

A Publication of the Ararat Home of Los Angeles, Inc.®

Fall 2010

Mission Hills Expansion Update

By Armen Hampar and Ron Nazeley

The Building Committee of the Ararat Home, as promised, is reporting our progress to our supporters and community. The committee continues to meet regularly with our architects who were responsible for the design of the original Mission Hills campus. Entitlements and a building permit have already been acquired from the City of Los Angeles. The construction drawings, which are 95% completed, must be approved by OSHPD, a state agency that regulates health care institutions. It is anticipated that this part of the process will be completed by year-end.

The first phase of the project is to replace the existing emergency generator with a larger one that can serve the entire campus. It will be relocated to the east of the existing Nursing facility. This will be done during the February to June 2011 time frame. The existing generator, over twenty years old, presently occupies space where a portion of the new building will occupy.

Phase 2 involves erection of the two-story addition. Final approval of the construction documents is expected during the spring of 2011. Upon completion of the installation of the emergency generator, construction of the new building will commence during June of 2011, with completion and occupancy to occur around December of 2012.

Ron Nazeley and Berj Shahbazian have taken on the responsibility of raising funds for this next step in the growth and improvement of the Ararat Home. While substantial money has been accumulated thus far for this project, through generous donations plus the profit from the



sale of our Rockhaven facility to the City of Glendale, we still anticipate additional funds will be needed.

It takes a lot of planning, hard work and financial assistance to ensure success of the addition of the 58-bed wing to the existing Skilled Nursing Facility at Mission Hills. To this end, there will be multiple opportunities to contribute by purchasing/sponsoring patient rooms, beds, nursing stations, shower rooms, medication rooms, dining rooms, building floors and wings, elevators, stairways, etc. Donors and contributors who are interested in supporting this plan are encouraged to call Beatrice Malkhasian, Executive Secretary to the Board of Trustees at (818) 838-4860 to get further information on various opportunities that are available for giving. The Trustees have a responsibility to serve the Armenian community, and at the same time it is of paramount importance for the community to financially support this project in order to succeed.

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Board Member, *Hyelights* Editor Steve Surmeian Leaves Legacy of Service to God and Community

By Phyllis Hamo

On September 18, 2010, at the age of 77, Steve Surmeian lost his valiant battle with cancer, leaving a lifelong legacy of devotion to his family and untiring service to his church and community.



Stephen N. Surmeian was born during the Great Depression in New York City and raised in Union City, New Jersey. When he was only 11 his father died. His little sister was nine. Their mother struggled, working two jobs to keep the family afloat. Steve was an excellent student who graduated from the Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, NJ with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. Immediately following commencement he packed up his mother and sister and drove to California where the weather was mild and engineering jobs were abundant. Steve first worked for Lockheed, then for Hughes Aircraft where he remained for 27 years as an aerospace designer and analyst, finally becoming a senior scientist (also referred to as a rocket scientist). He was well informed and often described as being an expert in almost everything.

Steve retired early at the age of 54 and devoted the next 23 years serving his church and community using his many God-given talents. Some of the positions he held were Trustee, Deacon, and Treasurer of his church, Clerk of the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America, Editor of the *AEUNA Forum*, and Board Chairman of the Armenian Evangelical Social Service Center (Hollywood and Pasadena). He held various positions in the Knights of Vartan including Commander of the Sevan Lodge and also served on the

Grand Council as Grand Secretary and Treasurer and Western Grand District Representative. He proudly supported his wife Asien during her two-year term as Grand Matron of the Daughters of Vartan, traveling with her throughout the U.S. and Canada with his tuxedo packed for formal events.

Steve was a member of the Executive Board of the Ararat Home, serving as its Secretary. He could be found serving plated dinners at the Ararat monthly luncheons and volunteering at the picnics and other events. He was an exemplary citizen with great integrity, often described as conscientious, patient, kind and trustworthy. He had a sharp memory and was a gifted problem solver. His opinion was sought and valued by his family, co-workers and the organizations he served.

Knowing that his time was short, Steve asked his son Michael to prepare three letters on his laptop computer at his bedside. They were addressed to the Congregation of the United Armenian Congregational Church, the Executive Board of the Ararat Home, and the Brothers of the Knights of Vartan. In each letter he expressed gratitude to the organization and pointed out how much their members had enriched and blessed his life. He didn't see death as an end; he viewed it as a beginning. "I am not afraid of what the future holds for me," he said. "God has always been good to me, and I know that He will continue to care for me in my eternal life and for the family I leave behind."

