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Culture
Heritage
History
Language

Armenian Cultural Organization of Minnesota
Established 1980

No. 155 Summer 2019

MinneHyeLites

POOL PARTY

You are invited to the ACOM Annual Poolside Picnic and Party at the Gregorians!

SUNDAY, August 25, 2019

2:00 pm

Henry and Laurel's Home Address:
2742 Marion St., Roseville, MN



What: Annual ACOM Pool Party and Potluck

Why: A great chance to visit with each other and enjoy a salt-water pool heated to a balmy 90 degrees.

What to Bring: Yourself, Your Family, a Dish to Share, and Swimsuit/Towels

The Gregorians will grill bratwursts and ACOM will provide beverages, plates and tableware

Please RSVP: Terry McGibbon at hyebar@yahoo.com

www.mnarmenians.org

A Fond Farewell to Armineh Kachatoorian

It was hard to say goodbye to Armineh! Even though we knew her for only a few years, she fit so well that it seemed we had known her for a VERY LONG TIME! We will miss you, Armineh, and if you ever come to Minnesota for a visit, make sure to let us know.

Nairy

Hello to all my Minnesotan friends and St. Sahag parishioners

It was a little over 3 years ago when I moved to Minnesota from California.

As you all have heard I have worked the last 22 years of my career at 3M. Four years ago 3M decided to integrate the Dental and Orthodontic divisions to create the 3M Oral Care Division. As a result of this integration some redundant positions were eliminated and others were given the opportunity to move to 3M Center in St. Paul from Monrovia, CA, in order to continue their employment. I was one of about 40 who were affected. Almost half of this group decided to uproot their families and move to Minnesota. As my children were already young adults and semi-independent, I decided my best option was to leave behind my husband, home, kids, mother, sister and her family, as well as friends and move to Minnesota to continue working at 3M for a few more years.

On June 16th, 2016, the day after my husband and I arrived in Minnesota, I decided to search the internet for any local Armenian church or community. How surprised we were to find that there was an actual Armenian Church in St. Paul, only 20 minutes from my apartment! Surb Sahag Hayots Yegeghetsi. And there was even weekly badarak at the church by a residing priest! This was a very pleasant surprise to us.

But first, I have to explain that I was born and lived in Tehran, Iran for the first 17 years of my life where there were abundant choices of Armenian cultural communities, churches, schools, athletics clubs, etc. I attended Armenian school for my first 9 years of school, was a Girl Scout at Ararat Homenetmen Organization and competed in Volleyball and Basketball competitions representing the Armenian Athletic clubs. When I arrived in Southern California in 1977 to attend USC I joined the Armenian Student Association and continued my involvement with the vast Armenian community in Glendale. This involvement and total submersion within the Armenian community and church continued as I got married, had kids, and sent them to Armenian schools and cultural/athletic clubs.

All of the above was meant to show how involved and surrounded I was with the Armenian community and how I longed for it here in Minnesota, away from my family and friends.

The first time I came to church I met Yeretskin, Father Tadeos and the other members of the parish who were very warm, welcoming and friendly. Hearing the badarak in Armenian and being able to speak Armenian to some of the parishioners filled the void in me that had been created by the distance from my family and friends. I built friendships and relationships with many members of the parish.

I had found a home away from home.

Then I discovered ACOM and the Armenian Dance Ensemble. I enjoyed participating in the activities of ACOM as well as joining the ADE, which, I quickly found out was WAY above the level of my dance knowledge and capabilities. But, I got to know a very nice group of women and men and was able to listen to traditional Armenian music and observe the talented members of that group perform Armenian dances wearing authentic costumes. I even joined the Armenian Folk Singing group for a short while and enjoyed singing a few Armenian songs.

I had found all the necessary elements to fill my soul with what it was yearning for.

I was also somehow surprised how this small community was able to organize and successfully implement so many events and programs. Kudos to Father Tadeos, Michele, Gayaneh, the Parish Council, the Women's Guild and all the hard working members of this community that willingly donate their time and resources to successfully implement these programs. I was very happy, to be able to participate and contribute in some small way towards organizing and implementing some of these events. I was honored to be asked to join the Parish Council and am sad that I will have to leave not fulfilling my 2-year term. But from what I can see, there are many programs and ideas that will help grow and strengthen the bonds of this community in the future.

I can't tell you how I appreciate the spiritual and religious guidance from Father Tadeos when my family members were going through hard times.

I appreciate Gayaneh and Michele's friendship and bow to their unending dedication to this church and community.

Chacké and Steve, your kindness and hospitality towards my family and I has been much appreciated and we are honored to have known you.

Caroline and family, Avo, Katie and family, Nora and family, Margarita, Steven, Lydia, Artyom, Anita, Segey, George, Jeannie, Peka, Steve, Maria, Jim, Charlie, Lexi, Austen, Dana, Pete and family, Piere and family, Emma, Drew and Yara, Nairy, Terry and many others, you have been my friends and supporters and I would not have known any of you if I had not taken the 3M offer to move here. But ultimately, God has plans for us and we need to accept, be resilient and make the best of any situation to grow and also help others around us.

Please keep in touch and let me know when you visit Southern California.

Armineh

ACOM 2019 Calendar

Questions, Suggestions, email: hyebar@yahoo.com
or call ACOM President, Nairy at: 651-639-9346



Armenian Cultural Organization of Minnesota, 39 years and going strong !!

