

THE ARMENIAN Mirror-Spectator

Volume LXXXX, NO. 45, Issue 4638

\$ 2.00

The First English Language Armenian Weekly in the United States Since 1932

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

Armenian Prime Minister Blames Businesses For Coronavirus Spike

YEREVAN (RFE/RL and Armenpress) – Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan held businesses reopened by his government over the past month primarily responsible for the accelerating spread of coronavirus in Armenia which resulted in another daily high of COVID-19 cases and deaths on Sunday.

The Armenian Ministry of Health said on Monday, May 25, that as many as 452 people had tested positive for coronavirus



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan addresses the nation.

in the past day, bringing to 7,113 the total number of confirmed cases in the country of about 3 million. The latest daily number of new infections is sharply up from the previous record high of 374 cases recorded on Friday.

With the ministry reporting 6 more deaths, the official death toll from the epidemic rose to 87. It does not include the deaths of 39 other people infected with the respiratory disease. The ministry claims that they died primarily as a result of other, pre-existing conditions.

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Fr. Hratch Sargsyan visits Sue (Srbuhi) Mirakian, member of the Narekatsi Choir, for a socially-distanced home blessing. The bread, salt and water are on the table..

Cleveland's Armenians During The COVID-19 Crisis

By Harry Kezelian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

CLEVELAND – The Cleveland Armenian community is one of the smaller ones in the Eastern United States, but has not been silent during the current pandemic.

With approximately 200-250 families under the care of St. Gregory of Narek Armenian Church in Richmond Heights, Ohio (a Cleveland suburb), and about 80 families in the Columbus, Ohio, mission parish, the community is led by the young and dynamic Fr. Hratch Sargsyan, a native of Armavir, Armenia. St. Gregory of Narek is the only Armenian house of worship in Ohio.

Sargsyan says that due to diocese orders, only a couple of deacons and a couple of choir members, aside from the priest, are participating in Sunday badarak. However, services are being streamed online, on both Facebook and YouTube.

The parish is offering Zoom Bible studies twice a week – one for men, and one for women. Sargsyan has been reaching out to community members to participate in socially-distanced home blessings and visitations.

Sargsyan visits with parishioners outside their homes or on their porches. He puts the bread, salt, and water, of the traditional Armenian home blessing somewhere outside.

Sargsyan, who is no stranger to using social media in his ministry and has been doing so for a number of years, has even posted a graduation speech for all the graduates in the community who were unable to attend any other ceremony.

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Quartet Forges Ahead with Online Collective Writing Platform

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

YEREVAN – It doesn't sound like an unusual story in the US. Four friends graduate college and come up with a great idea for a business. Their software platform takes off and becomes wildly successful internationally. In the case of ForgeFiction, what is unusual that this story is set in Yerevan. ForgeFiction (<https://forgefiction.com/>) is an online blockchain-based platform allowing people to write stories collectively which may eventually turn into published books.



Areg Vardanyan of ForgeFiction, left, accepts the Armenian Tech Community first place prize in 2019 at the 23rd World Congress on Information Technology.

The Origin Story

Hrach Toneyan, Gayane Gasparyan, Karen Shahnazaryan and Areg Vardanyan are the quartet. Hrach explained that the four are all 27
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NEWS IN BRIEF

Turkey Condemns Czech Armenian Genocide Resolution

PRAGUE (Prague Morning) – The Turkish Foreign Ministry on May 23 called the Czech Senate resolution condemning the Armenian Genocide “null and void.”

“The fact that the decision was taken in an environment with few members in the Senate at a time when the whole world was struggling with the coronavirus pandemic reveals the insidious mentality behind it,” the Turkish Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

It noted that Czech Foreign Minister Tomas Petricek said the decision does not reflect the attitude of the Czech government.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry welcomed the adoption of the resolution, noting that the unanimous decision of the Czech Senate is a “major contribution to the restoration of historical justice and respect for the memory of the victims.”

“It is also a key message in preventing genocides and new crimes against humanity,” the Foreign Ministry Spokesperson said.

In April 2017 the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament had approved a resolution, condemning the genocide of Armenians and other religious and national minorities in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War.

Artsakh Makes Higher Education Free for All Students

YEREVAN (Arka) – Artsakh President Arak Haryutnyan congratulated graduates this week, while announcing also that starting September 1, higher education will be free in Artsakh.

“According to our election promise, from September 1, higher education will become free in Artsakh. However, I reaffirm that at the same time, the state's requirements for the quality of education will be stringent. Therefore, the desire to study and improve continuously may never leave you,” he wrote in a Facebook post.

He noted that the Coronavirus pandemic this year deprived everyone of the opportunity to celebrate the event.

“I'm sure, however, that disappointment due to this situation will in no way prevent each of you from making the necessary efforts to achieve your goals,” he emphasized.

He said also that after graduation a very important stage. Harutyunyan noted that no matter what specialty in life they choose, they should always remember that in their field they must be leaders.

“I congratulate you and your teachers in this connection and wish that all your dreams and aspirations are fulfilled in the name of your personal and collective successes,” he said.

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Investigations Service Refuses to Look into Parliament Brawl

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The Special Investigations Service (SIS) announced on May 23 that it will not launch a criminal case regarding the May 8 brawl between lawmakers in parliament, SIS spokesperson Marina Ohanjanyan said.

She said the SIS investigator has determined that the incident does not constitute a crime.

A heated argument between LHK (Bright Armenia) opposition leader Edmon Marukyan and ruling My Step bloc lawmaker Sasun Mikayelyan escalated during the parliament session on May 8 and a fistfight ensued. Dozens of other lawmakers intervened and the chaotic scenes were televised live.

The prosecution then asked the SIS to prepare materials over the incident. A group of lawmakers were questioned by the investigators.

Armenians Stuck in Belarussia Returning

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The Civil Aviation Committee announced that Belavia airline operating the Minsk-Yerevan-Minsk flight on May 25 and the Red Wings airline will operate the Moscow-Yerevan flight on the same day bringing back Armenians that have been stranded in Russia and Belarussia.

Authorities have tasked the tourism committee to escort the arriving passengers to their self-isolation locations.

Babayan to Become Advisor to President

STEPANAKERT – On Monday, May 25, Davit Babayan, the head of the Central Information Department of the Artsakh Republic for 13 years, announced on Facebook his plans after leaving office.

“It has been an honor for me to lead this structure throughout all these years, be in the forefront of the information battlefield, serve my people and homeland. I have tried to do my job professionally, exclusively being guided by state and national interests,” he said.

“I want to inform you that today I am officially resigning. I thank all of my colleagues and media representatives for long-lasting efficient cooperation. Dear colleagues, I do not leave the political and public spheres. I have accepted the proposal of Artsakh Republic President Arayik Harutyunyan and from now on I will serve to our homeland as an advisor to the Artsakh Republic President on foreign relations,” he added.

Being the leader of the Conservative Party of Artsakh, my party and I will continue our active work in the political and public spheres of the republic.

Foreign Ministers of UAE And Armenia Speak

YEREVAN – On May 14, Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan had a phone conversation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Foreign Ministers Mnatsakanyan and Al Nahyan discussed issues related to COVID-19, especially the steps taken at national and international levels towards eliminating the social-economic consequences of the pandemic.

The Armenian foreign minister thanked the UAE government for humanitarian aid provided to Armenia during the pandemic.

The two commended the dynamics in the relations between the two countries based on traditional friendship, in political dialogue, cooperation in trade and economic and other spheres, and reiterated mutual readiness to continue steps aimed at further deepening and enriching the bilateral agenda.

Emphasizing the spheres of high-tech and innovation, agriculture and tourism in the framework of trade and economic cooperation, the Ministers also exchanged views on the prospects of using the potential of regional and integration frameworks in this regard.

Pashinyan Blames Businesses For Coronavirus Spike

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Six such fatalities were registered on Sunday. One of the victims is a 31-year-old woman who gave birth about a week ago, according to a ministry statement.

Pashinyan took to Facebook late on Sunday to discuss this “very dangerous situation” and present further actions planned by the Armenian authorities.

“The main reason for the rise in the number of cases is industrial enterprises,” he said in a video address. “More than 75 percent and even 80 percent of [new] cases are registered in industrial enterprises and the services sector.”

Pashinyan accused those businesses of failing to observe social distancing and hygiene rules set by the government. He said the government will now enforce tougher penalties for such violations.

“Those cafes, restaurants, bank branches, manufacturing enterprises or hairdresser salons which do not observe the safety rules will be harshly shut down,” he declared.

Pashinyan’s government ordered the closure of most nonessential businesses and seriously restricted people’s movements as part of a nationwide lockdown imposed in late March. But it began relaxing these restrictions already in mid-April.

Although the daily numbers of confirmed COVID-19 cases steadily increased in the following weeks, most sectors of the Armenian economy were reopened by May 4. The government went on to lift its ban on public transport and allow kindergartens, shopping malls, indoor restaurants and gyms to resume their work.

Opposition figures and other critics say that the authorities ended the lockdown too soon and never enforced it properly in the first place.

Pashinyan effectively acknowledged on Sunday that the lifting of the lockdown has contributed to the spread of the virus. But he insisted that the measure was necessary for economic reasons.

Accordingly, the prime minister gave no indications that he may restore lockdown restrictions. He made clear instead that the authorities will continue to put the emphasis on the “people’s consciousness.” He again urged them to practice social distancing and wear face



Yerevan cafes are packed despite warnings.

masks in all enclosed spaces and shops in particular.

Armenians have already been required for the last few weeks to wear masks and gloves when entering shops, banks and other businesses. There has been ample evidence of widespread non-compliance with this requirement, however.

Health Minister Arsen Torosyan repeatedly warned last week that the number of people dying from coronavirus could rise sharply soon. He is particularly worried about an impending shortage of intensive care beds at the Armenian hospitals treating COVID-19 patients.

In a Facebook post, Torosyan said on Sunday evening that 154 of 186 such beds available in the country are already occupied. He also wrote: “We have 230 patients in a serious condition and 52 patients in a critical condition.”

Faced with the soaring number of new cases, the health authorities on Friday stopped hospitalizing or isolating infected people showing mild symptoms of the virus or none at all. Such individuals are now supposed to self-isolate at home.

Torosyan acknowledged that doctors

dealing with the COVID-19 epidemic may soon have to switch to a “deep sorting” of patients that show severe symptoms of the disease.

“The deep sorting is also done during wars, with mainly those patients who have a chance to survive admitted for treatment,” he said. “It’s possible that at this rate [of coronavirus infections] we will opt for that in the coming days. But we are doing everything to avoid that, for example, by deploying new beds.”

The minister’s latest stark warning came as the health authorities stopped hospitalizing or isolating infected people showing mild symptoms of the virus or none at all. Such individuals, who account for more than 70 percent of all cases, will now have to self-isolate at home.

Asymptomatic patients currently kept in hospitals or hotels turned into temporary medical care centers will also be sent home.

Torosyan defended this measure, saying that the authorities simply have no other choice. “There is no more room [for asymptomatic cases,]” he said. “That is why we are sending people home.”

During Azerbaijani War Games, US Ambassador to Armenia Announces US Is Pulling Plug on Artsakh Demining

WASHINGTON – As Azerbaijan continued large-scale military exercises this week, amid a \$100 million US military aid escalation to Baku, US Ambassador to Armenia Lynne Tracy announced on May 21 – during a Facebook Live appearance – that the Trump Administration is ending USAID’s humanitarian Artsakh demining program in favor of initiatives that “prepare populations for peace,” reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

“We’re deeply troubled that Ambassador Tracy – while Azerbaijan is conducting war-games – announced that the State Department is pulling the plug on the life-saving Artsakh humanitarian demining program,” said ANCA Communications Director Elizabeth Chouldjian. “It appears that the current Administration defines ‘preparing populations for peace’ as ending lifesaving demining programs in Artsakh while sending over \$100 million in military

security assistance to Azerbaijan. This is unacceptable. We will continue to work to ensure that the US Congress has the last word on this subject.”

During a Facebook Live presentation held at the US Embassy in Yerevan earlier, Tracy fielded a viewer question on US funding for Artsakh demining, the transcript of which is provided below:

“We are very proud of the work that we supported through the demining program to help in a humanitarian way the people of Nagorno Karabakh. We think the investment of \$17 million dollars over nearly the past 20 years has been extremely successful. And so what we are starting to look at now as the demining – our involvement in the demining – has concluded is to turn to another area – preparing populations for peace, which is in support of the work of the Minsk Group, to see what kind of activities we can conduct in this space to help toward that goal of achiev-

ing a lasting peaceful settlement of the conflict,” Tracy said.

Ambassador Tracy’s statement and the State Department’s position on US funding for Artsakh demining is in sharp contrast to multiple calls by over 100 Senate and House members for the inclusion of a \$1.5 million Artsakh demining allocation in the FY2021 foreign aid bill. Over the past month, Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Frank Pallone (D-NJ) was joined by over 75 House colleagues in support of the effort, while Senate Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member Robert Menendez (D-CA) and 30 Senate colleagues made a similar request.

Tracy, or the State Department more broadly, have made no comment on US efforts to prepare the Azerbaijani population for peace or condemning Azerbaijan’s military exercises, which threaten to destabilize the Caucasus region amidst the ongoing pandemic.



ARMENIA

COAF Celebrating the Migration from City to Village

DSEGH, Armenia – Roosters’ “Cuckodoodle doo!” in the morning, fresh air, and the sound of silence – a few luxuries of Armenian village life, yet unfamiliar to many urban citizens. People living most of their lives in the country might not realize the privilege of having abundant nature outside their door.

Whether city life suits you just fine, the countryside seems to have “organic” pleasures. If anyone could appreciate the country life, that would be the three of our Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) SMART Center instructors, Maggie, Ara, and Liza. Born in the city of Yerevan, they quitted urban life moving to the smallish village of Dsegh in Lori province to teach and excel with the youth of SMART.

