

Armenians  
in  
Minnesota  
since  
1899



Culture  
Heritage  
History  
Language

Armenian Cultural Organization of Minnesota  
Established 1980

No. 133 Spring 2012

## MinneHyeLites



On  
Saturday  
night January 7th, 2012,  
the 31st annual  
ACOM Gaghan Dinner

was held. For the second year in a row, we marked the occasion at the Minneapolis Marriott Southwest, in Minnetonka. Eighty-eight people attended this year, an increase from last year's attendance. The room was decorated beautifully with our ACOM banner and lit Christmas trees. The candlelit white clothed tables, along with alternating tables of red & green napkins set all in a joyful, festive holiday spirit. ACOM President Tom Keljik offered a few words, including recognizing both past and newly elected members of the ACOM executive committee. After a wonderful meal, all were treated to a couple of dances by our very own Armenian Dance Ensemble, led by Nairy Digris. Thanks to Nairy and all our wonderful dancers for performing. This, of course, was followed by Armenian dancing for everyone! From the very young, to our graceful veterans, a new rug was cut! Our thanks again go out to Harut Khachatryan for running the sound board and playing a nice variety of dance music.

While most of this year's attendees were from the Twin Cities area, we had people who traveled from Rochester, MN to join us. If you were unable to come this year, please plan to join us for our next Gaghan celebration on Saturday, January 5th, 2013.

Mark Wiersbeck  
ACOM Social  
Director



# From Our Readers!

Thanks for a great party (ACOM's Gagahant). We all had fun, especially my granddaughter.

**Aram Charchian**

Many thanks to the ACOM Board members and the different committees that worked very hard this year (on ACOM's Gagahant party) and in the past years.

**Francis Bulbulian**

I appreciate all the fine work you people do to keep the organization going.

**John Kourajian**

Thank you for sending me the ACOM Newsletter. Wow, I made the cover! I also wanted to congratulate you (ADE) on the dancing during the Kebab Fest. I was very pleased to see so many Armenian and non-Armenian young families in attendance. Stay well.

**Hayr Simeon**

Thank you very much for sending the flowers/plants when Doug's father died. We so appreciate the kind thoughts and wishes.

**Judy Ohannesian & Doug Tiffany**

Thank You to all ACOM Members for the work you are doing to keep us (Armenians and Odars) in touch with each other.

**Sarah & Ray Wiersbeck**

My thanks to you for remembering my mother and for such a beautiful autumnal floral arrangement. It is a great comfort to know I am in your care and support as I move through this time of loss and mystery. Thank you for your kindness.

**Joan Poritsky**

I am deeply touched by your attention, warmth and well wishes. Sincerely,

**Katya Poghosyan**  
(Kocharian's mother & grandmother)

ACOM's programs are outstanding, well designed and meaningful.

**Marty Meketarian**

Thanks you for the nice work you people do.

**Azad Mesrobian**

Thank you for the beautiful flowers. They definitely put a smile on her face.

**Kocharians**

I enjoy reading the ACOM Newsletter very much and look forward to the next newsletter.

**Helen Pompeian**

Hope all is well ! Give my best to the Minnesota Community!

**Robert Barsamian**  
(Dallas, TX)

*Many of you remember meeting Robert Barsamian who came to Minnesota in January 1999. He is the artist who collaborated with the University of Minnesota, assisted by Stephen Feinstein, and did the installation of "ABSENCE/PRESENCE", the Artistic Memory of the Holocaust and Genocide, at the Nash Gallery at the University of Minnesota.*

Re: 2011 ACOM Annual Report

Well done, thanks !

**Aram Charchian**

Excellent report !

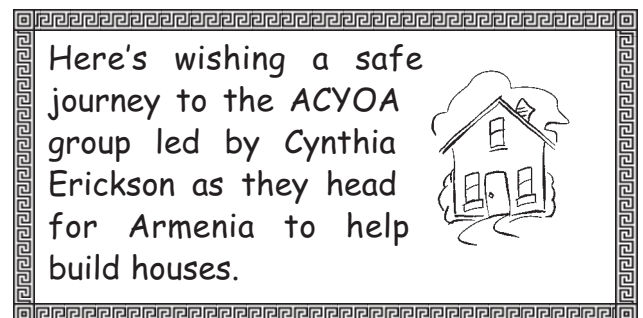
**Francis Bulbulian**



## Our Sympathy

To **Joan Poritsky** on the loss of her mother in October, 2011.

To **Doug Tiffany, Judy Ohannesian, Erica and Harrison**, on the loss of their father and grandfather in October, 2011.



## WHAT WAS IT LIKE GROWING UP AS AN ARMENIAN IN AN ARAB COUNTRY?

A large crowd of 80 assembled in St. Sahag's Fellowship Hall on the afternoon of February 19, 2012 to hear **Karam Bedros, Sam Mesroubian** and **George Yaghsezian** talk about their early years growing up respectively in Beirut, Aleppo, and Cairo. For an hour they each shared their unique as well as common experiences. It was a wonderful occasion to learn more about our fellow Armenian Americans and many of us found ourselves in conversations long after the ending of the formal panel discussions.

**Karam** provided a picture of a very vibrant Armenian community - mostly centered in Beirut. He explained that the Armenian community is given representation in the Lebanese government. He talked about his grand-parents leaving unfriendly Turkey and settling into the beautiful land of the Cedars. The family was involved in transportation and auto/truck repair and parts. Born of Armenian parents and raised Catholic, he went to school where French and Arabic were taught. During the troubles Lebanon experienced, he and other family members decided to head to America for education and opportunity. He has family living in Lebanon and visits when he can. He heads up the IT department for Medtox, located in New Brighton.

