



*Culture
Heritage
History
Language*

Armenian Cultural Organization of Minnesota
Established 1980

MinneHyeLites

No. 134 Summer-Fall 2012

Voski Ashoun—Golden Autumn

Special points of interest:

- Harry Tashjian Tribute
- Eulogy for Ray Wiersbeck

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Voski Ashoun was held this year in the side yard of St Sahag Church on a cool and blustery late September evening. The crowd experienced wind, fire, food, wine and grapes, and the 70 Armenians and friends of Armenians began stomping and chatting up a storm. One of the highlights of the evening was watching the young (with a few brave folks as well) crush the green and purple grapes into a slippery mash such that the Meketarian boys found themselves occasionally slipping into a full body plunge - all in good fun!



ACOM attempted to capture the ancient spirit of the festival. For thousands of years, the Golden Harvest brought villagers together to celebrate the harvest, exchange greetings (and a bit of gossip), and perhaps arrange a few marriages (I don't think any this year).

Thanks to the generosity of Vartkes Ebrahimian, we were well stocked with wine. We also must be sure to thank Whole Foods and Kowalski's (thank you, Mara Meketarian, for your Kowalski connection) for donating grapes that were not up to sell status. A rough calculation suggests we stomped 400 lbs of grapes!



With the wine, Armenian Brandy (the brandy disappeared quickly), Armenian Pomegranate wine and assorted crackers, cheeses, cold

cuts, dolma and grapejuice, the festival quickly evolved into a big outdoor party.

The stomping and a bit of the fermented grape kept people warm and smiles on their faces. Ambiance was created by our set designer Terry McGibbon - who arranged the bales of straw imported from Wisconsin, torches, fire pits, grape vats, and food/wine tent in a large circular pattern. This gave us a sense of enclosure and a recreation of a village square. I think it is safe to say that many old friendships were rekindled and many new ones were launched.

Oh yes, almost forgot, the event raised over \$500.00 that will be contributed to the Fuller Center for Housing - Armenia operation. Thank you to those who came and to those who were unable to come but still donated to this very worthy cause.

*Tom Keljik
ACOM President*

Thanks to ACOM board members and their families for their efforts and dedication:

Terry & Nairy - general contractors and project managers

Tom - grape gatherer and fire pit man

Lou Ann - music conductor

Adrienne and Michelle - food organizers and vendors; grandson **Alex** - fire master

Leroy and son **Bradley** - spirits men

Tina and Dave - promotion and straw bale providers

Church youth - muscle power

(Continued from page #1)



**ACOM CONGRATULATES
FATHER TADEOS
BARSEGHYAN
ON HIS APPOINTMENT AS
ST. SAHAG CHURCH
PASTOR**



Բարի եկարք

From our Readers

Dear Friends of ACOM,
The brilliance of your bouquet of lilies and early autumn flowers added so much to our sad house. Thank you so much. Harry was strong, and Armenian to the end.
Love,
Alice Tashjian

Dear ACOM,
This Friday (early this morning) a gentleman presented us with a gift of fruit from ACOM - a thoughtful gift ! We have enjoyed the fruits today - there is more to enjoy ! Thank you.
Sona Plummer and Family

I really thank ACOM for the plant you sent a couple weeks ago, it brought me to tears to be reminded of the community's love and care even when I'm far away and out of sight and mind. Thank you for being so good to me and my family!
Janet Rith-Najarian

Thank You ACOM for the beautiful fruit basket you sent to my folks last week. It is huge!
Thanks again to ACOM for all of their support.
Mark Wiersbeck

Ray and I would like to say "Thank You" for the fruit basket we received from ACOM the other day. Please convey to ACOM our heartfelt thanks for all the nutritious fruit, your warm wishes and thoughtful prayers.
Ray and Sarah Wiersbeck

Tom Abrahamian received a BIG basket of fruit. Thank you for it, ACOM !
Abrahamian family

Special Thanks to VARTKES EHRAMJIAN for donating a case of wine to ACOM for the annual Voski Ashoun event.
ACOM

It is always a pleasure to help ACOM. Thanks for all you do.
Best wishes
Art Kourajian

We had a great time last Saturday (Voski Ashoun).
Sona & Elizabeth Plummer

ACOM PICNIC - July 15

To the ACOM board. My family had a wonderful time at the picnic. I so enjoyed seeing the kids and many adults having so much fun with water! Harrison stayed so long, and came home wet, tired and with a smile on his face. I am not sure if you planned the picnic date to coincide with Vartavar, but it sure worked out well! Especially with the heat and humidity.
The Ohannesian - Tiffany family

All,
Please pass along my thanks and praises for the great job the ACOM EC did in preparing and running the Picnic on Sunday. I saw the name board was quite a hit and I even learned about our family name in the process, which was cool. So thanks and keep up the great work you all do to make our community much stronger and alive.
Mark Wiersbeck

