

ARARAT HIGHLIGHTS

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Winter 2008

FLORENCE GERTMENIAN - VOLUNTEER EXTRAORDINAIRE

By Steve Surmeian, Trustee

Ararat Home's Assisted Living Facility is a storehouse of treasures in the persons of its residents. Most of these wonderful people have lived exciting, interesting and fulfilling lives. And they continue to live and thrive here at Ararat Home. We've featured a few of them in earlier issues.

This time we are featuring a 93 years young dynamo, Mrs. Florence Gertmenian, whom we could title "Mrs. Volunteer Extraordinaire." The organizations that were beneficiaries of her efforts are numerous. An incomplete list includes the First Methodist Church and St. Joseph Hospital in Phoenix, Phoenix chapter of the AGBU, the Armenian Missionary Association of America, P.T.A., Lion's Club and Haigazian College (which became a university in the 1990's). But more about Haigazian College later.

Shortly after her parents fled Hadjin, Turkey, in 1914, and settled in Syracuse, NY, Florence was born in 1915. Soon after, the family moved to Pasadena, CA, where they were one of the first families to take residence there. Her father, Samuel Mardian, who was in the construction business in Hadjin, continued his skills in Pasadena, building numerous homes and buildings in Pasadena, including the Cilicia Armenian Evangelical Church. Their home was always open to welcome recent immigrants, many of whom were escaping the Genocide. Florence and her four brothers often gave up their beds for these newly arrived guests, spending many nights sleeping on the floor.

At the tender age of 17, Florence married Leon Mahagian, a young Armenian in the carpet business who was 12 years her senior. They settled in Albuquerque, NM, where she worked hand in hand with her husband. Some years later, they moved their business to Phoenix, where it thrived. Florence worked very hard, even manhandling rolls of carpet. After husband Leon retired in 1955, she got her real estate license, and quickly became the top seller in her firm year after year. In spite of her success in real estate, she continued her volunteer work in Phoenix.




Florence and her husband Leon were blessed with two children; Nancy Mahagian, a published author who lives in Studio City, and son Richard, who resides in Sedona, AZ.

One of Florence's favorite projects was Haigazian College in Beirut, Lebanon. Although principle funding that established the college was provided by Stephen Philibosian, Florence and her sister-in-law Mary Mahagian, daughter of Dr. Haigazian, made substantial donations to Haigazian. Back in Phoenix, every year for over fifteen years, Florence prepared a banquet for 500 people to raise funds for Haigazian. Needless to

say, her wonderful cooking skills became famous throughout the region. And Haigazian College reaped the benefits of her volunteerism! The photo displays some of her handiwork.

Florence had four brothers, Aram, Daniel, Robert and Samuel (Dan and Samuel live in Phoenix; Aram and Robert passed away some years ago). Two of them went into politics; Robert was Assistant Attorney General in the Nixon administration, and Samuel was a two term mayor of Phoenix. All four were in construction, forming Mardian Construction, building numerous homes and other buildings in Pasadena, Beverly Hills, Las Vegas and Phoenix, including Phoenix's Sky Harbor Airport.

In 1976, Florence ran into her childhood sweetheart, Roy Gertmenian. Both she and Roy had lost their spouses, and it was providential that they should meet again after so many years. They were married soon afterwards, residing initially in New Jersey, eventually moving to San Clemente, CA. One of her acquaintances there was ex-President Richard Nixon.

After Roy passed away in 1998, Florence remained in San Clemente until 2005, then moved in with her daughter Nancy Mahagian in Studio City. She came to Ararat Home early this year where she enjoys the fellowship and numerous activities offered. 

Ararat-Eskijian Museum, A Treasure of Armenian Culture & History

By Phyllis Hamo

The Ararat-Eskijian Museum in Mission Hills is easy to find, located on the grounds of the Ararat Home, just beneath the Sheen Chapel and a few steps from the parking lot. The stately bronze statue of "Mother Armenia Rising Out of the Ashes" graces the entrance. It is not only a museum, but a cultural center for the performing arts, lectures, and special displays.

When the Museum opened its doors in 1993 it fulfilled a lifelong dream of its founder Luther Eskijian. The talented and generous Mr. Eskijian, a Genocide survivor and architect, spent years meticulously designing both the Museum and chapel and served as the general contractor during construction. His personal collection formed the core of the original Museum repository.

In 1998 Maggie Mangasarian Goschin, who had discovered the Museum accidentally while visiting the Home, became a volunteer and board member. Now, after ten years of dedicated service, Maggie has earned the title of vice-president/administrator. She is deeply committed to the mission of the Museum's founder, who passed away at age 93 in 2007, and his devoted wife Anne, "to preserve our Armenian culture and historical treasures for generations to come."

