

# ARARAT

## H Y E L I G H T S

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

Spring 2018



## HASMIK ASATRYAN:

### *A Life of Fortitude, Perseverance and Love*

Hasmik Asatryan was born in 1935 in Yerevan, Armenia, the eldest of three siblings. Her parents were repatriated Armenians from Greece who met and married in Yerevan three years before her birth. While Hasmik loved her mother Vartuhi Aghdayan, she adored her father Armenak Asatryan, whose tenacious character she inherited.

Hasmik's strength of character and her ambitious, self-reliant nature were evident from a young age. She was studious in primary school and excelled in her studies in secondary school. Having always appreciated the value of education, she pursued a bachelor's degree at Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences, where she majored in English. While she had a good foundation of English from her school years, by the time she completed her university coursework, Hasmik had mastered the language. And, her hard work qualified her for a scholarship for all four years of study, which gave her a sense of independence as well as gratification knowing that her achievement was a result of her own efforts.

During her second year at university, Hasmik met

Hmayak Hmayakyan, a native of Leninakan (present-day Gyumri) and an architectural student at Yerevan's National Polytechnic University of Armenia. The two soon began a courtship that lasted six years. Although their relationship was tested by distance and separation as well as tepid support from their families, in the end, their love endured.

Upon completing her degree in 1956, Hasmik was assigned to the pedagogic career track, and her first teaching position was in the village of Musayelyan, about 20 miles north of Gyumri. Greatly disliking village life, Hasmik decided to return to Yerevan as soon as possible – to the man and to the city that she loved. Under the employment structure of the time, however, changing a job posting was quite difficult. Nonetheless, with a bit of luck and lots of determination, she obtained a teaching position at a kindergarten in Yerevan, where she spent the next three years. In the meantime, Hmayak completed his studies in Yerevan and returned to Leninakan; and the two were apart again.

students in grades fourth and higher. And, Hmayak worked as an architect on public building projects in Leninakan, Yerevan and throughout the areas. Among the projects to which he contributed over the years are the drama theater in Gyumri, the sports and concerts complex in Yerevan, and the reconstruction of several churches in area villages and towns.

In 1973, Hasmik's father passed away unexpectedly, and this event served as an impetus for the family to relocate to Yerevan. Soon afterwards, Hasmik began teaching at Yerevan's school #120, where she



remained for 20 years, until her retirement in 1994. For many years, she served as the head of the school's English department, where she worked to ensure the comprehensiveness and continuity of the curricula used by the department's faculty. She was a mentor for younger teachers, respected by students and parents, and a skilled professional. Throughout her career, she tutored many students, and at times, she received no compensation. But, her love for education, her belief in its value, and her openness and generosity of spirit provided her with sufficient motivation and reward.

Hasmik vividly recalls the aftermath of the 1988 earthquake in northern Armenia. At the time, her son Yervand was a student at the polytechnic institute in Leninakan. With communication lines disrupted,



Eventually, in 1960, their parents agreed to their union, and Hasmik joined Hmayak in Leninakan, where they lived for 13 years. This is where they both began their careers and where their two sons, Yervand and Samvel, were born. Here, Hasmik started her 33-year path as an English teacher for

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# CELEBRATION OF 400 YEARS OF ARMENIAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE

On March 16 and 17, Ararat-Eskijian Museum hosted a remarkable two-day conference dedicated to the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first Armenian to America – “Martin the Armenian” (Virginia, 1618). The conference opened with a moving cultural program on the first day and concluded with a four-part series of talks and presentations on the second day that focused on the establishment of the Armenian-American community, its involvement in and contributions to American life and society, and the prospect for continuing this 400-year legacy. The conference also featured an exhibition of items from the museum’s collection as well as from the private collection of Dr. Hayk Demoyan, Director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute.



conference panel discussion



conference organizers and participants



Chookasian Folk Ensemble & Ara Dabandjian



exhibition of Armenian-American heritage



Vatche Mankerian and Marie Der Kazarian performing songs by Alan Hovhanness



Dr. Hayk Demoyan presenting his book to LA City Councilmember Paul Krekorian



William Joseph Ryland presenting “Old Glory Speaks”



Ludwig Manukian staging “I Ask You, Ladies and Gentlemen” by Leon Surmelian



exhibition of Armenian-American life

The conference was organized in collaboration with National Association of Armenian Studies, Project SAVE Armenian Archives, Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute in Yerevan, and California State University Northridge Armenian Studies Program.

Videos from the conference are available to view on Ararat-Eskijian Museum’s [YouTube channel](#).



# LENTEN TRADITION AT ARARAT CONVALESCENT HOSPITAL

Every year, the staff at Ararat Convalescent Hospital celebrates the middle of the Lenten season by preparing a special *meecheenk* luncheon of traditional Lenten foods. All staff members participate in the preparation of the meal, which is then shared together with residents. Traditions like this contribute to the feeling among both staff and residents that they are all part of one large family.



## GIRL SCOUT GOLD AWARD PROJECT AT ARARAT NURSING FACILITY

Ararat Nursing Facility is the beneficiary of a Gold Award project being implemented by Talar Asdourian, a senior at Valley Academy of Arts and Sciences and a six-year Girl Scout. The Gold Award is the highest recognition in Girl Scouting, and the process



**Talar Asdourian with Executive Director Margarita Kechichian and Director of Clinical Services Susan Yeranian**



**Talar interviewing a resident**

involves the completion of a community-impact project that requires a minimum of 80 hours of service. Talar's project at the Nursing Facility is three-fold: research and create activities that are appropriate and engaging for all residents; interview residents to collect

and record life stories; and, organize the facility's library.