**Sam** talked about the varied Armenian communities surrounding Aleppo. There were well established Armenian families living within the city performing many trades and professions. There was also a refugee

area, where life was more rough and immediate. It was in the refugee community that Sam grew up. He talked about the various professions that Armenians dominated including medical doctors, jewelers, watch repair and dentists had lists dominated with community in Cairo.

Armenians found the trades of printing, jewelry, photography, watch repair as well as a smattering of doctors and dentists amongst its midst. Sam is a 3M retiree.

**George** began learning Armenian, French, Arabic and English in school. He eventually learned the trade of printing. He attended an Armenian Catholic church and school. He talked about the various peoples, Muslims, Jews, Christians, Coptic, as well as both Armenian Catholic and Apostolic getting along with one

another. George has many family members that originated from his hometown Cairo that surround him in Minnesota today. George is retired from Banta, a high quality printing company.

We thank these three wise and entertaining gentlemen for giving us a more vibrant understanding of our Armenian American community in Minnesota. The panel discussion piqued much interest and will drive ACOM to create more opportunities for many of our members to share their rich and varied background as well as the common experiences we all feel.

Planning is underway for additional sessions of *What Was it Like Growing Up Armenian in .....*? Watch for an announcement soon!


Tom Keljik  
ACOM President



## STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT ARMENIAN GENOCIDE


In February, three members of our community visited a Holocaust and Genocide class taught by Mr. Tom Franta at Irondale High School in Mounds View, MN. Alice Tashjian, Viola Reimers and Cynthia Erickson spent the morning with Mr. Franta's three classes and described what their mothers (or grandmother) went through during the time they were surviving the Armenian Genocide in 1915 and afterwards. Vi talked about her mother's time in the death march and subsequent travels through the country with other young Armenians, begging for food and working odd jobs in return for a meal. Alice described how many years her mother walked until she finally reached safety and the measures the women took to protect their young women. She showed a map of Anatolia that marked the routes that the Armenians were driven on when they were forced from their villages. Cynthia described how she learned about the torture survivors suffered while researching background material in college to add to her grandmother's story of survival. It made for a very memorable morning for the students, most of whom had never heard of the Armenian Genocide before taking this high school class. Alice even presented a copy of her book about her mother to Mr. Franta for his class' use. The kids were pretty impressed that Alice has a page on Facebook where her mother's story is published! Many thanks to Tom Franta for giving us this wonderful opportunity to share our families' experiences with the young people in his classes. Their interest level was evident from the questions they asked following our presentations.


### COMMENTS & THANK YOU NOTES FROM THE STUDENTS


Thank you for taking your time to come visit our class and speak to us about your experiences and history with the Armenian Genocide. I think it's a topic that not too many American students know about the whole Armenian Genocide, so I think it's great to have guest speakers come to the classes and help inform us about it. Already I've learned a lot about it. Coming into this semester I was just focusing on the Holocaust and the Genocide in Darfur, so I am thankful to have speakers come teach me about a new genocide that I wasn't as familiar with. So once again, I thank you three, Cynthia, Viola, and Alice for coming into our class! 


I truly enjoyed your guys' presence. I recently within the last 3 weeks have learned about the Armenian Genocide. So a few weeks ago I would've had no idea that all this misery and tragedy had happened in Turkey's history. For you guys to come in and share a little bit about your knowledge of what happened during this horrible point in time; was just so beneficial to my heart and mind. Hearing your stories just made this past few weeks of learning so much more powerful. I don't know if I will ever get another chance to say that I have heard a first


generation of a survivor's story. For me and a lot of others this experience was very powerful. I thought that it was amazing how willing you all are, to share you families' history. Because if you don't then no one would. Also your testimonies made me curious about my family's history and it made me realize I don't know much about it. History is so important. Thank you so much for your time. I enjoyed your stories and truths very much.



Thank you so much for coming into our Holocaust and Genocide Studies class. I am so glad that you are all sharing your story and traveling around to educate people about what your family members went through. It feels more real and it really hits me when I hear a personal story that relates to the material I am learning. I know it is hard to share a story like the ones you three told, but you are using it to educate and to show awareness to students and adults. You all did a great job connecting with our class. I loved hearing each of your connections with the genocide because it was so heart-felt and showed how the genocide still affects the generations of the families that went through it so long ago. Thank you once again. Keep sharing your knowledge and stories!! 


I loved hearing each of your connections with the genocide because it was so heart-felt and showed how the genocide still affects the generations of the families that went through it so long ago. 

I really enjoyed seeing the map and trail that was used for the Death Marches. It was really eye opening to see that and hearing the first hand account as well. 

Your stories were so moving and they really brought to life the consequences of the genocide. 

I learned that no matter what happens, don't forget your people, your culture, and your people's history. 

It's one thing to read it in textbooks and to watch movies about the atrocities that happened, but to actually see faces and hear voices of people that are closely connected with the genocide itself really made the whole thing come to life for me.   


In class we only learn about the basis of things, not the little stories like: when Alice told the story about her mom's head being shaved and that she had many struggles throughout her life. 