DATE	DAY	TIME	LOCATION	EVENT
11-Jan	Fri	6:00 PM	MidPointe Event Center	GAGHANT
14-Jan	Mon	5:30 PM	Merriam Park Lib. #A	Board meeting
17-Jan	Thu	7:00 PM	Bulbulians	Book Club
19-Jan	Sat	7:00 PM	Digris/McGibbon Residence	Cinema Saturday - MOONSTRUCK
9-Feb	Sat	7:00 PM	Digris/McGibbon Residence	Cinema Saturday - CONAN IN ARMENIA
11-Feb	Mon	5:30 PM	Merriam Park Lib. #A	Board meeting - cancelled due to snowstorm
21-Feb	Thu	7:00 PM	Andrea & Lowell Johnson's home	Book Club
9-Mar	Sat	7:00 PM	Digris/McGibbon Residence	Cinema Saturday - Cancelled due to snowstorm
11-Mar	Mon	5:30 PM	Merriam Park Lib. #A	Board meeting
21-Mar	Thu	6:00 PM	St. Anthony Park Library	Book Club
24-Mar	Sun	1:30 PM	Merriam Park Lib. #A & #B	What Was It Like Growing Up Armenian In
Presenters: Darla K., Margarita A., Marty M.				
1-Apr	Mon	7:00 PM	U of M, McNamara	Armen Marsoobian, from Ohanessian Chair
6-Apr	Sat	7:00 PM	Digris/McGibbon Residence	Cinema Saturday - GENOCIDE IN ME
8-Apr	Mon	5:30 PM	Merriam Park Lib. #A	Board meeting
15-Apr	Mon	12 noon	U of M, 710 Soc. Sc. Bldg	Artyom Tonoyan: Nagorno-Karabagh Contested Area & Conflict
18-Apr	Thu	6:00 PM	St. Anthony Park Library	Book Club
21-Apr	SUN			EASTER
24-Apr	Wed	5:30 PM	Merriam Park Lib. #A & #B	Genocide Commemoration - Interview descendants
2-5-May			RiverCenter St. Paul	Festival of Nations
13-May	Mon	5:30 PM	Merriam Park Lib. #A	Board meeting
16-May	Thu	6:00 PM	St. Anthony Park Library	Book Club
18-May	Sat	7:00 PM	Digris/McGibbon Residence	Cinema Saturday
10-Jun	Mon	5:30 PM		Board meeting
15-Jun	Sat	7:00 PM	Digris/McGibbon Residence	Cinema Saturday
20-Jun	Thu	6:00 PM	St. Anthony Park Library	Book Club
23-Jun	Sun	3:30-9:30	Como Park	Picnic
8-Jul	Mon	5:30 PM		Board meeting
13-Jul	Sat	7:00 PM	Digris/McGibbon Residence	Cinema Saturday
18-Jul	Thu	7:00 PM		Book Club
10-Aug	Sat	7:00 PM	Digris/McGibbon Residence	Cinema Saturday
12-Aug	Mon	5:30 PM		Board meeting
15-Aug	Thu	7:00 PM		Book Club
25-Aug	Sun	2:00 PM	Henry & Laurel Gregorian Residence	Pool Party
7-Sep	Sat	7:00 PM	Digris/McGibbon Residence	Cinema Saturday
9-Sep	Mon	5:30 PM		Board meeting
19-Sep	Thu	7:00 PM		Book Club
5-Oct	Sat	3:00 PM	Keljik Rugstore	Voski Ashoun
14-Oct	Mon	5:30 PM	Mim's	Board meeting
17-Oct	Thu	7:00 PM		Book Club
19-Oct	Sat	7:00 PM	Digris/McGibbon Residence	Cinema Saturday
27-Oct	Sun	1:30 PM		What Is It Like Being Married To An Armenian
11-Nov	Mon	5:30 PM	Mim's	Board meeting
16-Nov	Sat	7:00 PM	Digris/McGibbon Residence	Cinema Saturday
21-Nov	Thu	7:00 PM		Book Club
9-Dec	Mon	5:30 PM		Board meeting
14-Dec	Sat	7:00 PM	Digris/McGibbon Residence	Cinema Saturday
19-Dec	Thu	7:00 PM		Book Club

ACOM 2020

10-Jan	Fri	6:00 PM	MidPointe Event Center	GAGHANT
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ACOM WEBSITE

Remember to continue to check our website:

www.mnarmenians.org

FROM OUR MAIL BAG**THANK YOU**

ACOM truly appreciates Leroy Erickson who has videotaped all of ACOM's "What Was It Like Growing Up Armenian In...." events since the first one took place in February 2012. He was occasionally assisted by Bradley Erickson. These videos are great historic records not only to us in the present Armenian community but for future generations who would learn a lot about Minnesota Armenians.

ACOM Board

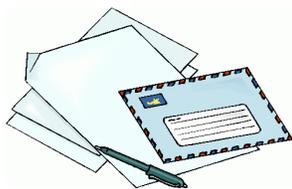
Dear ACOM members,
I just received your beautiful flower arrangement. It was so thoughtful of you. Thank you.
It has been a long recovery struggle. However, I do feel better and look forward to total normalcy.
Love to you all.
Vali K.

Dear friends,
The gorgeous bouquet of flowers brightens up our dining room so colorfully and is better than any medicine. Thank you so much!
I look forward to seeing you soon.
Andrea J.

ACOM GENOCIDE COMMEMORATION EVENT

Thanks for having me. It was so great to hear those stories, I'm grateful to have been there. Keep me in mind if program appropriate opportunities arise. It was great to see so many people.
Thanks again!
Robert Bell, guitarist at the Commemoration event

Thank you for a truly outstanding program yesterday, recognizing the 104th anniversary of the onset of the Genocide. Kudos to the moderator, Tom Keljik, and three speakers, Carolyn Melkonian Ylitalo, Francis Bulbulian and Azad Mesrobian. They were absolutely excellent. It was a most fitting way to remember and honor the suffering our ancestors bore during the horrific years of the Genocide as well as to remember and honor the enormous strength and will of those who survived. After the program, six of us had an enjoyable time at Mim's, with good food and interesting conversation. It was a very special evening in every way.
Andrea J.

**CONGRATULATIONS**

Elsa Matossian Hoover of DeVetter Design Group (Minneapolis) will enter Harvard's Graduate School of Design this fall to further her studies in architecture. She is an alumna of Columbia University and South High School.

Congratulations, Art Kourajian, on celebrating your very special Birthday!