Maggie Ghulinyan is our Chinese Program Instructor. Her ancestral roots are right from where she lives now. “Since childhood, I dreamed of becoming a military surgeon and working in borderline villages,” confesses Maggie. “Then I got married, and my husband and I moved to Shanghai and lived there for 3 years.” When they returned to Yerevan, Maggie persuaded her husband to have a sweet escape from the messy and noisy traffic of city life. The decision didn’t come easy but eventually, they



Liza Yepremyan during the Vocal Program

moved hoping to establish quality living standards in their preferred environment.

Having flowing water only three hours a day might not be the best amenity one could wish

for. That is part of Maggie’s new reality, where she has to wash the plates, do the laundry, take a shower from 9 AM - 12 PM, as it’s the only time they have water. Still, she forgets about all the difficulties as soon as she’s on her way to her workplace staring at the picturesque scenes given to her as a gift from nature.

“People meditate and spend money on therapies, here in the village, all that is given for free,” says Maggie, who does not live like a peasant, but still enjoys being close to nature. “Every time I admire the views around me, I

while villagers live a pure and natural lifestyle,” affirms the long-time advocate of country living.

“Cranes are migrating birds, and you can gaze at that unique scene only in a village. In cities, we do not notice such things, whereas, villagers foresee the weather based on their knowledge of nature and wildlife,” explains Ara, the city guy who now understands the philosophy of nature. Living in the suburbs has taught him to hear the sound of silence and rejoice in it.

In Dsegh, he sublets an apartment with an elderly couple whose relationship has become an inspiration to him. “They get up every morning, go to the barn to feed the animals, then break some wood, and work in the kitchen together. Even when they are silent, their silence speaks,” Ara tells with delight.

Mother Nature seems to be a fantastic place for a young musician like Liza Yepremyan to create and surpass. Moving to Dsegh to work as the Vocal Instructor at the SMART center has been an interesting challenge both for her and her family who live in Yerevan. “The village life is twice or thrice as tough as the urban life, but I am a flexible person and know how to adapt,” explains Liza.

Here she is surrounded by many things worth appreciating, and her workplace is one of them. “The rural kids need professionals to learn from, and I am sure they will value the center and its impact more as they grow up. I do my best to develop their taste in music and learn from them at the same time,” says Liza, who enjoys being accompanied by her staff

Celebrating Long-Term Collaboration of AUA and Mentor, a Siemens Business

YEREVAN – The American University of Armenia (AUA aua.am) and Mentor, a Siemens business and US-based electronic design automation leader, initiated a mutually beneficial collaborative relationship back in 2012. Since then, AUA researchers have annually engaged in joint research projects on a wide variety of topics, including data compression, mechanical stress modeling and calibration, circuit analysis, chemical-mechanical polishing (CMP) of computer chips, and machine learning. The projects were conducted with annual research funding from Mentor.

“We highly value our long-term collaboration with Mentor. The joint research projects have developed a strong link between academia and industry. Not only do our faculty members benefit from this collaboration, but also our students get the opportunity to acquire firsthand experience by being part of research teams, as well as interning at Mentor,” noted AUA President Dr. Karin Markides.

In March 2020, Markides, accompanied by Dr. Aram Hajian, dean of the AUA Akian College of Science and Engineering (CSE), Artur Khalatyan, chair of the Master of Engineering in Industrial Engineering and Systems Management (ME IESM) program and CSE industry liaison, and Narek Ghazaryan, director of communications, visited Mentor’s local office. Sedrak Sargisian, development engineering director at Mentor, and Irina Dumanyan, Mentor-Armenia site manager, welcomed the AUA delegation and briefed them on the recent milestones reached through their collaboration.

“The AUA/Mentor partnership is a win-win collaboration. Mentor gains access to top researchers who help us solve issues that are important for our technology and product development. And AUA gains access to industry-leading IC design technologies. In addition, upon the successful completion of each project, we publish joint research articles,” remarked Sargisian.

AUA and Mentor Joint Research Projects

Dr. Hayk Nersisyan, chair of the CSE’s Bachelor of Science in Computer Science (BS CS) program, together with AUA Adjunct Associate Professor Dr. Michael Poghosyan and Adjunct Lecturer Dr. Arnak Dalalyan, became part of the research collaboration of AUA and Mentor in 2017. They worked in parallel on two projects lasting two years each.

Having developed efficient and scalable methods to solve the pressure equation in CMP simulator, Dr. Nersisyan, the principal investigator, along with Dr. Poghosyan and two other collaborators participated in the VI International Conference on Topical Problems of Continuum Mechanics. Their paper titled “Application of the Obstacle Problem to Pressure Calculation for CMP Modeling” was published in the conference proceedings in 2019. The outcomes of their research were also published in the peer-reviewed Journal of Physics: Conference Series, 2020.

Another project based on the Bayesian framework was conducted by Dr. Dalalyan in collaboration with several AUA students. So, the AUA and Mentor collaboration has allowed AUA students to also engage in the process of discovering solutions to real-life problems.

In 2019, Dr. Nersisyan started another project working on the application of machine learning to deposition process modeling with long-range effects. The outcomes of the research were submitted in early 2020 and will result in a published paper in a peer-reviewed journal.

“Overall, as a result of the AUA and Mentor collaboration, four papers have been submitted to reputable journals and published within the last four years. These were not simply publications, as we have suggested solutions that Mentor is incorporating in the development of their products,” highlighted Dr. Nersisyan. “I am happy to share that our recent project on machine learning for CMP is going to evolve into a new stage.”

Internship Programs for AUA Students

Through the AUA and Mentor collaboration, AUA students have had the opportunity to participate in a well-established internship program offered by Mentor. This experience allows our students to gain hands-on experience in modern software tool development and get ready for the challenges of employment.

“Having an internship program is vital for Mentor. We try to identify top talent among the graduating students and offer them long-term paid internships. Every time we have a new job opening, we first consider our interns who are ready to jump in. That’s how we have been growing in Armenia. About 60% of our staff today are former interns,” said Sargisian.

So far, four AUA students have successfully completed internships at Mentor, subsequently being offered full-time positions in the company.



Maggie Ghulinyan teaching Chinese to COAF SMART students

think everyone would long for seeing what I see every day,” she believes. While many friends were first skeptical about her decision to move, when visiting Maggie in Dsegh, they wish to stay there more and more.

Another old and experienced “migrant” is Ara Harutyunyan, the COAF SMART Mechanics Instructor, who has lived in the villages of Artsakh before settling in the Lori region. “City population has an “artificial” life,

members, who always share news and interesting stories with each other.

Our instructors describe COAF SMART as the “most wanted workplace” in the surrounding area providing jobs to locals and not only this. While we strive to bring change in rural communities, we are glad our innovative educational center is also fostering decentralization and promoting the beauty of Armenian village life.



Ara Harutyunyan on a hike in Artsakh



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Egypt, Armenia FMs Discuss Cooperation

CAIRO (Xinhua) – Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry and his Armenian counterpart Zohrab Mnatsakanyan discussed means of promoting cooperation on May 19.

In the phone conversation, the two diplomats also discussed regional and international issues of common concerns, especially the security conditions in the Middle East, said Ahmad Hafez, spokesperson of the Egyptian Foreign Ministry.

The two stressed the importance of achieving stability and security in the Middle East via peaceful solutions, he added.

They also discussed efforts to curb the spread of the coronavirus and agreed on enhancing cooperation for containing the virus' social and economic impacts.

Hafez added that the talks also touched upon the positive developments of the two countries' recent cooperation, particularly in the economic fields.

Azerbaijani FM's Son Bought 2 Homes Worth \$4.2 Million in NYC

BAKU (PanARMENIAN.Net) – In the summer of 2015, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov's eldest son, Emin, bought two apartments in Manhattan for a total of \$ 4.2 million in cash, Turan reports citing information obtained from the New York Tax Department.

After recent discussions on social media about the wealth of the Mammadyarov family and their apartments in Manhattan, the Azerbaijani media outlet sent an inquiry to the New York authorities to request more information about the property belonging to the Foreign Minister's 31-year-old son.

The investigation found that out the younger Mammadyarov had acquired the two apartments in Trump Place, a Riverside South development.

Lavrov Says Russia, Armenia Enjoy Close Military Cooperation

MOSCOW (Panorama.am) – Armenia and Russia are allies, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told reporters on Tuesday, May 26, after an online conference of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Council of Foreign Ministers. The Russian top diplomat added, that refers to the cooperation with the CSTO and in bilateral relations.

"The military cooperation is very close," Lavrov said, reminding of the Russian military base in Armenia that "supports to preserve the regional security and stability."

Gulbenkian Foundation Donates \$30,000 to Armenians in Lebanon

LISBON – The Armenian Communities Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is providing \$30,000 to three community-based social aid organizations in Lebanon to support their activities in light of the socio-economic and medical emergency in the country due to the Covid-19 crisis.

The three, which will receive \$10,000 each, are: the Armenian Relief Society of Lebanon, the Armenian Educational Benevolent Union and the Howard Karagheusian Commemorative Corporation. The funds will augment each organization's capacity to provide basic needs such as food, medicine and medical services to the most vulnerable sectors of the Armenian community.

This donation is complementary to the department's engagement with the Armenian educational sector in Lebanon. In December 2019 and January 2020 support was sent to the 18 Armenian schools in the country. It is also in addition to the assistance provided to Armenia in April for COVID-19 related medical supplies.

ECHR Rules Against Azerbaijan in Case Of Freed Killer of Armenian Soldier

STRASBOURG (Armenpress) – The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on May 26 issued a judgment in the case of Makuchyan and Minasyan v. Azerbaijan and Hungary, concerning the presidential pardon of Azerbaijani officer Ramil Safarov who murdered Armenian officer Gurgen Margaryan in 2004 during a NATO training course in Hungary.

Margaryan was asleep in his room when Safarov attacked him with an axe.

Safarov admitted in court to having killed Margaryan because of his hatred towards Armenia and Armenians. He was sentenced to life in prison by the Hungarian court. However, in 2012, Hungary extradited him to Azerbaijan. He was released upon arrival, glorified on the state level and pardoned by President Aliyev.

The ECHR found "that there had been no justification for the Azerbaijani authorities' failure to enforce the punishment of Safarov and to in effect grant him impunity for a serious hate crime."

The ECHR found that "Azerbaijan had clearly endorsed [Ramil Safarov's] acts, not only by releasing him but also by promoting him, paying him salary arrears and granting him a flat upon his return."



Gurgen Margaryan

The court unanimously voted that there had been a procedural violation by Azerbaijan of Article 2 (Right to Life) of the Convention, by six votes to one, that there had been a violation by Azerbaijan of Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) taken in conjunction

with Article 2. The ECHR found that there were no facts to suggest that the Hungarian authorities could have been aware about Safarov's future release.

The applicants had not expected financial compensation: in an earlier interview they said they sought only justice and Azerbaijan's condemnation. They only requested the court for €15,143 pounds compensation for covering the expenses of lawyers. The court found that Azerbaijan must make the payment.

Representative of the Republic of Armenia to the ECHR Yeghishe Kirakosyan praised the judgment as a great move.

"It's very important to emphasize that the court recorded the violation of Article 14 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms - Prohibition of Discrimination by Azerbaijan. This is a significant achievement. The court also recorded violation of procedural obligations for Article 2 of the Convention - Azerbaijan violated the right to life and failed to ensure the adequate punishment given the fact that it has been proved that the crime was committed on the basis of national hatred," Kirakosyan said.

Erdogan Voices Support for Palestine In Eid Message to US Muslims

ISTANBUL (Anadolu Agency) – Turkey's president on May 24 reiterated his country's support for Palestine as the Muslim world celebrates Eid al-Fitr, the holiday marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

"We will not allow the Palestinian lands to be offered to anyone else," President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in a video message on Twitter addressed to U.S. Muslims.

"I would like to reiterate that al-Quds Al-Sharif, the holy site of three religions and our first kiblah, is a red line for all Muslims worldwide," Erdogan said.

"It is clear that the global order has long failed to produce justice, peace, serenity, and order," he said.

"Last week we witnessed that a new occupation and annexation project, which disregards Palestine's sovereignty and international law, was put into action by Israel," he added.

Israel has said it will annex parts of the West Bank on July 1, as agreed to between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Benny Gantz, the head of the Blue and White party.

The plan has drawn outrage worldwide, and especially sharp condemnation in Turkey.

The West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is seen as occupied territory under international law, thus making all Jewish settlements there – as well as the planned annexation – illegal.

Turning to the holiday, Erdogan said: "I congratulate my American Muslim brothers and sisters' Eid al-Fitr on behalf of the citizens of the Republic of Turkey."

"I pray to my Lord that these holy days may herald an era of peace, safety, and serenity for American Muslims, the entire Islamic world, and humankind," Erdogan said.

"The [coronavirus] pandemic has shown that there are no hierarchies or privileges among any region, nation, or country in the world," he added.

"It is only through global cooperation that the problems caused by dis-

eases, various conflicts, wars, migration, racism, Islamophobia, terrorism, and poverty that threaten humankind can be overcome," Erdogan said.

"Turkey has endeavored to respond to all countries, including the United States, who asked for our support in the fight against the global pandemic," he said, referring to the medical and aid supplies for the pandemic that Turkey sent to scores of countries worldwide.

"I wish Allah's grace upon our brothers and sisters who lost their lives because of COVID-19, patience to their families, and a speedy recovery to those receiving treatment," he added.

"Undoubtedly, the prayers we say in this climate are more candid and sincere than ever,

"Our hearts are one and united even though we have spent the month of Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr bitterly," he said.

Syria and Libya

On the ongoing civil war in Syria, the Turkish president said: "As everyone is focused on the pandemic, the oppressed Syrian people continue to suffer."

Since 2011, Syria's civil war has killed hundreds of thousands of people and displaced more than 10 million, according to U.N. estimates.

On the conflict in Libya, he said: "The putschist [Khalifa] Haftar forces continue to attack their own people and destabilize the country and the region."

Following the ouster of late ruler Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, Libya's government was founded in 2015 under a U.N.-led political agreement.

The Libyan government, also known as the Government of National Accord (GNA), has been under attack by warlord Haftar's armed forces since April 2019, with more than 1,000 killed in the violence.