Thank you Marty!
MARTY is such a ROCK STAR! He buys all these gifts for the kids, he sets up all the games, digs through the trash with me (3 times, I think).....
Marty! Thank you SO MUCH! You started the most successful Minnesota Vartavar ever!!
Michelle Hayes

VOSKI ASHOUN
Awesome event ! Great idea ! ACOM Rocks !
Judy Ohannesian

A NOTE FROM DAVID ABRAHAMIAN
We are moved to California now. It's been a long process, and we've thought of you and the group often. Please give our regards to everyone.
I'm sorry we didn't get a chance to say goodbye. There were so many emotions and difficult choices.
We will be back - family and friends will have us back there often.
David Abrahamian and Family

Our Sympathy

ACOM extends its most heartfelt and sincere condolences to the entire **Tashjian family** for the loss of their husband, father and grandfather, Harry.

Sympathy to **Jim Lippert** and his family in the loss of his beloved mother, Ruth Lippert, on September 9, 2012.

Sympathy to **Mark Wiersbeck, his mom Sarah** and the entire Wiersbeck family for the passing of their beloved father and husband, Ray, on September 18, 2012.

Condolences to the families of **Cynthia Erickson**, her mom **Vi Reimers**, her uncle **Tom Abrahamian** and her cousin **Todd Abrahamian** for the loss of their beloved aunt and sister, Alice, in Oklahoma City on September 30, 2012.

Thank You

Thanks to **Peggy Merjanian** for the wonderfully put-together ACOM Newsletter. I hope she continues to act as the editor for the next 24 years.

Tom Keljik



Congratulations

Get Well Wishes

Tom Abrahamian who had surgery, but is home and on the path of recovery. Tom was on ACOM's board and served as its Treasurer for seven years between 1991 and 1997.

Harriet Balian who has been hospitalized many times in the past 6 months. Keep her in your prayers for a speedy and full recovery. Feel better, Harriet.

Hamdy El-Rawi. We hope you are getting stronger each day, Hamdy.

Alice Tashjian who is suffering from a hip issue. Get well soon, Alice.

Speedy recovery to **Hagop Tabibian** from Rochester, MN, who had back surgery in August.

We all wish **Hank Manthei** our very best for a full recovery from major surgery he had early September.

Mark Keljik, our wish is to see you up and around, fully recovered from your procedure.

To **Nina Papiyeva** and **Artur Hakobyan** on the birth of their daughter, Lia Lilit Hakobyan, born July 4, 2012.

A Tribute to Harry Tashjian

Article by: DANIELA HERNANDEZ

Star Tribune August 8, 2012 - 8:24 PM

Harry J. Tashjian lived his life on the border between the worlds of data and imagination. A mechanical engineer by training, he valued hard facts and numbers, but he also saw the value of imagining a future that didn't yet exist.

His forward thinking helped bring about the democratization of computers as he led teams that developed midsize computers -- desktop models much smaller than the room-size contraptions they replaced.

Tashjian, 90, worked at IBM in Rochester for more than 40 years. He died July 27 after complications from a stroke.

Tashjian's new powerful but cheaper models were "a major technological achievement," said Jeffrey Yost, associate director of the Charles Babbage Institute at the University of Minnesota. Two computer families Tashjian helped create, System/3 and System/38, brought computers into new settings such as small businesses and science laboratories, Yost said.

The System/3 was the first computer system developed completely in-house at Rochester, a feat possible because Tashjian was savvy enough to call the technology a "unit record system" instead of a computer. Before that, computer design was entrusted to IBM's New York location.

Tashjian was a trusted leader who motivated his peers to live up to their full potential, said his son, Edward. He had a



Harry Tashjian

knack for organizing people and for getting things done right. But "he hated public speaking. He could hardly sleep the night before," his son said.

He remembers his dad best for his laughter and unrelenting optimism. He donated to charities, funded scholarships, served in World War II and was an active member of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Rochester, where he served as senior warden from 1974 to 1976.

Tashjian played violin and loved classical music. He woke up every day by 5:30 a.m. and filled the house with recordings of Mozart, Bach and Beethoven.

Tashjian valued education highly, his son said. Sports were not high on his list of priorities, although he often joked that he couldn't die until the Vikings won the Super Bowl.

Tashjian and Alice, his wife of 62 years, met as children in Johnson City, N.Y., and married in their late 20s after finishing college and graduate school. Their families emigrated to the United States after the Armenian holocaust.

Tashjian donated his body to science so medical students and researchers could learn from it. "My dad hated the idea of his body being taxidermied like a stuffed fish," Edward said. "To the very end, he was giving himself away."

Tashjian is survived by his wife, three sons, Joseph, Edward and Christopher; daughter Francine and 11 grandchildren. A memorial service will be held at 1201 Yale Place, Minneapolis, from 3 to 4 p.m. on Aug. 24, Tashjian's birthday.