SPEEDY RECOVERY

Andrea Johnson who broke her leg on Saturday, March 16, when she lost her balance on snowshoes at a large recreational trail system near Tromsø, Norway. Even though the largest hospital in northern Norway was in Tromsø, she is happy to be back home to recuperate.

Judy Ohannesian had her shoulder rotator cuff repaired on April 8th. Hopefully the 6 weeks of "arm in a sling" have gone by very fast and you are totally recovered, Judy.

SYMPATHY

To Janet Rith-Najarian, please accept ACOM's condolences on the recent passing of your cousin's dear, sweet wife. We know how devastating it is. Even though she had been struggling with cancer, you all hoped she was winning the battle. She passed very suddenly and we are all with you in thoughts and prayers.

ACOM is saddened to share the news of the passing of so many of our Armenian community members. It is a great loss not only to their families and friends, but to ACOM as well, as these individuals have been some of our long-time supportive members.

**DAVID JOHN
ADAMEK**

Adamek, David John Age 75 of River Falls, WI, died Mon., July 15, 2019. Survived by his wife, Christine 'Tina' Adamek. Funeral Service Tues, July 23,

2019, 10:30 am, Bakken-Young Funeral & Cremation Services, 805 E Division St. River Falls, WI. Visitation was on Mon, July 22, 2019, 4-8 pm and Tues 9:30 10:30 am at funeral home. Interment Fort Snelling National Cemetery. Bakken-Young Funeral & Cremation Services, River Falls 715-425-8788 bakken-young.com

Published on July 21, 2019

MALINE BALIAN BROBURG

Maline Broburg was born in 1925 to Aram and Karzouhi (Ousdigian) Balian, in Minneapolis. Maline grew up in St. Paul

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and lived in the Twin Cities until 2011 when she moved to Remick Ridge in Windom. She was baptized in St. Paul and was a member of St. Mark's Cathedral in Minneapolis.

Maline graduated from Washington High School in St. Paul in 1943. She then attended the University of Minnesota and received her undergraduate degree in Music Education and Piano. In 1964, Maline received her Master's

degree in Music Education.

In 1953, Maline was united in marriage in St. Paul to Eskil Broburg. This marriage was blessed with two children, Gregory and Karen. Throughout her life, Maline was a music teacher, church organist, choir director and pianist. She taught at St. Paul Public Schools, and North St. Paul-Maplewood Schools, and played the organ and piano for many churches in the Twin Cities. Maline spent over 30 years in the classroom. In 1983 she retired from teaching but continued to play the organ until age 85. Her last position was through 2010 as an organist for First Church of Christ, Scientist, White Bear Lake. Maline played the organ and piano for countless weddings, funerals, birthday and anniversary celebrations and many other events over a period of more than 70 years, in addition to her church positions. She was a member of the U of MN Chorus, Bach Society, American Guild of Organists, Twin Cities Choir Masters Association, MEA, National Education Association, and Sigma Alpha Iota (SAI) music sorority.

Maline is survived and deeply missed by her children, Gregory Broburg of St. Anthony Village, Karen (Dr. Steven) Hartberg of Windom; grandchildren, Anna (David) Grumm of San Francisco, CA, Mary Hartberg of Pacific Palisades, CA, and John Hartberg of New Orleans, LA; great-grandchild, Aila Grumm; sister, Dr. Lucy Rorke-Adams and her husband C. Harry Knowles of New Jersey; and several nieces, nephews, and cousins. Maline is preceded in death by her husband, Eskil; parents, Aram and Karzouhi; sisters, Eva Rudisel, Harriet Balian, and Elizabeth Seropian. Blessed be the memory of Maline Balian Broburg.

In lieu of flowers, memorials are preferred to the ALC in Windom, St. Sahag's Armenian Church in St. Paul, St. Mark's Cathedral Church in Minneapolis, or if you are able, please donate blood to the American Red Cross.

Published on July 21, 2019

HAMDY FATTAH

EI-RAWI

El-Rawi, Hamdy Fattah April 4, 1926 - May 26, 2018.

After a prolonged battle with illness, the Lion of Iraq succumbed.

Hamdy was an educator who loved travelling and showed his family the

world. He was a restaurateur who opened and operated the Baghdad Café and always appreciated good food and a great bottle of wine. A staunch supporter of human rights, Hamdy possessed kindness, humility and a quiet generosity. He was preceded in death by his loving wife, Angel Sarkissian El-Rawi.

Hamdy is survived by his children Susan, Satenik, Ararat and Araxes El-Rawi, his brothers Jamal and Abdul Qahar El-Rawi and sisters Mumtaza and Fawzia El-Rawi. May Angels give his feet wings and guide him to paradise.

Published on June 3, 2018



MIGNETTE

NAJARIAN

Mignette Najarian, Age 90, of Minneapolis. We have said goodbye to one of the greatest women one could have ever known, Arylss Viola Mignette Najarian, often referred to as Mig, Miggie, Grandmig and Mignette. Mignette

peacefully passed into heaven on May 24, 2019 at 10:05 am at Regions Hospital in St. Paul, MN. She suffered a massive stroke on April 17th, just before Easter, and never recovered.

The eldest of 6 children, she was born in Benson, MN on November 29th, 1928. She lived most of her life in Minnesota raising her 4 boys on Lake Harriet and then transitioned to Stillwater with her husband, Dr. John S. Najarian to whom she was married for 67 years. She is preceded in death by her father, Art (ATL) Anderson, her mother, Dorothy Anderson (Fahl) and her son, Paul Najarian. Many succeed her. Her husband, Dr. John S. Najarian (91). Sons, Jon (Brigid) Najarian, Dave (Kris) Najarian, daughter-in-law Julie Najarian, Pete (Lisa/Loopie) Najarian. Her grandchildren, Jessica (Eric) Bell (32), David (Becky) Najarian (27), Dominique Najarian (25), Lex Najarian (25), Jon Jon Najarian (22), Kole Najarian (20), Michael Najarian (20), Tristen Najarian (20), Finola Najarian (15), Sophia Najarian (14), Jackson Najarian (13), Bella Najarian (11), great grandchildren, Charlie (3), Xander (9 mos.)