"Blood and tears have, unfortunately, continued to be shed in the holy month of Ramadan as well across the Islamic

world," he added.

"Our brothers and sisters living in Western countries suffer from new Islamophobic, racist attacks nearly every day,

"The COVID-19 pandemic has again called into question the utility and reliability of international organizations against global threats," he said.

"We hereby reiterate our call for fairly redesigning the global system, which we describe as 'the world is bigger than five'," he said, reiterating his motto on reforms to the U.N. Security Council, a cause he had long championed.

'Smoking Joe' Hockey Joins Macquarie Group

WASHINGTON (Australian Financial Review, thedailynew.com.au) – Joe Hockey, former Australian ambassador to the United States (2016-January 30, 2020), joined the Macquarie Group, an Australian global financial services group, this April as a part-time special advisor. Macquarie is called by some the "millionaires factory." Hockey also runs his own Pennsylvania Avenue consulting business, Bondi Partners.

Hockey served as Australia's treasurer from 2013 to 2015. He entered the Australian parliament in 1996 on the Liberal Party ticket and held various ministerial posts prior to becoming treasurer. He was christened "Smoking Joe" after being photographed with a cigar before the 2014 Australian budget.

Hockey's Armenian father anglicized his last name from Hokeidonian after immigrating to Australia from Bethlehem, Palestine.

Community News

How the Biotech Investor behind Moderna Is Using The 'Immigrant Mindset' to Take On COVID-19

By Erika Fry

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (*Fortune*) – At a time when the world is just waking up to all the ways in which the planet was woefully ill-prepared for a new, highly contagious pathogen and the global pandemic it has wrought, Noubar Afeyan, founder and CEO of Flagship Pioneering, a Cambridge, Mass., biotech incubator, is thinking about the technology that will prevent such a catastrophe from ever happening again: “a pathogen defense shield.”

“You don't wait until there is an all-out pandemic to come up with a vaccine or a treatment,” Noubar tells *Fortune's* Alan Murray on this week's episode of *Fortune's* “Leadership Next” podcast. “You put in place surveillance. You put in place rapid response. You put in place production capacity, [so] that as soon as you have something, [it] very quickly can be produced.”

Afeyan, whose career and firm have focused on audacious innovation – “how to take the fiction out of the subset of science fiction that turned out to actually be science fact,” he says – is used to operating on science's cutting edge. That's no less true in this pandemic.

Flagship Pioneering currently has nine entities working on various ways to fight COVID-19, from companies that are using A.I. machine learning to help in the hunt for effective therapeutics, to others that are “computationally designing antibodies against the virus” or developing sophisticated at-home antibody tests.

The most high-profile of Flagship's portfolio companies' efforts, however, is that of Moderna Therapeutics, whose experimental COVID-19 vaccine candidate – made using the company's messenger-RNA platform technology – is out front in the global pharma race. On Monday, May 18, the biotech, also based in Cambridge, Mass., reported an early success: The first 45 volunteers who had received the company's vaccine all developed antibodies to the virus.

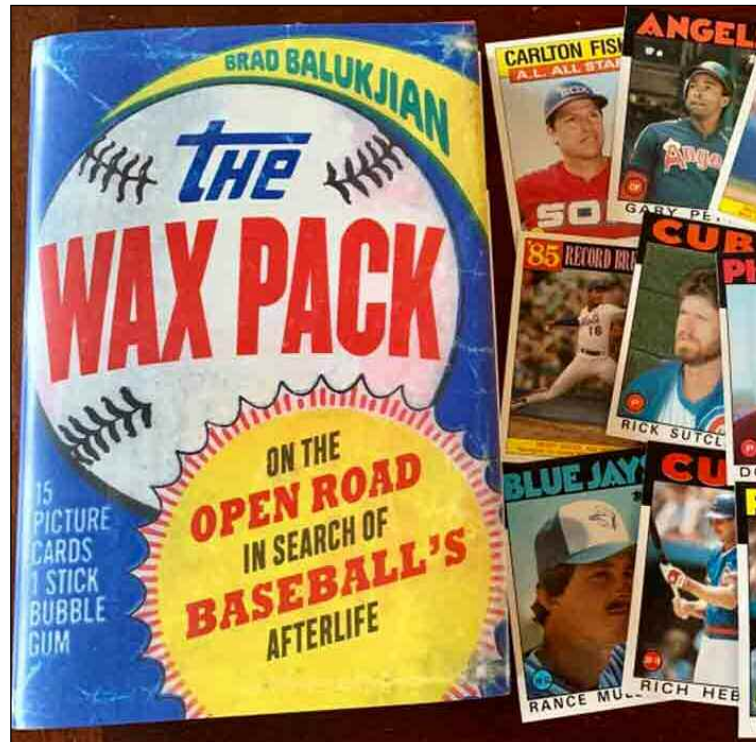
Moderna, which has 15 non-COVID clinical development programs but no drugs yet approved, is hoping to start pivotal late-stage vaccine trials this summer, aiming to file a new-drug application later this year or in 2021, says Afeyan. He notes that while there are challenges, like securing raw materials and scaling production, the company is working through them.

“At the end of the day, we think of it as, what can be done to go as fast as possible that money can allow?” says Afeyan. “Everything we can do with resources – given the impact this disease is having on the economic well-being of nations around the world – the kind of money you need to do this quickly is a very, very tiny percentage of that.”

While profits are hardly assured for Moderna in this endeavor – Afeyan points out that the vaccine's approval, like all drug approvals, is “a low-probability event” – he says pursuing a vaccine was the only course for the company given the potential impact on public health. He adds that, for Moderna, it also offers an accelerated opportunity to prove the power of its mRNA technology, namely the incredible speed at which it can develop potential therapeutics.

“The entire platform, we thought, would benefit from the maturation that this would impose on us,” says Afeyan.

While Moderna is an all-out sprint on its COVID-19 vaccine candidate, Afeyan says he's
see MODERNA, page 7



Wax Pack baseball cards

The Wax Pack Chronicles Baseball Card-Fueled Road Trip

NEW YORK (AP) – Brad Balukjian tore open a pack of 1986 Topps baseball cards, chewed the stale, brittle bubblegum and then planned a road trip most sports fans could only dream about.

By Dennis Waszak Jr.

those old pieces of cardboard – from Garry Templeton to Rick Sutcliffe to Carlton Fisk – and see what life after baseball has been like.

“Whether it's musicians or artists or baseball players, I'm just fascinated by what happens when they're done after the spotlight,” Balukjian said in a telephone interview with the Associated Press. “I always wanted to do something about those guys I grew up with. And I saw the pack as the perfect device to get a random sample of players from that era.”

The self-funded trip in 2015 cost about \$8,000 and took him and his 2002 Honda Accord across 30 states over 11,341 miles in 48 days – fueled by 123 cups of coffee. What Balukjian learned is vividly documented in his recently published book, *The Wax Pack*, which has quickly become a favorite among baseball-hungry fans during the coronavirus pandemic.

“When I actually started doing the trip and talking to these guys, that's when it really became something a lot bigger,” Balukjian said. “It was transcending baseball and talking about these bigger themes like what is our relationship like with fear, which is a universal question that we all deal with. Baseball players and athletes, in general, they have to master fear to be successful. Call it fear, call it anxiety, whatever you want to call it, it's all fear.”

“And the lessons that they passed on to me about what their relationship was like with fear, it's something we can all benefit from.”

see BASEBALL, page 6



Brad Balukjian, left, stands with former major league outfielder Lee Mazzilli in Rye, N.Y. (Brad Balukjian via AP)

Sevag and Jackie Ajemian Provide Scholarship and Employment Opportunities To AUA Students

LOS ANGELES – As both donors and employers, Sevag and Jackie Ajemian's commitment to Armenia and the American University of Armenia (AUA) is intertwined with their daily lives. They recognize the high quality of education that AUA provides, thus hiring AUA students to work in their Globanet office in Yerevan. As annual scholarship program supporters, they directly impact the lives of Armenian youth studying at AUA.

Sevag, who is based in California along with his wife, is the president and CEO of the software company Globanet, which he founded in 1996 after graduating from USC. Globanet is a premier provider of email archive migration, compliance, and eDiscovery solutions. He later expanded Globanet's services to Armenia to provide new job opportunities and spur economic growth in his beloved homeland.

“I realized early on that there was a shortage of software programming talent, and I felt the country could benefit from people who are in the computer science and engineering fields,” Sevag says. “I had noticed in my own team and other teams that females were especially enthusiastic to join software development, and I wanted to further encourage that enthusiasm.”

In December 2018, Sevag and Jackie Ajemian committed to contributing to AUA's scholarship program in support of a female enrolled in the Zaven & Sonia Akian College of Science and Engineering. The first recipient of their scholarship support was Armine Papikyan, a freshman student from Gyumri studying data science. “I was so impressed by Armine; her story, her background, and her enthusiasm to learn and explore the world,” recalls Sevag, reflecting on meeting the scholarship recipient. “I was treated with such professionalism that I could barely hold back my enthusiasm and emotions.”

The Ajemians have pledged to continue their annual scholarship support which will provide funding for Armine to complete her undergraduate degree and lead her into a promising future for herself. “Sevag and I want to do our best not only to contribute economically to Armenia's workforce, but also to help the next generation receive the education they need to succeed and lead Armenia to become the next technology cluster in the world,” says Jackie.

Sevag and Jackie named the scholarship in memory of Sevag's father, Bedros Karnik Ajemian. A scholarship at AUA is a great way to honor a loved one. “In Beirut my father was sponsoring the education of others. When he passed away a couple of years ago, I decided to follow in his footsteps and support students in financial need through scholarships. Naming the scholarship in his honor was very meaningful,” Sevag says. Through this named scholarship sustained by his son and his daughter-in-law, Bedros Karnik Ajemian's legacy will live on at AUA, empowering many Armenian students through the gift of education.

Petros Mkheyan, who serves as a Software Developer at Globanet's Yerevan Office, is a sophomore student at AUA from Gyumri studying computer science. He completed his military service in Artsakh in 2018 and is now continuing his education along with working. “The dedication to school and his work that Petros has is just amazing,” says Jackie.

“Seeing that other people care about your education reminds you of how valuable it is. It's a big motivation for me and for others like me,” says Petros. “I always wanted to develop something innovative, something that will change the world. I don't know what exactly, but I'm working on figuring it out. My biggest goal is to be able to change one person's life, at the least.”



COMMUNITY NEWS

Cleveland's Armenians During the COVID-19 Crisis

CLEVELAND, from page 1

The church has also made a list of phone numbers to call. They are helping elders with their shopping, buying groceries, and making sure they are coping with the situation. They are helping elders with anything else they might need. For example, some had electrical issues and the church helped them.

Outreach to the broader Cleveland community is being done by the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) Juniors and Seniors through St. Herman's House of Hospitality, and Orthodox Homeless Shelter in Cleveland. Normally the ACYOA members cook food and serve it at the homeless shelter. Since this is now impossible due to social distancing, St. Herman's has asked the ACYOA members to prepare sandwiches and drop them off. ACYOA members gather on Saturdays to prepare the sandwiches – making sure to observe social distancing. The church is also collecting toiletries and canned goods, and those who cannot come to help have been sending donations.

Some are reaching out beyond just the Cleveland community. Doctors from the Diaspora have been doing webinars with healthcare professionals in Armenia about strategies and experiences fighting COVID-19. One of those American-Armenian doctors who has participated is Dr. Rafi Avitsian from the Cleveland community.

So far, no one in the Cleveland Armenian community has been sick, and there have been no COVID-related deaths.



Fr. Hratch Sargsyan

The Wax Pack Chronicles Baseball Card-Fueled Road Trip

BASEBALL, from page 5

The Wax Pack journey began in 2014 when Balukjian was sitting in the upper deck of Oakland Coliseum watching an Athletics game and realized he wasn't as familiar with the players on the field as he once was. As a kid growing up in Rhode Island, he followed the game religiously and baseball cards – boxes of them – provided easy links to his heroes on the field.

So, Balukjian ordered a few unopened packs of Topps cards on eBay from 1986, the first year he recalls collecting. The 15-card pack he picked included a mix of stars (Fisk, Sutcliffe, Dwight Gooden and Vince Coleman), solid players (Templeton, Lee Mazzilli, Steve Yeager, Gary Pettis and Richie Hebner) and non-stars – called “common” cards in the hobby – such as Rance Mulliniks, Randy Ready, Jaime Cocanower and Don Carman, Balukjian's childhood favorite player. Also included were a checklist and the late Al Cowens, whose chapter is arguably the book's most intriguing.

“I didn't mix cards between packs because that would definitely be cheating,” Balukjian acknowledged. “Also, I didn't keep opening

packs until I got Don Carman because that would be kind of cheating, too.”

Balukjian spent about nine months planning his trip, researching the former players and exchanging letters, emails, texts and phone messages with them and their families to set up meetings.

“I set my expectations to be reasonable enough that, like, OK, I didn't have an advance, I didn't have a book deal and I had no guarantees this would work out,” he said. “But I knew that I was having a hell of a ride – the pure road trip aspect of it was fun.”

What transpired is detailed over 275 pages in *The Wax Pack*, which took Balukjian a few years to get published before University of Nebraska Press took a swing – complete with a wax paper-like cover.

Several of the former players shared tales of personal successes and failures with Balukjian, whose adventures included visiting a zoo with Carman, getting a hitting lesson from Mulliniks, watching kung fu movies with Templeton, lifting weights with Ready and desperately trying to chase down Fisk.

There were a few players Balukjian didn't link up with, but he managed to turn those setbacks into entertaining chapters.

He also weaved aspects of his own personal life into the book, including his struggles with obsessive-compulsive disorder and anxiety, briefly reuniting with a lost love and reliving moments of his childhood.

“I mean, it's almost a self-help book as well,” Balukjian said, “because you can get these little bits of wisdom from these players.”

The 39-year-old Balukjian, who teaches at Merritt College in Oakland and is the director of the school's Natural History & Sustainability

program, has maintained relationships with many of those featured in the book.

Despite the overwhelmingly glowing reviews of *The Wax Pack*, Balukjian isn't planning on hitting the road for a sequel when social distancing and travel restrictions are lifted.