What was it like Growing Up Armenian in.....: May 20, 2012

If you missed the second in the series – you missed a very fascinating and informative two-hour session in which three of our female members each shared their experiences growing up as an Armenian in different cultures.

With an audience of fifty in Fellowship Hall, Mara Meketarian, Peka Savayan and Caroline Ylitalo told us about the places they were born and grew up, giving those assembled a flavor of life in Baku, Sofia and Aleppo.

Mara led off and explained that when she was 8 years old, a calm and peaceful life came to an end for Armenians in Azerbaijan. Before this time people lived in harmony and many Armenians were involved in the oil business (her mother was a cartographer charting Caspian Sea terrain in search of oil fields). She relayed the terror and brutality that quickly descended on all Armenians. She described that, in her elementary school, at the beginning of the year in her classroom there were 18 that she knew were of Armenian ancestry. By the end of that year, the authorities came to the school and asked if there were any Armenian children left in the school. Mara said that the teacher shielded her by saying she didn't know if there were – Mara was the only one left. She escaped this episode only because her last name did not contain a yan or ian and was not easily identified by a typical Armenian surname ending. Leaving Baku, the family arrived in Armenia. Treatment was harsh for the Armenians from Azerbaijan as they were offered little and were marked with the status of refugee. Initially unable to speak Armenian, she quickly learned and eventually found a woman who helped her to find work helping other refugees. She was able to employ her math and computer skills as a data manager in this job. This eventually led to meeting Marty (she calls him Max) Meketarian – and they now have Armen and Hagop and live in St Paul.



Peka grew up in Bulgaria and said that people got along with one another. She said that the Bulgarians were very accepting of the Armenians who migrated to Bulgaria. There are two distinct groups - one migrating shortly after the genocide and having deep roots; and the second wave occurring during 'perestroika' - drawn there by friends and relatives. The Armenians, as a group, were relatively well off and many filled the professional ranks in business, sciences and governmental positions. She mentioned the eminent Bulgarian Poet Paio Kracholov Yarorov, who put to verse a moving piece on the suffering of Armenians during the genocide. The poem is so loved that every high school textbook has it and every



Bulgarian knows it by heart.

She also indicated that Armenians were known for their jewelry, especially gold as well as watch-making and repair. The community was vibrant and thriving, having some 10 - 12 churches, newspapers and an electronic media site. There were numerous Armenian cultural events in the community as is evidenced by her mother's continued participation in these events.

Her father and mother were physics educators and life was pretty good. She mentioned that her father was not of Armenian descent and that her maternal grandmother and grandfather were not accepting of the fact she married a non-Armenian; for this reason they did not attend the wedding. Her full name is Peka Christova Savayan. The Armenian last name was attached when she married a Bulgarian (now her ex-husband) who is half Armenian. She explained "I speak to my daughter (Maria) in Bulgarian, Armenian to my mother and aunt, and Russian to my Russian friends"; and of course she speaks to most of the rest of us in English. Her first language was Armenian because she lived her formative years with her Armenian grandparents. Peka received a PhD in neurophysiology, which led her to the University of Minnesota on a one year visa and post-doctoral research. She says that she has been here ever since - arriving some ten years ago. When asked about the status of women in Bulgaria, she reminded us it is a country in the Balkans!

Caroline talked about the Armenian community in Syria where she grew up. She said that her life was surrounded by Armenians. As a youngster, she would have told you that she lived in Armenia. Everywhere she would go, everyone she talked to, all the shops and businesses she would frequent, were Armenian-owned and run. She mentioned an Armenian theater that was popular – not only with Armenians but the general population because it would offer provocative plays. The school she went to was Armenian – in fact, she told us that its benefactor was none other than our own Dr. John Najarian's father, who bequeathed much of his wealth to start the school. Caroline related that contact with Arabs was most frequent with the Christians. She looked upon the Sunnis as more educated and progressive and the Shia relegated to the lower end of society. She remembers the Sunni women in more western dress and the Shia women dressed in their black burkas. Occasionally she would come in contact with Kurdish women in the market selling their produce – exhibiting tattoos and more traditional dress. She commented that the Armenians always supported education; and if you couldn't afford the tuition, it would be offered free. She surmised that is the reason Armenians were so prominent in Syrian society. She mentioned that Armenians were instrumental in forming the Baathist party in Syria, which was seen as promoting progressive and secular ideals. Today she is worried what the Islamist Arabs might bring to Syria.

She explained that her coming to the United States was a series of accidental encounters that led her to stay with a woman for a year



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who was grieving the death of her daughter. Part of the arrangement was that she would pay for Caroline's education to the local community college. Caroline did so well it led to scholarships at UC Berkeley, followed by graduate work at Stanford where she met her husband of Finnish descent and a Minnesotan to boot, David Ylitalo. She currently works at 3M.

Our successful second session leads us to the excitement of a third. Our little crowd has many wonderful thought-provoking stories full of challenges, changes, journeys and triumphs. I am sure we

are looking forward to hearing more stories about our intriguing ACOM people.