I know you all do not want pity because I can tell you are all strong and passionate about your cultural history, but I do hope you all know that I was very touched by what you shared with us and the perspective we all were exposed to. I've taken a

SILENCES

MY MOTHER'S WILL TO SURVIVE

by Alice Agnes Tashjian

This is the story of an astonishingly courageous woman who survived the Armenian Genocide in the early part of the 20th century.

<https://www.facebook.com/#!/SilencesbyAliceAgnesTashjian>

Armenian Museum Library of America

On April 22, ALMA commemorated the Armenian Genocide along with the Ukrainian Genocide of the 1930's, largely forgotten today, and the Great Hunger of the Irish people in the 1840's resulting from the deliberate "Potato Famine," each one of them causing millions of deaths.

Armenian-Americans understandably focus, each April, on the commemoration of the 1915 Armenian Genocide. Yet, as the Armenian Genocide was a forerunner of countless other genocides during the past and current century, the Armenian Library and Museum of America firmly believes it fitting also to acknowledge and commemorate the suffering and deaths from all genocides. ALMA has committed to do that in the past, and will continue to do so in future years.

Brief talks were given by Dr. Joseph Downes on the Irish Great Hunger, Dr. Dikran Kaligian on the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide and Attorney Paul Rabchenuk on the Ukrainian Genocide. The commemoration was followed by a brief Ukrainian religious service with priest and choir.

ALMA has arranged for a travelling exhibition on the Ukrainian Holodomor to be on display in the Terjenian-Thomas Gallery, courtesy of the Connecticut Holodomor Awareness Committee.

MADE IN ARMENIA DIRECT (MIAD)

Every November, ACOM sponsors a sale day in cooperation with Made In Armenia Direct (MIAD) to raise funds to be used to support ACOM events.

Last fall, ACOM realized a gain of about \$60 from the sale of items available from MIAD. Made in Armenia Direct is an organization which supports Armenian artisans and their families and encourages the preservation of their native craftsmanship and unique Armenian artistry.

Their products can be seen anytime at [www.madeinarmeniadirect.com](http://www.madeinarmeniadirect.com).

Thank you to everyone who made purchases and supported ACOM as well as deserving Armenian craftsmen. Watch for another MIAD shopping day this fall!

Let's Get Acquainted

This is a new feature where we ask our members to get to know each other by sharing just a paragraph or two about themselves. We can offer a set of questions to make it easy to get started. You're more than welcome to expand on any of them or just "wing it" - whatever you are comfortable with. This issue we begin with our editor, Peggy Merjanian.



I was raised very Armenian in Arlington, Massachusetts. Beginning in my early teens, I was active in the AYF (Armenian Youth Federation.) While still in high

school, I joined the Komitas Choral Society of Boston, an Armenian choral group led by Maestro Rouben Gregorian. This experience exposed me to many Armenian folk songs that are with me to this day. The choral group presented concerts at just about every university in the Boston area and even got to sing at the New York World's Fair. The 25+ years I sang with this marvelous group are very close to my heart.

Control Data brought me to Minnesota in January, 1983 for a training program. During that time, thanks to Aram Charchian, I met Steve Merjanian. In July, we celebrate our 24th wedding anniversary.

Steve introduced me to antique and classic boats which opened up a whole other world that consumed much of my spare time. I became quite learned in many aspects of wood boats - even got to varnish one.

Learning about my Armenian heritage however I can is now my focus. I joined ACOM and served as President in 1985. I am presently in my 24th year as editor of *MinneHyeLites*. (When I like something, I don't let go.) My love for singing is satisfied by singing in the choir of St. Sahag Armenian Church.

I have two sons still residing out East - Richard who is married with two children: Keith, 18 and Shae, 14. Rich is a Physical Therapist/Clinical Specialist currently working toward his PhD and coaches gymnastics. Gregory is a pilot with more than 25 years experience in both private aircraft and as a Captain with Continental Express - flying is his passion. Both are musicians - Rich on guitar and Greg on drums.

We'd love to "get acquainted" with you in our next newsletter. Give Peggy a call at 952-473-HYEM and let's do it. I'll give as much help as you would like.

## ACOM GENOCIDE COMMEMORATION -- PASSING THE TORCH

Nearly 100 people assembled at St Sahag on April 24, 2012 for the traditional ACOM memorial of the Armenian Genocide. The event was crafted of music, poetry, and poignant spoken words that deepened our emotional connection with the events of 97 years ago.



We were treated with beautiful music from a quartet (Hagop & Thomas Toghramadjian, Andy & Max Ylitalo), and by Armen Sahakyan, who dazzled us with four complex, gorgeous and moving piano pieces.

The theme centered on passing the torch to the new generation with the knowledge that "The arch of history is long, but bends towards justice." This quote from Martin Luther King, set the tone that we must honor the past, struggle with that memory and work towards justice for all.

A reception followed in the Fellowship Hall. During that time, Bradley Erickson was honored on his 25th birthday with a cake and a hearty rendition of "Happy Birthday to You." This was followed by a presentation by De La Salle high school students from Minneapolis who

had selected the Armenian Genocide as their website - History Day Project. They shared with the audience what horrors they learned had occurred and that they were stunned that there are people and nations that carry on denial in the face of evidence of the crime.

As usual, Terry McGibbon came to the rescue on a number of technical issues ranging from last minute printing to sound systems, creating-deploying a movie screen used in the De La Salle presentation, and over-all orchestration and preparation of the sanctuary. We are all indebted to his expertise and willingness to serve our little community. Our hats are tipped in appreciation to Terry.