“It's not tempting creatively because I just don't think I could match it,” Balukjian said. “I think the novelty of that idea is gone and that's OK. ... I get asked this a lot, but I'm like, hey, man, if anyone out there wants to write about another wax pack, like you could franchise this and do other sports and other years, and I would gladly read someone else's book.”

Irvine Declares April 24 Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day

IRVINE, Calif. –The City of Irvine declared April 24, 2020 as Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day thanks to the efforts of Mayor Christina Shea, Irvine City Council, and the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) Orange County Chapter. ANCA-OC announced on May 22 that it has been in frequent communication with the city of Irvine addressing the needs of the Armenian-American community, including the importance of annual commemoration and condemnation of denial of this international crime against humanity. Mayor Christina Shea has always been available to listen and meet with the ANCA-OC Board and community members to address those needs and issues.

“The Armenian National Committee of America-Orange County chapter would like to thank the City of Irvine and Mayor Christina Shea for their work to honor and commemorate the Armenian Genocide,” remarked Armen Garabedian, chair of the ANCA OC chapter. “On the 105th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, we welcome this proclamation as a testament to truth and an act to honor the victims and their families. We look forward to continuing to work with the City of Irvine and Mayor Christina Shea in addressing and advancing the Armenian American community's cause for justice.”



Donations

The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada gratefully acknowledges the following donations, listed alphabetically, in memory of Victor Varujan Ganjian for the renovation of a classroom in the Berdzor Tekeyan School.

Manuk and Josephine Akmezikyan	\$150
Arman and Sossy Derian	\$50
Armine Erol	\$50
Elizabeth Ganjian	\$250
Herman and Patricia Gennetian	\$150
Krikor J. Gennetian	\$100
Sarkis Gennetian	\$100
Varoujan S. Hachikian	\$100
Janet Imirze	\$100
Hagop and Noyemi Isnar	\$200
Harry Parsekian	\$50
Krikor and Araxy Shaboian	\$150
Tamburinni Painting	\$50
Haig Toomajanian	\$100
Mari and Raffi Zargarian	\$100



OBITUARIES



Leo Kricorian

Musician, Victim of COVID-19

WATERTOWN – Leo Kricorian passed away on Friday, May 15, 2020 from complications of COVID-19. Leo was a life-long resident of Watertown, Massachusetts and member of the Watertown Evangelical Church. He was born on August 4, 1940 at Saint Elizabeth's Hospital in Brighton. He was the son of Leo (Levon) and Mary (Mariam) Kodjabian Kricorian, brother of Edward, Dan, and Grace Carter. He is survived by nieces Linda Carter Rose, Debbie Carter Kirkpatrick, Nancy and Susan Kricorian, nephew David Kricorian, sister-in-law Irene Kricorian, and long-time companion Joan Butler.

Music was the passion of Leo's life, and in his youth he was the front man for the bands Leo and The Thunderbirds and Leo and the Rhythm Rockers. He wrote music and lyrics, and recorded several songs under the name Leo Scott. He was the lead guitarist for the Andy Healy Band starting in the late 70's. Andy Healy said of Leo, "He truly loved the Irish music scene, and he was front and center with our band. He was always very dependable, and he was never late for a gig in the 37 years he played with us." Leo was also known as a guitar teacher, and one of his early students was guitarist, composer, and educator John Baboian.

A memorial service will be scheduled at a later date once pandemic restrictions are lifted.

Dr. Jack Panjian

Veteran, Scientist and Musician

ARLINGTON, Mass. – Dr. Jack G. Panjian of Arlington passed away peacefully at his home on May 12, 2020 surrounded by family.

He leaves behind his beloved wife of 54 years, Beverly Panjian, his son, Jason, daughter, Jana, and son-in-law Keefe. He was also the dear uncle of Lisa Jones Piece and Derek Jones.

He was born in Cambridge on December 6, 1934 to the late Jacob and Elizabeth Panjian of Lexington. He was the younger brother to the late Edward Panjian and the older brother to the late Barbara Jones. He spent his youth with his parents and siblings at their home in Watertown. Later when his parents and brother moved to Lexington, Jack, Beverly and their children enjoyed spending weekends there having cookouts, playing ping pong and badminton.

Panjian graduated from Watertown High School and simultaneously attended the Frank Gaviani Piano Accordion School. His band, The Jack Panjian Orchestra, entertained schoolmates and local area residents. Jack continued to play the jazz accordion for over 13 years at

countless venues in the Boston area with his band mates and many other local musicians. After he stopped performing in clubs, Jack would entertain family and friends by playing the keyboard or melodica.

He attended Tufts College and graduated from the New England College of Optometry in 1961. Upon graduation, Jack opened his private optometry practice where he operated for 37 years. He was appointed to the staff at Cambridge Hospital, Youville Hospital, The Bruschi Medical Center and was Optometric Advisor to the Registry of Motor Vehicles. Professional memberships included the American Optometric Association and the Massachusetts Society of Optometry.

Jack was a veteran of the U.S. Army (1st Lieutenant-Medical Service Corps) where he served as Chief Optometrist from 1959 - 1962 at Fort Devens. This is also where he met and began his life with Beverly. During his tenure at Fort Devens, Dr. Panjian collaborated on a scientific study which demonstrated that using the color orange (aka "Hunter Orange") for safety



vests would dramatically save deer hunters' lives. This is still relevant today.

Jack will be remembered by friends and family for his elegance, wit and sense of humor. A lover of automobiles, he could be seen on a sunny day waxing his car or admiring one of his many antique collectibles. Interment will be private.

Daniel Aram Balian

Dedicated to Children, Grandchildren

BOSTON – Daniel Armen Balian passed away on May 10, 2020 at 64. Daniel, better known as "Danny," "Dan," and most affectionately, "Gramps," was born on April 11, 1956 in Boston, to the late Daniel and Lucy (Masserian) Balian.

He was a graduate of Watertown High School (1974) and Bentley College (1979) where he received a bachelor's in economics. He later entered the family dry cleaning business and ran his own store.

He was devoted to family. As a child, he always included his brother Jimmy and brought him along when he spent time with his friends. He encouraged friends and family to pursue their passions. His personable nature put those around him at ease. Known by many as fun-loving and funny, Danny loved the beach, cookouts, dogs, and long walks in nature. With his young children he made big Sunday breakfasts a tradition, complete with heartland rock and

blues music. His curiosity and sense of wonder had him always exploring and learning about the world and the universe through books, museums, trip detours, and food. His kids and grandkids brought him the most pride.

He is survived by his children; Janet Flaherty and her husband Justin of Waltham, Lara Balian and her husband Marcus Mann of West Lafayette, Ind., and Daniel Balian and his fiancé Kelly Camuso of Boston. He had five grandchildren; JJ, Jackson, Juliana, Maya, and Liv. He is the dear brother of James ("Jimmy") Balian of Waltham, Arlene McDonald and her husband Richard of Framingham, and Linda Yerardi of Frederick, Md. He is also survived by many nieces and nephews, cousins, relatives, and friends.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic and current public safety measures, private graveside services will be held at Ridgeway Cemetery in Watertown.



Margrit Kenovape Babikyan

Opera Singer, Died of COVID-19

WATERTOWN – Margrit Kenovape Babikyan was born on December 23, 1933 in Istanbul, Turkey to the late Arsen Babikyan and Maryam Ayvazian Babikyan. She was sister to the late Antranig Babikyan and Jirair Hagop Babikyan.

She is survived by her beloved sister-in-law Carol Babikyan, and nephews Armen, Haig, Aram, and Vartan, and their families. She is also sur-

vived by cousins Joyce Mooradian Yeremian and Mariam Mooradian Norigian, and their families. Margrit passed away on May 22, 2020, due to complications of COVID-19 infection.

Margrit was always an independent soul. She was passionate about music, opera especially, and graduated from the New England Conservatory of Music with a degree in voice before pursuing a professional career in opera. She was devoted to her parents, and incredibly selfless, never wanting to inconvenience anyone, and always thinking about others before herself.

At this difficult time, due to COVID-19, funeral and cemetery arrangements are private.



Using the 'Immigrant Mindset' To Take on COVID-19

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also rooting for the competition. "It's encouraging to see so much science being applied to this problem," he says. "We're going to need multiple vaccines to be able to supply the world, regardless. And so I don't believe in a winner-take-all outcome here."

He adds: "We're running in our lane. And other people have their lanes. And we're not competing against them. We're competing to finish the race. And if we can finish the race, then we will have had an impact." If the vaccine is successful, Afeyan believes Moderna can produce 1 billion doses annually.

Afeyan, an Armenian entrepreneur who was born in Lebanon and left the country with his

family during its civil war, credits his background as an immigrant in his success and encourages others to realize the inherent value in the immigrant experience.

"I view innovation as just intellectual immigration," he says. "When you leave the comforts of what you know, expose yourself to criticism, go to something that people don't believe is possible, persist, persist, persist, until you make it habitable so that people come and tell you how obvious it was years later. That is what an immigrant does."

"I would invite people to think of the immigrant mindset when they are doing these kinds of innovation, particularly cutting-edge innovation, and recognize that it is a strength that the kind of resilience, the adaptivity, all the things that we think are rare skills in an entrepreneur, that's what every immigrant has to go through."

Giragosian

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Arts & Living

Award Winning Artist Michael Aram Launches Scholarship With Fund For Armenian Relief

By Margarita Arakelyan

NEW YORK – A collaboration between Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) and Michael Aram has led to the launch of a new scholarship program for those from disadvantaged backgrounds who wish to pursue a career in arts and design.

Aram, an award-winning Armenian-American artist, has dedicated his career to craft-based design. Trained as a painter, sculptor and an art

historian, Aram has neatly applied his diverse background to the decorative arts. His work is a celebration of craft and age-old hand working traditions.

The Michael Aram Scholarship was launched in Armenia in February. A special selection committee, which includes several Armenian artists, was formed to select the first recipient. While they received many applications, there is only one Michael Aram Scholarship to be awarded.

Lusine Avetisyan, 20, the scholarship's first recipient, was born and raised in Yerevan. Since childhood she has enjoyed working with diverse materials, including wood, rubber and clay.

"Such materials allow you to spark your creativity and design different pieces of boundless styles and forms," she said.

She enrolled in the Decorative Applied Arts Program at the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia in 2017. But along with her studies came financial strain.

"At some point I decided that I needed to start working to help cover the tuition. But because I had to be at the academy from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day for classes and studio work, I couldn't find myself a job in the evening that I would be able to manage with my schedule," said the student whose father's modest salary at the Department of Inspection of Food and Beverages could barely cover her family's living expenses plus her tuition. "My parents were in a tight corner."

When she first heard of FAR's new scholarship, publicized through the arts academy, she jumped on the opportunity and immediately applied.

In addition to FAR's Education Program's Coordinating Council, two well-known Armenian artists, Tigran Matulyan and Taron Muradyan, were also part of the selection committee.

"Our committee supported Lusine's candidature because she has a great potential," said Matulyan. "She is creative, genuine, and she feels the elements to her bones. In her works, there was a balance in size and shape, a sense of togetherness and harmony, which was interesting. She certainly has talent, but she also has room for development."

While Lusine had previously shown herself to be a serious student, having participated in several different exhibitions during 2018 and 2019, she also received an award for her painting and ceramic works, which were part of the

see SCHOLARSHIP, page 9



Michael Aram



"The Reader" in Montreal

Canadian Doctor Creates Elegant, Abstract Statues

MONTREAL – Canadian-Armenian sculptor, Megerditch Tarakdjian, was born in Aleppo, Syria but left for Canada decades ago to attend medical school.

Despite being a self-taught artist, Tarakdjian has acquired great artistic knowledge and experience. From a young age, he was interested in painting and sculpting, which he practiced during his student years. Although he chose a career in medicine, he continued painting and sculpting as an amateur artist.

As he took on sculpting, and despite having the renowned sculptor Arto Tchakmakjian as his mentor, Tarakdjian remained mostly uninfluenced by the other artists. He sought to find his own solutions when composing his works and, as a result, most of his sculptures bear his unique form of expression.

As art critic Moves Hergelian mentions, Tarakdjian's non-classical surrealist sculpting style "is not an easy one. The artist who creates in this style has to be simultaneously good in realistic sculpting, in order to be able to produce a realistic figure, as well as in semi-abstract solution, in order to compose only a part of the sculpture yet give it the appearance of a complete figure."

Many of Tarakdjian's sculptures are prominently placed in cultural centers across Armenia. They are at the Aram Khachaturian House-Museum, at the Yeghishe Charents House-Museum, the Charles Aznavour

see STATUES, page 9



Armen Garo's statue in Washington

Prisoner Of the Hamptons

An Art Giant on Life in The Covid Age

By Katya Kazakina

AMANGANSETT, N.Y. (Bloomberg News) – Right about now, Larry Gagosian, septuagenarian bad boy of the art world, should be surrounded by the rich and beautiful, doing rich and beautiful things.

Like procuring a Picasso for a hedge fund titan and outbidding rivals at Sotheby's and Christie's. Or regaling billionaires and celebrities on the soft banquettes at his Kappo Masa restaurant, beneath his Madison Avenue gallery, where, in good times, a single roll of sushi might run \$240.

But Gagosian isn't doing any of that – not during a pandemic. Like so many New Yorkers, he's social distancing. Only in his case, he's hunkered down in the Hamptons.

The term "social distancing" sounds out of place in the context of one of the most powerful and connected figures in the art scene's social order. And yet here's the picture he's painting now: Alone on a cold beach, without a mask, dashing whenever he sees a passerby who might be shedding virus. His silver hair, normally an impeccably cropped helmet, hasn't been cut. He slips back into his palatial house, a captive in Hamptons paradise.

It's from this Charles Gwathmey-designed modernist fortress that Gagosian has been running his empire for the past two months while all 18 of his galleries, which dot the globe from Hong Kong to Los Angeles, remain closed. The man, who likes his art in the flesh and still uses a BlackBerry, is coming to grips with the market's new reality: Most sales now happen electronically. Clients are distracted. Transaction volume has plunged.