Residents have indeed been enjoying the fruits of Talar's efforts as well as her interactions with them. Ararat Home wishes Talar much success in being granted the Gold Award and in her endeavors of pursuing higher education this fall.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 >>

Hasmik and Hmayak were unable to receive word about his well-being, and they decided to travel there to see for themselves. As she walked through her old neighborhood in Leninakan, particularly past the school where she had worked for many years, Hasmik saw death and destruction all around. She was eventually reunited with Yervand, but the scenes she witnessed there would traumatize her for years to come.



As she often had done when faced with challenges, Hasmik tapped into her inner strength, and her fortitude helped her adapt and normalize to life in Armenia during the uncertain years of transition, political upheaval, economic collapse, and social change that followed the earthquake. Determined for her family to persevere and thrive, she continued her staunch support of her sons' professional ambitions and helped them succeed in pursuing higher education and in securing a promising start to their careers.

In telling her life story, Hasmik is most proud of the accomplishments of her two sons, her daughters-in-law and her three grandchildren. After obtaining his degree at Yerevan State Medical University, Samvel completed a fellowship in gynecology in Kharkov, Ukraine, and returned to Yerevan to begin his hospital-based practice. In 1994, he moved to the U.S. with his wife Mayram, and completed his residency training in Family Medicine at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in Lubbock. And Yervand, after obtaining his engineering degree, worked on architectural designs in a private company for several years before moving to the U.S. in 1997, with his wife Astghik and their daughter. In 1999, Hasmik and Hmayak joined their growing family in Texas. Two years later, they moved to the Los Angeles area with Samvel, Mayram and their two children.

Hasmik passed on the value of education and hard work to her children, and it seems that they, in turn, instilled it in their own children. After moving to Los Angeles, Samvel completed a fellowship in Hospice and Palliative Medicine, and he is currently affiliated with both hospitals in Glendale and several skilled nursing facilities, including Ararat Convalescent Hospital, where he serves as Medical Director. With a background in law, Mayram currently manages the billing for Samvel's medical practice. Their daughter Hasmik is a student at Loyola Law School, and their son Khachik is a student at UCLA School of Dentistry. Yervand and Astghik have remained in Texas, where he works as a City Engineer in the Public Works Department of Odessa and she works as an engineer in a private firm. Their daughter Mane, following in Hmayak's footsteps, works as an architect in New York.

Hasmik and Hmayak established a new social circle when they settled in Los Angeles and remained very active until Hmayak's death five years ago. About nine months ago, Hasmik became a resident of Ararat Assisted Living Facility, where her generosity and creativity continue to blossom. For most of her working life, Hasmik supplemented her teaching income by sewing winter coats, hats and other clothing. Now, she knits – not out of necessity, but with love and pleasure for the people to whom she gifts her handiwork. When not keeping her hands busy, she works on her lifelong passion of writing acrostics in both Armenian and English for her loved ones, friends, staff members, or anyone she meets. Her warmth and beautiful spirit gleam through the words and sentiments she expresses so lovingly in her poems.

# NEW WING OF ARARAT ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY ALMOST READY TO WELCOME NEW RESIDENTS

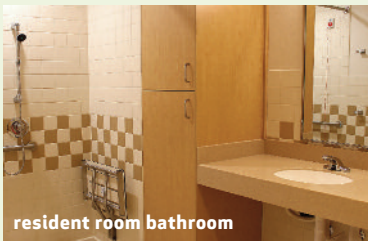
We are happy to announce that construction of the new wing of Ararat Assisted Living Facility is complete, and all that remains are the final touches. The new resident rooms are gradually being dressed with furnishings, and soon after final approval is received from the California Department of Social Services, administration and staff will begin welcoming new residents.



double-occupancy resident room



single-occupancy resident room



resident room bathroom

We are eagerly looking forward to celebrating the opening of the new wing with friends and supporters of the Home. Please mark your calendars...

*Opening  
Gala*

Saturday, August 4, 2018



44-room new wing

For information regarding **OPPORTUNITIES FOR GIVING** in the new wing, please contact Derik Ghookasian or Ani Dikranian at (818) 365-3000 or [derikg@ararathome.org](mailto:derikg@ararathome.org) / [anid@ararathome.org](mailto:anid@ararathome.org).

## — Save the Dates —

1st Tuesdays ~ **MONTHLY LUNCHEONS**  
at Ararat Home ~ organized by the  
Ladies Auxiliary

May 16 ~ **GAME DAY** at Lakeside Golf  
Club (Toluca Lake) ~ organized by the  
Westside Guild

September 8 ~ **PARTY IN PARADISE**  
(Hawaiian theme) at Armenian Center  
(Montebello) ~ organized by the  
Massis Guild

September 30 ~  
**66TH ANNUAL PICNIC**  
at Ararat Home

October 13 ~ **ANNUAL LUNCHEON**  
at Ruth's Chris Steakhouse (Irvine)  
~ organized by the  
Orange County Guild

November 17 ~  
**CASINO NIGHT XV** at Ararat Home

Please visit [www.ararathome.org](http://www.ararathome.org)  
for more information on these events.

## ARARAT HYLIGHTS

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