EDWARD POMPEIAN

Edward Paul "Ed" Pompeian passed unexpectedly on Saturday morning July 6, 2019 at St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester at the age of 67, surrounded by his loving family and friends.

Ed was born in Grosse Pointe, MI, where he spent his earliest happy childhood years with his parents, Edward and Helen, his sister Sharon (Maraian) and their extended family in Pontiac's vibrant Armenian immigrant community. In 1964, a misdiagnosed illness brought him to the Mayo Clinic, where he received a life-saving kidney transplant in 1973. His mother gave him life twice – she was his organ donor. Rochester became their home for the next 46 years. Supported by his family and new friends, he began a successful business and real estate career and established the commercial brokerage firm of Realty Growth Inc.

From his own experience of sickness and healing, Ed understood the financial and emotional strain that transplantation places on organ recipients and donors, their families and caregivers. He dreamed of creating a home away from home for other transplant patients to help relieve some of the stress and turmoil he had experienced first-hand. He made that compassionate vision a reality in 1984 by founding the Gift of Life transplant House. He dedicated himself to serving on the board of the House and served as treasurer and board member of the

National Association of Hospital Hospitality Houses. In recognition of his life-long community service and philanthropic work, he received numerous honors including the National Association of Relators' Good Neighbor Award in 2014. In 2016, the house at 705 2nd St. SW was named the "Edward and Jayne Pompeian Home".

While visiting one hospitalized transplant friend in 1979, he met the love of his life, a nurse named Jayne, whom he wed in 1980. Ed and Jayne were married for almost 39 years and raised four wonderful children.

Ed was preceded in death by his father and mother. He is survived by his wife, Jayne, their children: Edward, Aaron, Nick and Adrienne, three grandchildren, his sister Sharon Maraian, his nephew and a great niece.

Despite the many challenges he faced, Ed was a man of great faith, fortitude and character. He reminded us he lived a blessed life because of God, his family, and Mayo Clinic. He will be greatly missed by all who were fortunate enough to know him.

A celebration of Ed's life was held on Thursday, July 11th in River Park Chapel with Rev. Brian Kom officiating. Memorials are requested to be sent to the Gift of Life Transplant House or Ascension Lutheran Church in Rochester.

Ed is the proud author of "The Gift of Life: the Story of Edward Pompeian and the Founding of the Gift of Life Transplant House". Copies are available for purchase on Amazon or directly from the Gift of Life Transplant House and all proceeds are donated to the organization.

ACOM Movie Aficionados



ACOM Cinema Saturday continues its successful run. Screening for the month of July was "Yolun Başında—Beginnings".

Beginnings follows a group of youths from Armenia and Turkey who meet in two cities on either side of the divide to reconcile the past, present and future of their perpetual conflict stemming from the Armenian genocide. While close relationships develop, these youth must question notions of friendship and trust within a quest to face issues of memory, history, genocide, denial and the demand for the truth.

What was it like growing up Armenian ... 11th in the Series

ACOM continued its stimulating and informative series about community members experiences "growing up Armenian" with the 11th session on Sunday March 23, 2019 at the Merriam Park Library. Panelists for this session included: Margarita Aroutiunian-Uusitalo, Marty Meketarian. And Darla Kashian

Their Stories:



Margarita Aroutiunian-Uusitalo



Margarita was born in 1972 in Yerevan, Armenia. In 1993, she moved first to Novgorod, Russia, and then to Montreal, Canada. Her mother was born in Baku, Azerbaijan, and her father in Grozny, Russia. She has two sisters, both of whom live, with their families, in Yerevan. Both her mother and father,

as well as her uncles and cousins, also live in Yerevan. She only has one other relative who emigrated, a cousin who lives in San Francisco.

She went to Russian language schools in Yerevan. This was, of course, not unusual in that Armenians who wished to be mobile in the Soviet Union needed to learn Russian, and learn it well. She, of course, also studied Armenian. She attended university at the Yerevan State Pedagogical University (named after Valery Brusov). She earned a teaching degree, in Russian language and literature, from that university.

Although they all knew Armenian, her family's language at home was Russian. Her mother spent more than four decades teaching Russian in Yerevan secondary schools.

While Yerevan was quite homogeneous (with Armenians making up more than 90% of the population in the late Soviet era), there were also numbers of Azeris, Jews, and Russians who called Yerevan home. It had a multicultural feel about it!

Margarita loves learning languages; the only way to understand another country, and another culture, is to understand the language of that society, even though Russian dominated Soviet discourse. There was space and great support from the state to learn other languages as well.

Margarita's grandparents, on both sides, were spiritual without being actively religious. Of course, it was decidedly difficult to be actively religious in the Soviet Union. People socialized and congregated not after church, but around the dinner table at home.

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Friendships and extended social circles were richly cherished in Soviet Armenia. It was a way to live apart from the stagnation of late Soviet political life.

The implosion of the Soviet Union, which culminated in 1991, drastically reshaped life in Armenia. Armenia prospered during the Soviet period and there were not extensive anti-Russian attitudes. Armenian economic life, and in fact aspects of cultural life, had flourished thanks to Soviet support. Anti-Russian or anti-Soviet attitudes were found mainly among those in the diaspora. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was a disintegration of economic and political life in the newly independent Armenia. Prior to 1991, the situation in Armenia had already sharply deteriorated. In 1989 Azerbaijan imposed a blockade on Armenia that impoverished the country. There were shortages of everything. Azerbaijan was a crucial source - through rail and road transport - and supplier of goods to Armenia, and when the blockade was imposed, Armenians faced profound hardships.

There was a devastating energy crisis lasting into the early 1990s. There was limited electricity; indeed, many lived without power. There were water shortages, etc. This hardship was felt over much of the former USSR.

There was a rationing of food; Armenian citizens were given ration tickets. They formed bread lines. People became desperate to secure food and heat. At the genocide complex of Tsitsernakaberd, trees were cut down for fuel. Her family had a vast collection of books; they were burned to keep them warm.