Steve is survived by his loving wife of 49 years, Asien (nee Tozlian), their three children, James, Michael (Laura), and Julie, and four grandchildren, Lukas, Haley, Samantha and Mia Surmeian for whom he was a great role model. He also leaves his extended family and many friends who admired, loved and respected him.

Stimulating Life, Goal of Ararat Assisted Living

By Debbie Avedian

Entering the dining room at the Ararat Assisted Living, I could not help but notice the beautiful Armenian mothers and fathers engaging in conversation with their peers, and the caregivers and the kitchen staff happily accommodating their needs and desires. These ladies are the "Wonder Ladies" of the Ararat Home. Under the leadership of Rose Hovsepian, Dietary Supervisor, the kitchen staff provides residents with healthy, balanced, and delicious meals. The residents are given opportunities to tour the kitchen to see what foods are available for them. Always pleasant and helpful, the staff strives to serve a wide array of cuisines such as Chinese, Mexican, Italian, American, and of course Armenian. Residents can request dishes they desire, and alternative meals are always available. The first Thursday of each month is celebrated with a *Kef Time* birthday party. Families are always encouraged to join their loved ones for lunch or dinner.

Under the supervision of the kitchen staff, the residents are encouraged to participate in numerous activities: rolling sarma, preparing choreg, coloring eggs for Easter, bagging grapes for blessing of the grapes in church, Halloween mask parties, trimming of the Christmas tree, decorating Christmas cookies, and even folding towels. They participated in the 4th of July festivities this year, barbecuing



Staff Standing Left to Right: Susan Asryan, Ruzanna Galstyan, Robert Akopian, Mayram Muradyan, Rose Hovsepian



Residents Seated Left to Right: Lorik Babajanians, Laurice Dolamakian, Marie Kassabian

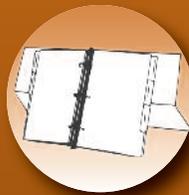
hamburgers and hot dogs and enjoying an afternoon of entertainment with famous singer, "Gariné," and lively music with a DJ.

Our "Wonder Ladies" not only provide such a wonderful priceless service to our residents, but they are always on hand to help with the Ararat Home's Kufte dinner and, of course, Mayram Muradyan's unforgettably delicious Kufte and Yalanchi served at our annual picnic.

Activity chair, Tina Balyezyan enthusiastically organizes activities for our elders who are taken on picnics, to the beach, to parks, and outings to various local restaurants. Tuesdays are shopping days where they are taken to nearby stores for shopping. With pianist, Alice Kavaldjian's uplifting music, the residents are encouraged on Thursday afternoons to participate with a wonderful afternoon of singing. A few of the other activities they partake in are: yoga, indoor gardening, creative painting, sculpturing, bingo, backgammon, stringing beads, movies with popcorn, and card games.

Life does begin again for our residents at the Ararat Home, a wonderful nurturing and stimulating environment for our elders to feel productive and enjoy each special day.

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Candlelight Lunch at Ararat Nursing Facility

By Debbie Avedian

What a beautiful setting to observe with eight beautiful ladies and gentlemen handsomely dressed and seated around a lovely candle lit table set with gold rimmed fine china on gold plate chargers, napkins with rose napkin rings, lovely wine glasses and polished silverware. The beautiful centerpiece filled with fresh fruits, flowers, and platters filled with delicious food: fish with carrots, boreg hamus, potatoes, salad, cheese and olives lay across the table. Beautiful, soothing music added to the ambiance. I was invited to join the residents and gladly accepted. Before dining on the fabulous feast, resident Loussazein Ishkhanian recited the Lord's Prayer.

The wonderful meal was planned by Biatris Jekmeian, supervisor of the Ararat food and nutrition department, and prepared by Lucy Akopian and the kitchen staff.

As salad was being passed, resident Ashod Karabed commented "Ararat Home is the best in the world because Armenians are capable of unique work and with unity can accomplish the greatest of all things. This is our home. This is for the Armenians. I pray our children will follow our footsteps and respect the elderly and keep the Ararat Home the best."