Through the efforts of Mrs. Goschin, the board and community supporters, the Museum has held more than 50 programs including art exhibits, rug exhibitions, photo expositions, poetry events, plays, films, musical events, and outstanding lectures by prominent authors, artists, speakers, and scholars. Past Museum programs have featured Dr. Vhahn Dadrian, leading genocide scholar, Dr. Levon Chookaszian, art historian,

This fall's programs included a display of photographs from the Boston-



Standing at the entrance to the Ararat Eskijian Museum are (l to r): Nancy and Martin Eskijian (daughter and son of founder Luther Eskijian) and Maggie Goschin


based Armenian Photograph Archives, Project Save, with founder Ruth Thomasian. On October 5, John Chookasian and members of the Chookasian Armenian Concert Ensemble presented A Performance-Lecture of Traditional Armenian Music and Instruments. On November 9 at 2:00 p.m. an event in the Sheen Chapel hosted by three organizations; the Armenian Professional Network of the Western Diocese, the Ararat Home Valley Guild and the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, will honor the Armenian men and women who have served in the American Armed Forces in A Historic Tribute to Veterans.

On Sunday, January 25, 2009, in conjunction with the Organization of Istanbul Armenians, a documentary on "The Morgenthau" by Apo Torosian will be shown and discussed. The public is always invited.

The Museum's collection of books and artifacts is increasing daily. Many in the Armenian community have found great satisfaction in knowing that their family heirlooms, documents and books have found themselves in this museum. A recently completed showcase displays passports, travel documents, and birth certificates. In the words of Luther Eskijian, "The

Genocide devastated our people and homeland, but did not destroy our love for God, our spirit, nor our desire to achieve and excel."

Members of the Museum Board are Chairman Martin Eskijian, Vice Chairman/Administrator Maggie Goschin, Dr. Edouard Selian, Nancy Eskijian, Ralph Ayyazian, Peter Kazanjian, Nora Nalbantian, George Balian and Araxi Churukian. Consulting supporters are Dr. Levon Chookaszian and Verjine Svazian of Yerevan, Armenia, and Dr. George Kooshian of Pasadena, CA.

Children from Southland schools, both Armenian and public, regularly visit the Museum. Museum hours are Saturdays, 1 to 5 pm, Sundays 10 am to 4 pm, and 2 to 4 pm following the Ladies Auxiliary Luncheon in the Deukmejian Ballroom, which usually is on the first Tuesday of every month. There is no charge for admission. 

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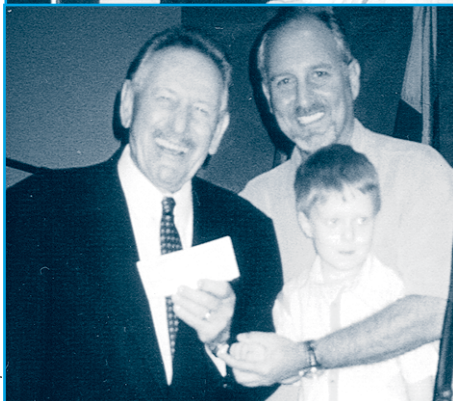
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"MR. ARARAT," BOB SHAMLIAN HONORED ON SEPTEMBER 9

On September 9, 2008, a special presentation was made during the regular Tuesday Luncheon honoring Robert Minas Shamlian, "Mr. Ararat," and to dedicate the first floor Entry Arcade leading to the elevator to the Deukmejian Ballroom to Mr. Shamlian. A special plaque is mounted next to the entry doors and his name, "ROBERT MINAS SHAMLIAN, MR. ARARAT" is affixed in large brass letters on the arch over the entry to the building.

A framed replica of the special plaque was presented to Mrs. Helen Shamlian by Mr. John Yaldezian, Past Trustees Board Chairman. Bob and Helen's son, Gregory Shamlian presented a \$30,000 check on behalf of the Shamlian family to go to the Ararat Home Endowment Fund.

Hundreds witnessed the presentation, including former Governor George Deukmejian and his gracious wife Gloria, as well as a number of "Mr. Ararat's" extended family and friends.



1. Some of the members of the "Shamlian Clan." Mrs. Helen Shamlian in the center below the light fixture, with Trustee Chairman Armen Hampar on her right. Others in the photo are her son Gregory Shamlian holding his daughter Andie, Gregory's wife Jennifer Shamlian holding Griffin, and Bob Shamlian's sister Arcie Bedrosian (2nd from the left).
2. Past Trustee Chairman John Yaldezian presenting a replica of the plaque honoring "Mr. Ararat," Robert Minas Shamlian, to Mrs. Helen Shamlian. The plaque is affixed to the first floor entry to elevators to the Deukmejian Ballroom. Looking on are her son Gregory and grandson Griffin.
3. Gregory Shamlian presenting a \$30,000 check on behalf of the Shamlian family to Trustee Chairman Armen Hampar as Bob Shamlian's grandson Griffin looks on. The check will go to Ararat's Endowment Fund.

NEW BOARD MEMBERS BRING YOUTH & ENTHUSIASM

by Cindy Kaloostian

The Ararat Home Board of Trustees recently welcomed two new members to its rolls. They are Mr. Berj Shahbazian and Mr. Michael Surmeian.