Margarita, and her husband, like to remind people of those hardships when they start complaining about, well, about practically everything. Those are "first-world" problems they often tell people. She tells them to remember the hardships that many people went through when people here, with some exceptions, have sufficient food, hot showers, and indeed working lights in the house. However terrible some of these experiences, she believes that they made her a stronger person.

The collapse of the Soviet Union also led to the massive emigration of Armenians to Russia, Ukraine, France, Canada, and the United States, among other places. Indeed Margarita emigrated to Russia, then to Canada, and finally to the US. Three emigrations! She knew little English when she arrived in Canada; within a year she was fluent. She also met her husband in Montreal; he was teaching history at McGill University.

Margarita's family, on both sides, lived for generations in the Caucasus (present day Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and the extreme south of Russia). She had a great-grandfather who, as a musician, traveled in the Ottoman Empire, but other than that, she knows few precise details of her ancestors before her grandparents.

Margarita always took the fact that she was born in Yerevan for granted. When she moved to Montreal, it was the first time she started thinking about being Armenian. There is a large Armenian community in Montreal; it has an active cultural life: an Armenian school, many churches, and so forth.

It was in Canada that she also felt, for the first time, what it really meant to be an immigrant to a new land. At first Armenian, Georgian, and Russian foods provided comfort. Speaking Russian and Armenian, with new friends and acquaintances offered security. Montreal is a fantastically multi-ethnic city and the Quebec and Canadian governments were very open and

supportive of immigration. Even so, immigration is a hard adjustment.

She felt especially proud to be an Armenian only when she left the country. Even given the size of Montreal's Armenian community, as well as that of the Armenian community in Detroit - where she first lived in the US, it took time to feel at home. The Armenian community offered a sense of connection to Armenia itself. Even so, she is not a nationalist. One thing that immigration has taught her is the dangers of extreme nationalism.

Margarita feels that in order to preserve an Armenian heritage within families across generations, then children have to be taught about Armenia: its history and culture. Even so, many Armenians living in Canada and US have only the most tenuous ties to the Republic of Armenia. So in a sense, Armenian identity is only partially about present-day Armenia, indeed is a fluid and ever-changing concept.

Additional comments from Husband Steve Uusitalo

He sees little religious faith in Armenia. There is much skepticism of the Catholics. Indeed, there is much criticism of the Armenian Church. Why?

Steven has been to Armenia many times. What he finds most interesting when thinking of Armenia in the US is the passionate attachment of some in the diaspora for a country, Armenia, they have no real connection to. He knows the history of both Armenia and its diaspora, even so to hear people who have never been to Armenia, and have no relatives there, speak about Armenia as their homeland is a bit surprising. Not bad, just surprising.

He was born in Finland (and lived there and in fact did one of his degrees there), and Finland has provided a magnificent life for its people under arduous conditions. Even so, he does not yearn to return even to a land where he was born.

Also, he wonders, does being Armenian require that the person know the language? After all, by way of comparison, many - most Jews - the other great diaspora people - do not know Hebrew. And Yiddish is largely a language of the past.



Darla Kashian

Was born in 1963 in Southeastern Wisconsin and grew up in South Milwaukee. She went to Marquette University then moved to New York city. There, she worked two years for the Armenian Diocese. From NYC, she moved to Miami and lived on Miami Beach for nearly 3 years. In an effort to be closer to her parents and her siblings, she moved to Minneapolis in 1995. She has four older brothers, Phil and Scott in Minneapolis, Russell in Milwaukee and Terry in Tucson, Arizona. A younger sister, Jackie is in California and is a stand-up comedian.

Her grandparents came from Turkey. Her grandmother came from Chomaklu and grandfather from Tomatza. They moved to South Milwaukee, WI. Neither one was willing to discuss anything related to the genocide unless one said something insignificant. Then, you got a lecture about gratitude.

Darla's grandfather was one of the 100 survivors from his town. He died in 1969 - he was in his 60's. He was illiterate in

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Armenia. He came to the US in the late 1920's. He had two jobs: during the day, he worked in a slaughterhouse, scraping pig carcasses. At night, he worked in a charcoal factory. He was a determined hard worker.

She was 18 or 19 when someone asked: What is an Armenian? Having grown up in South Milwaukee where there were at least 250 Armenian families, it was unusual to meet people who had never met an Armenian.

South Milwaukee was the world headquarters for Bucyrus-Erie, a company that manufactured mining equipment, so in the 1900's, when Darla's grandparents came to South Milwaukee, there were plenty of unskilled jobs for everyone.

The Armenian Church in South Milwaukee was considered the big church, with more than 250 families. Darla's family participated in church life, from Armenian school, Church choir and weekly services. With that said, she suggested her family wasn't necessarily religious, but culturally Armenian.

In the 1970's, on Sundays, she always went to church at 8.30 in the morning and spent all day there. On Saturdays, she went to Armenian school. There was a population of 25,000 – everyone knew someone who was Armenian. Father was not a natural English speaker.

She attended a breakfast fundraiser for the Center for Victims of Torture. The speaker, a Ugandan torture survivor, reminded her of her grandmother, who would physically steady herself before talking about the genocide. It was the first realization that survivors were in fact torture survivors.

Darla's partner and she now have 2 kids who are raised Jewish. She feels everyone's job as parents is to make their children proficient in being part of the community. As far as Jews vs. Armenians, Darla converted to Judaism by choice. She feels the whole issue of Israel is complicated for the Armenians.

Armenians in diaspora were challenged due to a lack of religious education in the 1960's until the early 1980's. She describes herself so "culturally Armenian" and can go anywhere in the world to an Armenian Church and know what is going on. She feels she does have a place everywhere, anywhere in the world.



Social time after the session

What was it like growing up Armenian ... 12th in the Series

ACOM slipped in another one. The stimulating and informative series about community members experiences "growing up Armenian" continued with the 12th session on Sunday July 21, 2019, again at the Merriam Park Library. Panelists for this session were the mother-son team of Sarah and Mark Wiersbeck.