Tom Keljik
ACOM President



Partamian Administers “Shock Therapy” in Minnesota

By Lou Ann Matossian

Los Angeles media personality Stepan Partamian, a.k.a. “The Armenian,” rolled through the Twin Cities May 17-18 to deliver what he calls “shock therapy for the Armenian identity.” Most of his visit was devoted to filming Minnesota Armenian sites and conducting interviews for an upcoming documentary about Armenian communities off the beaten track. Partamian also spoke at St. Sahag Armenian Church on May 18, sponsored by the Armenian Cultural Organization of Minnesota.

The compiler of two biographical collections, *Yes, We Have*, and *Yes, We Have...Too*, Partamian highlighted Armenian contributors to American life, from “Martin the Armenian” (Jamestown Colony, 1618) to world-class inventors such as Oscar Banker (Asadoor Sarafian), whose many patents include the needle-less inoculation gun, a power-steering mechanism, and the automatic transmission.

“With innovations in science, technology and industry, powerful works of art and literature, and generous acts of humanitarian outreach,” Partamian has written, “Armenians have often gone beyond the local and tribal, to make a difference for all of humanity.”

Partamian's passion for documenting those contributions extends to the merest traces of Armenian presence in the American geography, both historical and contemporary. In his travels through 45 U.S. states, Partamian has photographed gravestones, street signs, commercial marquees, state capitols, churches, memorial trees,

and entire landscapes—anything and everything that could qualify as Armenian or Armenian-inspired—while financing his journey through donations and book sales.

These efforts have not been without some personal risk. Partamian's audience of a dozen or so was enthralled (and somewhat appalled) to hear of his attempt to photograph the Texas State Capitol, only to be profiled and nearly arrested on suspicion of terrorism. In Partamian's entertaining account, his beard, accent, name, and Lebanese birthplace, not to mention his SUV full of book cartons, did not endear him to a posse of security guards—his American citizenship notwithstanding.

During his 2½-hour presentation, Partamian's “shock therapy” emerged as a brash, engaged, humorous critique of whatever obstacle might stand in the way of Armenians living up to our full potential. When those obstacles proved to be self-imposed—such as the construction of two competing Armenian churches on adjacent properties—Partamian pulled no punches, comparing the churches to McDonald's and Burger King.

A proud Armenian denizen of Planet Earth, Partamian aims to cover the globe in his quest to bring Armenian history, heritage, and identity into the 21st century. Yet his insistence on realism and impatience with hypocrisy also place him within a venerable tradition of constructive Armenian satire. During his ACOM talk, one could easily imagine a nineteenth-century Stepan Partamian holding forth in Constantinople during the Zartonk—or better yet, a modern Hagop Baronian with an SUV full of books and gear, a GPS, and the freedom of the open road.

Three times the champs! Armenia wins another World Chess Olympiad!

Armenia has finished on top in the competition of some 150 nations to win another World Chess Olympiad title in Istanbul, Turkey. This is the third Olympic gold won by Armenia in chess.

In the decisive round on Sunday coach Arshak Petrosyan's team led by the world's current number two FIDE player, Levon Aronian, beat Hungary 2.5-1.5 to gather 19 points in the 11-round competition. Sergei Movsesian playing with white pieces on the

second board brought the team the winning point. Russia beat Germany 3-1 also gathered 19 points, but Armenia finished on top due to additional showings. Ukraine, which beat China 3-1, took third place.

This is the third Olympiad title in the history of independent Armenia. The first two were won at the tournaments in Turin and Dresden in 2006 and 2008, respectively.

Remembering my father — a Eulogy from Mark Wiersbeck

Good morning, everyone. Thanks for coming to help celebrate my father's life today. And that is what we'd like to do, celebrate the wonderful times and relationships he had with all of us.

I would like to start out with talking about this church and more importantly, the people of this church. St. Luke's has been a huge part of both my parents' lives for over 40 years now. We moved to Minnesota from upstate New York during the Fall of 1969 and shortly after began attending here. Vonnie and I were just kids at the time and this became our family church home. Over the years, Dad's faith and spirituality grew in his life through the connection he had with St. Luke's. Our family is comforted to know there are so many of you who are lifelong friends and the support you have provided us during this difficult time is overwhelming. One other thing I wanted to mention: since I've been back here for services the last several weeks, I can't tell you how many times people have said to me, "you look just like your Dad." And how proud that makes me feel.

Now I'd like to talk a little bit about Dad's life and perhaps some things you didn't know about him. He was born and grew up in Aberdeen, South Dakota. Recently, I was talking with him about his pony "Blackie." He told me how he used to ride that horse all over town and how much he enjoyed that. It was where his love of horses began. Dad also talked about how much he enjoyed pheasant hunting back then. He'd come home from school and grab his shotgun and go out hunting. Dad would talk about how the pheasants would literally cover the sky. We have some pictures from his hunting days for everyone to see.