"When things go down like this you say, 'Jesus, Larry, do you really need all these galleries?'" he said by phone from Amagansett.

'Scrappy Businessman'

It's a striking question coming from the man whose "mega gallery" business model has been at the forefront of the art market's global expansion for the past two decades. The pandemic brought the \$64 billion industry to its knees, with galleries and museums shuttered, auctions and art fairs postponed or canceled and countless exhibitions derailed. The jet-setting art world faces a reckoning: Who will survive, and what will the New Normal look like?

The stakes are especially high for Gagosian, who employs almost 300 full-time staffers and has more than 175,000 square feet of prime real estate.

There's also fierce competition from rivals including David Zwirner, 55, whose early investment in online platforms is paying off during the lockdown, generating more than \$10 million in sales. Pace gallery's new eight-story emporium in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood dwarfs Gagosian's flagship, once the largest space in the city's art district.

In his telling, the dealer is wired for tough times. A grandson of Armenian immigrants, he rose from selling posters in a parking lot in Los Angeles in the 1970s to becoming one of the art world's most powerful figures, with all the trappings of his clients: mansions, a private jet and an enviable personal art collection.

see GAGOSIAN, page 12



ARTS & LIVING

Standout Wyoming Chef Shares Easy Kofta Recipe

By Dan Janjigian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

JACKSON HOLE, Wyo. — As an Armenian-American chef, I am constantly looking for ways to integrate the dishes and flavors that I grew up with into my menus. This recipe was born out of that desire in the catering kitchen. When I make these koftas, they're usually small, about two bites and served on a skewer as a passed appetizer at events, dotted with a dill-cucumber raita, or a thick jajik.

This recipe is a marriage of kofta, and losh kebab, or as my parents said "It's a grilled Keyma with spice."

When I'm at home, I prefer to eat it in Syrian bread with a lightly dressed cucumber and tomato salad.

If gluten is an issue, you can substitute cooked quinoa for the bulgur in equal proportions, it adds a different texture as an added bonus.



Dan Janjigian grew up in Westwood, Mass. and has lived in Jackson Hole for the last 15 years. He works as a catering chef and was recently voted "Best Chef" in the 2020 Best of JH competition. When he is not cooking he spends his time exploring the Teton mountain range where he works as a backcountry ski guide in the winter months. <https://bestofjacksonhole.com/business/dan-janjigian-jiggy/>

Kofta

INGREDIENTS

1 LB. ground lamb or beef or a combination of both
 1 Small Yellow Onion
 3 Cloves Garlic
 1/4 Cup Fine Bulgur Wheat or Quinoa
 1 1/2 Tsp. Kosher Salt
 3 Tbs. Harissa Paste
 1 Tsp. Ground Cumin
 1/2 Bunch Flat Leaf Parsley, Chopped Fine

DIRECTIONS

In a small bowl, combine the bulgur wheat with 1/4 cup of warm water and set aside. If using quinoa, follow box instructions to cook, then set aside to cool.

Peel and dice onion and garlic and pulse about 8-10 times in the food processor until the purée is wet. Move the purée to a fine strainer and set over a container to catch liquids as they drain off the mixture. After about 10 minutes, lightly press the mixture with a spatula to push out remaining liquid.

In a medium mixing bowl, add the onion purée, chopped parsley, cumin and a few grinds of black pepper, about 1/2 teaspoon. In the container with the onion water, add salt and harissa paste and stir to incorporate.

Using your hands, combine everything together and massage until well mixed and smooth. Form into oblong shaped balls and grill over high heat until medium or to your liking.

Makes about 10 patties - Serves 4



Canadian Doctor Creates Elegant, Abstract Statues

STATUES, from page 8

Museum, the National Academy of Opera and Ballet Theatre, the Komitas State Conservatory, the Komitas Chamber Music House, the Museum of Folk Art, the Museum of Modern Art in Yerevan, the Armenian Ethnographic Museum of Sardarabad, and the Academy of Art, among others.

In North America, Tarakdjian's works are placed in many cultural and public institutions as well as embassies in Ottawa and Washington, DC. One of them is a monument to the world-renowned Canadian-Armenian photographer Yousuf Karsh, which was erected in downtown Ottawa, Canada, to mark the 25th anniversary of Armenian-Canadian diplomatic relations as well as Canada's 150th anniversary. Tarakdjian's "The Reader" statue is placed at the entrance of the Reginald Dawson Public Library of Mount-Royal. In 2018, the monument of the first Armenian Ambassador to the United States, Armen Garo, was inaugurated at the Armenian Embassy in the United States in the presence of the President of the Republic of Armenia. Tarakdjian's most recent work, the monument of Komitas, is now erected in front of Parc de l'Armenie in Montreal on the occasion of Komitas's 150th anniversary.

Megerditch Tarakdjian's sculptures vary in place and in content, but they all have one important aspect in common: humanity. His various sculptures reflect the cultural trend of the time, yet they are distinguished by the harmony of life and hope. As a physician, as well as an artist and an art lover, Megerditch Tarakdjian believes in the healing power of art.



Yousuf Karsh statue in Ottawa

Michael Aram Scholarship

SCHOLARSHIP, from page 8

"A Glance from Another Corner" exhibition at the State Academy in February. She also credits the scholarship with boosting her motivation and ambition.

"The scholarship regenerated hope in me; it has eased my family's financial burdens by 100 percent. Now I feel a real duty to do my best to get high scores at the academy and make some great achievements in the future, to justify I deserve this high recognition," she said.

Now in her third year of school, she hopes to pursue a master's degree in the future. Eventually, she wants to open her own art studio with a second purpose of offering art therapy specifically to children with speech impediments and mental health issues. Working with materials, specifically sand and clay, are very beneficial in assisting those who have problems with speech and communication, she said.

"FAR and Michael Aram have invested in my education and I want to invest my earnings in something good too. I don't just want to convert my work into money," she said. "I want to do something for people in need for help or empowerment. Life would be much better if each of us could use his/her professional capacities to help others, like Michael Aram does"

Aram hopes to help many through the scholarship.

"Supporting future generations of creatives is important to me," he said. "And it is my sincere hope that the Michael Aram Scholarship Program enables many young and talented people to pursue a career in art and design, those who might otherwise face financial obstacles in getting an advanced degree."



ARTS & LIVING

Quartet Forges Ahead with Online Collective Writing Platform

FORGE, from page 1

now and have been friends since their teens. They are all from Yerevan.

Hrach said, "I would say what made our friendship and united us was the different worlds in fiction – *Lord of the Rings* and *Game of Thrones* are good examples. There was a passion in the four of us to make something that would be appealing for people like us."

They all got their bachelor's degrees in 2013, but are from different professional fields. Areg has an MBA now and teaches marketing at the American University of Armenia. Karen also has an MBA but is more involved in business management. ForgeFiction's chief technology officer Gayane has a background in mathematics and spent years in different software development companies, including some larger ones in Armenia. Hrach defended his doctorate in experimental physics before switching to the ForgeFiction project.

Hrach said, "We came up with the idea in the spring of 2018." "Game of Thrones," the hit HBO series based on the books, had two seasons left. There was a really large community of fans, Hrach recalled, creating amazing theories about how the story might continue and what different things in the story meant. In fact, Hrach said, "It actually turned out later that the show did not even come close to the things the community imagined."

This was what gave rise to the idea of bringing together this community and providing them a place where they could create original concepts and get recognition for it. Hrach continued, "There is great potential. The platform itself is not targeted to professionals, but rather for communities of people who are passionate about sci-fi and fiction." Most of the writings in progress are science fiction or fantasy, with a lot of superheroes, some of whom are based on comic books.

Areg noted that there are no restrictions on genres, so there are also romance, detective and many other types of content being written. There are, however, a list of things that are not allowed on the platform which are pretty standard for such websites, Areg said, including cer-

tain types of violence, pornography, promotion of hatred or violence, and revealing personal information about people.

Assuring Financing

At first, the four relied heavily on the help of their friends, Areg said, for things like the initial design of their website. Gayane designed the architecture of the backend.

The four were accepted into a pre-accelerator program called Armenia Start-up Academy as part of the latter's second group, which graduated in the spring of 2018. This program was initiated by the Catalyst Foundation with support from the European Union and Germany. It brought together 12 startup firms, with founders all roughly in the same age group as those of ForgeFiction, to help them move to a minimum viable product. Hrach said, "It was really interesting for many of us. There were many mentors."

After finishing the program, the quartet continued to work on ForgeFiction, but they could not work fulltime on it and launch their product until they received a European Union (EU4Business) Support to SME Development in Armenia (SMEDA) Science and Technology Entrepreneurship (STEP) grant in January 2019. This allowed the hiring of one technical and one designer employee, and the ability to now pay their friends who had been helping them as volunteers to develop their platform. The money lasted around six months.

ForgeFiction won prize money at the Sevan Startup Summit in the summer of 2019. During that same summer, Hrach said, they received their first investment as part of a pre-seed round from the venture capital firm SmartGateVC, which was run by the same people who organized the startup program. SmartGateVC was joined at the start of October in the same round by angel investors from Armenia and the diaspora from the Science and Technology Angels Network (STAN) initiated by the Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology and the Business Angel Network of Armenia.

Furthermore, ForgeFiction won the first

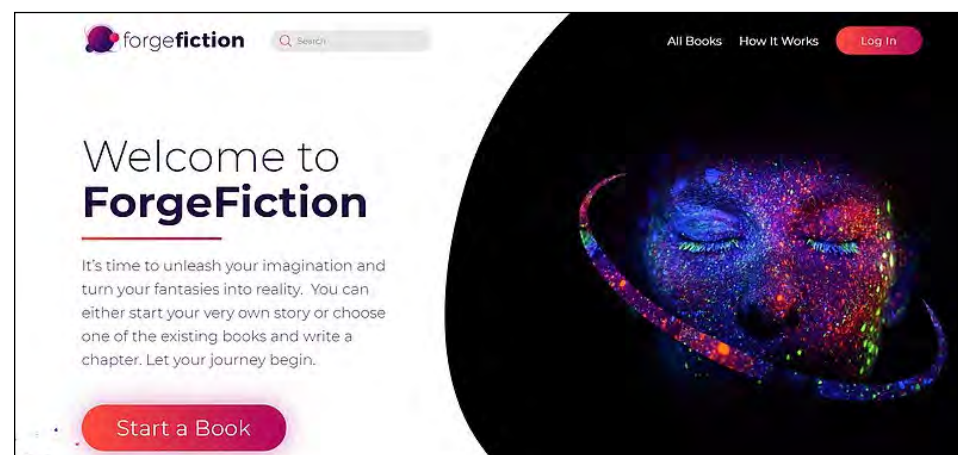
prize of \$25,000 for the Armenian Tech Community Prize, fundraised by BANA, at the World Congress on Information Technology in Yerevan on October 9, 2019. By October 2019, the ForgeFiction platform had 150 weekly active users, over 1000 pages of user-generated content, and 25 ongoing books.

By May, 2020, according to Hrach, the platform increased its usage to approximately 1,500 active weekly users. This includes people who read, submit chapters and vote on the website, not just an overall quantity of users. A large percentage, around 300, have written, whether through chapters or other items on the platform.

as other eBook sites. Every contributor to a book will receive a proportional share of royalties.

It is also possible to make "universes" to enhance a story, or share in this process. In these universes you can create locations, characters with biographies and physical descriptions and other categories by submitting detailed pages on which voting takes place. Books can be linked to those universes.

At present, he said, ForgeFiction is working with a company in New York which helps edit the fan-created books to be ready for publishing.



How It Works

When you enter the ForgeFiction website, you are invited to either start your own story or write a chapter in one of the existing books. Sometimes competing versions of the next chapter in a story are submitted and members of the ForgeFiction community can vote to determine which of these chapters will stand as a part of the final work. Writers get both positive and negative feedback on their works in the process. Community members can also suggest ideas for books.

Once a book is finished, it will be edited by the ForgeFiction company, and then put up for sale on the ForgeFiction website as well

The first finished book, *True Darkness* (<https://truedarknessbook.com/>), written by J. C. Phelps and Lorenzo Jones Hillman, was released several months ago. It is a supernatural detective story. Unlike most ForgeFiction contributors, one of the two authors, Phelps, is a professional author who already has an entire series of books published.

There is a second book which has been finished and is being edited at present.

There is no cost to use the ForgeFiction website and platform. Monetization comes from selling the content in the form of books, and in the future, media partnerships. According to Hrach, at present, ForgeFiction is not profitable but it already is generating revenue through its first published book, and more are in the pipeline.

Areg added that though some of the books or "universes" created are fan-fiction, these are not monetized in any way and no aspect of the original work is claimed. Consequently, this is considered fair use legally.

The Future

ForgeFiction is looking to collaborate with streaming services and other companies once it has developed enough finished content, such as books, and license its stories to them. It has an advisor in Los Angeles who has worked with the film industry and will help make partnerships in the film industry in the future.

The ForgeFiction platform will also be expanded beyond books to comics. Areg said that many of the current ForgeFiction members ask about this. He explained, "We are planning to do it, but we didn't start yet because we expected it to be a bit harder to find users. We would need two types of users, those who write the story and those who illustrate it." The "universe creation tools" on the platform already allow doing visual art such as drawings building upon a story.

A drag-and-drop system for characters is planned for the future that will help provide illustrations for people who are bad at drawing and can't draw the characters they create. It will also easily create maps.

Hrach said that they were considering a function allowing for adding theme songs to stories or creating audio books of the stories. These might all be added in the universe creation tools section to help make the created worlds more immersive, he stated.

continued on next page



From left to the right, Gayane Gasparyan - Co-Founder & CTO at ForgeFiction, Hrach Toneyan - Co-Founder & CEO at ForgeFiction, Karen Shahnazaryan - Co-Founder & COO at ForgeFiction, Grigor Hovhannisyanyan - Director at BANA - Business Angel Network of Armenia, Vazgen Hakobjanyan - Partner at SmartGateVC, Areg Vardanyan - Co-Founder and CMO at ForgeFiction and David Bequette - Vice President of Innovation at Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology (FAST)



ARTS & LIVING



From left, Hrach Toneyan and Areg Vardanyan of ForgeFiction accept the Armenian Tech Community first place prize in 2019 at the 23rd World Congress on Information Technology, with second place recipients at right

from previous page

The present platform is all in English. Hrach and Areg explained that the cofounders all learned English in Armenia. The current platform material is written primarily by Areg along with the other cofounders but ForgeFiction recently hired an Armenian who spent most of her life in the United Kingdom but moved to Armenia. She is starting work this May and will improve the platform.