Their Stories:



Sarah Wiersbeck

Sarah was born in Binghamton, NY. Lived in Vestal, NY before moving to Rochester, MN. Later to a Hobby Farm in Byron, MN before downsizing to a town home in Byron. She grew up with the families of her aunts, uncles and cousins and godparents. Harry Tashjian's parents were her Godparents.

Her father arrived in Binghamton in early 1900's; purchased a farm where they had a huge garden with concord grapes, raspberries, wild grape leaves for sarma/dolma. Sundays were special gatherings for family and Armenian food. Armenian was spoken.

There were no Armenian relatives except Harry and Alice Tashjian when Sarah and family moved to Rochester, MN. Her daughter, who moved away more than 20 years ago, lives in Texas. Son Mark lives in Maple Grove, MN. A brother who lived on the family farm in NY died 2 years ago and her sister lives in MA.

Her ancestors came from Kharpert, Turkey. Her father's family was wealthy and able to smuggle her father, his brother and her mother's brother to the US. Sarah's mother told her about the Genocide. Her parents taught her to be kind and appreciate people.

Sarah did not have grandparents like other kids did. Sarah was the only Armenian girl in her (non-Armenian) school, but an Armenian boy was in her high school graduation class. She learned to speak Armenian from her parents -- Armenian was their main language. Once she learned to drive, Sarah's parents

and Marty Meketarian



Our Moderator
John Parker Der-Boghossian



Audience

Refreshments were served after the presentations

encouraged her and her siblings to attend Armenian functions in Syracuse, Utica, Troy, NY and Springfield, MA. Sarah was involved in AYPF. She attended the 1952 AYPF Convention in New York City where she met a young man who asked her if she had any sisters. This young man did then meet Sarah's sister at the 1954 AYPF Convention in Detroit and ended up marrying her. Sarah was elected secretary at the 1953 AYPF Convention in Cleveland, OH.

Sarah says "I love America. I have been to Canada and Mexico, that is enough. I want to stay in America." Mark has tried to convince his mom to travel to Armenia; she has no interest. Sarah has lived with people of various international backgrounds, religions and race. Her husband's family is of German ancestry. His grandparents spoke German.

Sarah's father delivered fruits, vegetables, chickens to Italians, Slovaks, Poles, Jews, etc. The Rabbi had to come and bless the animals for delivery to the Jews. Her father traveled to many neighboring towns. He mentioned there was an Armenian family living in Greene, NY. As it turned out many years later, she learned from Mark that it was Steve Najarian's family that lived there. Steve's family was in the ribbon business. Ribbons were made for military service personnel. It is the only business in US that still makes these silk ribbons.

Sarah also remembers that Armenians liked to come up and pinch her cheeks...she used to hide from them.

Years ago when the kids were little, they all went to MA to visit her sister. Her husband had purchased 4 tickets to the Boston Pops. It was such a nice surprise to see Henry Gregorian's brother who was not only a composer but the conductor of the orchestra. Sarah learned from Helen Pompeian that Henry played in the MN Orchestra.

Joe Tashjian was the ring-bearer in Sarah's wedding. His grandparents (Harry's parents) were Sarah's godparents. Many gatherings and joyful days were spent growing up going to the movies, merry-go-rounds in the park, picnics and Armenian family holiday dinners (Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year, Easter, July 4, and Labor Day celebrations). The Tashjians (4 children) and Kalagians (3 children) enjoyed many memorable days growing up together. Harry's sister Patty looked like Liz Taylor. She was beautiful. Sarah's mother told her if anything happens to us, the Tashjians are your parents. After Harry learned to drive, his father gave him strict instructions driving us all to the movies. While we were at the movies, our parents enjoyed visiting and playing cards. Other outings were shooting the BB gun (never shooting at birds), fishing in the creek with a pail -- it was catch and release, fireworks, etc.

After moving to Rochester, Sarah's and Harry's families attended the same Church. Mark and Chris were acolytes together.



Mark Wiersbeck

Was born in Binghamton, NY and lived on his grandfather's farm his first few years, before moving with the family to nearby Vestal, NY.

After moving to Vestal, and during his preschool years, Mark remembers his mother and grandmother speaking Armenian on the phone frequently in the

mornings, after his father had gone to work. He did not learn to speak the language, but did learn how to count, and learned var-

ious phrases and words. Mark's father Ray was the first to marry into the Kalagian family. They always treated him very well, but he must've felt a little like the man marrying into the "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" family.

Many Sunday afternoons were spent with the family over at his grandparents' house on the farm. There was always an Armenian feast to be eaten. With his aunt, uncle and cousins also living on the farm, everyone came for the meal and to socialize. He remembers his grandmother putting huge portions of food on his plate saying, "eat, eat, you're all skin and bones." Mark was actually a little chubby back then, but that was grandma! To this day, Mark has been fortunate to enjoy all of his mother's Armenian cooking. Armenian was spoken by all adults at grandma's, especially if they didn't want us kids to know what they were talking about! Mark also remembers attending Armenian picnics while living in New York state.

At the age of 10, his family moved to Rochester, MN, where he finished his schooling years. Mark attended college at Mankato State and graduated with a Business degree. After graduating, he moved to the Boston area to begin his career working for a computer company. He lived with his mother's sister's family in Framingham and continued to enjoy wonderful home cooked Armenian meals. In 1987, he moved back to Minnesota and subsequently transferred to Chicago in 1993, spending six years there, then travelling all over the western US for about four months, before settling back in Minnesota in 2000. He has lived in the Twin Cities since then.

Sometime around 2001 or so, Mark remembers attending an ACOM function at the new Armenian church in St. Paul. That was the beginning of his association with the organization. He continued attending events, such as the picnic and Gagant and eventually was asked to become the board's Social Director, where he has now served two terms. He describes the ACOM community as a family and enjoys seeing everyone whenever possible.