Lou Ann Matossian expertly chaired the committee that was supported by ACOM and ACYOA. Comments were shared in Fellowship Hall that this was a moving and profound tribute to remembrance of April 24, 1915.

*Tom Keljik*  
ACOM President

### ACOM PRESENTS "MOVIE NIGHT"

On Saturday evening, March 10, about 33 people attended ACOM's first Movie Night in the St. Sahag Church fellowship hall and enjoyed popcorn, soda and a nice movie.

The movie chosen for this night was "The Journey", a story about a young woman who had moved from Armenia to America at a young age, and returned to her home country during the move for independence in 1991. While not a very exciting story, the crowd seemed to enjoy it despite the occurrence of a minor technical difficulty.

The first half of the movie takes place in New York City with all of the people speaking English. The second half takes place in Yerevan, Armenia, with all of the people speaking Armenian. When the DVD of the movie had been previewed, English subtitles appeared whenever the people were speaking Armenian. Unfortunately, when the movie was shown at St. Sahag, the English subtitles were not present. After a couple of attempts to turn the subtitles on failed, we continued watching the movie with the help of one of the attendees, Hasmig (Jasmine) Keller, who periodically interpreted the Armenian into English. A big thank you to Hasmig for her help.

As a side note, the main actress in the movie, Sona Tatoyan, took part in a house-building trip to Armenia in 2007 led by our own Cynthia Erickson.

Plan ahead to take part in ACOM's second movie night, to be held on June 23rd, when we will be presenting Atom Egoyan's "Ararat".

*Leroy Erickson*  
ACOM Vice President (6)

### A FRIEND RETURNS

Professor Taner Akçam returned to Minneapolis Monday night April 16, 2012, as the speaker for the Tenth Annual Arsham and Charlotte Ohanessian Lecture Series. Eric Weitz - University of Minnesota History Department and holder of the Ohanessian Chair at the University of Minnesota, introduced Taner and lauded the Ohanessian family for their decision ten years ago to fund the chair. Taner's opening remarks explained how pivotal the University and his Minnesota-Armenian friends were in his career. Of course, our own Lou Ann Matossian was an editor to the book *The Young Turks' Crime Against Humanity*. Professor Akçam proceeded to highlight and enlighten the audience with his findings of newly found Ottoman documents.

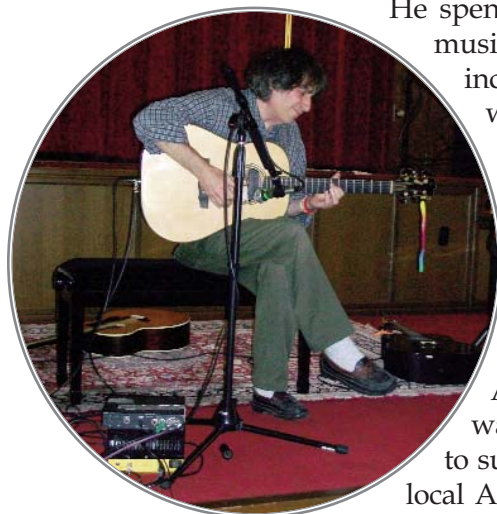
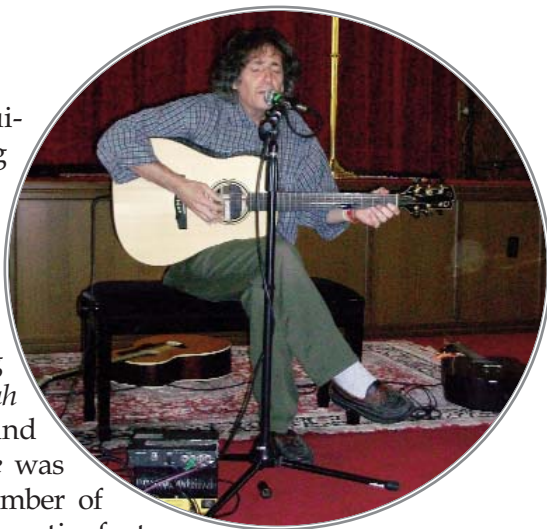
He went on to explain that the Young Turks were driven by a "social engineering" objective to limit the presence of the Armenians to no more than 5% concentration in the western and 10% in the eastern provinces. This was revealed by a treasure trove of telegrams and other government documents written primarily between 1914-1916, that most recently have been released in Istanbul and studied by Akçam.

The original plan was to re-distribute the Armenian population so as to dilute and weaken it, and to make it more vulnerable to forced conversion to Islam. The quest to dilute quickly evolved into a policy to annihilate the Armenians. Many books were sold during a social gathering after the presentation and will provide further enlightenment to readers.

*Tom Keljik*  
ACOM President

## GULEZIAN CONCERT

Michael Gulezian, a highly acclaimed solo acoustic instrumental guitarist, performed an ACOM-sponsored benefit concert at St. Sahag Church before an audience of over 50 attendees. Not only were the sounds coming from his guitar amazing, but also the visual show of his handwork.



He spent over an hour mixing guitar music only with a few songs he sang including a version of *O Suzannah* which was wistfully delivered and richly rendered. *Little Meggie* was gentle and sweet, while a number of others were acoustical gymnastic feats.

Those gathered on the afternoon of April 22, 2012 were delivered a large treat of wonderful music and they responded with appreciation and applause.

A sizable sum of money, \$795 to be exact, was generated from the benefit and will go to support Fuller Center for Housing and the local ACYOA members who are embarking for Armenia this June - headed by our own Cynthia Erickson.