There is no Armenian-language version of the website is because the market for Armenian eBooks is really small right now, Hrach said, and the focus is to create content to be monetized. While there are requests from Armenians who wish to write, the main community of users is from Anglophone countries.

Of these countries, the largest number of users is from the United States and it is being expanded through marketing. YouTube channels, for example, create content in sci-fi, fantasy or other genres in English, and then invite their own fans to write stories together.

Even potential Russian-language users would offer a relatively small market at present but Hrach said that they were planning to make parallel sites in different languages such as Spanish, Japanese and Chinese. The latter two languages in particular would offer entry into growing large markets both for books and comics, which are called illustrated novels. First, he said, it would be necessary to perfect the English-language website and then move to new languages. The founders will face some natural barriers, said Hrach, since without knowing a language it may be harder to understand the dynamics involved.

Although the platform is not targeting Armenians specifically, there still are some connections being made. For example, Hrach said that ForgeFiction, based on advice received from Armenian Americans, will be soon contacting Armenian schools to see if they can use the website's fiction for their English and literature classes.

COVID-19

It is nearly impossible to escape the effects of the new coronavirus in all realms of life. Even the members of the fictional worlds of ForgeFiction are affected. As a consequence, Areg said, ForgeFiction launched a new campaign called quarantine fiction. He said, "The idea behind this is to help people to overcome their anxiety during lockdown with the help of the arts. People share their stories, write memoirs and whatever fictional ideas they have in mind. With the help of these stories, people also are able to socialize together and cope with this situation easier."

These stories later will be published in books available worldwide and all proceeds will be donated to charity, said Areg.

#QuarantineFiction



-  Submit your short stories, whether it be a work of fiction or a memoir
-  Share with hashtag **#QuarantineFiction**, challenge 2 of your friends
-  Become a published co-author of a unique book available worldwide
-  All the proceeds will be donated to children who are left without caregivers because of the pandemic.

Write your way out of quarantine

Let's join forces together to tell our stories



Karen Shahnazaryan of ForgeFiction making a presentation at the Armenian University of America demo day for the second batch or group of Armenian Startup Academy graduates on May 30, 2018

Prisoner of the Hamptons: An Art Giant on Life in the Covid Age

GAGOSIAN, from page 8

"My journey is different from some other major galleries because I started from scratch," he said. "I didn't have family in the business. I never worked for another gallery. I never worked for an auction house. So by nature, I've been a survivor and a scrappy businessman, which maybe in these times it suits me well."

Clients Preoccupied

So far the gallery furloughed part-timers and paid interns, but Gagosian is aware that more tough choices may have to be made.

"You want to keep your business healthy," he said. "You are stupid if you just pretend that nothing is going on."

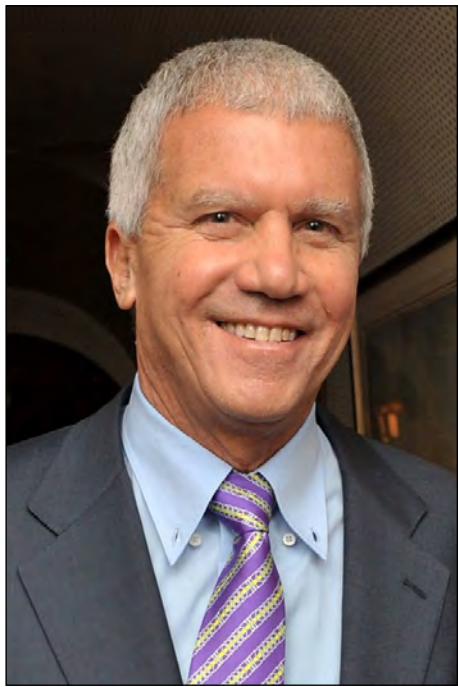
Gagosian, 75, understands that clients are preoccupied with more important things.

"Buying art is not a priority even for active collectors," he said. "They have other concerns now."

But the biggest challenge is not having access to the galleries, where customers can see a painting on the wall, fall in love with it and buy it on the spot.

"That's really what it boils down to," Gagosian said. "It's very difficult to even move a painting, to get a truck, to get someone to do a condition report. All the things the art world takes for granted have become very problematic."

The strength of online sales surprised him, he said. This week, as Frieze New York opened its virtual edition, the gallery found a buyer for a \$5.5 million Cecily Brown painting featured in its online viewing room. Sellers, who feel under pressure and are motivated to offer discounts,



Larry Gagosian

have been another active part of business lately, he said.

Seeking Masterpieces

And then there are the major works.

"There is always a buyer somewhere for a masterpiece," Gagosian said. "They say, 'Maybe it's not the greatest moment to buy something, but when will I get offered something like this again?'"

He recalled buying three significant works at auction in the wake of the financial crisis – by Gerhard Richter, Brice Marden and Christopher Wool. A large Marden painting from his "Cold Mountain" series had a low estimate of \$10 million at Sotheby's.

But Gagosian was concerned that if others took note of his interest in the work a bidding war would ensue, so he discreetly placed his bid with the auctioneer at the reserve price.

"He hammered it down," Gagosian said. "Not one person bid."

The final price, including fees, was \$9.6 million. The same happened with two other works, and he still owns all three.

Still Optimistic

Some of Gagosian's galleries are starting to reopen, including in Hong Kong and Paris later this month. Selling at art fairs will be trickier.

While Art Basel moved its June edition to September, Gagosian is skeptical.

"Is that the first thing people will want to do when they start traveling, go to an art fair?" he said. "I've committed to my booth and I'm hoping for the best. I just don't know. September seems like a long way away."

Museums may also have a hard time getting back.

"They are in the business of selling tickets and attendance," he said. "I can sell a painting on the telephone if I am lucky. Museums are participatory venues. That means you have crowds. And I don't think people are going to be comfortable in crowds for a while."

But Gagosian takes a longer view – and remains an optimist.

"It's going to be tough for a while," he said. "But that doesn't mean you can't make money or create a great painting."

The other day, Gagosian was flipping through the sports section of the newspaper – which is rather depressing these days, he said,

because there are no sports – and he spotted a photograph from the 1918 World Series, during the last pandemic.

"The photograph shows the batter, the catcher and the umpire all wearing masks," he said. "It's a fantastic image. And it made me think that this, too, will pass."

(With assistance from Steven Crabill)

Recipe

Corner

Guest Recipe

by Christine Vartanian



Stanley's Shish Kebab

Recipes courtesy of the late Stanley G. Kooyumjian, a Fresno native and beloved restaurateur and proprietor of the famous Stanley's Armenian Cuisine Restaurants in Fresno for many years.

INGREDIENTS:

3 pounds lean leg of lamb, cut into 2-ounce cubes
1 1/2 cups yellow or white onions, diced
1 cup green bell pepper, diced*
1 cup fresh parsley, minced
2-3 large garlic cloves, finely minced
About 2 teaspoons salt
About 1 teaspoon pepper
1/2 cup inexpensive red wine, such as Carlo Rossi burgundy, or juice of one large freshly squeezed lemon
1/4 cup olive oil

*Diced red onions, zucchini, red or yellow bell peppers, and cherry tomatoes may be used in this recipe.

PREPARATION:

In a medium (non-corrosive) bowl, combine cubed lamb, onions, bell pepper, parsley and garlic. Add salt and pepper. Pour wine (or lemon juice) and olive oil over lamb and vegetables, then mix well. Cover tightly, refrigerate, and allow to marinate 6-24 hours. Mix occasionally.

Thread meat onto skewers or alternate with pieces of onions and bell peppers (and other vegetables, if used). Place skewers on hot grill over hot coals or under hot broiler. Turn as needed to cook uniformly on all sides until the meat is medium doneness (browned well on the outside and still pink on the inside). Serve with rice or bulgur pilaf.

Serves 6.



Stanley's Kouzou Kuzartma (Baked Lamb Shanks)

INGREDIENTS:

4 lamb shanks, preferably from a leg of lamb
Salt and pepper
4 cups sliced white or yellow onions
1 bell pepper, coarsely chopped
1/4 cup minced fresh parsley, reserving 1/2
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 10 oz. can tomato sauce
1 28 oz. can crushed tomatoes in puree or diced tomatoes, drained
1/2 cup California burgundy wine, to taste
1/2 cup water
1/4 cup olive oil

PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 225-250 degrees. Thoroughly salt and pepper lamb shanks. In a roasting pan with rack, add water and place lamb shanks on rack. Bake uncovered for 2 hours. While shanks are browning in oven, proceed with sauce. In a skillet, sauté onions, garlic and bell pepper until onions are opaque. Add crushed or diced tomatoes, wine and 1/2 of the parsley. Salt and pepper to taste. Remove shanks from oven. Remove rack, drain liquid, and discard. Spread sauce evenly over shanks. Cover lightly with lid or foil and place in oven.

Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour. Remove lid or foil and return to oven for 30 minutes. Garnish with remaining sauce and parsley, and serve with rice or bulgur pilaf.

Serves 4.

Note: <http://fresnobeehive.com/2010/07/farewell_stanle.html> The Fresno Bee's blog item on Stanley Kooyumjian's passing at age 77 in 2010 drew remembrances and condolences from Stanley's many customers and dedicated employees who testified to the high caliber of Stanley's traditional Armenian dishes, the unrivaled excellence of his food, wine, and service, and to Stanley's exceptional professionalism and character as a friend, and a respected community and business leader for decades.

*Many of Stanley Kooyumjian's original recipes are reprinted from A Harvest of Recipe Cookbook, Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church, Fresno

<<https://www.armeniandiaspora.com/showthread.php?245567-Readers-Loved-Armenian-Kebab-King>>

<<http://www.lostfresno.com/phpBB3/download/file.php?id=8293&sid=c35cc0a072ee7905816740c2a1ebad86&mode=view>>



EDITORIAL

What's Wrong with the Armenian Church?

By **Edmond Y. Azadian**

Mirror-Spectator Senior Editorial Columnist

What is wrong with the Armenian Church? That question begs a number of answers depending upon to whom the question is directed.

Many have been alienated from the church in general and from the Armenian Church in particular. Cynicism has eroded the foundations of the faith, driving many away from organized religion.

In the case of the Armenians, our Christian faith is intertwined with our ethnic consciousness so that when our identity is diluted, the Christian faith itself can drive the individual away from the Armenian Church.

Clergy in the Armenian Church have traditionally been bulwarks of knowledge, culture, wisdom and inspiration. Historically, serving the Armenian Church was considered a highly respectable position in society. It was only when many misfits and losers gravitated towards the ranks of the clergy, that those congregations, in time, realized that they have put too much faith in those men and have become alienated from the church. And since human nature, more often than not, forces the individual to look for scapegoats for their own failures, the first target of the criticism has become the church. That answer is so much easier than one that comes from self-reflection.

These are general observations about the shortcomings of the church and the parishioners who make up that church, for its failure to keep pace with the current developments of society.

All the above being endemic to the Armenian Church, there are also other reasons why the Armenian Church has been experiencing so many problems, which rightfully baffles its adherents.

Historically, church leaders, based on the blind faith of the congregation, have built temporal castles for themselves, sometimes challenging the political establishment or royalty. King Pap, in the fourth century, rose against the clergy and expropriated their wealth. That is why Armenian historians, many of whom came from the ranks of the clergy, have maligned him. We see this dichotomy in our church history down to current times.

As the political parties emerged to shape the consciousness of the people, they certainly identified a power base in the church and they plotted to take over the church, late in the 19th century. But that struggle for control of the church took an ugly turn in the 20th century and its ramifications continue to this day.

The attempts by political parties to control the church impacted diasporan life heavily and divided the Armenian Church. Any Armenian in good conscience cannot vouch that the division in the Armenian Church is a healthy situation and enhances our struggle for survival as a viable community. We cannot heal the rift and unite the communities for our survival to achieve our most cherished goals until we identify the historic causes of this division.

It would have been the most rational solution had each group admitted its own responsibility and worked together towards healing the wounds. But we have not gotten to a point yet where we can stand up and admit our own shares in the division of the church, a division which spills over into the larger secular community.

Admittedly, for many, it would be a traumatic experience to revisit the times and acts which caused the division. Many believe ignorance is bliss. But there will be no healing until we are able to find the source of this cancer and rout it.

These days, it is very difficult to write about the causes of the division, because many people prefer to live in their comfort zones, even when that attitude may end in disaster. Also, those who preserve the memory, and once in while try to be history's prompters, are maligned. Most prefer to blame the messenger rather than deal with the deadly message.

Those who are uninformed, misinformed or ill-informed, are innocent until the moment they decide not to face history and learn the facts about the church division, which gained diasporan-wide proportions in 1956. That is the date one of the hierarchical seats, namely the Catholicosate of Cilicia, was taken over by a political party through the election of a mild-mannered clergyman, Catholicos Zareh Payaslian, who was anointed contrary to the canons of the Armenian Church.

At that time, the Armenian Church had more than 50 bishops.

None but two, Khoren Paroyan and Ghevont Chebeyan, volunteered to participate in the anointment of Catholicos Zareh. To comply with Armenian Church canons, a third bishop (Severios) was borrowed from the Assyrian Church.

One does not have to learn all the facts about the events of that period, but if he or she can answer one question, the legality of the takeover can be established; why were Lebanese Army tanks and armored vehicles surrounding the Antelias Cathedral if a popular election was taking place? That was a political takeover that came to amplify the church division extant in the US since the 1930s. Archbishop Ghevont Tourian, the primate at the time, was murdered in 1933, because he refused to obey the orders of the same party.

For the party which planned that murder, any person speaking of the event today is more evil than the murderers themselves.