Mark has taken two trips to Armenia. The first was in 2004 with the Habitat for Humanity group to build homes, led by Cynthia Erickson. Michele Hayes, Jim Favre, Francis Bubulian and Steve Rith-Najarian were also on that trip. Other than Cynthia, it was the first trip for all to Armenia.

The group took the Habitat van out to the first house. Leaving the modern city of Yerevan, they quickly were on dirt roads, some containing huge potholes that the van would need to very slowly meander around. When they arrived at the first house, the family had moved from a domik (large metal box that supplies were shipped to Armenia after the 1988 earthquake) to their barn, where they had lived for a few years. They would then move into the home that the group was helping to build.

Prior to the trip, Mark's mother Sarah had given him an address of relatives that lived outside Yerevan. While out working at the first house, he showed the address to the Armenian Habitat liaison and asked if she knew where that was. To his HUGE surprise, she told him they were in that village! Sarah had occasionally corresponded by mail with the relatives, but they had never spoken or met and the relatives in Armenia weren't aware he was coming. Mark then asked the family at the house they were working on if they knew his relatives. None of the immediate family did, but as the day wore on, relatives of the family came over to help assist with lunch and join

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the group helping out. One of the uncles that came did know Mark's relatives. The uncle indicated he would let Mark's relatives know he was in the country and would be at that work site.

After a day of sightseeing with the HFH group and gathering specific family questions from his mother with hopes of meeting a relative the following day, the group returned to the house to work again. Mark remembers Cynthia saying, "Mark, there's someone here to see you." When he looked over to see the visitor, the man looked like the spitting image of his grandfather!

With the help of Gohar (from Habitat) interpreting, Mark asked the man five specific family questions. He answered each one perfectly! This had to be his relative. But, the man was unsure who Mark was, so he explained his mother is Sarah and just like that, the man's eyes lit up. It was amazing! This was Mark's mother's cousin Khoren!

Khoren mentioned that he had a daughter who spoke English and that he would bring her to the work site. Armine did come on the last day of working at the site and arrangements were made for Mark to visit their house.

The relatives brought Mark to their house and there were people everywhere! All relatives. Armine needed to translate everything between Mark and all of the family present. Many questions were asked and answered. Mark brought several pictures of relatives to explain his mother's side of the family, some of which they were familiar with through correspondence by mail over the years. Several toasts were given and after the first one, another cousin was encouraging Mark to drink the vodka shot, which he did. Another toast was given and the shot glass was refilled. But, Mark needed to slow that process down. He would've been under the table before too long. But, the final confirmation came when Armine went over to a drawer and pulled out letters and pictures that Sarah and her sister had sent over the years. One of the first pictures Mark saw was him dancing with his cousin at her wedding in Boston. He remembers pointing and saying, "that's me!" When the evening wrapped up and before dropping him off at his hotel, Mark wanted Khoren to speak with his mother back in Minnesota. In order to do that, they needed to go to the Post Office, where phones were available to make international calls. Khoren did get to speak with Sarah and that was a very special moment for the families.

Sarah indicated that Khoren's family had previously lived in Beirut and in 1947, they were invited to move back to their homeland in Armenia. Khoren was born on their travels to Armenia at that time.

Mark feels very fortunate. He is half Armenian but many times, he feels 100% Armenian, due to the appreciation he has gained of all the hardship his grandparents went through and how they survived and flourished in a new land. Mark mentioned that growing up in the 70s in Rochester, MN, it was a very Caucasian community. Being Armenian, Mark's skin would darken a little more than others. In high school, he played on the baseball team and some of the guys thought he was Mexican, so they gave him various related nicknames. To this day, some friends still call him "Taco."

As for any negative issues, what Mark remembers is that shortly after 9/11, while travelling alone, he was the only one pulled out of the security line at the airport and singled out for additional screening. Another time, while in college during the late 70s, at the time of the American hostage situation in Iran, he had gone into a restroom at the college bar and three guys

wanted to beat him up because they thought he looked Iranian. Luckily, he was able to convince them he wasn't and got out of there unscathed, but rather shaken up.

In another more friendly encounter, about 20 years ago at a Gopher basketball game, Mark was returning to his seat from the concession stand. As he tried to get in his row, the person on the aisle - as a joke - blocked his entrance in. Recognizing who he was, Mark said, "inchpes es?" The man backed out of the way and let him through to his seat next to him. It was Dr. John Najarian and they became fast friends for the rest of the game. Three years ago, Mark went with Sarah on a trip to Florida. They flew to Miami to visit Sarah's cousins for Easter. They took a side trip over to Ft. Myers to watch the Twins play a Spring Training baseball game. It was a beautiful day, but about half way through the game, people started leaving. All of a sudden, a big storm blew in. Everyone ran for cover, as it was pouring and the wind was whipping around. Just as Mark and Sarah reached an area with covering, a man approached from the other side. The man said, "hey, I know you! Your name is Mark." Turns out Ben Rith Najarian and his wife had driven down from Charlotte, NC to also watch the Twins. The game was called off, but they made arrangements the next day to meet and sit together for the game. During the game the next day, an Armenian player entered the game for Toronto. When they announced his name, Ben's wife asked if this player was from Chicago. After determining he was, she then indicated that she knows his family! Small world.

It should be noted that Mark's father always supported all of his Armenian endeavors. From the Habitat trips to participating in ACOM, Ray never felt his side of the family was slighted by Mark's support and only encouraged him to continue being involved. In fact, before Ray's passing, Mark and his parents took a trip to Racine, WI, to attend an Armenian picnic together.

Mark currently works at United Health and recently learned that Fran Tashjian Lundgren and Chris Tashjian's son Raffi also work there. They are trying to arrange a lunch to meet up. As they say, you never know when you're going to run into another Armenian



Our Moderator

Refreshments were served after the presentations.