Tom Keljik, Gloria Faust & Michael Gulezian



Nairy Digis & Michael Gulezian

Michael talked about his Armenian parentage and his astonishment at finding an Armenian community in the Twin Cities.

He credited Nairy Digris with sending him an email last year when she found out that an Armenian guitar player had been in town, and making him commit to saying hello when he returned to Minnesota, which he did. Now that he has found us and excited us with his music, we think there will be many future engagements to enjoy.

Tom Keljik  
ACOM President

## ALBERT EINSTEIN'S BRAIN

Lucy Rorke-Adams, sister of ACOM member, Harriet Balian, is a prominent neuropathologist at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. She donated 46 slides containing Albert Einstein's brain (gray matter) to the Mutter Museum of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia.

"They are a very important part of medical history," said Rorke-Adams, 82, who received the slides from a colleague in the mid-1979s. The slides reveal a kind of medical artistry that has been lost to the past. Months were spent slicing the tissue into thin sections so they could be preserved for posterity.

Einstein, so renowned for his theory of relativity and other physics achievements that his very name is synonymous with intellect. Rorke-Adams, who estimates she had examined 25,000 brains during her career, noted that his brain cells looked quite youthful, given that Einstein was 76 when he died. She wanted to make sure the slides were safely in the hands of a museum before she dies, lest they be lost or destroyed. Rork-Adams is a 1957 graduate of the University of Minnesota Medical School. "I'm working full time and still loving it" she said. "I'm one of those lucky people who wants to get up in the morning and go to work."



Lucy Rorke-Adams, a neuropathologist, with one of the slices of Albert Einstein's brain.

## ANOTHER FESTIVAL OF NATIONS COME AND GONE

(MAY 3, 4, 5, 6, 2012)



While celebrating its 80th year, the Festival attracted over and above 50,000 attendees of all ages: infants, school-age children, adults. This year, the Armenian Dance Ensemble (ADE) members were the only representative of our heritage, culture, music and dance. The group performed seven times: during the day for students, and in the afternoons and evenings for the general public.

I want to express my most sincere appreciation to ADE members for their patience, commitment and interest in Armenian music and dance. Coming to regular Sunday rehearsals, working on costumes, learning new music and dance steps, it all leads to disciplined and attractive performances. You make the Armenians proud.

### THANK YOU!

Gina Bonsignore  
Bradley Erickson  
Cynthia Erickson  
Karen Genetti  
Lynne Gildensoph  
Alarica Hassett  
Emily Jarrett-Hughes  
Ed Kvarnes  
Terry McGibbon  
Theresa Mish  
Lynn Paulin.

Special thanks to Terry for being the most valuable "techy" of the Ensemble.



I also want to thank Seda Bagdasarova and Lou Ann Matossian who joined us at our Atrium performance on Sunday, for the first time, and sang along for two of our dances.

To the Ensemble family members who were kind enough to photograph and videotape our performances, please know that you are very much appreciated.



We will soon start rehearsing again, so anyone interested in joining the group should connect with me as soon as possible. Men, women, boys, girls. Children over 5 feet 2 inches tall are more than welcome to join.

*Nairy Digris*  
651-639-9346





VARTKESS TARBASSIAN'S NEPHEW IS MARK WIERSBECK, ACOM EXECUTIVE MEMBER.  
TARBASSIAN SERVED IN KOREA. FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW  
CONDUCTED BY PARADE MAGAZINE IN MASSACHUSETTS - Parade Magazine, Nov. 6, 2011

**Parade:** Can you tell me when and where you served?

**Tarbassian:** I served in the United States Army in 1952 to 1954. After training I was sent to Busan, Korea.

**Parade:** What do you remember most about the day you left home?

**Tarbassian:** A lot of family and friends sent me off. But my parents, well, they were quite shaken. I was headed for a newer life.... I didn't like the thoughts of what lay ahead, I'll be honest with you.

**Parade:** What was your first impression of Korea?

**Tarbassian:** Mayhem. Korea was a country which was pocketed at the time with shell burst holes. The hills were devoid of trees. They were burnt and completely blasted away. The countryside was desolate. You didn't run into many civilians. They had all fled southward as I progressed northward towards the front.

**Parade:** I understand you had a remarkable experience during your first patrol of the DMZ. Can you tell me more about what happened?

**Tarbassian:** Oh yes. First, let me take you back to high school for a moment. One of my classmates was Perry Wong. Perry and I graduated high school together, and then we got drafted together. And we went into the Army on the same day at Fort Devens. Then, we went our separate ways.

Now, my first night inside the DMZ was terrifying because I had no idea what to expect. The commanding officer of my company told me that I was going into the DMZ, and my objective was to simply act as Paul Revere to give the alarm in case the Chinese Communists came down from the hills, and to alert the troops well behind me.

The DMZ was 2.5 miles wide and 150 miles long. There's a line that runs down the middle of it called the Dead Line. If you went behind that line, you were a dead man because they had their troops on the other side just waiting for things to happen. They told me that I was to go up a certain hill and relieve a GI who had put in 12 hours up there already. I would then put in 12 hours at the outpost myself.

They dropped me at the base of the hill, and so I started to climb. And as I started to rise through up the mountainside, I was rising through a shroud of fog. And

that didn't make me feel particularly happy. It was quite spooky, as a matter of fact. And, my nerves started to get jangled. When I finally got to the top where the bunker was, I opened the flap to enter into the bunker, and I was met by yellow skin. I immediately raised my rifle. I was prepared to shoot the person inside the bunker. I thought he must be a Chinese Communist or a North Korean trooper.