Ever since these two incidents, the division in the church has been continuing and expanding.

The control over the dissident church by a political party had found a justification, or rather an excuse, that the Holy See at Echmiadzin was under communist rule. Therefore the diaspora churches supposedly had to come under the jurisdiction of Antelias, which in its turn has been controlled by the ARF since 1956.

The division still continues even after the fall of communism. What is the justification? The answer to this question was not even clear to Catholicos Karekin I, who left Antelias to ascend the Echmiadzin throne. When this writer visited the late Holiness in Echmiadzin to congratulate him on his election, he confided: "I was at the forefront of the campaign against Echmiadzin. But at

the time, the Holy See was under Soviet rule. What is the justification now?"

That rhetorical question is still hovering in the air. However, the answer is very clear for any unbiased Armenian; the dissident church is a power base for the ARF and a source of income.

If having two competing churches in the US and Canada is okay, then we have lost our reasoning and understanding of the very significance of the church itself. If the appointment of priests to parishes and

prelates to the Prelacy by political party officials are okay, then there should be no discussion about church unity.

Now a campaign has been launched against Echmiadzin and Catholicos Karekin II. That is a very convenient way of diverting attention away from the division of the church, which is experiencing an existential threat. Some atheists and religious sects have joined the fray. Unfortunately, when the Velvet Revolution took place, some of the extreme elements of the new government encouraged the unholy campaign until they realized that the Catholicos is not a parish priest and is the spiritual head of "All Armenians." Therefore, they relented.

The church certainly needs reform, but the reform has to extend from Echmiadzin to Antelias and to cover all the churches around the world. That reform can only be implemented by qualified church and lay leaders and not by charlatans who are shouting louder and have their own dubious agendas.

Many compare His Holiness Karekin II to Aram I of Antelias. No one questions Aram's quick intellect, and, above all, his skills to manipulate the media. Echmiadzin has almost no PR and most statements are defensive rather than informative about the activities of the Holy See.

This is not a forum to compare and contrast the two hierarchical centers but one comparison is in order. If five scholarly or religious volumes are published in Echmiadzin, no one hears about it, but if a single book is published in Antelias, the publicity impresses the public as if Antelias has become the academic center of the Armenian world.

The leaders of the USSR realized the significance of Holy Echmiadzin and used its symbolism to attract the sympathy of diasporan Armenians for Soviet Armenia. If the current government realizes that same concept, after sorting out their priorities, they can value Holy Echmiadzin to harvest its power for its own sake and for rallying the diasporans around Armenia. Right now, Echmiadzin is in defensive mode.

It may sound ironic that Antelias does not need outside control since Catholicos Aram is a strong leader who can keep his segment of the churches subservient to the political party. Instead, Echmiadzin can use some guidance if not control from the government. If we realized that much, we no longer can ask what's wrong with the Armenian Church.



Mirror Spectator

Established 1932
An ADL Publication

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The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is published weekly, except two weeks in July and the first week of the year, by:

Baikar Association, Inc.

755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472-1509
Telephone: 617-924-4420

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

U.S.A.	\$80 a year
Canada	\$125 a year
Other Countries	\$190 a year

© 2014 The Armenian Mirror-Spectator
Periodical Class Postage Paid at Boston, MA and additional mailing offices.

ISSN 0004-234X

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Armenian Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472

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COMMENTARY

Centennial of Alex Manoogian (1920-2020)

Distinguished Armenian National Philanthropist

By Father Zaven Arzoumanian, Ph.D.

The Armenians of the 20th century, both in the homeland and in the diaspora, were most fortunate to have this outstanding person, Alex Manoogian, as their great benefactor and the distinguished president of the AGBU for 36 years. Born in Kasaba, near Smyrna, Alex, a 19-year-old youth, travelled to the United States by sea in 1920. Virtually with nothing, \$50 in his pocket and no experience, speaking three foreign languages but not English, eventually he was to distinguish himself as the brightest star under the Armenian cloudy skies and in this blissful land of America, silently lead our people both in Armenia and abroad, despite the most tragic political geography following World War I. The following is a tribute by this writer, the eyewitness pastor of the Armenian Church in Florida, who had the privilege to meet occasionally with Mr. and Mrs. Manoogian visiting from Michigan on their winter vacation.

Truly humble and with a great personality, Mr. Manoogian while in Florida would call to visit the newly built St. David Armenian Church office where I was assigned as the founding pastor since 1984, and on occasions would invite me and Yeretsgin Joyce to take a ride in his own boat along with Mrs. Manoogian and friends. One day he whispered to me and said, "I feel fortunate with the guidance from above," not mentioning all the responsible and honorable achievements behind his most benevolent non-stop activities and skillful undertakings known worldwide as the owner of the Masco international firm. I reverently replied saying, "Mr. Manoogian fortune does not come by itself; it is earned with dedication and the kind of knowledge and concerns you have displayed all along." He used to smile through his blue eyes to express his impressive satisfaction on his illustrious face. Next year we will mark the 120th birth year of this great benefactor, born on June 28, 1901.

President of the AGBU

Mr. Manoogian was telling me he never heard about the founder and the first president of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Boghos Nubar Pasha until age 15, when he encountered his picture at the elementary school in Kasaba in one of the history textbooks. "I liked the picture and decided to copy it on a larger scale and donate to the school for sale to benefit the school," Mr. Manoogian said. He told me this predestined and legitimate association under the light of his future life and position with love, and I heard it twice with admiration. I was amazed as to how much closer he could get at his tender age to the great founder and the first president Boghos Nubar, turning into his 5th successor, both of them unmatched indeed. He was elected president of the AGBU on December 12, 1953, when the Center of the AGBU had moved from Paris to New York City in 1940, under Arshag Karageuzian, the president who resigned in 1953, and the 40th Assembly elected Alex Manoogian president.

The immediate future attested that his personal, family, and community life crossed all borders and Alex Manoogian's name as a great benefactor spread worldwide associating both his and his wife's name honorably and respectfully with new schools and cultural centers, built and donated through his benevolent funds by dozens in every country and every Armenian community. Not only did he multiply the funds and the congenial activities of the AGBU,



raising the total funds of eight million dollars of the Union from 1954 to fifty million dollars during his 36 years tenure, but he also established alert and active branches of the AGBU all over the world, himself visiting most of them periodically. Regrettably most of those branches have ceased to exist.

He built 13 elementary schools well known by their individual names that I could list, and 10 cultural and athletic centers, headed by the Armenian Home for the Aged in Michigan and dedicated to his parents Takvor and Takouhi Manoogian. The Home for the Aged has been functioning with full capacity of Armenian elderly in the state of Michigan for many years. None of those schools closed the doors for any reason as long as Mr. Manoogian was living. Unfortunately the disastrous closing of schools and AGBU branches took its course rapidly, following the closure of the Melkonian Institute in Cyprus in 2006, year after year, due to the new administration succeeding him after his demise in 1996 at age 95.

His Holiness Vasken I

Almost simultaneously, in 1955 the Armenian Church was blessed by the election of Vasken I, Catholicos of All Armenians. Catholicos Vasken I and Alex Manoogian providentially became the much-needed leaders of our Church and people in the second half of the 20th century, the Pontiff displaying full and unreserved trust in him when he commissioned Mr. Manoogian for several important missions. As benefactors, upon the request of His Holiness, Mr. and Mrs. Alex Manoogian donated full funds for the building of a museum for ancient artifacts and manuscripts in Holy Echmiadzin. The museum was inaugurated in 1982 near the Pontifical Palace (Veharan) in the presence of the benefactors by the hands of His Holiness, surrounded by Diocesan bishops from Armenia and abroad.

The Catholicos of All Armenians met Alex Manoogian sev-

eral times in the Mother See and in the United States. They met twice in Jerusalem where the dedication of the newly-built Seminary donated by the benefactor Manoogian couple was taking place in 1975. For another reason, the Pontiff deeply concerned, commissioned President Alex Manoogian in 1967 to rescue those 23 ancient Armenian manuscripts shamefully and treacherously taken from the vaults of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem to London for auction by the hands of the irresponsible leadership of the Patriarchate. Benefactor Alex Manoogian paid the required ransom and rescued the manuscripts and returned them to Jerusalem.

The Masco Corporation in Detroit

Alex Manoogian began his career in Detroit at a humble stage, learned, taught, and accomplished much, concluding with his magnificent successes, and lived there all his life since 1924. Previously he apprenticed in the design of auto parts in the prime city of car industry, and soon established his famous Delta Faucets development in 1929, turning it into a worldwide undertaking. All of the successes Mr. Manoogian achieved were credited primarily and exclusively to his intelligence, skill, hard and honest work, added to his unwavering optimism, smile always on his face. At its peak the annual transaction of the Masco Corporation while Alex Manoogian was handling his prestigious firm was \$3 billion.

85th and 95th Birthdays

We were all gathered in Detroit to mark the 85th birthday of Alex Manoogian in 1986. Guests from far and near were received by the benefactor individually at the entrance of the Masco Corporation, followed by an outstanding reception dinner. To our great surprise on Sunday, during the episcopal Divine Liturgy at St. John the Baptist Armenian Church, Deacon Alex Manoogian performed the presentation of the Gifts, raising the Chalice ceremonially for the celebration of the Holy Mass, wearing the proper robe and stole of an Archdeacon.

We were in Detroit again to celebrate Mr. Manoogian's 95th birthday, and for the third time in July, 1996 as he bid farewell to this world and passed away at age 95. For the funeral of this great man, His Holiness Karekin I Catholicos of All Armenians arrived in Detroit from Holy Echmiadzin to preside over the services, assisted by ten bishops and numerous clergy from all over including this writer.

The Last Beneficiary

It was only a few months before Mr. Manoogian's passing that in 1996 the St. David Armenian Church parish in Boca Raton, Fla., became the fortunate beneficiary, when approached by this writer, then the pastor of the newly built St. David Armenian Church, requesting to offer funds for the building of the first and the only Armenian parish school in Florida on the church premises. No questions asked, the great benefactor said he will help. On February 18, 1996 Mr. Manoogian was present at the ground breaking ceremonies of the school presided by His Holiness Karekin I Catholicos of All Armenians of blessed memory, assisted by the Primate Archbishop Khajag Barsamian who led the Catholicos to Florida and performed the Sunday Mass. Marie Manoogian had passed away in 1993. Father Arzoumanian conducted the laying of the foundations ceremony.

Regrettably benefactor Alex Manoogian did not live to see the school completed and inaugurated. We dedicated the opening of the new school later in October and remembered the legacy of the Benefactor with gratitude and love.

AMAA Launches Aid Project for Lebanon

The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) this week issued a letter seeking help for the Armenian community in Lebanon, whose precarious fate was being battered by the fallout from the COVID-19 quarantine.

The letter appears below:

Our communities in Lebanon are facing existentialist threats. And this time it's not the indiscriminately flying bullets. It is poverty, unemployment, loss of jobs, layoffs, bankruptcies or half a salary that has surrendered its purchasing power. It's COVID-19, liquidity crunch, political upheaval and vanished opportunities. Our people are industrious, workaholic and can turn the stone into bread. But when calamity hits on all fronts paralyzing a region because of persistent fear of vio-

lence, exasperated by inability to access one's own resources, compounded by an unknown and unseen vile, the result is an unimaginable and catastrophic collective punishment.

That is what our communities are facing today in the Near East, especially in Lebanon.

Imagine, a lockdown partially lifted, allowing schools to open but parents fretting, because they cannot afford any tuition any more.

Imagine teachers being paid half a salary while the cost of essential goods has tripled.

This is not the Dark Ages nor the lurid Ottoman Empire.

It is the 21st Century so sanguinely welcomed.

The situation is grim and even the short term need is unimaginably immense.

We have no choice but to reach out, cast out all fear, inject hope and resuscitate.

God has called us to implore "perfect love to cast all fear." Fear held off and hopelessness cast away bring chances of revival closer to reality.

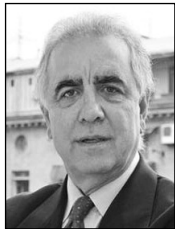
I ask that you join us in our efforts and support the Armenians in Lebanon through a reputable channel of your choice or AMAA's mission (AMAA 31 W. Century Rd., Paramus, NJ 07652) to sustain the health, education or mere life of the communities in the Near East.

Your generous gift will help win the battle of survival in Lebanon.

Zaven Khanjian
AMAA Executive Director/CEO



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

An Incredible Armenian Who Retrieved Armenian Orphans From the Syrian Desert

Parnag Shishigyan is a heroic Zeytounsi who retrieved hundreds of Armenian orphans from Arab families in the Syrian desert after the Armenian Genocide. His name is not known to most Armenians. Therefore it is worthwhile to focus attention on his life and his good deeds. He is buried in the little town of Hovdashad, a few miles outside of Yerevan.

Last month, Zarmik Sargsyan from Yerevan posted on her Facebook page a very moving tribute to Parnag Shishigyan after visiting his grave. The only reference to his unique accomplishment is a booklet published 30 years ago by Hagop Jghlyan whose family he had rescued. The book was aptly titled, *A Life Left in the Shadows*. Sargsyan attempted to take Shishigyan's life out of the shadows and present him to the public at large.

From April 10 to May 18, 1915, the town of Zeytoun in Cilicia was depopulated. The men were herded into the infamous Ottoman Turkish "Labor Battalions." On the road to Deir Zor, Syria, 14-year-old Parnag, ignoring the snakes and scorpions around him, spent days cuddling the corpse of his mother who was killed by the sword of a Turkish soldier. He was rescued by a Bedouin Arab from the Shammar tribe, who, after digging a grave in the sand for Parnag's mother with his dagger, placed the young boy on his horse and took him to his home.

Young Parnag who already knew Armenian, German and Turkish, soon also learned Arabic. Besides herding sheep and camels, Parnag, renamed Ahmet El Jezza, taught the tribesmen how to write in Arabic. He became very popular in the region because of his diligence, humility, and serious demeanor.

Soon, in the course of herding sheep, Parnag came across in the desert many Armenian children adopted by local Arabs. He reminded them of their Armenian heritage and began to write down their names and places of residence in a notebook.