Dad left Aberdeen to enlist in the Navy and served during the Korean war. Part of his duties were as an aerial photographer. I believe that's where he also gained his love for both flying and photography. While in the Navy, Dad was stationed several places, but always mentioned Treasure Island in San Francisco as a favorite. He told me how he got to do a lot of fun things while out there, such as see the Rat Pack and going to San Francisco Seals baseball games, as this was before the Giants moved out to California.

After dad left the Navy, he moved to upstate New York, where he began a career in photography at a company called Anso. That's where he met mom. After they were married in 1956, he began a long career with IBM, which is what brought us out to Rochester in 1969. My Dad was a Midwestern boy at heart and I know he longed to get back out this way again.

As many of you know, my mother's side of the family is Armenian. Dad's is German and Irish. Over the years, I've become quite involved with the Armenian organization in the Twin Cities. I've taken two Habitat for Humanity trips to Armenia. I have probably lent a lot more attention to that side of my heritage than the German side. I did this for a couple reasons: first, you really can't walk more than 20 feet in Minnesota without running into another German; and second, because of the uniqueness of the Armenian people and culture, I felt their voice needed to be heard. The thing about this is, Dad never - and I mean never - complained or felt slighted by this. In fact, he only encouraged me more to get and stay involved. You all remember the movie

"My Big Fat Greek Wedding." Well, dad LIVED that life back in the mid-50's. He was the first "odar" (which means non-Armenian) to enter into my mother's family. I asked him a few times about that, and to a fault, he said he was always treated with respect, welcomed and comfortable being with the family.

My father loved planes, especially small ones. When he moved out to New York after the Navy, he trained for and obtained his small plane pilot's license. He especially liked the Piper Cub. Not that long ago, we got him a ride in a Stearman up at Flying Cloud airport in Eden Prairie. The Stearman is a biplane that was used as a military training aircraft. On the ride, he said they did all these loop-d-loops and he had a ball. The pilot even let Dad land the plane, which was a thrill for him.

Dad enjoyed sports, especially baseball. His two favorite teams were the Twins and believe it or not, the Lady Gophers basketball team. He really enjoyed watching Lindsay Whalen play. He used to say that he liked watching the "girls" as he'd call them, because they didn't make every basket and that they were better at the fundamentals than the men. As for the Twins, they are a bond that our whole family has enjoyed. We'd usually get to a game or two each year, but both Mom and Dad would watch or listen to most every game. So whenever we talked, we were always discussing the Twins. In 1987 when the Twins won the World Series, I took him to Games 1 and 7. I know Vonnie really wanted to go to Game 7 and was quite ticked when I wouldn't take her. But if the Twins were to win it all, I couldn't think of anyone else I'd rather have with me than my father. He had taught me so much and offered his endless time and energy toward my youth baseball. And what a moment that was, when they did win! Dad also coached a few of my little league teams and did a nice job running things. He always talked to the team before and after the games and was encouraging, if nothing else. I think back to all the hours he spent with me, throwing batting practice and hitting me grounders and fly balls. I remember that he taught himself to throw left-handed, just to play catch with me. The bursitis in his right arm was so bad, that he could hardly hold it up. But, it meant so much for him to spend this time with me, that he learned how to do this. However, I must say that when he'd throw me batting practice, every once in awhile he'd hit me with a pitch and start chuckling. I know he didn't mean to, but it used to tick me off. I was too young to know to hit his next pitch up the middle and undress him. As I got into older leagues where they held tryouts, I still recall him telling me to do my best and to always hustle. If you miss a ball, run after it and throw it in. Get back into position. Respect the game and show you care. It was a life lesson. He and mom taught Vonnie and me many of life's lessons that we still use today.

As I mentioned earlier, Dad had a love of horses. Nugget was in our family for 33 years. Dad loved that horse and they communicated and spent time together daily. Years ago, they'd go on trail rides together. From what I understand, Mom and Dad brought Nugget to one of the Blessing of the Animals services they hold here at church each year. That would have been interesting to see.

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Dad really enjoyed photography. In fact, he made a career out of it. But, I also recall that he had a side business taking photos. He had these business cards with his slogan, "Have Camera, Will Travel." In 1983 he had one of his pictures published in the Best of Photography Annual. When we were quite young in New York, he had a darkroom down in the basement and would develop pictures he had taken by dipping them in the liquid solution they used back then and then he would hang them to dry.

In putting this together, I now realize what an interesting and all-encompassing person my father was. He was real good at building things. He would work on our cars, pulling the engines apart and putting them back together. One time, my uncle found a horse-drawn sleigh. Dad completely restored it into beautiful shape. For a while, it was in a museum in South Dakota. The Post-Bulletin did an article about it.