Mike Surmeian is an energetic, intelligent young man with professional expertise in finance and strategic thinking. He has served on Ararat's Investment Committee for the past year. However, his immediate duties on the Ararat Board will center around his long-time experience in assisting his LA Triple X fraternity in putting on the Annual Picnic. Mike began as a Junior Trex member working under the leadership of Kay Hovsepian and Lee Neshanian at the Los Angeles campus, setting up tables and chairs the day before and guarding parked cars the day of the picnic. Since the move to Mission Hills, Mike has continued his expanded picnic duties, working with Chairman Richard Jebejian and Committee Chairmen Ken Khteian and Gabe Kaprelian. With a handful of his Trex brothers, Mike will follow the great examples of his predecessors and "lead the charge" for next year's picnic.

Mike, a life-long resident of the San Fernando Valley, is a family man. He and his wife of 15 years, Laura, have 3 children,



Michael Surmeian



Berj Shahbazian

Luke 12, Samantha 10 and Mia 6. His previous jobs, ten years as a CPA with Ernst & Young and ten years as Vice-President of Sales with Natrol, Inc., often led to more travel than he liked. For the past eight months, Mike has been working from his home office for the TABS Group, a sales and marketing consulting firm. He says, "Being home when the kids return from school is a real pleasure."

Berj Shahbazian was born in Baghdad, Iraq and moved to the United States in 1984. He has had a very successful career in real estate development and lending, culminating in his founding in 2001 of Colony Mortgage Lenders of which he is CEO. As well as for his business acumen, Berj is well known in the Armenian community for his generosity and passion towards Armenia and Armenians. In addition to being a benefactor of AGBU, Iraqi-Armenian student sponsorship, Iraqi-Armenian relief, AGBU-Manoogian School, ANC and the new Diocesan Cathedral in Burbank, Berj and his wife Bilet (they have 2 daughters, Delilah and Donella), are happy to have been instrumental in the renovation of Etchmiadzin School No.5, positively affecting the lives of 500 students.

Of Berj's work at Ararat Home, Chairman Armen Hampar says, "Berj is a youthful businessman who thinks outside the box in bringing fresh and new ideas to the Board."

ARARAT HOME IS TURNING GREEN

Steve Surmeian, Trustee

Under the leadership of newly appointed Plant Manager, Vahe Hamalian, Ararat Home is turning green. There are two aspects to this transformation; green as we incorporate energy and water conservation, and green as we save money by doing so. Mr. Hamalian has stated, "It may seem like using a fluorescent light bulb instead of a regular incandescent one, or fixing a leaky faucet will do much to reduce our energy costs, but it does. By making just a few small changes to our daily routine, we now save a significant amount of water and conserve energy in our Mission Hills campus. Our maintenance team has done a great job to conserve energy and reduce our utility bills."

Some of these changes are listed below:

- Phasing in water efficient plumbing fixtures throughout the facilities. Install very low and ultra low flush hardware.
- Installed water saver irrigation systems. Monitor sprinkler heads daily and repair broken heads immediately. Replace sprinkler heads with ones that provide adequate coverage and minimize runoff, yet use less water.
- Lighting: Where possible, phase in compact fluorescent bulbs to replace regular incandescent bulbs. These use 75% less energy, last ten times longer, and save electricity as well as cost of the bulbs and maintenance. Adjust parking and all outdoor lighting timers to coincide with the season.
- Installed timers on the hot water circulating pumps to be turned off during low demand hours.
- Installed programmable thermostats in offices to automatically control room temperature to comfortable levels.
- Routinely check toilets, pipes and all plumbing hardware for hidden leaks.
- Have the Gas Company check stove burners and boilers quarterly (at no charge to Ararat).
- Installed 90% efficient boilers to replace those not operating correctly.
- Review the monthly utility bills for accuracy and note any spikes in usage indicating that something may be wrong.
- In the near future, install infrared sensors in rooms to turn out the lights when occupants exit.

Trustee Charles Keligian and Plant Manager Vahe Hamalian are considering installing solar panels to produce a significant portion of the energy we use. This is a major undertaking, but the rewards can be well worth it. We will provide more information as the study progresses. 🏔️

ARARAT HOME'S ANNUAL PICNIC ANOTHER SUCCESS



Some of the Los Angeles Triple X men pause from their kebab cooking for a picture.

Ararat Home held its 56th Annual Picnic on September 28, 2008 on the beautiful grounds of the Home. Trustee Richard Jebejian, Picnic Chairman, mobilized a small army of volunteers, numbering about 140. The Los Angeles Triple X Fraternity—members and their families—supply the majority of workers. However, the Ladies Auxiliary, Guilds, Trustees, Knights of Vartan Sevan Lodge, AGBU School and other Southern California Triple X chapters support the picnic.

Mr. Jebejian's principle assistants are Trex members Gabe Kaprelian and Ken Khteian. They prepared a logistical plan to ensure nothing was overlooked so that all attending have a great time. Ararat's ladies did a great job preparing and serving mouth watering desserts. To help work off some of the delicious food, there was music for dancing as well. This was a picnic for the entire family, including games and prizes for the kids; truly something for everyone!

Ararat's Picnic receives support from the entire Armenian Community. Those attending enjoyed great food, fun and fellowship, and certainly look forward to the last Sunday in September 2009 for the 57th Annual Picnic. 🏔️



Ararat's ladies busy at the dessert tables.