Audience



If you have in interest in Armenian dance, if you have danced in the past, or have never danced but really would like to learn and participate, this would be a good time to give it a try. All the dances are taught, and costumes provided. It is a volunteer activity and we only ask for your time commitment. Rehearsals are typically held on Sundays at 1:00 pm in Roseville. Remember: you do not need to be Armenian to become a member of the dance group, just a desire to learn and enjoy Armenian music and dance.

Note: if you wish to perform with the group, you need to purchase your own “character shoes” and be ready to wear makeup and perform without eyeglasses.

For additional information, call Naïry: 651-639-9346 or email: hyebar@yahoo.com

The Armenian Dance Ensemble has been representing Armenian Culture through Dance and Music for over 25 years. Below is our schedule from August to year end.



Armenian Dance Ensemble				
8-19	Monday	7:00PM	Edina	Centennial Lakes Amphitheater
8-24	Saturday	12 and 1:30PM	Falcon Heights	Festival of Nations Stage at MN State Fair
9-19	Thursday	7:00PM	Minneapolis	Jones-Harrison Senior Residence
12-1	Sunday	TBD	Minneapolis	Ukrainian Holiday Fair (tentative)



Naïry taught Armenian dances at Tapestry Folkdance Center on two consecutive Fridays in July and August, and along with the dance steps, she gave some basic, brief background about Armenian history. The last dance she taught was Daronee which has a slow first part, and a fast, complex second part. After the teaching session was over, one of the ladies in the class came up to her and indicated that she was emotionally touched not only by the grace and movement of the dance, but the story behind it

The next day, another one of the attendees sent her this email: *"Thanks so much for the incredible Armenian dances you've taught over the years. You're a gifted teacher and cultural ambassador. I was especially impressed with your willingness and ability last night to teach new dancers the difficult 2nd part of (can't remember the name of the dance, but you know what I'm talking about!!!)."*

Besides the gracefulness of the Armenian dances, the music is gorgeous. It makes me terribly sad to realize that such dances are now lost to countless Armenians who've been absorbed by countries in the former Soviet block. One of the reasons I love our folk dance program is that we're preserving many dances for posterity. Thank you for your part in doing that."

This is what gives her the ambition and encouragement to keep on teaching and dancing.

Festival of Nations May 2019

My gratitude to Janet Rith-Najarian and her assistants at the Demo Booth who tireless talked about the Silk Road

and Armenian silk and wool during the four days of the Festival. Thanks also to Janet, along with Terry and Naïry who helped her set up the Demo Booth at the Festival prior to its start, and at closing, the assistance of Mark and Caren Keljik, as well as Cynthia, Leroy and Bradley Erickson. Without their help, I think Janet, Terry and Naïry would have had to be pried off the floor due to exhaustion....

I cannot say enough about the 10 Armenian and ABC (*Armenian By Choice*) ADE dance ensemble members. Their time commitment, their participation and support, especially through the wonderful venue of the Festival of Nations, makes it possible to showcase our culture, music, costumes and dance, and to preserve and perpetuate them. Endless Thank Yous to All from the bottom of my heart!

Special thanks also to all those who were so kind to tape the Dance Ensemble performances, and the Demo Booth displays.

Naïry

ADE @ the Festival of Nations

I saw you dancing in the rotunda as I was leaving the Festival today. I just love those costumes and the dance troupe is just so wonderful and professional. You should be very proud of the whole group.

Judy O.

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ACOM BOARD MEMBERS, 2019

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Any ACOM dues-paid member who is interested in serving on the Board is welcome to contact us:

www.mnarmenians.org

Likewise, get in touch with us if you have comments, suggestions or would like to submit an article for an upcoming ACOM Newsletter.

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The red dresses with gold accents were beautiful and the long length made the dances look especially graceful. It was a terrific day!

Carole W. (an “odar” friend)

ADE @ Senior Residences

Thanks so much for coming! It was a wonderful time and we’ve had many compliments on your performance! (The Waters)

I just loved your dances. You were all very warm, your explanations so interesting and you made us, the audience, feel as though we were part of you. Thank you very much and come again. (White Bear Senior Living)



Festival of Nations 2019 Demo Booth

Silk Worms—a big draw



ADE World Stage Performance



ADE Dancers 2019

ADE Student Day Performance



ARMENIAN RED

As people might know, Armenian national garments and rugs are often adorned with a rich, deep red color. But what most might not realize is that this is all thanks to a little insect called the “Armenian cochineal” also known as “Kermes” which is indigenous to the Ararat plain and Aras River valley in the Armenian Highlands. The lowly scale bug lies at the center of the creation of one of the most rare and special pigments known to humans; the Armenian color Vordan



Karmir. In his book *Forty Centuries of Ink* (1904) David Carvalho who solved crime cases through his expertise in ink, tells the history of ink and writes:

insect somewhat resembling cochineal, found in great quantities in Armenia...”

To read more, look up:

<https://www.peopleofar.com/2015/11/13/the-red-color-of-armenian-garments-and-rugs/>



“The term scarlet as employed in the Old Testament was used to designate the blood-red color procured from an

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- Andeweg, George, Jeanne
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- Boranian. Mavya
- Bulbulian, Francis, Barbara
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- Keljik, Jeff, Susan
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- Poritsky, Joan
- Rith-Najarian, Steve, Janet
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- Uusitalo, Steven: Aroutiunian, Margarita
- Vaubel, Kass, Carol, Jamaica P.
- Wiersbeck, Mark
- Wiersbeck, Sarah
- Yaghsejian, Geo, Aida, Greg
- Ylitalo, Caroline, David & family

If you have not yet renewed your membership, and would like to do so, please use the form on the back of the Newsletter to mail your check. Let us know if you are interested in receiving a copy of the Board Member biographies. Email your request to:

hyebar@yahoo.com

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.

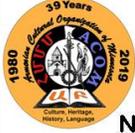
CONSTITUTION

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, summer picnics, and series of Interviews of Presenters talking about their heritage. 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.

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.



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Valid January 1 to December 31, 2019

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Household Membership \$35.00
Includes all members of one household

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Contributing..... \$100.00

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