This next section are some short snippets from e-mails Dad had sent me. Most of these are from the 90's, so written several years ago. Whatever brain cell told me to save these, I am so thankful that I did, because this will give a little more insight into how he encouraged us and how much he loved his family:

I can imagine things are kind of tough right now but I can tell you from a lot that I used to go through in my working days that things will get a lot better for you. You just have to trust in that.

"As always, son, do not hesitate to let me know if there is anything I can do to help you out when needed. Am very happy for your situation and I know you are happy too. I know you are very busy but I always look forward to your e-mails, Thank you. Take good care son, and enjoy great things . We love you..... Dad"

And finally a few to show his easy-going sense of humor:

Dad would tell people that he married an older woman. Mom is four days older than him.

"Mom has planted HER garden now and will have all the usual things : tomatoes, cukes, peas etc. I think she planted her tomatoes too close together but it is her garden and I shall not interfere :-)" "Mom is talking of raking the leaves, and I hate to see her work so hard, so I think I'll go take a nap ;-)"

Dad usually signed his e-mails with HTTY, which stands for Happy Trails To You.

To my buddy, my pal... my father. Happy Trails To You, Dad!

MINNESOTANS PLUS 2 ON A MISSION

By Cynthia Erickson

Several members of the Armenian community of Minnesota went to Armenia with the **Fuller Center for Housing** this past June. We were joined by Charlie from Florida and Lynn from New Jersey. Our mission – to help construct homes with Armenians living in rural Armenia. There were 6 young men on our team – ages 14 – 25 – accompanied by their 5 mothers. For most of these Minnesotans, this was their first trip to Armenia.

We worked with two different families – one in the village of Ledjan and the other in the town of Tashir, very near to the Georgian border. Both families have very young children

-ranging in age from 2 to 4 years. So these children will realize the maximum benefit of growing up in healthy, decent homes.

Most of our work was in the style of a ‘bucket line’, where construction materials (dirt, sand, concrete) were passed from Point A to Point B in buckets handed from one person to the next. In this way, we helped to construct the outer walls of the home in Ledjan, working on the second floor and moving concrete and concrete blocks. In Tashir, we helped move sand and gravel into the home to provide the base under the floor. The kids were fun to have near us, and the neighbors who initially said we were too loud, laughed and clapped when we did the Kochari dance with Grandma Tamara in the bucket line.

In between our days of work, we took in sights and visited historic places. Our travels took us to Jajour, the Genocide Memorial of the northern part of Armenia, and to Gyumri, where we saw some of the damage from the 1988 earthquake. We also visited Marmashen, a ruined monastery complex west of Gyumri – very beautiful – and spent some time at the river behind it. On Sunday, after church, we split into two groups and visited either Haghpat, a church complex designated as a World Heritage Site, or part of the group went fishing. No fish were caught, but then again, no people were ‘hooked’ either, so it was a successful endeavor by some accounts. And of course, in the area of Yerevan, we visited Geghart, Garni, Khor Virab, the Genocide Memorial, and the Vernissage for some souvenir shopping.

We visited a few different agencies which are working to help improve people’s lives. One is Full Life, which is an organization that works for benefits for handicapped people throughout Armenia. One of their staff is here in Minnesota this year – Anna Ayyvazyan – completing a fellowship at Lutheran Social Services. Another organization we toured was Orran, an after school program. They provide social services, support, and guidance to children (and their families) who are most at risk. Most of the children they serve live in the domik (homes made from shipping containers) areas of Vanadzor.

One of the most meaningful parts of the trip was the home blessing that we attended this year. It was to bless the home of the Avetikyan family, with whom my team worked last year. So there was a special closeness and deeper meaning to this home blessing than with most others. The three young boys were another year older and just as delightful as they were last year. Family, friends and neighbors who helped construct that home celebrated at the banquet, and there were plenty of toasts all around. And dancing, too! At the end of the evening, Vrezh, the quiet, reserved home owner, patted the outside wall of his new home, looked me in the eye and said ‘thank you’. What a gift our efforts have given this family!

This year’s young team was energetic and focused, and accomplished quite a bit of work on these two homes. We are awaiting news and photos of them once they are complete. Many thanks go to you, our community members, for supporting us in this endeavor. As several of the team members commented, this trip was not just about building homes, but it was about making connections – with young knitters half a world away, with young boys and girls eager to assist a foreign team of volunteers, with Yerevantsis strolling through Republic Square enjoying the music, fountains, and light show. We are reminded that no matter where we live or what language we speak, we all have similar goals – safety and security for ourselves and our families, healthy foods and environments, freedom to make our own choices, respect for and from others. We may live half way around the world, but our needs and goals are nearly identical.

Dates for 2013 trip – June 16-30.

Our Armenian Youth in the news

Education notes: National Merit Scholarship semifinalists

Pioneer Press, 09/23/2012

NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP SEMIFINALISTS

About 16,000 students across the U.S. have been named semifinalists in the 2013 National Merit Scholarship program and will compete for some 8,000 scholarships to be awarded in the spring.

