post-earthquake Gyumri and her American experience as an exchange student. Gayane contrasted her life and education in Soviet Armenia and her professional career in independent Armenia as a faculty member at the American University of Armenia and the contrasts between her Soviet education and her American education. Garbis spoke of his first visit to Soviet Armenia in 1959 and his subsequent visits and work in the independent republic as a representative of SOS Armenia and his involvement with Yerevan State University.

It is clear that Armenia is going through a destabilizing transition from a Soviet economy and social structure - destabilizing, yet necessary. Armenian history is marked by periods when we have had to begin again from zero, or at least practically zero - in our most recent history, genocide, post-genocide, the consequences of WWII, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Soviet Armenia was one of the most prosperous and advanced industrial republics in the USSR and the collapse and the subsequent pillaging of the economy (common in most Soviet republics) were devastating. At the time of the



PHOTO BY ALAIN EKMALIAN

Panelists Garbis (left), Dolares, and Gayane.

collapse and subsequent independence, the country had experienced a catastrophic earthquake leaving one-third of the country in ruins with over 25,000 dead, was flooded with refugees from Azerbaijan, and engaged in a war in Kharabagh without a regular army - the army being organized as the fighting went on.

We were back to "zero" again. The economy was in ruins. Thus began the painful and difficult transition from a communist command economy to a market based economy. The country was faced with critical challenges. It was blockaded by both Turkey and Azerbaijan, the rail line through Georgia to Russia was disrupted by the Abkhazian separatists, and the road to Iran inadequate.

Beyond these challenges was a psychological/social one. Soviet society was marked by corruption at every level, cynicism and the absence of what is called a civil society. Old ways of thinking

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Editor's Reflections

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was on Sunday, April 30, at 1:00 p.m. at Fresno State's Leon and Pete Peters Educational Auditorium. The Conservancy was one of several co-sponsors. We are pleased this event also drew a capacity crowd. There was a refreshment reception before the event at Fresno State and also a private one in the evening for the individual sponsors in a lovely garden setting of the Daniel and Varvara Sivas home.

Those of you who were unable to attend our June 1 panel discussion, "Armenia Today," missed a thought-provoking, informative evening. High school exchange student Dolares Havhannisyian from Gyumri, Armenia, shared that she learned a new concept while living here, that of volunteerism, and will take that back home and continue helping others in need. Gayane Avetisyan Tarkanian, born and educated in Yerevan during Soviet times, but fortunate enough to get her Masters in the United States and return home to teach, was the generation caught between the transition from Soviet rule and independence. She shared the difficulties she and her contemporaries had in adjusting to the changes. Garbis Moushigian, an American-born, retired psychotherapist, first visited Armenia in 1959 and became involved in various projects in Armenia. He gave an historical overview of why we need to be patient with Armenia's seemingly slow progress to becoming the Armenia the Diaspora envisions.

Another panel discussion is scheduled for Tuesday, June 27, on the recent



PHOTOS BY ALAIN EKMALIAN



Above, "Women of 1915" film committee with filmmaker Bared Maronian (4th from right); (left) the attentive film audience and the pre-film appetizers.



Hollywood film *The Promise*. The panel includes Dr. Carla Garapedian, a filmmaker and associate producer of *The Promise*; Jack Geiger, Theatre Arts Department Head of West Hills Community College; Dr. Matthew Ari Jendian, CSUF Sociology Department Chair; and the Honorable Houry Sanderson, Fresno County Superior Court Judge. Serving as moderator will be Marshall D. Moushigian, Esq., community activist.

The event will take place at St. Paul Armenian Church at 7:00 p.m.

Have an enjoyable summer and see you at the summer grape blessing festivals!



PHOTO BY ALAIN EKMALIAN

Mary Ekmalian (left) and Jane Knar Lanas with the Armenian-American Inventors display.



PHOTO BY ALAIN EKMALIAN

Garden Reception honoring Bared Maronian and sponsors.