But it happened to be an American named Perry Wong, my high school classmate. That was a close call. I almost shot and killed someone that I grew up with. To this day, that still shakes me up thinking of what could've happened. I wouldn't be able to live with that nightmare. But, we rejoiced once we recognized one another.

**Parade:** How often do you think about your war experiences today?

**Tarbassian:** Well, I don't have the nightmares I used to have. My mother used to come in, shake me and wake me up because I'd be screaming in my sleep, "The Chinese are coming, the Chinese are coming!" It took me about a year or two just to get over that experience. It can really frighten a man. It did certainly frighten me.

**Parade:** What do you remember most about coming home?

**Tarbassian:** I want to see my parents. My mom opened the door and we rejoiced, and she said, "Dad's waiting for you upstairs." So, I went upstairs to the parlor, and there was dad sitting in his armchair watching TV. He saw me come in. He reached to the side of the chair and brought up a six pack of beer, shocked the hell out of me. I had never seen dad with a case of beer or a can of beer in my life. That was quite an experience.

**Parade:** Who do you think of most on Veterans Day?

**Tarbassian:** I can't give enough tribute to those who died or suffered some wound in the service. They come number one. Those that gave all. Anyone else falls second best. In that category of second best, I could name quite a few and tell you why I give them applause. They were great people, great soldiers, and I'll always remember them.

The full interview can be seen at:

<http://www.parade.com/news/veterans/articles/vartkess-tarbassian.html>



**PARIS, FRANCE (A.W.)—THE FRENCH SENATE ON JAN. 23, 2012, PASSED A BILL CRIMINALIZING THE DENIAL OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE, DESPITE THREATS AND BULLYING FROM THE TURKISH STATE. THE BILL PASSED WITH 127 VOTES FOR, 86 AGAINST.**

The French Senate Drafted by French General Assembly member Valerie Boyer, the bill renders denial punishable with a year in jail and a fine of 45,000 euros (\$58,000). It is slated to be signed into law by French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

During the proceedings, members of the French Senate spoke powerfully and vocally in support of the bill, noting that it's not directed against any specific country – that it is merely an effort to honor the memory of genocide victims and the struggle against hate speech.

French-Armenian intellectuals and artists—including Charles Aznavour, Serge Avedikian, Simon Abkarian, and Levon Sayan—had each issued a call to the French Senate to pass the bill.

Commenting on the vote, Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) Executive Director Aram Hamparian said, "Today's courageous vote by the French Senate shines the spotlight across the Atlantic, on American policymakers who, for far too long, have let Ankara block U.S. recognition of the Armenian Genocide."

"We mark this occasion by urging President Obama to honor his pledge to recognize the Armenian Genocide and by calling on the U.S. House leadership to allow a vote on the Armenian Genocide Resolution, H.Res.304," he added.

Thousands of French-Armenians gathered in front of the Senate building to express their support for the bill. The crowd celebrated by singing Armenian national and revolutionary songs.

## MINNESOTA DEER WANTS TO GET A COLLEGE DEGREE

(and perhaps visit Prof. Lynne Gildensoph while on campus?...) Cops fatally shoot deer after it barges into St. Kate's building during classes

Article by: [PAUL WALSH](#), Star Tribune  
Updated: November 3, 2011 - 9:39 AM

A deer busted through a window of a St. Catherine University building as classes were in session, and St. Paul police tracked down and fatally shot the animal. The five-point buck met its fate Wednesday evening in the Coeur de Catherine building, said police spokesman Howie Padilla.

Students told police that an unleashed dog had been chasing the deer on the grounds of the university. The deer broke through an O'Neill Center for Academic Development window that was about a foot and a half off the ground, went through a sheetrock wall and took refuge for a time in a stairwell before it was tracked down and shot, Padilla said. The deer didn't enter any of the classes that were underway.

Police decided to shoot the animal before it could do further damage or become a threat to students, the spokesman said. "A frightened deer doesn't distinguish between people who are trying to harm it" and others, Padilla said. "In deference to the safety of the people in the building, we were forced to put the deer down." Animal control personnel removed the carcass, he said.

The Coeur de Catherine building sits on the western edge of campus near the Dew Drop Pond in St. Paul's Highland Park neighborhood. Along with classrooms, it houses the Student Center and Activities Office for the 5,300-student Catholic school.

*Students Continued from page 4*

I've taken a moment of silence for the innocent Armenian people that have passed.



It really opened my eyes to how the genocide affects even today's generations. I learned that it doesn't JUST affect the people that were in it, it affects future generations. I never really realized the affect that it had until I listened to your presentation.



I can relate to Viola's story because when I was a little girl I had to witness the SPLA (Arabic people) come into our homes and take our families. And it was always hard on the mothers and children who were left without their dads. I thought it was extremely interesting how grateful your families were to be in America.



*One student even took the time to figure out how to write a thank you note to us in Armenian. (We assume he used Google Translate to do this.)*

**ACOM Annual Picnic**  
**July 15, 2012**  
**1:00 p.m.**



**Mark Your Calendar Today!**

ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21, 2012, THE ARMENIAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM OF AMERICA (ALMA) AND THE FRENCH CULTURAL CENTER HOSTED THE ARMENIAN SOIREE AT THE FRENCH CULTURAL CENTER

France and Armenia have been close for centuries, despite their geographic distance. From the Armenian alphabet Denis Diderot published in 1765, to numerous French personalities of Armenian descent (singers Charles Aznavour and Sylvie Vartan, film director Francis Veber, former prime minister Edouard Balladur), the two cultures have shared a rich history.