The students, who were chosen from among 1.5 million juniors who took the preliminary SAT test in 2011, represent less than 1 percent of U.S. high school seniors. These east metro students are semifinalists.

ST. PAUL

Evan Denis, Noah Ellis, Nils Larsson, Brian Petkov and Emily Syverud, Central High School; Tracy Dinh, Elena Neuzil, Ian Reynolds and Joseph Vanderwall, Cretin-Derham Hall; Melanie Donnelly, Great River School; Benjamin White, Highland Park High School; Amalia Hertel, homeschool; Chase Adelsman and Michaela Johnson, Nova Classical Academy; Francesco Di Caprio, Ibad Jafri, Melanie Luikart, Noah Shavit-Lonstein, Maria Siliciano, Clara Stahlmann Roeder, Henry Swanson, **HAGOP TOGHRAMADJIAN**, Mara Walli and Samuel Wood, **St. Paul Academy and Summit School**.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Michael Douglass, St. Croix Preparatory Academy, Baytown Township; Mary Kasl and Erica Rapheal, Forest Lake Area High School; Claire Belisle, Jason Kuennen, Thomas Neumiller and Karna Ringhamu, Mahtomedi High School; Jessica Shaklee, homeschool, Stillwater; Erik Eitzman, Peter Fleischman, Garret Ruh and **ANDREW YLITALO, Stillwater Area High School**; Colin Scheibner and Christopher Wang, East Ridge High School, Woodbury; Rachel Glick and Iram Shafqat, Math and Science Academy, Woodbury; Edward Liu, Kinsey Philips, Daniel Pilon, Jack Thomas and Angela Yang, Woodbury High School.

Minnesota's distinguished High School students honored for high performance

Roseville, MN – Thirty-four distinguished Minnesota high school students will be honored Saturday at the Scholars of Dis-

inction award program in the areas of Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, Leadership and Theater Arts.

“Minnesotans can be proud of these outstanding scholars,” said Minnesota Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius. “Their dedication, work ethic and outstanding academic achievement represent the best of our state. These young people are the bright lights of our state’s future, and I offer them my sincere congratulations and best wishes as they take the next steps in their academic careers.”

Deputy Commissioner Jessie Montano will be on hand to congratulate scholars at the awards ceremony on Saturday, May 19. Scholars of Distinction specialties are developed through partnerships that include educators, business people and others who are able to apply complex knowledge and skills to the real world. To earn recognition, a student must complete required work in Minnesota’s Academic Standards, demonstrate mastery of complex subject matter, and apply their knowledge and skills on challenging projects.

Stillwater Area High School, Stillwater, Minn.

ANDREW YLITALO, Scholar of Distinction, Dual Awards: Mathematics and Science

St. Paul Academy and Summit School.

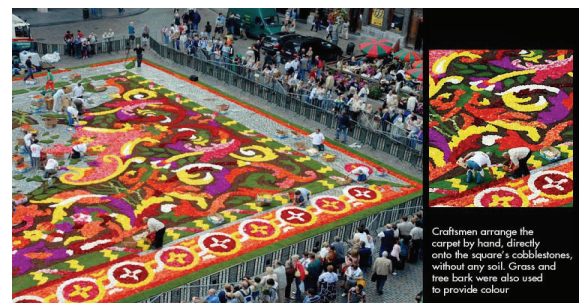
HAGOP TOGHRAMADJIAN was ranked First in Minnesota for debate as of October 12, 2012. He was also elected Student Council President in April of this year.

On October 15, 2012, **HAGOP** and **TOMMY TOGHRAMADJIAN** who normally are not partners, debated together. They went undefeated and won the Varsity Division of the **St. Thomas Debate Tournament**.

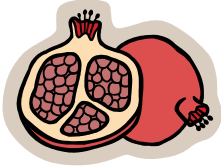
Brussels in Bloom

Although no Armenian connection is found here, these are simply beautiful pictures we wanted to share with you for your enjoyment !

This beautiful "carpet" is created every year in the Grand Palace in Brussels, Belgium. It's made entirely with fresh flowers - begonias this year. What a breathtaking sight! Isn't it wonderful that there is so much beauty in this world and the computer enables all to enjoy it.