ACC Community Calendar

Monday, June 19-23, 6:30-8:30 p.m., St. Paul Armenian Church Vacation Bible School, 226-6343.

Sunday, June 25-28, 9:00-12:00 noon, Holy Trinity Armenian Church, Vacation Bible School, 486-1141.

Tuesday, June 27, 7:00 p.m. The Promise: Impact and Significance of the Movie panel discussion, St. Paul Armenian Church, RSVP 559-226-1984.

Saturday, July 1, 5:30 p.m., Armenian-American Citizens' League Barbecue and Game Night, California Armenian Home AACL Hall, \$15 per person, Contact Barbara at 559-284-8478.

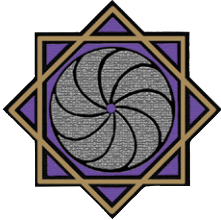
Friday, July 7, 6:00-8:30 p.m. - July 8-9, 9:30-12:30 p.m. St. Gregory Armenian Church Vacation Bible School, Fowler, Ages 3 to Adult, 834-2919.

Monday, July 24-28, 5:30-8:30 p.m., Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church, Vacation Bible School, 229-2915.

Sunday, August 6, 2017, 10:30 a.m., Holy Trinity Grape Blessing Festival, California Armenian Home grounds.

Sunday, August 13, 2017, 10:30 a.m., St. Paul Grape Blessing Festival, California Armenian Home grounds.

To collect, preserve and interpret the evidence of the Armenian experience in Central California in an enduring institution of learning.



Armenian Cultural Conservancy Logo

The six- and eight-pointed stars have a long history in pre-Christian Armenia and have been adopted in Church architecture and decorative arts. They are thought to have magical powers and are used extensively in astronomy and sacred art. The logo's wheel of eternity signifies life; the eight-pointed star represents the eight architectural pillars of the Armenian Church; the color purple represents the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Genocide; the gold color is the richness of the Armenian culture.

This logo was created by Alain Ekmalian.

Armenian Cultural Conservancy

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You can help. Become a member. Spread the word. Host or assist with an event.

*"For when two of them meet anywhere in the world,
see if they will not create a New Armenia." – William Saroyan, 1936*



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Three Perspectives

Continued from page 1

and doing things needed to be changed if the country could transform and rebuild itself. These old ways sometimes take generations to change, this being one of Armenia's most significant challenges.

There are positive signs in this regard. The education system is being reformed with an emphasis on critical thinking, innovation, and high tech areas. During Soviet years Armenia was a leader in providing mainframe computers for the military and space programs, and this sector is now one of the fastest growing. Corruption, difficult to root out in most societies, is being seriously addressed and the government realizes that it must create a business friendly atmosphere if it is to attract foreign investment. In one international measure, of 180 countries Armenia ranks 21st in ease of

business, and is striving to move up further. Tourism, information technologies, export oriented economy, particularly in agriculture, and light industry are the main areas of focus, as well as import substitution (local products displacing imports). The foundations of a civil society are being laid and with generational changes we can see a new, healthier mentality taking root, especially in the younger generation, which is curious, innovative and enterprising. Development in the rural areas is a priority.

While Armenia still faces and will continue to face serious challenges, all of these changes augur well for the future. The best way for us in the Diaspora to honor the memory of the Genocide is to do all we can to assure that Armenia survives, develops, and prospers, that it becomes a true homeland for our people. After all, this is the only Armenia there is. If this fails, there is no place for us to retreat. This is it...



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THE PROMISE
Empires fall. Love survives.

The Armenian Cultural Conservancy
in partnership with Saint Paul Armenian Church
presents
A panel discussion of
"The Promise" A Motion Picture
Tuesday, June 27, 2017 . 7pm
Saint Paul Armenian Church
3767 North First Street, Fresno

RSVP Required, call: (559) 226-1984
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