In 1924, 23-year-old "Ahmet," as a trusted and literate young man, was asked to deliver a herd of sheep bought by wealthy Arabs from Aleppo. Once in Aleppo, he was surprised to see Armenian signs on storefronts and people speaking in Armenian. He was offered a job and a place to stay by local Armenians, but he turned down the offers, saying he had a family in the desert and could not abandon them. He then showed to an Armenian shoemaker his notebook listing the names and places of Armenian children living in the desert with Arab families. He had promised himself to gather these Armenian children, help them marry each other and find their relatives, if still alive. It was a very difficult task. Most of the children, having lived with Arab families for several years, did not remember their heritage and did not know that there were other Armenians still in existence. But Parnag persisted despite the obstacles.

The shoemaker Panos, President of the Rescue Committee of Armenian orphans from Arab and Kurdish tribes, was stunned. During the last few months, the Committee had barely rescued a couple of children, and now Panos was seeing an entire notebook full of Armenian names.

After returning to his tribe, Parnag kept sending list after list of Armenian children to Aleppo. The Rescue Committee would then go to the desert, pay off the tribesmen and take the Armenian children to Aleppo or Beirut.

Eventually, the Syrian government allocated two villages in the desert to Armenians. Parnag got married to an Armenian woman by the name of Wadha who later changed her name to Siranoush. Respecting their adoptive Arab parents, they agreed to have the marriage ceremony performed by a

Muslim Sheikh. The couple planned to have an Armenian wedding later on. Parnag's four Arab "brothers" were not happy that he was leaving them to go and settle in the new Armenian village of Tel El-Brak. They divided the family belongings into five. Parnag took with him 100 sheep, five camels, a horse, a rifle, and household items.

Parnag brought the hundreds of Arabized Armenians to his village, gave them Armenian names and arranged their marriages. He organized the young men of the village to collect the bones of Armenian martyrs from Deir Zor, Raqqa, around the Euphrates and Khabour rivers and the tragic cave of Sheddadeh. Parnag held a memorial ceremony for the souls of the deceased!

The two Armenian villages in the desert soon prospered. They formed a sports organization and a music band. In 1947, when Parnag became aware of the mass migration back to Soviet Armenia he decided to return to the homeland! He left all his possessions behind except for one thing, his Arabian horse, which he donated to a horse ranch after arriving in Armenia.

Parnag's family settled in Hovdashad, a village near Echmiadzin where he worked as a farmer. His wife, Siranoush, had five more children in Armenia. Even though Parnag had retrieved hundreds of Armenian children, he always thought of the hundreds of other children who were not, including his wife, Siranoush's sister.

In the Hovdashad cemetery, there is a statue of Parnag in Arab attire. The house that Parnag built in 1956 in that village is now like a museum, where his clothes and his photos are displayed. Facebook writer Zarmik Sargsyan recalls that Parnag's great-grandson Hagop was married in Los Angeles on April 17, 1997, in the presence of his seven siblings. It is ironic that the descendants of the man, who had sacrificed so much to rescue Armenians and moved to the homeland, now live far away from Armenia, in Los Angeles.

Armenians both in Armenia and the Diaspora should visit the village of Hovdashad and Parnag's grave to pay tribute to the man who retrieved hundreds of Armenian orphans and returned them to their heritage.

Pandora's Box for Istanbul Armenians

By Raffi Bedrosyan

ONLY A FEW MONTHS after the long-delayed election and appointment of Archbishop Sahag Mashalian as the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople (Istanbul) in December 2019, the Istanbul Armenian community is again in crisis. The latest turn of events brought forth the unpleasant realities in the leadership of the Istanbul Armenian community, or the lack of it.

It all started on May 15, 2020 with the firing of the two long-serving and popular principals of Esayan High School and Esayan Middle School by the director of the charitable foundation in charge of Esayan. Esayan School in Taksim, Istanbul, was founded in 1895 by two brothers, Mgrditch and Hovhannes Esayan, and is one of 17 Armenian schools left in Turkey, all of them in Istanbul, compared to more than 800 schools in Ottoman Turkey prior to the 1915 Armenian Genocide.

This historic and prestigious institution has a primary school for boys and girls, a middle and high school for girls only. Both my wife and I are graduates of Esayan Primary School. Every Armenian school in Istanbul, as well as every Armenian church, is directed and controlled by an Armenian charitable foundation, accountable to the General Directorate of Charitable Foundations of Turkey.

And now, time to review the contents of Pandora's box. Esayan School is controlled by the Holy Trinity (Surp Yerrortutyun) Charitable Foundation, which also controls the church of the same name. It is one of the wealthiest charitable foundations, with significant real estate assets, including 26 office buildings, numerous apartments and more significantly, the historic Tokatliyan Hotel which at present operates as an

office building. The monthly revenue of the charitable foundation is estimated to be over a million dollars, even with mismanagement and inability to utilize the real potential of the assets.

Although the foundation is supposed to have a board of directors of at least seven members elected every four years, the Turkish government has not allowed elections for the past seven years. Due to deaths and resignations, there are only two directors left in control of this vast real estate empire, school and church, accountable to no one. And the senior of these two directors, a lawyer by profession, unilaterally decided two weeks ago that the two dedicated and popular principals of Esayan School had to go.

The dismissal of these two ladies caused a huge uproar and massive protest within the Istanbul Armenian community, as well as among the thousands of Esayan alumni scattered around the world. The Toronto branch of Esayan Alumni, along with other alumni and community leaders, immediately called upon the Istanbul Patriarchate to use its moral and legal authority to intervene and to have the two Holy Trinity Foundation directors reconsider and revoke the dismissal decision, and if they resist, to ask for their resignation.

The patriarch did call upon the two directors, as well as the two principals to come together and discuss the issues face to face – but only after the government relaxes the COVID-19-related restrictions sometime in June. It is disappointing that the Patriarchate did not consider to make use of technology by inviting both sides to an immediate video conference via Skype or Zoom, as time is of essence in this issue.

This incident also brought to the forefront the issue of elec-

“AS IN MANY OTHER ARMENIAN COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS ARE NOW DEEMED DISPENSABLE BY CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS IF THEY LOSE MONEY. UNFORTUNATELY THIS REALITY IS FURTHER EXACERBATED IN THE ISTANBUL ARMENIAN COMMUNITY...”

tions for the Armenian charitable foundations and why the government has prevented them for the past seven years. This situation is similar to the patriarchal elections which were prevented from the time the previous patriarch was incapacitated ten years ago until last year, during which an acting patriarch ran the affairs of the patriarchate in complete obedience to the government, but perhaps not always in the best interests of the Armenian community and the church.

The directors of the charitable foundations also run their affairs, individually and unilaterally, unaccountable and perhaps not in the best interests of the Armenian community overall. The wealthy charitable foundations with significant

assets are supposed to assist the schools and churches of charitable foundations with limited revenues. But this rarely happens.

The directors of most of the wealthy charitable foundations run their empires, hire or help their buddies, and buy and sell assets without the advice of professionals. Of course, they like their chairs and are content with the lack of elections. Some foundations have become extremely wealthy in recent years and have received significant compensation as they have won several lawsuits against the government which had illegally expropriated assets in the past.

These assets should be put to use for the good of the entire community, for schools, bursaries, social services and employment, by regularly elected, competent, responsible and accountable members of the community. Unfortunately, this is not the case at present, except for a few directors with good intentions.

The dismissal of the two Esayan principals triggered another scandal. The self-appointed spokesperson for the Istanbul Armenian community, the head of the Holy Savior (Surp Prgitch) Hospital Foundation, took it upon himself to send a letter to the General Directorate of Charitable Foundations of Turkey, recommending that the control of Esayan School be taken away from the Holy Trinity Armenian Church Foundation and transferred to his Hospital Charitable Foundation – a completely unilateral and outrageous act, carried out without consultation or discussion with anyone.

Instead of advocating for the legal and democratic process of election of directors, he further suggested that appropriate people be 'appointed' to run the school. Although one should give the benefit of the doubt and hope that this act has good intentions, it is difficult not to speculate about ulterior motives.

This person has publicly suggested in the past that if Esayan School is losing money, it should be closed and merged with another high school named Getronagan (Central) School. This person is also on record stating that Getronagan School is run badly and 'is raising militants'. Getronagan School is situated at the commercial center of the city, sitting on a very valuable plot of land. Perhaps merging the two schools on the Esayan School plot, and selling the Getronagan School property could be the end game in this person's mind.

As in many other Armenian communities, schools are now deemed dispensable by charitable organizations if they lose money. Unfortunately this reality is further exacerbated in the Istanbul Armenian community, where there is no election and accountability of the charitable foundation directors, no unity and cooperation between the 'have' and 'have-not' charitable foundations, no moral and legal authority of the Patriarchate, and the result is the loss of historic institutions and valuable individuals.



Roslin Press Announces Armenian-Language 'Treasure Island' Anime Series

LOS ANGELES – Roslin Press announces the first-ever Armenian production of Osamu Dezaki's anime rendition of the classic swash-buckling adventure, *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson. To capture the spirit of the 21st-century Diaspora and Armenia, the 26-episode series features a mix of characters speaking Eastern and Western Armenian. Thanks to the assistance of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, young Armenians from across the globe can now sail the seven seas with Jim Hawkins in his search for buried treasure.

Especially during the pandemic with all of us spending an unprecedented amount of time at home, finding high-quality Armenian entertainment for children has never been more important.

It was a dark and stormy night... Jim and his mother were tidying up the Admiral Benbow Inn of Black Hill, a remote part of the English countryside. Just as they were about ready to lock up, a mysterious old sea captain arrives at their door. This wayward stranger named Billy Bones warns of a certain one-legged man, a vicious, brutal pirate who must be avoided at all costs. Fearing that he may not be around much longer, Billy entrusts Jim with some mysterious papers, one of them the map to Treasure Island. And thus begins an epic saga of high seas adventure, treacherous mutiny, and one boy's courage, faith, and good will.

"Treasure Island" comes at a critical juncture in the Diaspora. There is no denying that the Diasporan communities of the world are struggling when it comes to language maintenance. What is needed to keep the youth engaged with the Armenian language is high-quality entertainment with a strong literary backbone. Children must be entertained but must also be exposed to complex thoughts, emotions, and themes. The new Armenian production of "Treasure Island" has all these combined with a fantastic score and beautiful animation.

Special attention was given to the translation of the series. Both Eastern and Western Armenian are shown organically interacting for the first time in a children's animated series. From LA to Paris, the old mono-dialect Diaspora is no more. Communities are more diverse than they have ever been - and we set out to celebrate this fact in *Treasure Island*. Characters are depicted with their unique accents and linguistic stylings, encouraging our youth to embrace the linguistic diversity of the Armenian language.

Each and every single member of the Roslin and TechnoLinguistics team that has contributed to bringing *Treasure Island* to life has left an indelible mark of love, from the countless casting sessions to the multiple iterations of the translated script.

From the raw emotion poured out by the cast of over twenty voice actors and actresses to the hours upon hours of video editing to ensure a seamless dub...

"Treasure Island" is available now on VLUME, a new media platform custom-built for the Armenian-speaking communities of the world. VLUME is already host to hundreds of eBooks, 1000's of hours of audiobooks, and now with the introduction of *Treasure Island* - video content. Whether you are in Buenos Aires or Nicosia, New Jersey or Paris, Glendale or Yerevan - VLUME provides an unprecedented sense of community, now centered around fantastic literature and the best and brightest video content that the world has to offer.



New episodes of *Treasure Island* are made available every Friday on VLUME. To see a clip, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htEWUHCm6X4>

'We Armenians Survived': COVID-19 Connection Draws Past to Present

ALAMEDA, Calif. – Author Ellen Sarkisian Chesnut's second non-fiction book: *We Armenians Survived! Battle of Marash 1920* became available for purchase at the Amazon Kindle Store in December 2019. The book consists of eyewitness accounts of civilians caught between the opposing forces of Turkish combatants against the French army.

"I knew my mother's people, the Shamlions, Topalians and Berberians of Marash, Turkey lost relatives to heartless torture before being summarily killed but luckily they survived as did an adolescent, Lydia Bagdikian, not a family member, whose memoir is featured in the book," says Chesnut.

Chesnut first learned of her family's experiences during the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923 when she was an adolescent. She always wanted to let readers of history know the truth of what happened. Chesnut succeeded in this with the publication, to overwhelmingly positive reviews, of her first book about her father published in 2014 – *Deli Sarkis: The Scars He Carried*.

"I'm reading Ellen Chesnut's latest book *Battle of Marash* while in quarantine due to the pandemic. Rather than repeat the excellent previous reviews for this book, I just want to add my personal recommendation for this book which is a heartfelt compilation of memoirs by survivors of the Armenian Genocide in Turkey. While this first genocide of the 20th century was horrific, the stories of persecuted Christians and their amazing sur-

vival and incredible accomplishments as immigrants is heart warming. In one passage I learned that a co-developer of the malaria drug that is now saving CV19 patients' lives was just one of these incredible survivors. What an amazing people," wrote readers Jim and Randi, who gave the book a five-star review on March 28, 2020.

The review references three chapters of the book that feature the memoirs of Dr. Dicran Berberian about the Battle of Marash. "It turns out that Dicran Berberian (my mother's first cousin) was the co-discoverer of the antimalarial drug Plaquenil now known as Hydroxychloroquine. This is being used by some doctors to treat people with COVID-19," said Chesnut.

Ellen Sarkisian Chesnut's second non-fiction book is available at the Amazon Kindle Store but also can be ordered at any bookstore in America both in ebook and paperback version.

Chesnut has decided that all proceeds from book sales will help Armenian compatriots in distress in both Lebanon and Syria—Armenian Relief Society for Armenian Syria Relief and the Armenian Missionary Association of America for Armenian Lebanon Relief. "By ordering this book, you will not only be getting an informative book filled with inspirational stories but you will be helping Armenians in the Middle East! Thank you for your heartfelt support," said Chesnut.

For more information, visit <http://ellensarkisianchesnut.com/>.