ACOM Picnic July 15 2012



ACOM Voski Ashoun September 22 2012



ACOM 2012 Dues Paid Members

<p>Adamek, Tina & David Agadzhanova, Galina Andeweg, George & Jeanne Angell, Bill & Michelle Aram, Connie & George Asgian, Phil Balian, Harriet Baradaran, Kathie & Jaff Bobgan, Harold Bulbulian, Francis & Barb Charchian, Aram & Ruth Clarke, Barbara Desteian & Savage, John & Judith Desteian & Tashjian, Aram & Aja Digris & McGibbon, Naïry & Terry Dourgarian, Gregg Erickson, Cynthia, Leroy & family Ebrahimian, Vartkes Faust, Gloria & Dave Favre, Margaret & Jim Gauro, Boghos Gregorian, Henry & Laurel Hayes, Jim & Adrienne Hayes, Michelle Hajinian, Peter & Brooke Johnson, Margaret Keljik, Mark & Caren Keljik & Collins, Tom & Jennifer Kocharian & Davtian, Armen & Marine & family Lippert, Jim</p>	<p>Matossian, Lou Ann Meketarian, Marty, Mara & family Merjanian, Steve & Peggy Mesrobian, Azad & Karen Mesroubian, Sam & Sylvia Nyholm, Peter, Dana & family Ohannesian & Tiffany, Judy, Doug & family Ohanessian, Sita Oyler, Bill Plummer, Sona, Bill, Elizabeth & Chris Pompeian, Helen Saakova, Karina & family Samelian, Amy Savayan, Peka & family Souslian, Kristapor Tashjian, Alice & Harry Teosyan & Bagdasarov, Yelena & Georgiy Toghramadjan, Avo, Katie & family Warren, Melanie Wiersbeck, Sarah & Ray Wiersbeck, Mark Yaghsejian, George, Aida & Gregory</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTE: Boldface type indicates members who have contributed more than \$50.00 to ACOM. Our thanks for everyone's most generous support</p>
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The first Carpet of Flowers was created in 1971 as a way to promote begonias. Each square metre of ground contains more than 300 flowers.

How's that for a flower garden?

See article on page 8

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.

ACOMs 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.

ARMENIAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION OF MINNESOTA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President:	Tom Keljik	651-659-0552
Vice President:	Leroy Erickson	651-917-1818
Treasurer:	Naïry 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 Director:	Lou Ann Matossian	612-929-2947
Past President:	Mark Keljik	612-823-6338
Newsletter Editor:	Peggy Merjanian	952-473-HYEM

ACOM 2012 Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event	Time
January	7	<u>Gaghant - Barahantess</u>	5:30 PM
	11	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
February	15	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
	19	What it means to be Armenian? (discussion series)	1:00 PM
March	8	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Jones-Harrison Residence - <u>Mpls.</u>	7:00 PM
85	10	Movie and Discussion	7:00 PM
	11	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Preview for Festival of Nations	1:00 PM
	21	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
April	12	Armenian Dance Ensemble - <u>Sholom</u> Home East, St. Paul	7:00 PM
	18	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
	22	Michael <u>Gulezian</u> guitar concert, St. Sahag	1:00 PM
	24	Genocide Memorial Event and Reception	7:00 PM
	26	Armenian Dance Ensemble - <u>Sholom</u> Home East, St. Paul	7:00 PM
May	3,4,5,6	Festival of Nations	All day
	16	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Walker Elder Suites, Edina	2:00 PM
	16	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
	20	What was it like growing up Armenian in.....? 2nd of series	1:30 PM
	22	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Edina Care and Rehab, Edina	7:00 PM
June	10	Classical Concert	1:00 PM
	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 - <u>Sholom</u> Home East, St. Paul	7:00 PM
	15	Picnic, St. Sahag Backyard	12:00 PM
	18	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
	20	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Hennepin Cntry Government Ctr	12:00 PM
	22	Armenian Dance Ensemble - <u>Millner</u> Heritage Vineyard	12 & 2 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 - <u>Cerenty</u> Senior Care, St. Paul	2:00 PM
	19	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
	22	<u>Voski Ashoun</u> - Grapes, Cheese, Wine & Brandy Tasting	7:00 PM
October	11	Armenian Dance Ensemble - <u>Sholom</u> Home East, St. Paul	7:00 PM
	17	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
	21	Farewell Potluck for Steve & Peggy <u>Merjanian</u> .	12:00 PM
	28	What was it like growing up Armenian in.....? 3rd in series	12:00 PM
November	9	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Walker Elder Suites, Edina	2:00 PM
	13	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Edina Care and Rehab	7:00 PM
	14	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
December	9	Armenian Dance Ensemble - Episcopal Homes, St. Paul	2:00 PM
	12	ACOM Executive Committee meeting	6:00 PM
ACOM 2013 Calendar of Events			
January	5	<u>Gaghant - Barahantess</u>	5:30 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 in St. Paul

Thank You!



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.

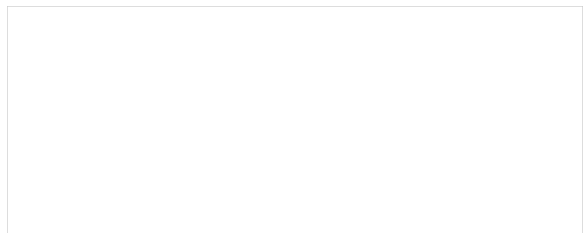
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This saves ACOM considerable printing and mailing costs.

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Roseville, Minnesota
55113**



We're on the Web
www.mnarmenians.org

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