In honor of this exchange, ALMA teamed up with the French Cultural Center in Boston to organize an Armenian soiree as part of 2012's Francophone Celebration in New England. This event featured a one-night-only exhibition of the French Cultural Center's collection of photographs by Yousuf Karsh and a small traveling exhibit produced by ALMA, "Armenie, Mon Amie: The French-Armenian Connection", which included an original Armenian alphabet from the French Encyclopedia and some beautiful examples of Armenian laces. Armenian hors-d'oeuvres and French wine were served throughout the evening along with musical entertainment. This event was presented with the generous support of the Québec Government Office in Boston and the Consulate General of Canada in Boston.

**YOUR FAMILY HISTORY**

For those who want to gather all their family history data in one place, check out the web site [www.armenianfamilytree.com](http://www.armenianfamilytree.com). This is an online family tree builder where you can enter family data and share it with others. A variety of research services is also offered.



**2012 ACOM MEMBERS**

*Names that are in bold type have donated more than \$50.00 to ACOM.*

*Our sincere thanks for everyone's most generous support.*

- |                     |                              |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Adamek              | Tina & David                 |
| Agadzhanova         | Galina                       |
| Andeweg             | George & Jeanne              |
| Aram                | Connie & George              |
| <b>Asgian</b>       | <b>Phil</b>                  |
| <b>Baradaran</b>    | <b>Kathie &amp; Jaff</b>     |
| Bobgan              | Harold                       |
| Bulbulian           | Francis & Barb               |
| Charchian           | Aram & Ruth                  |
| Clarke              | Barbara                      |
| Desteian & Savage   | John & Judith                |
| Desteian & Tashjian | Aram & Aja                   |
| Digris & McGibbon   | Nairy & Terry                |
| <b>Dourgarian</b>   | <b>Gregg</b>                 |
| Ehramjian           | Vartkes                      |
| Faust               | Gloria & Dave                |
| Favre               | Margaret & Jim               |
| Gauro               | Boghos                       |
| Gildensoph          | Lynne                        |
| Gregorian           | Henry & Laurel               |
| Hayes               | Michelle                     |
| Hayes               | Jim & Adrienne               |
| <b>Keljik</b>       | <b>Mark &amp; Caren</b>      |
| Keljik & Collins    | Tom & Jennifer               |
| Kocharian & Davtian | Armen & Marine               |
| Matossian           | Lou Ann                      |
| Meketarian          | Marty & Mara                 |
| Merjanian           | Steve & Peggy                |
| Mesrobian           | Azad & Karen                 |
| Mesroubian          | Sam & Sylvia                 |
| Nyholm              | Peter, Dana & family         |
| Ohannesian          | Judy, Doug Tiffinay & family |
| Ohanessian          | Sita                         |
| Oyler               | Bill                         |
| <b>Pompeian</b>     | <b>Helen</b>                 |
| Saakova             | Karina                       |
| Samelian            | Amy                          |
| Savayan             | Peka                         |
| Souslian            | Kristapor                    |
| Tashian             | Alice & Harry                |
| Teosyan             | Yelena & Badasarov, Georgiy  |
| Toghramadjian       | Avo, Katie & family          |
| Warren              | Melanie                      |
| Wiersbeck           | Ray & Sarah                  |
| Wiersbeck           | Mark                         |
| Yaghsezian          | George, Aida, Gregory        |

## TWO LEAVING - TWO JOINING

Lynne Gildensoph and Mark Wiersbeck have been valued members of the ACOM board for years. Without people like these two, we would have a less exciting and vibrant Minnesota-Armenian community. Fortunately, they have pitched in year after year. While they have both asked for a break, we know they will be right around the corner if and when we may need their special talents. Take a well deserved break Lynne and Mark, but don't get too far from the action.

Tina Adamek has accepted and has been approved by the ACOM board and the ACOM dues-paid membership to serve as secretary of the executive committee. She lives in River Falls, Wisconsin, and will need to sneak over the border for our monthly board meetings. I'm sure we will find a number of opportunities to head her way as well. It's the spirit of willingness from many in our community that makes serving in such an organization a pleasure.

Likewise, with Mark leaving, we needed some extra special care. Adrienne and Michelle Hayes said yes to helping and have become the dynamic Hayes duo undertaking the role of social co-directors. Both have served terms on the board in the past and bring fresh ideas for this year's social happenings.

Tom Keljik  
ACOM President

*Our sincere thanks to the outgoing committee members for their contribution to ACOM and the Armenian community.*

### ARMENIAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION OF MINNESOTA

203 North Howell Street ~ St. Paul, MN 55104

#### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President:	Tom Keljik	651-659-0552
Vice President:	Leroy Erickson	651-917-1818
Treasurer:	Nairy Digris	651-639-9346
Secretary:	Tina Adamek	751-425-2315
Social Co-Directors:	Adrienne Hayes	612-866-4277
	Michelle Hayes	612-867-1628
External Affairs & Cultural Dir:	Lou Ann Matossian	612-929-2947
Past President:	Mark Keljik	612-823-6338
Newsletter Editor:	Peggy Merjanian	952-473-HYEM

### ARMENIAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION OF MINNESOTA (ACOM)

#### MISSION STATEMENT

- 1) To provide programs and events which encourage its members to learn Armenian culture, language, history and heritage.
- 2) To provide programs of Armenian culture, language, history and heritage for the general Minnesota area.
- 3) To provide an environment which encourages participation of all Armenians, their relations and friends who have an interest in Armenian culture, regardless of religious, political or social differences, and to promote harmony among its members.
- 4) To provide periodic gatherings and meetings for the cultural furtherance of the Armenian people, their relations and friends who have an interest in Armenian culture within the general Minnesota area.