We were embraced with eight bright and knowledgeable individuals, all having unique backgrounds, different political affiliations, and occupations: dressmaker, lingerie designer, carpenter, furniture maker, executive of General Electric in Iran, jeweler, volunteer for British Red Cross, volunteers to the Armenian Relief Society for more than 40 years, and homemakers. There was a unique bond and connection they felt towards each other; they were all proud Armenians living comfortably in the same home.

Mr. Garabed Baghdassarian, a resident, began singing love songs in Armenian: Siroon Aghchig (Pretty Girl), Sari Siroon Yar (Sweetheart from the Mountains) and Khentsori Dzarin Dagge (Under the Apple Tree). He sang the Spanish song, Besame Mucho to all the ladies. When he finished, one of the residents, Mrs. Arshalouis Terazian, showed her appreciation by handing him a white rose. Vardoui Selian, social worker, entered the room to greet the residents and another resident, Magardich Tavitian, got up and danced with her.



Residents seated around table: **Magardich Tavitian, Garabed Baghdassarian, Varoujan Yedalian, Ophelia Kay, Khatoun Jinbachian, Arshalouis Terazian, Loussazein Ishkhanian, Ashot Karabed**

Standing Left to right: **Rima Pogosian, Hasmik Melikian, Anait Dishdishian, Lucy Akopian, Biatris Jekmeian, Aykui Oganian, Nadia Mirzoyan**

As dessert, farina cake and fruit, was being served, the staff encouraged the residents to engage in thought-provoking conversation and successfully had all the residents partake in various discussions.

This special event takes place every Friday, and all residents are given opportunity to participate. Activities, coordinated by Anait Dishdishian, Hasmik Melikian, Nadia Mirzoyan, Aykui Oganian, and Rima Pogosian, are offered throughout the week and include: reading group, therapeutic relaxation exercises, sing-along shape bingo, casino games, card games, jigsaw puzzles, card games, word games, sculpturing, making cards, doll therapy, ball toss, ring toss, darts, cookie decorations, word games, and bible study.

At the Ararat Home, our elderly residents enjoy a safe, secure and comfortable home surrounded by compassionate and well-trained caregivers.

Team Work Provides Annual Picnic Success

By Cindy Kaloostian

Was it the delicious chicken and lamb kebab served by smiling volunteers? Was it the inspirational Nairi Dance Group, who ignored the heat and thrilled the audience with their grace and enthusiasm? Was it the children's games and fun prizes? Was it the Oasis Band? Was it the Triple X Fraternity, the Los Angeles Jr. Triple X and their family members who filled the 150 needed positions to get the job done? Was it Chairman Mike Surmeian and his committee of long-time friends (William Kevorkian, Galen Petoyan, Stephen Hampar, Shant Dergazarian, Joe Ouzounian, Matt Matoesian and Richard Jebejian)? Was it the friendly drivers from Knights of Vartan Sevan Lodge who shuttled guests from outer parking areas to the front door? Was it the ladies of the Auxiliary and Guilds who provided and served the famous Armenian desserts? Was it the hardworking Ararat staff members, Vahe Hamalian and his maintenance crew, Rita Noravian and her crew, Rose Hovsepien and all the wonderful people helping in the kitchen, money man Derik Ghookasian or was it Beatrice Malkhasian who is the glue of the organization? Was it the hundreds of attendees from all over Southern California?

Yes, yes and yes.

As Chairman Mike Surmeian said, "We might operate independently 364



days out of the year, but on the day of the Picnic, all these people from all these different organizations come together for the Home." In fact, Master Shant Dergazarian and Dikran Devian from the Los Angeles Triple X Fraternity invited Beatrice Malkhasian to their monthly dinner on October 6 to award her a certificate of appreciation and a beautiful Bromeliad plant in recognition of her fifteen years of assistance, "above and beyond the call of duty."

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Upcoming Events

Ararat-Eskijian Museum presents:

1. At the Crossroads of Family and Institutional Memory: The Armenians of Marsovan (Merzifon) and Anatolia College (1890-1922)

illustrated lecture by Prof. Armen T. Marsoobian

Date: Wednesday, November 17 at 8 p.m.

2. Isfahan, New Julfa and the Art of Sumbat

by Prof. Armen Der Kiureghian

Date: Sunday, December 5, 2010 4-6 p.m.

Free admission

Location: 15105 Mission Hills Road, Mission Hills, CA 91345

ARARAT HIGHLIGHTS

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