#### CONSTITUTION

The Armenian Cultural Organization of Minnesota (ACOM) preserves and promotes Armenian culture, language, history and heritage in Minnesota and the upper Midwest. Founded in 1980 and headquartered in St. Paul, ACOM is the oldest and largest Armenian organization in the state.

ACOM welcomes everyone, regardless of ethnic, religious, or political affiliation, who takes an interest in Armenia and Armenians. Our members include first-generation through fourth-generation Minnesota Armenians, their families, and non-Armenian friends of the community.

ACOM's numerous cultural and social events include Armenian dance parties (barahantess), guest speakers, Armenian language classes, folk dance lessons and performances by the Armenian Dance Ensemble of Minnesota, chamber music concerts by the Armenian Music Ensemble, art shows, summer picnics, and craft sales. ACOM also sponsors all Armenian activities at the International Institute's *Festival of Nations*, a major regional folk festival held annually in St. Paul. Minnesota Armenians were founding participants in 1932; today, the Festival is ACOM's most visible public venue.

The ACOM office and most activities are in the historic St. Sahag Armenian Church building, at the intersection of Dayton and Howell, in the Merriam Park neighborhood of St. Paul. As an independent, 501(c)3 non-profit organization, ACOM is supported primarily by membership dues and private donations. Gifts to ACOM are tax-deductible to the extent permissible by law.



**ACOM 2012 CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

For further info, call Tom Keljik, ACOM President, 651-659-0552



<u>Month</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Time</u>
January	7	Gaghant - Barahantess	5:30 PM
	11	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
February	15	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
	19	What was it like growing up Armenian in ....	1:00 PM
March	8	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Jones-Harrison Residence, Mpls	7:00 PM
	10	Movie and discussion	7:00 PM
	11	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Preview for Festival of Nations	1:00 PM
	14	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
April	18	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
	22	Michael Gulezian Guitar Concert, St. Sahag	1:00 PM
	24	Genocide Remembrance Service, St. Sahag	7:00 PM
	26	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Sholom Home East, St. Paul	7:00 PM
May	3,4,5,6	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Festival of Nations	ALL DAY
	16	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Walker Elder Suites, Edina	2:00 PM
	16	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
	18	Stepan Partamian Presentation	7:00 PM
	20	What was it like growing up Armenian in ....	1:30 PM
	22	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Edina Care and Rehab, Edina	7:00 PM
June	12	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Episcopal Homes, St. Paul	7:00 PM
	13	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
	23	Movie and discussion	7:00 PM
July	12	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Sholom Home East, St. Paul	7:00 PM
	15	Picnic, St. Sahag Backyard	1:00 PM
	18	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
	20	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Hennepin County Govt. Center	12:00 Noon
	22	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Millner Winery & Vineyard min-fest	12:00 & 2:00 PM
August	8	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Centennial Lakes Park, Edina	7:00 PM
	15	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
September	9	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Cerenity Senior Care, St. Paul	2:00 PM
	19	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
	29	Voski Ashoun - grapes, cheese, wine & brandy tasting	7:00 PM
October	11	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Sholom Home East, St. Paul	7:00 PM
	17	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
November	9	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Walker Elder Suites, Edina	2:00 PM
	11	" Pilaf Cook-off "	12.30 PM
	14	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
December	12	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM



ACOM has placed a barrel in the Fellowship Hall along with empty grocery bags on the side.

Please keep in mind the less fortunate and bring non-perishable food items.

Your donated items will be much appreciated by those who are in need.

ACOM has been regularly delivering bags of food to the Keystone Foodshelf.

They have delivered more than 300 pounds of food.

**Thank You!**

**ACOM 2013 CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

January	5, 2013	Gaghant - Barahantess	5:30 PM
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Armenian Cultural Organization  
of Minnesota  
Culture. Heritage. History. Language.

# ACOM MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL FORM

VALID THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2012

NAME(S): \_\_\_\_\_

STREET: \_\_\_\_\_ City/St/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

- HOUSEHOLD MEMBERSHIP\***  
**MINNESOTA RESIDENTS . . . . . \$30.00**
- OUT OF STATE . . . . . \$15.00**  
**(Newsletter Only)**
- CONTRIBUTING . . . . . \$100.00**

*\*Includes all members of one household*

Comments? \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE MAKE YOUR CHECK PAYABLE TO ACOM.**

**COMPLETE THIS FORM and**  
**RETURN IT WITH YOUR CHECK TO**   **Nairy Digris, Treasurer**  
**1703 Skillman Ave. W.**  
**Roseville MN 55113**

**We appreciate and count on your continued support.**

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This saves ACOM considerable printing and mailing costs.

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Peggy Merjanian, Editor  
1703 Skillman Ave. West  
Roseville MN 55113

*MinneHyeLites*  
Newsletter #133 Spring, 2012

Armenian Cultural Organization  
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Culture. Heritage. History. Language.